

Chi Council for the Clear Lake Hitch

Minutes of February 22, 2007 meeting at Lake County Courthouse

Present: Peter Windrem, Victoria Brandon, Greg Dills, Linda Juntunen, Norm Longoria, Steve Devoto, Denise Hanson, Sarah Ryan, Jody Larson

Windrem called the meeting to order at 4PM and welcomed participants, who introduced themselves. Maps, observation location sign-up sheets, observation forms, and (new this year) self addressed envelopes for returning observation results were passed around.

Dills moved to accept the minutes of the May 19 2006 meeting as presented, Devoto seconded, all in favor..

Windrem summarized 2006 results: an early February run in Adobe Creek that lasted many months; no fish seen in Middle, Clover, or (again) Seigler Canyon Creeks; and few in Kelsey, but there was a better run in the Scotts Creek drainage and in some small tributaries to Clear Lake. This year Mary Manning is monitoring the mouth of Adobe Creek, where she has seen herons apparently feeding but no hitch so far. The water in Adobe is murky, evidently because of sediment entering from Highland Springs Dam -- unlike Kelsey Creek which is crystal clear. The 2006 Report and charts are still in preparation.

Dills discussed a recently received CalFed Prop 50 grant for \$400,000. This will finance three watershed assessments (Scotts, Middle, & Kelsey Creeks) providing an inventory of current conditions not only in the streambeds and but also including their watersheds up to ridge lines: target date for completion is June 2008. Simultaneously, the County is working on the Clear Lake Basin management plan. This work will provide baseline information needed to access various funding sources. Windrem: how should the Chi Council participate? Juntunen: one way is to attend the kickoff stakeholder meetings (March 6: Kelsey; March 14: Middle; March 15: Scotts). Dills: the data collected by the Chi Council should become part of assessments. Ryan: Big Valley tribe has data going back to 1999, as well as a boat and scientifically trained staff. Dills: the CalFed grant will also help with capacity building for watershed groups. Robinson Rancheria has completed a migration barrier study for the entire Clear Lake basin. Windrem: this information should be posted to the Chi Council website.

Discussion of physical barriers to migration: we should start working on their removal: fortunately the route to funding seems clearer thanks to developments discussed above. Dills: now is the time to take actions that will benefit our grandchildren's generation. Ryan: tribal elders remember walking across streams on the backs of hitch when they were young, so are these barriers new? Should we be investigating other causes of population decline such as predation and competition from other fish? Windrem: barrier removal is the obvious first step. Last year hitch came into Rodman Slough, then turned left into the Scotts Creek drainage but NOT up Middle Creek which historically has been an important spawning ground. Why? There are many mysteries. Juntunen: Scotts Valley tribe used to post a regular lookout for beginning of hitch run because traditionally that was the first creek they entered. Windrem recalled an old native tale about one year when hitch came up Cole Creek but not Kelsey, and efforts were made to divert the water. Ryan: is there monitoring of water quality? Dills: yes, Robinson is doing it among other groups, and plans to share the information are in progress. Windrem suggests that we should focus on removal of one particular barrier, for example on Middle Creek. Dills: the Middle Creek improvements (weirs) were damaged by storms in the winter of 2006 and must be rebuilt. Windrem: We need to collaborate with Robinson, and with Tom Smythe (Watershed Protection District).

Seigler Canyon is clear and free-flowing, but no hitch have been seen there since 1997. Dills: Angie Siegel's classes are collecting data and we should check with her. Brandon: has asked her for observations every year and none have been forthcoming so presumably she has seen no hitch. Devoto: recurring gravel bar at the confluence with Cache Creek might be a barrier. Dills: the barrier at Robinson Bridge on Middle Creek is an obvious candidate for study since removal would open at least five miles of spawning territory. We should make a particular effort to make sure that Tom Smythe and representatives from Robinson and the Upper Lake tribe come to the next meeting. Culverts can create major barriers as stream levels drop: one on Dills' property creates a 3-foot change in elevation.

Dills: there are three stream gauges in place (Scotts, Middle, & Kelsey Creeks): data is posted to the county website on an ongoing basis.

Devoto suggests database design changes. Stream data should be presented in separate sheets for sorting purposes, and observers should use standardized names for observation sites. He suggests adding fields for water temperature and clarity. Ryan: need device to measure clarity in a standard way, and observers should be provided with thermometers. Brandon suggests additional fields to indicate whether spawning behavior is observed, or if barriers downstream from the observation site are interfering with migration. We also have to be careful not to burden volunteer observers with so many demands for information that they give up altogether.

Assignment of specific observation sites followed.

Windrem: Tom Taylor, whose photo is prominently situated on the home page of our website, has sent a CD with other samples of his work. He requests that we sign a license agreement for the photo (at no charge). Dills moves that we authorize Windrem to sign this agreement, Devoto seconds, all in favor.

The next meeting will be on Thursday March 22 at 3PM, Brandon to confirm conference room reservation.

Meeting adjourned at 5:30PM.