

# Chi Council for the Clear Lake Hitch

## Minutes of March 24, 2006 meeting at Lake County Courthouse

Present: Peter Windrem, Diana Hershey, Victoria Brandon, Charles Gitchell Jr, Mike Umbrello, Val Stewart, Tom Smythe, Steve Devoto, Charlotte Ambrose, Jonathan Ambrose, Greg Dills, Ray Mostin, Denise Ishihara

Minutes of February 24, 2006 meeting: Hershey moved to approve, all in favor

**Discussion of hitch sightings since the last meeting.** Until the past few days, no more were seen after 2/25 (weather terrible). Devoto reported seeing spawning hitch moving up McGaugh Slough & Hill Creek, including some "very small ones" perhaps from bucket brigade last year. Windrem said the water has been too murky for the human eye to make out any fish, but herons and mergansers have been present in quantity. Smythe: his reported sighting of 3/24 could have been carp. Mostin: water temp in Kelsey Creek has gone from 42° to 46° in the last few days, but last year's run didn't get going until the temperature had reached 53°.

**Clover Valley Project.** Hershey: MOU with the county has been signed and ready to move ahead. The existing bypass is about 3 ft high, forming a complete barrier to hitch migration; it will be restructured, perhaps by adding a notch and removable gate. JAmbrose: how much habitat will be opened? Smythe: five or six miles of stream channel, maybe more, and at least two miles on Alley Creek. CAmbrose: who is preparing the design? Smythe: county Department of Public Works, which has just hired Green Valley Consulting from Santa Rosa. Windrem: is this project being done in collaboration with Upper Lake Pomo restoration work? Hershey: Yes. Upper Lake has money to research conditions on Middle Creek, with the Robinson grant funding the rest. Both tribes have employed the same consultant (Dietrick McGinnis of Reno). JAmbrose: recommends strongly that in preparing their design the engineering consultants should work closely with the California Department of Fish & Game, which will lead to substantial monetary savings and produce much quicker results. Hershey: because grant money is coming from US Fish & Wildlife, close consultation with that agency is also mandated.

**Stream temperatures gauges.** Smythe: three have already been placed in creeks (Adobe at Merritt, Kelsey, and a tributary to Scotts near Blue Lakes. He brought four more to the meeting to distribute for immediate placement, and said that an additional ten were available, but since these lacked protective rubber boots they would need sheltered locations. They have been programmed to log every six hours, which is sufficient frequency. Mostin: high flow at Kelsey creek keeps the temperature stable, but when the water level drops it will fluctuate between day and night. CAmbrose: is this the first year that water temperature has been recorded? Yes, except for some readings that Mostin did last year. Smythe: scientific data on hitch is extremely limited.

Devoto: how high can hitch jump? Mostin: 8-10 inches. Devoto: has seen some jump two feet. These were moving through water, not jumping in open air.

Windrem showed an excellent PowerPoint presentation that he had assembled recently for the benefit of the Clear Lake State Park Docents. Rotary may be interested too: the Chi Council is now on the rubber chicken circuit.

Dills projected pictures of several enormous log jams (also appliances and other debris) on Scotts Creek. Removal operations, requiring landowner permissions and heavy equipment,

will probably take place this summer: the junk will be hauled out of the creek, and when possible chipped or burned on site. Smythe is trying to get FEMA to pay for it.

Discussion of possible Chi Council participation in upcoming public events. Brandon offered space in Sierra Club booth at Heron Days, mentioned possibility of a hitch presentation as part of the McLaughlin Reserve's Science Building at the County Fair. Hershey offered to contribute displays that Robert Geary had prepared on the life cycle of the hitch.

J & CAmbrose described their background: Both Fish & Wildlife biologists. JAmbrose administers Endangered Species Act for steelhead & coho salmon on the central coast as far south as Monterey Bay; CAmbrose is recovery coordinator for national marine fisheries, developing recovery plans for four species in conjunction with the Board of Forestry and other agencies. JAmbrose is also on the board of the Lake County Land Trust, which he believes needs to devise a strategic plan to decide just which habitat areas to focus on.

Windrem: the spawning season is just about to begin. Why do they go up into muddy areas (ditches etc) instead of sticking to supposedly preferred gravel bottoms? What is the attractant?  
Smythe: low flows, they can move upstream. Dills: last year he observed hitch spawning in Hendricks Creeks in water so shallow that their backs were exposed.

**Next meeting: 2PM on Friday April 28, 2006, at the Courthouse.**