

**Chi Council for the Clear Lake Hitch**  
**Minutes of January 27, 2010 meeting at the Lake County Ag Center**

Submitted by Victoria Brandon, Chi Council secretary

Present: Peter Windrem, David Wooten (Tribal Partnerships Specialist, Habitat Restoration Division, US Fish & Wildlife Service), Tom Smythe, Linda Juntunen, April Hargis, Victoria Brandon, Keith Petterson

The minutes from the November 18 2009 meeting were approved as amended.

**MOU update:** signatures are still very sparse, especially from the tribes, where personnel changes are creating complications. The question was raised whether funding is available to continue the tribal tagging study and adaptive management plan. Answer: this year's grant application was not successful but money will be found from someplace to operate the second year of the tagging study, and applications have been submitted for next year. Robinson is still the lead on the hatchery and AMP. Wooten: the adaptive management plan is key to getting additional Tribal Wildlife Grant (and other) funding. Partnership with groups such as the County, other agencies, and NGOs such as Chi Council is of central importance too.

**Monitoring plans for this year.** If the wet weather continues this will be the first season with lots of water since 2006, and it will be interesting to see the differences compared to the past few years. Windrem will contact all past volunteers via USPS; Brandon will update the mailing list and send him the addresses. A 2010 observation form has been posted to the website.

Hobos: Smythe will set them out in the same locations as last year, with assistance from Windrem if needed (also from Hargis on Middle Creek). We might also put one out in the lake attached to a buoy to measure lake water temperatures.

Windrem: Mary Manning will give an early alert when the hitch begin to gather at the mouth of Adobe Creek. Sacramento suckers may be present in the creeks at that time, so we should advise observers about the possibility of confusion, and provide links to the photos and descriptions on the website. From the bank the main identifying feature is that suckers have a little hint of gold on the tailfin. Hargis: do we conduct training sessions for volunteers? Brandon: no. but we do provide provide photos and can call on local experts for identification assistance.

Windrem: according to Garth Murphy the fish in the famous old postcard photo of bank-to-bank dead hitch in Kelsey Creek were really pike minnows. Smythe: great schools of steelhead used to migrate up into Clear Lake tributaries before 1914; they were the first spawning run of the spring.

Lake monitoring. Windrem: in 1957 spawning hitch were observed on the beach at Library Park in Lakeport and at Clearlake Oaks, intermingled with carp that were probably

eating the hitch eggs. Possible that some populations of hitch are "obligatory stream spawners," and some not. Windrem has been talking to Greg Giusti about recruiting lake observers among bass fishermen, and Juntunen has discussed this with Angie Siegel in hopes of recruiting some students. Lots of kayakers go out on the lake but few belong to organized groups. Denise Ishihara might help organize a kayak observation crew; Hargis knows some people who would like to participate but don't have their own kayaks.

**2010 field trip.** Windrem: who do we especially want to invite? Brent Siemer, Kelly Cox, Rick Coel, the Supervisors, the new Water Resources department head if appointed by then. We also need to involve stakeholders and high school/college teachers such as Harry Lyons and Oscar Dominguez. Windrem will contact the Kelseyville HS biology teacher and some UC Davis people including Peter Moyle.

**Hitch Festival.** Wooten mentioned a small grant (\$5000 maximum) intended to help connect people with nature that would cover something like a hitch festival. We need to get the application in by March 22 for a festival to be held in March (?) 2011, in Upper Lake (?). Most important requirement is finding somebody to organize the event. Juntunen will talk to the Middle Creek CRMP, Brandon will discuss with Melissa Fulton and Denise Rushing, and Windrem will contact Bernie Butcher, who has already expressed interest,

**Announcements.** Smythe: biologist Jeremy Svehla has examined his conceptual proposal for a fish ladder at the Main Street bridge on Kelsey Creek and thinks it will work. Estimated cost is at least \$250,000. George Heiser thinks weirs would be better than a ramp.

Brandon requests Chi Council endorsement for a Land Trust project that could result in an additional layer of protection (probably through conservation easements) on the Big Valley wetlands area (see 11/18/09 minutes), and presented a draft letter. Unanimous agreement to endorse.

Wooten: the US Fish & Wildlife service has \$20-30,000 grants available. Preference is given to broad partnerships with local government, agencies, tribes, and NGOs.

Brandon: The 4th annual Cache Creek Discovery Day (sponsored by the Cache Creek Watershed Forum) will be held at the BLM Cowboy Camp recreation area on Saturday May 1. The official ribbon cutting for the new parkland on Mt Konocti is tentatively scheduled for May 8.

Juntunen: the annual Watershed Year in Review celebration will be held at the Scotts Valley Women's Clubhouse on January 28, and Lake County's first Fire Safety Expo will be held in the Kelseyville Lumber parking lot on Sunday May 2.

Next meeting: 3:30PM on Wednesday February 24, at the Ag Center.