

Chi Council for the Clear Lake Hitch
Minutes of February 25, 2009 meeting at the Lake County Ag Center

Submitted by Victoria Brandon, Chi Council secretary

Present: Peter Windrem, Tom Smythe, Linda Juntunen, Bill Combs, Mary Manning, Denise Ishihara, Victoria Brandon

The minutes of the January 28, 2009 meeting were accepted as presented.

Barrier report. Windrem gave a powerpoint presentation on a recently discovered possible barrier to migration on Seigler Canyon Creek, and culvert mitigation at the Bell Hill Road low water crossing of Adobe Creek. The Seigler barrier, on the east side of Highway 29 immediately across from Anderson Marsh SHP, occurs at a sewer line crossing, where in 1992 the Department of Fish and Game made a sort of concrete fish ladder. Hitch were observed in the creek subsequently, but not after 1996. A rock lodged in the opening (now removed) may have impeded passage: we will try to keep a particularly close eye on this location during this years spawning season.

The Bell Hill Rd crossing used to be a significant impediment, but a new design incorporating larger, lower culverts with flat bottoms now allows passage, and hitch have been seen to go through in significant numbers. If similar culverts could be adapted to mitigate the barriers at bridge abutments, for example at Main Street on Kelsey or Decker bridge on Scotts, this might turn out to be the most cost-effective solution to these vexing barrier problems. In investigating this possibility we have to find out the velocities that the fish can traverse. Smythe is planning to make flow measurements this year at both ends of the Bell Hill culvert, and has already tested the equipment. Windrem: we have to recruit a reliable observer to keep a close eye on the Bell Hill crossing, to alert Smythe as soon as fish are seen. Brandon: Juliana Vidich lives near by and may be willing to do this. Combs: Robinson Rancheria's flow meter was lost, but Big Valley is buying a new one with hitch grant money.

White paper "Human Impacts to Clear Lake" Greg Giusti has asked for comments on an early draft of this paper, which he has prepared as part of a larger compiled bibliography of all literature on Clear Lake fish. Brandon: has sent some comments, mostly designed to make it more appropriate for the intended general audience. Smythe: there are organizational difficulties plus incorrect numbers on levee construction etc. Everyone who notices errors should send corrections directly to Greg.

Tribal work. Combs: Big Valley and Upper Lake are assuming leadership of the tribal work, and are ready to start fish tagging when the run begins: they have identified several good locations (including the Perez property on Adobe and Quercus Ranch on Kelsey), gotten permission from landowners, and are ordering tagging equipment. If a tagging demonstration is held (as was proposed at the January 28 meeting) the Chi Council would like to know immediately so we can inform our members. Combs will pass this request along to Dietrick McGinnis.

Smythe: he and Pam Francis have been collecting basic water parameter data since last week. The water is much colder than this time last year, and may have to warm up before the spawning run is triggered.

AB 74 Brandon has received a request from the Department of Water Resources for a Chi Council letter of support for AB 74 (Chesbro), which would provide state funding for the Middle Creek Project. With the concurrence of the group, Windrem signs the draft letter presented (available at www.lakelive.info/chicouncil/pdf/AB74support.pdf)

Special Status fish Windrem reports that Dr. Peter Moyle, under contract with DFG, is currently revising the Special Status fish list last compiled in 1995, and that Jacob Katz, who attended our January meeting, is preparing the section on Clear Lake. Much information is being gathered that will result in a report with recommendations on status for various fish species including the hitch.

Sharing information. With so much going on and so many different informational streams a single repository is needed in the form of a central library where everyone could have access to everything. Smythe: the DPW library will soon be on line with a searchable format. Windrem: this is something the Chi Council should keep on working on.

Hitch aggregations at the Adobe mouth We need more study of schooling up before migration starts. Manning: the water is going down, and she has a spotlight for nighttime observations. Clarity is about 6 inches at this point. She passes around a dramatic set of photos of hitch aggregations taken March 27, 2008. Brandon will scan some to post on the website. We should try to find out how long they stay schooled up: this is a kayaking project.

Volunteer recruitment, The run could begin any time now, so Windrem will send out his usual letter out to past volunteers. The observation form should be simplified for ease of use by volunteer observers. How should they indicate water clarity? (Brandon: its reported in many different formats so can't be sorted or directly compared). Smythe: best to use estimated depths. Windrem: this is important work. Dietrick said that the Chi Council observations formed the basis of the tribal grant application. Windrem: we should try to get observers to specific sites.

MOU. It's up for renewal in August 2009 and needs revisions. Windrem suggests a name change to "Clear Lake Hitch Council" which would eliminate confusion, especially since we now know that the hitch were never called "chi" (the Pomo name for the splittail).

Juntunen announces the Fire Safe Workshop to be held in the BOS chambers at 6PM on March 4, and passes around flyers. Wildfire has a profound negative impact on water quality.

Next meeting: 3:30PM on Wednesday March 25, at the Ag Center.