

Chi Council for the Clearlake Hitch

Minutes of January 26, 2006 meeting at Lake County Courthouse

Present: Peter Windrem, Denise Ishihara, John Lindblom, Valerie Stewart, Linda Juntunen, Paul Kolb. Tom Taylor, Robert Geary, Nick Voegtly, Ray Mostin, Diana Hershey, Denise Rushing, Lee Morgan, Jim Mahon, Ken Roberts, Pam Francis, Stan Schubert, Greg Dills, Bill Rett, Judy Barnes, Vincent Price, Justin Braider, Steve Abel, Victoria Brandon

Chair Peter Windrem called the meeting to order at 2PM.

Introductions.

Hershey announced that Robinson Rancheria intended to apply for another Tribal Wildlife Grant next year.

Taylor moved to accept minutes of the January 20, 2005 meeting, Hershey seconded, all approved.

Windrem described the program and distributed new materials. These include volunteer signup sheets that include numbered locations, new maps showing each creek to be monitored, and a creek numbering system starting at Cole Creek and going clockwise around the lake. He also distributed his report of the 2005 observations, including comparisons with the 2004 season, and announced that there would be a field trip on the first Saturday after the spawning run has begun. A brief description of the characteristics of each creek followed, including identification of prime viewing locations and possible or confirmed migration barriers.

A question was raised about Cache Creek as a possible spawning area: It is considered part of the lake (and is certainly not a tributary), but spawning has sometimes been observed along its borders, and at the margins of Clear Lake too: this is something for the kayak patrol (new in 2006) to investigate.

Windrem explained that spawning seems to be triggered by two or more warm sunny days in February or March, and then continues for 10 days to two weeks. He and others emphasized the extreme importance of sending in negative results so as to get them on the record. Hershey: it is essential to establish a baseline for comparison if (for example) a barrier is to be removed. Such information is also vital for getting grants.

Hershey: we need data like water temperature and turbidity

Francis: the State Food & Agriculture Department has provided a \$1000 grant to buy 10 remote temperature gauges called hobos, a PDA to collect the data remotely,

and software to log it. Rick Macedo thinks that the spawning trigger is temperature change between the lake and the creeks, so the hoboies should be placed in locations. Voegtly: there should be a mixture of creeks with sightings and those without. Taylor: also a mixture of creek sizes. Sensors should be placed far enough upstream to be away from the influence of lake water; they can be attached to piers. Francis: they should be placed in pairs, one upstream and one down. Taylor: should be one set of three, one in the lake, one in creek downstream, one upstream. The other seven can be scattered. Morgan offered to lend another ten hoboies belonging to the Mendocino National Forest, which doesn't use them until later in the year. Four placements were decided: Kelsey Creek (Mostin), Middle Robinson Rancheria), Seigler Canyon (Anderson Marsh), and Schindler (Mahon). Taylor advised that sensors should record temperature readings no more frequently than every half hour; Rushing suggested once an hour.

Barnes: what restrictions apply to catching hitch? No limits, but they must be caught by hand or net and not wasted. Is this a concern? Hershey: maybe. New studies will include rearing and tagging fry. Geary: how would restrictions affect native communities who traditionally use them for food? Windrem: when hitch were abundant they were easy to catch by hand, but not any longer. Mostin: virtually impossible to take them on a line.

Schubert: what affect do barriers have? Windrem: there are no obstructions on Adobe Creek downstream from Highland Spring Dam, and an abundant run, especially considering the comparatively small size of the stream. In contrast on Kelsey Creek there's a series of obstructions. First, a rock barrier at Soda Bay Road that most go through; then the detention structure at Finley Rd that they can get penetrate but with great difficulty; then the culvert at Merritt Rd that very few can get through. The dam at Main Street stops virtually all of them despite the presence of a fish ladder. Spawning hitch need shallow water with a gravel bottom, so a deep pool in creek can act as a barrier too. Middle Creek should be one of the largest spawning areas, but the Rancheria Rd obstruction stops them completely. Hershey described seeing hitch banging against the concrete over and over again.

Geary: traditional observations indicate that chi are like salmon; they return to the creeks where they were spawned.

Taylor: fish kills in Clear Lake have been documented in the past when adult hitch were trapped upstream by receding creek waters: maintaining stream flows is crucial to their survival

Windrem: the holy grail is finding surviving splittail (not seen since 1975): they ran later than the hitch so were more vulnerable to reduced flows.

Windrem: he wants to recruit kayakers to look for spawning hitch along the lakeshore, to go up the creeks in search of obstructions, and perhaps even to

travel among spawning groups. Ishihara can connect with an extensive kayaking group.

We want to encourage the involvement of young people: Dills will notify Oscar Dominguez & Angie Siegel; Braider will spread the word at Natural High.

Francis: Berkeley emeritus professor John Hopkirk has donated 10 copies of his doctoral thesis to the Chi Council, with permission to scan it and post to the website.

Windrem: there are lots of anecdotes about hitch, but oral history MUST BE WRITTEN DOWN or recorded to be of value. Brandon: let's encourage collection of oral history from tribal elders. Hershey: documenting the presence of salmon (before 1914) is very important to getting grants from Fish and Game.

Mahon described the degradation of Schindler Creek from destructive grading ("recreational bulldozing"). The original pretext for this work was that it was part of a CRMP plan. Macedo inspected the results and wrote a letter demanding restoration, but the county hasn't done anything yet, except to issue an ex post facto grading permit. When the rains started serious sediment discharge began, and is continuing: he distributed confirming photographs. The county is now in the process of buying the property for a park, but will there be anything left for remediation? Dills: there will be an on-site meeting between the landowner and various officials on January 31, when his cleanup responsibility will be discussed. Mahon: the problem is that the county does not enforce codes. Hershey: county has a strong incentive to remediate because the discharge will augment the nutrient TMDL for which it is legally and fiscally responsible.

Meeting adjourned at 4PM.