

**Chi Council for the Clear Lake Hitch**  
**Minutes of March 24, 2010 meeting at the Lake County Ag Center**

Submitted by Victoria Brandon, Chi Council secretary

Present: Victoria Brandon, Judy Barnes, Bill Rett, Mike & Phyllis Stevenson, Peter Windrem, Greg Dills, Tom Smythe, Paula Britton, Dietrich McGinnis, David Wooten, Erik Ringelberg

The minutes from the February 24 meeting were accepted as amended.

**2010 observations:** we're seeing hitch in many creeks where there have been no observations for several years.

Cole: small groups

Kelsey: large schools below the detention structure, smaller above. Smythe: they are passing through the opening at about one per minute; last summer's remedial work at the fish ladder seems to have reduced velocities, but more work is still needed.

McGaugh Slough/Hill Creek: flow had stopped almost entirely at the Finley East crossing by mid February; no fish seen

Manning: large schools have been seen below Soda Bay Rd but there's a barrier across the creek at a low water crossing a few hundred yards farther upstream. Smythe: this could easily be mitigated with \$100 in rocks but would require \$2000 in permits. He will try to incorporate it into another project

Forbes: no reports

Adobe: many large schools

Robinson: a few seen

Scotts: hitch seen in Hendricks and Cooper and (probably) Pool

Middle: several hundred observed in the weir area; suckers have been observed passing above Rancheria Rd.

Clover: scattered small schools, with a school of 50-70 observed at Hwy 20 today

Morrison: dry

Schindler: zero

Burns Valley: no reports

Seigler: one dead fish on bank that could be a hitch.

Copsey: no reports

Ringleberg says a fish that was almost certainly a hitch (possibly the Clear Lake subspecies, possibly but less probably Sacramento) was found at Cache Creek Conservancy. Wooten: could there be a remnant population in living in Cache Creek?

**Tribal studies.** McGinnis: Robinson, Big Valley, Habematolel and Elem are participating.

Wooten: adoption of an adaptive management plan would lead to better funding.

McGinnis: the data we are collecting now are filling in gaps from last year; we're ready to move from draft phase to working phase, reworking the plan as it evolves in what is basically a feedback loop. Wooten: we need to put together a written document, put it out for review and then get sign ons from the county, agencies, tribes, organizations, etc.

Windrem: has heard that an organization completely unconnected to the Chi Council may

be petitioning for an ESA listing. Wooten: adaptive management could be an alternative, by leading the species towards recovery before they decline so far that listing is needed. McGinnis: the plan can provide uniform monitoring protocols and a format for the reception of diverse data, and allow effective coordination between different projects.

Windrem: do this year's sightings in many different creeks reflect a numerical increase, or a scattering of the population? Ringleberg: the tagging program will help provide an answer, and also address the question of whether they return consistently to the same creek or if many use alternative creeks. They have to have some ability to use resources as they become available. The first tracking system for tagged fish blew out in high water and has now been anchored in four feet of clay. It created much more flow resistance than anticipated, which allowed the fish to bypass the tracking system and also created some downcutting in the channel. Another problem was electrical interference from a nearby power pole during rain, which has been avoided by switching to battery power. 57 tagged fish have been counted in Adobe creek between March 19 and March 24: aside from the obvious objective of tracking the individual hitch tagged last year, the system also makes it possible to get a count when the water is too muddy for visual observations. Flat panel readers laid on the gravel will be used next year in order to avoid erosion; these are permanent structures so will require DFG permitting. Britton: all three tribes are tagging again this year. Although there's no reading equipment in Kelsey yet, finding fish in Adobe that had been tagged in Kelsey would provide significant information. Smythe suggests that the slot in the detention structure would provide an ideal location for a flat panel reader.

**Barriers:** Ringleberg: will DFG issue an annual categorical permit for barrier mitigation work? Smythe: this may be possible through an MOU but would require identifying specific streams and a specific management plan. McGinnis suggests that the adaptive management plan might fulfill this requirement, and that he would be happy to collaborate. Windrem: the Decker bridge on Scotts creek is a complete barrier that will be very expensive to correct -- \$20,000 for the rock alone. Dills: NRCS funding might be available to remove the bridge, which is on private property, but there would be no money for replacement, and removing the concrete sill would result in headcutting farther upstream. We should bring the Scotts Creek Watershed Council (chaired by Erica Lundquist) into this discussion.

**General discussion.** Britton: it's a question of priority, trying to decide which creeks to work on first. The Middle/Clover complex is high priority for Habematolel. McGinnis: lengthening the spawning season by extending suitable habitat could make the species more robust. Britton: does the Council conduct training sessions for volunteers? Windrem: not formally, though they are directed to the website. We should prepare a one-page instructional handout for volunteers.

**Field trip:** Saturday April 3. Windrem will lead, and participants will assemble in front of Studebakers at 9AM.

**Next meeting:** 3:30PM on Wednesday April 28, at the Ag Center.