

Chi Council for the Clear Lake Hitch
Minutes of March 26, 2009 meeting at the Lake County Ag Center

Submitted by Victoria Brandon, Chi Council secretary

Present: Bill Rett, Judy Barnes, Bill Combs, Peter Windrem , Tom Smythe, Victoria Brandon, Linda Juntunen

The minutes of the February 25 meeting were accepted as presented

Migration reports so far this year:

Kelsey: strong run, still continuing

Adobe: ongoing

Scotts: next to nothing

Middle: no reports of live hitch though Windrem saw a single dead one

Clover: Windrem saw 20 on Saturday, and there has been an unconfirmed report from Sam Alley Creek

Seigler: zero, although the creek is flowing well. Smythe examined the possible barrier off Lake Street and its fish ladder: the notch is very narrow and has a sill at bottom so maybe a work day there after the creek dried up would help. He reports that the runs in Seigler used to take place about a month later than in the Big Valley creeks, so we should keep up the observations there even if the migration seems to have stopped elsewhere.

Hill: no reports

Manning: zero

Forbes: no reports

Cooper (tributary to Tule Lake in the Scotts Creek drainage): one report, 12 fish

Schindler: zero

Burns Valley: no reports

We are now about ten days into the run, which will probably last a few days more. Plainly the existence of the hitch is completely dependent on maintaining runs in Kelsey and Adobe Creeks.

Tribal study: Combs describes a successful tagging event on Adobe at SBR on March 24. Tags are placed just under the skin in belly. The hitch are very strong swimmers that fight the net and when they find any opening the whole school zips on through. 90 percent of the captured fish had lesions around fins, something that tribal observers have been seeing for several years. Specimens are being sent to a fish pathology lab. There will be a public tagging demonstration on Saturday on Adobe at Soda Bay Road: everyone is invited. Juntunen: what about making a video of the tagging? Carle HS has pro video equipment. Windrem: how about organizing a hitch festival next year?

Windrem distributed a graph he has prepared correlating rainfall and hitch runs on Adobe Creek, to be sent to Jacob Katz as part of the upcoming DFG update report on Species of Special Concern.

Barnes says that the Schindler Creek CRMP is re-forming under the leadership of Jim

Mahon. The first public meeting has been held, with another scheduled on April 2 at the Keys Club.

Windrem announced that the Chi Council has received the Conservationist of the Year award from the county Fish and Wildlife Advisory Committee. It will be presented by the Board of Supervisors at one of the Board meetings in April, and we want to get as many of our volunteers as possible to participate. It's the good work of all these dedicated people that has brought this honor to the Council.

Powerpoint presentation, Swimming Abilities of the Clear Lake Hitch Smythe measured "nose velocities" at Bell Hill (Adobe) on March 14, discovered that they vary within the culvert, being slower at edge, faster in middle. ranging between 2.5 and 6.7 feet per second. No fish were passing through at that time. Measurements were also taken at Finley East (Adobe) on March 18: when a big school goes through a tight spot they negotiate the bottleneck in little pods, a few at a time. They seem to have no problem getting through at 4-4.5 ft/sec. Observations at the Kelsey detention structure on March 20 showed that about one in three fail to navigate the west fish ladder. At the worst spot water velocity was in the 7-8 ft/sec range: when it's this fast the fish hide in quiet pools at the side, then try to get through in a rush. By the time they hit the most difficult spot they have had to navigate through comparatively rough water for quite some time. The ladder wasn't constructed with this much water in mind. Where there are series of pools and velocities ranging from 3.5-4.5 ft/sec, about 90 percent seem to make it through. Nine measurements at the structure's central notch revealed velocities in the 7-8.5 ft/sec range. Tentative conclusion: flow velocities should be kept below 5 ft/sec, and slower if it's a long stretch, but these are preliminary numbers, and measurements need to be repeated many times in order to draw any definitive conclusions. Smythe then showed a fabulous movie he had made of hitch navigating the detention dam that we will attempt to post on You Tube with a link from the website.

Brandon announces that the third annual Cache Creek Discovery Day will be held at the Heron Festival at CLSP, April 25-26. Chi Council materials will be available at the Sierra Club and RCD booths.

Juntunen discusses the value of being recognised as a firewise community, which opens funding opportunities, including a chipping program at reduced rates. A "Take Responsibility" campaign is starting in April: wildfire and subsequent erosion has a horrible effect on water quality so is directly related to our concerns. She also reports that the water is very murky on Pool Creek this year, possibly because of recreational grading upstream.

Next meeting: at the Ag Center, 3:30PM on Wednesday April 22.