

Chi Council for the Clear Lake Hitch

Minutes of April 18, 2007 meeting at Lake County Agricultural Center

Submitted by Victoria Brandon, Chi Council secretary

Present: Paul Kolb, Victoria Brandon, Carolyn Ruttan, Linda Juntunen, Peter Windrem, Gary Amberson, Denise Ishihara.

Windrem called the meeting to order at 3:30PM. Introductions were made.

The minutes of the March 17, 2007 meeting were approved as corrected.

Summary of 2007 observations to date. Large schools of hitch have been seen trying to move up into a crescent-shaped inlet at Clear Lake State Park that was the original mouth of Kelsey Creek. Ranger Val Nixon has reported this observation, which was made by her co-worker Miguel Borraro. Question: do hitch get into Highlands spring reservoir? Answer: the dam acts as a complete migration barrier, but they could be present in the reservoir if artificially introduced, and in that case perhaps could spawn in its tributary creeks. Ishihara: has recently observed hundreds clustering near mouth of Adobe as if starting another run, but the water is very shallow. No migrating chi have been reported this year in Forbes, Robinson, Middle, or Clover creeks, nor in Schindler, Seigler Canyon, or Copsey. Juntunen: there is water in Hendricks creek but it is completely still, as if ponded up by a (possible) debris dam downstream. It is discouraging that there has been no spawning run observed in Middle Creek despite extensive streambed improvements: Kolb: about 2 months ago there was a strong flow over a lowered part of dam that would have allowed passage if the fish had been there. Ruttan: Clover Creek improvements are planned under grant funding obtained by Robinson Rancheria several years ago, but the work has not yet begun. Ruttan and Juntunen: administrative changes at DFG seem to be very positive, and the agency seems much more responsive than formerly.

Possible rescue operations. Brandon: several days ago Steve Devoto reported seeing large numbers of fry in Hill Creek where it runs through his property: that portion of the creek still seems to have an outlet but they might soon become trapped. This indicates the incomplete nature of the migration observations, because although there have been no adult sightings at all in the Hill Creek/McGaugh Slough complex this year, evidently some chi did make it up there to breed. Kolb: has seen fry in Middle Creek recently, where no migration observations have been reported either. Amberson: has a pond on his property where some hitch could be introduced for possible captive breeding purposes, also a larger lake that has been stocked with bass and shad. He also owns a suitable net and barrels with oxygen equipment specifically designed for moving fish. Kolb: don't introduce hitch into pond with bass, because the bass will eat them all. This might be a good location to transplant landlocked fry, on an experimental basis. Amberson: will connect with Devoto to investigate a removal rescue operation. [the next day Devoto reported by email that the fry are all gone, perhaps because of predation, perhaps because the water level got so low that they died for lack of oxygen]

Query: are there hitch in Blue Lakes? Answer: not as far as we know. Ruttan: do they seem to prefer one time of day to another for migration? Windrem: some evidence that they prefer night; there is also reason to believe that they can spawn and come back down quite quickly. Ruttan: how much evidence has been obtained from tribal elders about chi life cycle? Brandon: just anecdotal. Ishihara: we've repeatedly observed migration up culverts on Cole Creek into muddy water and even into flooded fields, so perhaps it's incorrect to assume that they need gravel for spawning? What are they actually looking for? Shallow water perhaps?

Report on four years observations. Windrem: we need a committee to put together a graphic presentation that might interest DFG and perhaps attract funding. This might be in the form of a line graph for each creek for each year showing numbers observed up to certain points of obstruction. Rainfall and length of the spawning season should also be indicated. Brandon: will send him the database for the last four years as an Excel file so he can try to figure out a way to display the material.

Barrier removal: Ruttan: will provide report on the work at Middle Creek at the next Chi Council meeting. Juntunen: suggests that a listing of debris dams be made. Some function as migration barriers and some do not. Kolb: there is a solid mass on Clover Creek that stops migration completely. Windrem: we should collect photos of debris dams. Brandon: will put together a debris dam album for the website if photos can be obtained.

Kolb: has started his own rescue operation with some Middle Creek fry that he has moved into several aquarium tanks.

Next meeting will be at 3:30PM on Wednesday May 23, Ag Center conference room.

Meeting adjourned 4:45PM.