

Chi Council for the Clear Lake Hitch
Minutes of September 28, 2011 meeting at the Lake County Ag Center

Submitted by Victoria Brandon, Chi Council secretary

Present: Peter Windrem, Tom Smythe, Victoria Brandon, Sunny Franson, Paula Britton

The minutes of the July 27 meeting were approved as presented. Reference had been made to difficulties counting tagged fish, which Britton clarified: in 2010 there was a count of total returning hitch, but because of a technical glitch specifics about the individuals weren't logged. Information from 2011 will be more complete but is not yet available. In the future Habematolel wants to obtain tag readers that can be read more easily under field conditions.

Tribal grant projects. Britton asked the Chi Council to help obtain Rights of Entry from landowners along Adobe, Manning/Thompson, and Kelsey creeks, so that the streambeds can be evaluated for both spawning habitat and impediments to migration. Access will be needed several times a year, since some areas that look impassible during the dry season are not obstructed when there is water in the streams. Both the county and the RCDs have template ROE request letters that can be adapted for the tribe to use, perhaps jointly with the county and Chi Council. During high water navigable portions of the creek are open to the public even though the creekbeds themselves are private property, but no one is allowed to touch feet to the ground without permission from the landowner.

The Chi Council will help sponsor a meeting where adjacent landowners will be invited to hear about the tribal project, with the spawning survey protocol explained by biologists working with Habematolel. After mentioning several possibilities it was decided that Rancho de los Fuentes would be an ideal location, and November the best month to aim for. In the meantime the standard ROE form will be adapted for this specific use.

Britton also explained that tribal grants from the US Fish & Wildlife service give preference to tribes that have not yet received them (thus making it hard to build on previous work), and that they are intended to improve and expand habitat, not to finance research even though increasing solid scientific information is essential for the longterm survival of the hitch.

Franson: has finished a final report on the findings of studies conducted by Robinson Rancheria under their 2008-10 tribal wildlife grant. Hard copies have been distributed to the US Fish & Wildlife (among others), but it is not yet available online. Recent updates to the Adaptive Management Plan (Appendix 3) have been posted to the Robinson Rancheria website (with a link from the Chi Council site, www.lakelive.info/chicouncil).

Instream pumping for frost protection. Windrem: this practice takes place at four locations on Kelsey creek, and several other creeks also. He suggests that it would be useful for the Chi Council to devise protocols such as appropriate screening and intake siting that will allow pumping without harming fry, which are often present in the creeks at that season. Smythe: If the status of the hitch is raised from "Species of Special Concern" to "Threatened" DFG surveillance will be undoubtedly be increased and new

regulations imposed; landowners may even be required to construct holding ponds that can be filled before the spawning season, and forbidden to pump directly from the creeks. Windrem: the flows at that season are enormous in comparison to the amount of water removed for frost protection. Smythe: there can be a great deal of fluctuation in streams, and frost pumping far upstream on Kelsey creek has been associated with significant differences in hydrographic measurements. Britton: frost protection pumping on the Russian River and other coastal streams has caused major dewatering.

Other topics

Britton: it would be very helpful if Windrem and others with local geographical expertise conducted another tour of the streams.

Windrem: spawning habitat on Manning Creek could extend for several miles upstream (clear to Hopland Grade) if impediments were removed.

Brandon: Lakeport is proposing to annex 197 acres that includes sensitive wetlands and hitch spawning habitat on Manning Creek. The Sierra Club has submitted comments on the mitigated negative declaration that reference Chi Council observations.

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