

Chi Council for the Clear Lake Hitch

Minutes of February 24, 2006 meeting at Lake County Courthouse

Present: Peter Windrem, Steve Devoto, Greg Dills, , Victoria Brandon, Charles Gitchell Sr, Donna Gitchell, Charles Gitchell Jr, Judy Barnes, Jim Rett, Jim Mahon. Diana Hershey, Rick Macedo, and Denise Ishihara arrived during the course of the meeting.

Minutes: Barnes moved to approve, all in favor

Windrem: Tom Taylor (biologist whose Ph.D thesis was on hitch & barriers to migration) was glad to see one of his photos on the home page of the website, but to grant a formal license to use it; it would also be a good idea to give him credit. Brandon moves, Dills seconds to authorise Windrem to negotiate for the license.

Windrem: substantial schools of hitch have been observed in Adobe Creek for three weeks, but no sightings anywhere else so far. All of this is a mystery. Hershey: want to do tagging study next year; Robinson is applying for another Tribal Wildlife Grant to pay for it. If funding available the tribe will coordinate with UC Davis and subsidize one or more grad students to do the work. Windrem: Tom Taylor has conducted scientific observations of the hitch run in previous years starting in the seventies, and saw them in Seigler Canyon Creek but NOT in Schindler even long ago.

The next task is to continue monitoring: a big storm is supposed to start this weekend, and will raise water levels again.

Devoto: is anyone monitoring high up Scotts Creek, where there are good gravels that would provide ideal spawning condition? Dills: an obstruction at old Decker bridge prevents the hitch from getting up that high; there are funds available to remove it but not to reconstruct, and the bridge provides access to a private landowner. Hershey: what about a weir? Windrem: we don't really know what works to get hitch over obstructions, which is one reason why monitoring Middle Creek where weirs have recently been installed is so important. The fish ladder on Kelsey Creek at Main Street doesn't work, but the other one downstream at the detention structure does -- but we don't know why. Aside from obvious barriers, hitch are reluctant to cross deep pools, since they need shallow water for spawning. We need good engineering and lots of study to find out what mitigates barriers. Hershey: Dietrick McGinnis is working on barrier analysis, and will bring fish biologist with him on his next visit to the county.

Windrem: Tom Taylor says we should refine our monitoring techniques by making precise counts if possible, perhaps by basing them on the fish in a specific number of feet in a measured stretch of water, perhaps by taking photographs from a high angle.

Dills: none of the remote temperature sensors (AKA "hobos")? have been placed yet, because he and Pam Francis have both been extremely busy, and have had difficulty programming the pickup device; in the meantime, the Forest Service has dropped off another dozen on loan for the season. Will ask Lee Morgan for advice. Brandon: will appeal to email list for help in placing hoboos. Security is a problem in selecting placement locations.

Windrem: will wait to decide on a date for the annual field trip till the spawning run starts in earnest. Brandon: March 11 is not a good date since the Cache Creek Watershed Forum will be meeting in Guinda.

Dills: Joelle has sent an email about logjams on Scotts Creek as barrier to migration. Ron McCutcheon has already asked the Scotts Creek Watershed Council for help in removing this obstruction, which contains refrigerators and similar trash as well as logs; permits, landowner cooperation, and heavy equipment will all be needed. Fish and Game permission is not required for trash removal, but access permission from landowners is needed. Macedo: ideally, a certain limited number of obstructions should be left in the creek bed, to slow the flow and improve habitat for fry. There have been no sightings of threadfin shad yet this year: they are much smaller than hitch, and their large schools move in unison like ocean fish. Macedo will be involved in the Scotts Creek cleanup if scheduling permits.

Gitchell describes the barriers on Forbes Creek in detail.

Devoto: will Fish & Game help find funds to remove barriers? Macedo: probably not, because although hitch are a "species of special concern" they are neither endangered nor a game fish ergo at the bottom of the funding ladder, and most funds are allocated to salmon & steelhead. On the other hand F&G can help designing obstruction mitigation and provide technical expertise.

Hershey: Clover Creek bypass money is coming out of Robinson's grant (Fish and Wildlife money); she wants F&G to be involved in design. Windrem: there are many impediments on practically every tributary to Clear Lake, including obvious obstructions on Kelsey, Middle, Clover, etc etc. Macedo: no design for hitch ladders exist.

Barnes: asks Macedo if he's looking at the destructive grading that has taken place on Schindler creek [see 1/26/06 minutes]. Macedo: Yes, and he has written letters, but doesn't have authority to order work to be done; F&G is making recommendations to the Water Control Board, which will meet early next month. The fish ladder on Schindler at Highway 20 seems to be well designed, but water level is crucial.

Next meeting: March 24, 2PM, at the Courthouse.

Macedo: he and Greg Giusti met with Peter Moyle, who said he would love to have students working on Clear Lake if funding is available. One of his students is just about to finish a Ph.D thesis on hitch food habits. Will update. Hershey: Dietrick McGinnis is also connected to Davis; she hopes that Robinson will have funding available to pay for a grad student to work here.

Devoto: will F&G have a problem if fish ladders on the Cache Creek dam allow communication with Sacramento River drainage through Cache Creek? Macedo: even if salmon or steelhead could get up Cache Creek again it is doubtful that the juveniles could survive the descent to the Sacramento, because there are so many introduced predators and competitors living in the lake now.

Meeting adjourned at 3:30PM.