

Council for the Clear Lake Hitch

Minutes of March 21, 2007 meeting at Lake County Agricultural Center

Submitted by Victoria Brandon, Chi Council secretary

Present: Peter Windrem, Carolyn Ruttan, Victoria Brandon, Paul Kolb, Tom Slaight, Keith Pettersen, Sandra Moura, Robert Geary, Steve Devoto, Ronda Mottlow, Denise Ishihara, Linda Juntunen

Windrem called the meeting to order at 3PM.

The Minutes of the February 22 meeting were not available, but have been posted to the website

Summary of the 2007 observations to date: very different from last year. Migrating hitch are being observed in significant quantities in both Adobe and Kelsey Creek, but in the latter so far none have been seen above the detention structure. Kolb: nothing but dead ones in Middle Creek despite good water quality. Devoto: no water in McGaugh Slough; Hill Creek has a little water and lots of algae but no hitch. No sightings have been reported from Cole Creek. At first it was thought that nothing had been seen in Thompson, but Petterson said that if this was the stream he knew as "T" creek that he had observed some at the low water crossing. Nothing reported from Manning, Forbes (which has been reported as dry), or Robinson. Geary: rocks have been placed in Middle that should make passage possible, but he has seen no fish going through them. Kolb: Clover Creek near the Middle Creek junction is so full of debris that passage is impeded. Mottlow: Robinson Rancheria is conducting weir modification work in conjunction with the county; the Rancheria is also monitoring water quality, temperature, flow, and pH. Nothing reported from Alley, Morrison, Schindler, Burns Valley, or Seigler Canyon Creeks. Ruttan: has heard secondhand rumors about hitch in Copsy Creek, says that Herndon is dry, perhaps because of a debris dam. Moura and Ishihara have been seeing schools of 1000 or more in Kelsey Creek, including hundreds returning to the lake. They also reported seeing a peculiar tight circle of fish shaped like a doughnut going around and around in the water, but are not entirely sure that these were hitch: Geary said that last year he saw suckers mixed with the hitch schools.

Ruttan reports major and very rapid organizational changes at the Department of Fish and Game. Lake County is now one of the nine counties in the North Central Region, based at Rancho Cordova near Sacramento rather than in the Yountville-based North Coastal Region as previously. Jay Rowan is fisheries biologist for our region now, rather than Rick Macedo, and the county is coordinating with Kent Smith instead of Liam Davis and Linda Hanson.

Windrem: we need to recruit more observers on Scotts Creek, which is difficult to observe because there are few strategically located bridges. Chris Toohey, who has expressed interest in working with the Chi Council, has property with a bridge in a good location, and should be encouraged to make regular observations.

Windrem: debris barriers on Morrison Creek have received recent publicity, but they are sadly typical of much of the county. Lots of watershed councils are working on cleanup. He suggests that the law should impose a civil liability on the owner of the trash until it is properly disposed of. Brandon: there should be some free dump days to encourage people to do the right thing. Mottlow: organizers of clean up projects should make a strong effort to involve youth.

Annual field trip: planned for this coming Saturday (March 24, 2007): those wishing to participate should gather at 9AM at Studebakers in Kelseyville.

Other Business. Brandon: suggests that volunteers who keep their records electronically would make database entry much easier if they would use the Excel observation form posted to the website, or that she will be glad to send by email, since this form makes it possible to import the information directly rather than typing it in item by item. Kolb: suggests implementation of a captive breeding program, as he says Peter Moyle recommends. Mottlow: Robinson has three ponds that could be used. Kolb: No DFG permission would be needed to capture and breed this species. We should check with hatcheries, since hatch might not breed in ponds if they need gravel bottoms and running water. Kolb: all catch should be suspended except for tribal members. Kolb: reports that Peter Moyle recommends seeking listing on the California Endangered Species list, and has offered assistance. Kolb: threadfin shad population growth is drastically affecting the Clear Lake ecosystem. Slight: suggests that reduction of sunlight is connected to changes in plankton growth.

The next meeting of the Chi Council will be held at the Agricultural Center at 3:30PM on Wednesday April 18.

Meeting adjourned at 4:25PM