

## Chi Council for the Clear Lake Hitch

### Minutes of July 25, 2007 meeting at Lake County Agricultural Center

Submitted by Victoria Brandon, Chi Council secretary

Present: Peter Windrem, Victoria Brandon, Tom Slaight, Linda Juntunen, Todd Gardner, Peter Windrem, Mary Manning, Lee Morgan, Carolyn Ruttan, Paul Kolb

Introductions: Gardner is a Department of Fish and Game biologist from Rancho Cordova assigned to Lake County, whose particular field of expertise centers on CEQA related matters.

Minutes of June 27 meeting approved as presented.

To help Gardner get a sense of our organization, Windrem provides background and a summary of the observations that we have undertaken during the past four years.

Physical barriers to migration. On July 6 Windrem and Erica Lundquist made a field trip to identify, photograph, and take GPS coordinates of barriers on the Scotts and Middle Creek drainages, including the Rancheria Road bridge, the Clover Creek diversion structure, the Decker Bridge, and the culverts on Greg Dills' land. Photographs of all these places will be posted to a barrier database on the website as soon as available. Another trip to investigate barriers in Big Valley is coming up on July 27 (this Friday). This specific information is needed to obtain funding for scientific studies and eventual barrier mitigation measures. Manning: has Manning Creek been explored? Windrem: not yet, but we want to record known barriers on all the creeks and get them into the database. Anyone with information is requested to provide it.

Windrem has high praise for the "California Streams Seminar" program at UC Davis on July 23; although he was unable to attend in person, the live webcast was highly informative, and the presentation by Dr. Lisa Thompson especially valuable. He will try to arrange a direct meeting with her at the Davis campus or elsewhere through Greg Giusti,

Brandon says that the Initial Study of the Cristallago golf subdivision (on a parcel that includes portions of both the Scotts and the Lyons Creek watersheds) mentions the Sacramento perch among possibly impacted species of special concern but says nothing about the hitch. She suggests that the Chi Council submit a comment letter recommending that possible chi impacts be included in the upcoming Environmental Impact Report. General agreement.

Kolb: worried about competition from threadfin shad. Windrem: this is a suitable subject for scientific inquiry.

Kolb: draws up a chart on the blackboard summarizing observation results from the last 3 years, and maintains that this information represents consistent decline. Juntunen says that in some cases it might merely represent difficulty in making observations, since water clarity was often so poor that fish were either invisible or too obscure to identify. Brandon: the information is too fragmentary to maintain any validity if subjected to statistical manipulation. Kolb describes his attempts to raise fry of undetermined species in a 10 gallon aquarium; they all died except for one that is now in the possession of a pet shop owner. None could be positively identified as hitch, but some did turn out to be stickleback (which it is illegal to possess). Gardner recommends that no captive breeding be undertaken without permission, and offers to investigate the legality of the situation. A take permit would be needed, but

approved methods of captive breeding exist, in the context of scientific methodology, and this could be a useful line to pursue at a later time.

Windrem: in the long term, there's no doubt that the hitch population is heading in the wrong direction, but need we more specific information over time to draw definitive conclusions. The short term fluctuations that we've observed over the past few years might not be representative. He also mentions that there are some things that can be affected by our actions and others that cannot. For example, hitch are an important food source for bass, and so bass fishermen are natural allies: it is "neither scientifically sound nor politically adept to establish adversarial relation with bass fishermen." Scientific support is paramount at this point: we need to attract qualified researchers who can design and implement investigations. General agreement.

Morgan says that when spawning salmon were introduced to a creek where they had been absent other spawners were subsequently attracted, presumably by pheromones; a similar effect could be related to the comparatively great abundance of hitch in Adobe Creek, where far more are found than anywhere else.

Slaight: what was the reason for the massive threadfin shad die off this winter? Ruttan: shad die if the water temperature fluctuates more than three degrees in any given 12 hour period, whether the temperature is going up or coming down. For some reason (perhaps related to global warming) water temperature fluctuations seem to be getting more extreme these days.

Kolb says again that UC Davis fish biologist Dr. Peter Moyle had told him that the hitch are a candidate for California endangered species listing and that listing could lead to funding sources. Morgan: we need more observations of nature before taking action.

Ruttan reports that the removal of the Clover Creek weir (funded by the Tribal Wildlife Grant that Robinson Rancheria obtained several years ago) will begin August 8, news that was met with great enthusiasm.

Juntunen suggests looking into encouraging a tag and release program as an undergrad project. Windrem: a program like that might help answer questions about the length of time spawning females spend in the creeks. Do they go up and back within a period of days, or do they hang out for weeks?

Next meeting: 3:30PM on Wednesday September 26, at the Ag Center.

Meeting adjourned at 4:45PM