

Chi Council for the Clear Lake Hitch
Minutes of May 26, 2010 meeting at the Lake County Ag Center

Submitted by Victoria Brandon, Chi Council secretary

Present: Peter Windrem, Jeff Lynch, Victoria Brandon, David Wooten, Tom Smythe, Greg Dills, Judy Barnes, Bill Rett, Mike Schaver

The minutes of the April 28 meeting were accepted as submitted

2010 observations. There have been a series of separate spawning runs this year: a small preliminary run from Feb 18-20; the main run March 9-28, with sightings in Adobe, Kelsey, Cole, Manning, Robinson, Middle, Clover, and Hendricks creeks; a subsidiary smaller run April 17-22, and schools of 100 fish or thereabouts seen on May 12-13 in Adobe and Manning creeks only. Detailed counts are available on the website.

Windrem: the huge concentrations of fish are seen immediately downstream from barriers, which are acting as a bottleneck. Nighttime observations can be made by shining a flashlight on the creek (it spooks the fish); spawning activity is highly audible.

Lynch: tribal observers have collected lots of data, which is being incorporated into a database under the supervision of Dietrick McGinnis. Has the run extended over a longer time than usual this year? Yes, but not continuously.

Windrem: we also had a long discontinuous run in 2006 which was the last rainy year.

Wooten: have there been many returns of tagged fish? Lynch: no. but the reader was washed out, and all the data isn't in yet.

Brandon: why no observations in the Hill/McGaugh complex, which had a substantial run several years ago? Smythe: there's been no water in those creeks despite heavy rain, probably because they are slow to fill and the groundwater was depleted after years of drought.

Lynch: Big Valley Rancheria suspects impaired water quality has something to do with the hitch population decline, and is collecting data to find out if this is indeed part of the answer. Big question: is there something different about Kelsey and Adobe creeks, which have had reasonably large runs all along, compared to the other creeks?

Windrem: it's necessary to analyze the raw data. Do fish biologists have statistical techniques to model the population from a sampling, and derive a count of total fish?

Wooten: marked recaptures over several years can provide necessary information, but funding for professionals is needed. At the present time we don't have a good understanding of the hitch lifecycle: how long from spawning till the fry go into the lake, how long till maturity, at what stage does most mortality occur? All questions that need answers

Lynch: what is the cause of the lesions that are commonly seen on hitch? Wooten: these come from a trematode parasite with a life cycle that includes birds and snails as well as fish, and that affects lots of different species. Schaver: when the lesions are this abundant it indicates that the population is under stress.

Wooten: we should collect oral history from tribal elders. General agreement.

Schaver: have there ever been runs in Seigler Canyon creek? YES: it used to host major

runs, but they stopped completely in 1993 for no obvious reason. A sewer line went across the creek in 1977 and there was major erosion following vineyard development in 1998, but the timing of neither of those events is tied to the loss of the spawning population. Smythe: 1993 was the year that DFG removed a low water crossing across from Anderson Marsh, something that would normally be expected to improve spawning conditions rather than impair them. Question: does streambed disturbance adversely alter water chemistry and deter spawning? Brandon: not always. The removal of the low water crossing at Merritt Rd on Kelsey Creek seems to have done nothing but good. General consensus: the population is down from 20 years ago but we don't have the information needed to make a statement about current trends.

Tribal monitoring. Big Valley has been gathering data in their area. and other tribes are working elsewhere.

Lake monitoring. Mike Stevenson has been working on it, but we need to recruit observers who live on gravelly beaches. Next year Barnes and Rett will expand their observations to include a suitable beach in Clearlake Oaks.

Rewards for monitors. it would be great to offer a thank you to the students who have helped gather information this year. Schaver recommends a teeshirt with a picture of a hitch. We can do a design, send it to Cafe Press, and buy the shirts as needed, no need to stock an inventory. Dills suggests using Linda Juntunen's great closeup posted on the website. Barnes says kids like black shirts. Windrem will get in touch with Oscar Dominguez to find out who the kids are.

Annual report. Windrem will compose a draft and circulate for comments with the objective of having it ready for distribution in September. It would be helpful to be able to incorporate data from tribal monitoring.

Barrier modification. Smythe is planning to add rock to the uppermost weir on Middle to improve passage, and to continue modifying the fish ladder below the detention dam, with assistance this time from the road crew equipped with jackhammers. Funding is needed to construct weirs below the Main St barrier, and many questions about design still exist.

Other topics. Wooten: deadline for the new US Fish & Wildlife grant cycle is Sept 1.

Lynch and Schaver discuss a proposal before the Regional Water Quality Control Board to construct wastewater treatment ponds at Wildhurst Vineyards adjacent to Kelsey Creek: the tribes are requesting that this be removed from the uncontested agenda, and that the comment period be extended. Perhaps the Chi Council will want to make comments suggesting that possible impacts to hitch be considered in evaluating this project.

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