

Chi Council for the Clear Lake Hitch
Minutes of February 27, 2008 meeting at Lake County Agricultural Center

Submitted by Victoria Brandon, Chi Council secretary

Present: Peter Windrem, Paula Britton, Bill Combs, Bill Rett, Judy Barnes, Linda Juntunen, Carolyn Ruttan, Pam Francis, Robert Geary, Ronda Mottlow, Victoria Brandon

Windrem called the meeting to order at 3:30

In discussing the minutes of the January 30 meeting, Geary said that he'd asked Pomo elder Nelson Hopper for guidance on the appropriate name of the fish, and was told that traditionally the word "chi" referred to the splittail (now believed extinct), and that the hitch were called hitch: so we should stick to that usage. Minutes were accepted as presented.

Combs read a letter from Big Valley Environmental Director Sarah Ryan, saying that the tribal members who reported seeing hitch in Kelsey Creek [corrected to Adobe Creek via subsequent email] on February 15 are very knowledgeable and the sighting should be considered definitive. Sacramento suckers have also been confirmed in Adobe Creek this spring, but there have been no other hitch sightings there or elsewhere yet. [another Adobe sighting was reported on February 29]

Conditions have been variable so far: the creeks clear and then it rains again. Windrem suggests that perhaps the temperature in the *lake* (rather than creeks) triggers spawning migration. Francis: six remote temperature monitors ("hoboes") are in place, and Tom Smythe has plotted the locations on a map (now posted to the website. Unfortunately the ten hoboes borrowed from the US Forest Service all have dead batteries, but USFS is in the process of acquiring more. Windrem: this is the fifth year of monitoring, and some patterns should be emerging.

Windrem passed around a \$35 lure in the shape of a hitch that's sold to bass fishermen. The bass in Clear Lake are predominantly a voracious Florida strain that congregates at the mouths of streams and feasts on hitch. We should try to figure out a way to monitor predation impact. Perhaps it could be reduced by changing the current catch-and-release protocol in tournaments to allow the fish kept and sold for food, but Rick Macedo says that sometimes removing large specimens leads to a population explosion of smaller fish. He recommends consulting DFG biologist Jay Rowan. Francis will be speaking to Rowan on Friday and will bring this idea up with him.

We will plan to hold a 2008 field trip on the first Saturday after a sustained spawning run begins, with participants assembling at 9AM at Studebakers in Kelseyville.

Windrem: evidence shows that salmon body shape facilitates their movement up swiftly flowing streams, and wonders if the same is true for hitch? Juntunen: it's hard to design streambed alterations for hitch because the only studies available deal with salmon. Francis: the Department of Water Resources has a stream flow gauge, as does the RCD, and should take measurements at culverts to figure out just what velocity impedes or prevents movement. Geary: Robinson also has a gauge, and has recorded 10 cu/ft/sec just downstream from the Bell Hill culvert. Francis: will check at slots in detention structure. She reports that Tom thinks the Middle Creek weirs are filling with gravel the way they are supposed to.

Greg Giusti of UC Davis Cooperative Extension is trying to organize a hitch workshop which would include fish biologists Dr. Lisa Thompson and Dr. Peter Moyle. Windrem will follow up on this.

Mottlow: Robinson Rancheria has applied for another Tribal Wildlife Grant in collaboration with two other local tribes. The funds would support a hatchery, fish tagging, and additional monitoring, including mercury sampling. Robinson is also working with the Center for Biological Diversity to get the hitch listed as a federal Endangered Species. Both scientific evidence and (probably) litigation will be required.

Windrem: a concrete barrier on Lyons Creek at Lakeshore Dr completely prevents fish from moving upstream. We should try to monitor Lyons regularly to see if hitch come up to this barrier.

Barnes: saw carp in Schindler last week. Brandon: Tom Taylor has recommended (via email) that we keep sighting records of carp, suckers, etc. General agreement that we should ask bass fishermen how they're doing: bass schools outside the mouths of creeks indicate the presence of hitch. Juntunen recently saw blue herons in Pool Creek, wonders what they were eating. Francis reports seeing a very large number of turtles basking on branches at CLSP, and also otters in the same location under the footbridge at the old mouth of Kelsey Creek (now a dead end) where such large schools of hitch hung out last year.

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