

# Chi Council for the Clear Lake Hitch

## Minutes of May 19, 2006 meeting at Lake County Courthouse

Present: Peter Windrem, Valerie Stewart, Steve Devoto, Charles Gitchell, Norm Longoria, Paul Kolb, Victoria Brandon.

Minutes of 4/28 meeting were changed to say that the spawning hitch in Adobe Creek upstream of the Bell Hill culvert got there throughout March, in between heavy stream flows. Devoto moved to approve minutes as corrected; all in favor.

**Year in Review:** we need someone to turn the raw data from the past three years' observations into charts for display purposes (easily done in Excel). Devoto volunteered to do this, if the information is provided to him.

Windrem: What are the implications of this years' observations? Results in several streams seem to be very different from last year. Middle Creek is an obvious example, with no sightings at all, though hitch were observed in adjacent ditches. Kelsey Creek was almost as obvious, with only a few scattered sightings compared to schools in the thousands last year. Devoto: the notch on the left hand side of the detention structure seems to constitute an impermeable barrier, which could be easily mitigated if the county would only rearrange some rocks.

Windrem: struck by the apparent fondness the hitch have for spawning in grassy places. Devoto: they struggle to move through extremely shallow water, half in and half out, then hit a deeper pool where spawning takes place. Brandon: in some creeks (ie Forbes, Manning, Pool) hitch were observed this year for the first time since we started looking. Kolb: Middle Creek was too swift and muddy. Devoto: they wait in a pool resting for propitious conditions. Gitchell: they pass directly through the lowest section of Forbes Creek, where the creekbed is encased in concrete, and spawn upstream where conditions are more natural. Kolb: shad population explosion is threatening hitch; Rick Macedo thinks so too.

Windrem: they seem to be better at getting past impediments than we had thought. Stewart: the heavy rains and consequent high flows made movement possible into areas that would be unreachable in a "normal" year -- thus increasing the effective spawning area. Windrem: Middle and Scotts Creeks merge in Rodman Slough. This year the hitch that started to move up Middle made a sharp left turn into Scotts (and eventually Eickhoff and Pool) rather than continuing up the main channel, perhaps because of heavy flows and turbidity in Middle.

Windrem: now that we're having a little more rain, maybe another run will begin, so let's keep checking the creeks.

Windrem describes a conversation with a Big Valley Pomo elder named Nelson Hopper, discussing the differences between hitch (called the splittail in English, and last seen in 1976) and the chi. The hitch was considered better eating than the chi.

### Off Season Activities.

Devoto: should get going on charting barriers, and then send a formal announcement about their nature and locations to Fish and Game. The uppermost weir on Middle Creek needs a notch, those downstream are fine.

Brandon: first we have to get the volunteers to submit their data. Windrem: now that we have three years' observations we can begin sorting things out. Greg Giusti and others at UC Davis want to put together scientific conference. The main function for the Chi Council is to facilitate the exchange of information.. Devoto: we should prepare a presentation to the Board of Supervisors on our activities and results.

Windrem: maybe we can connect the hitch run with eco tourism, by publicizing it as a spectacle unique to the Clear Lake area. There should links to the Chamber of Commerce website, and information at the visitor center and in county-sponsored publicity. Devoto: biking community would be interested too.

Windrem: Dietrick McGinnis, who attended the May 6 field trip, wants to approach the design of chi fish ladders by altering those used for salmon design; Windrem thinks it would be better to start by looking at the hitch themselves. Windrem and Devoto will work on barrier inventory. Besides the major, obvious barriers, many small ones (ie culverts) may have had a significant cumulative impact in reducing potential spawning ground.

Windrem: have to assess potential impacts from development, ie proposed Meadowview subdivision off Konocti Rd, which has an ephemeral stream (Cole Creek drainage) that might be a spawning area even though the biological evaluation denies this. Brandon: the Planning Commission will consider a mitigated negative declaration for this subdivision on June 8; the Sierra Club has already submitted comments on possible chi implications, but possibly the Council should be represented at the meeting.

Kolb raises concerns about impending Middle Creek streambed improvements, eg dredging. Brandon: proposal seen by Sierra Club did not include streambed itself, just the margins. Windrem: when dredged gravel is deposited upstream in the same creek no harm is done, but removal is destructive. Kolb: what about captive breeding? Windrem: this year the run in Adobe lasted much much longer than in previous years, which is a good sign.

**Next meeting:** not for another couple of months. In the meantime we will assemble data and schedule the round table scientific conference proposed by Giusti. When it's time for another Council meeting the announcement will be sent out by email.