

**Chi Council for the Clear Lake Hitch**  
**Minutes of April 23, 2008 meeting at Lake County Agricultural Center**

Submitted by Victoria Brandon, Chi Council secretary

Present: Carolyn Ruttan, Lindas Juntunen, Greg Dills, Peter Windrem, Bill Combs, Tom Smythe, Bill Rett, Judy Barnes, Victoria Brandon

The minutes of the March 26 meeting were accepted as presented

Review of this year's observation results: the main spawning season extended from March 11 to March 28, with a few scattered observations before and after. A few hitch were seen in Cole creek; many in Kelsey over 3 weeks; the usual strong run in Adobe; one isolated observation in Scotts; only a few in Middle (nonetheless a drastic improvement compared to the past two years, especially since sightings were made upstream from the weirs); the same in Clover; zero in Schindler and Seigler, where the water was extremely low this year.

Windrem suggests a hypothesis: a female returns to spawn in the creek where she hatched, and the significant numbers in Adobe every one of the past five years mean that the local population is successfully spawning and then returning. Interruption of the spawning cycle in other creeks leads to a longterm population drop, because after spawning fails for a period of time the hitch stop using the creek. The interruption could be caused by physical barriers, or perhaps by disturbance to the streambed that prevent females from recognizing the creek. His supposition that if all creeks supported spawning populations as vigorous as those in Adobe the hitch wouldn't be in trouble meets general agreement.

Smythe: contrary to the hypothesis, there were no runs at all in Kelsey for 4-5 years in the 90s, followed by a resurgence in the thousands. Runs in Adobe were weak or non-existent during this same period. The answers that can be provided by fish tagging are desperately needed. Smythe provides a history of the Kelsey Detention Structure. It was built 1987, incorporating the western notch for fish passage but this was never effective, and in the winter of 1987-8 the structure was a complete barrier. Additional mitigations added the following summer weren't very effective either, but after another pool was built on the west in 1989 and an additional notch ca1991 some spawning hitch could get through, though the structure still continues to impede migration. The same year a concrete low water crossing on Seigler was modified by a CCC crew, though apparently without any longterm benefits since no hitch have been observed there since 1993. Smythe thinks the spawning hiatus on Kelsey took place from 1995-2000, approximately, and will provide sighting information for inclusion in the Chi Council database. There was also a huge hitch dieoff in the mid 80s at Sylar Lane on Cole Creek when rapidly receding waters marooned thousands of spawners on dry land. Juntunen says that large schools were seen in Pool Creek in 2005 after a period of 10-15 years with no sightings whatsoever -- also contrary to Windrem's hypothesis.

Combs reports seeing farm workers taking a heavy catch on Adobe creek this year, and wonders what DFG rules apply to hitch? Barnes (checking DFG manual) says that special

rules allow hitch to be taken from Clear Lake tributaries by hand or dip net in any quantity as long as no barriers are constructed.

What other factors might make a creek attractive? Vegetation at the creek mouth, as exists on Adobe, has been suggested, and perhaps temperature variants. Smythe says Hobos are still in place gathering temperature information, with a tentative pick up date set for May 1.

Windrem: it's time to prioritize action items. Conducting a systematic barrier inventory similar to that done in Mendocino county would be a good place to start, in order to construct a prioritized ranking matrix to determine which barriers to work on first. This information could also be a tool in connection with any kind of county road work. Smythe: the county already has a GPS inventory of culverts and bridges, with photographs. Dills says he will recommend funding for barrier inventory as part of ongoing watershed assessments, and suggests that the tribes can explore funding sources too. Combs: this would be best done by several tribes collaboratively. Smythe: DFG allows culverts in a fish bearing stream only if sunken and bottomless. Windrem: could funding be found to replace the low water crossing on Adobe at Bell Hill? Smythe: possibly, but the new bridge at Merritt Rd replacing that low water crossing came from a special one-time source that probably can't be tapped again.

#### Announcements

Dills: Greg Giusti has offered to sit on a technical advisory committee for the fish tagging program.

Windrem: Kelsey Creek is impaired by septic seepage, starting clear up at Cobb.

Brandon: the Chi Council will be tabling at Cache Creek Discovery Day in Yolo County on May 10, and assistance would be very welcome. Juntunen and Ruttan also expect to be at this event, representing the RCD Watershed Groups and the County Department of Water Resources.

Dills has received a CalFed grant to fund his work over the next three years, with one element being such an overwhelming response to Juntunen's appeal for public support that it choked the Department of Conservation communications system.

Next meeting: 3:30PM on Wednesday May 28, at the Ag Center