

## Chi Council for the Clear Lake Hitch

### Minutes of June 27, 2007 meeting at Lake County Agricultural Center

Submitted by Victoria Brandon, Chi Council secretary

Present: Peter Windrem, Victoria Brandon, Erica Lundquist, Greg Dills, Lee Morgan, Robert Geary, Jeff Lynch

Minutes: approved as amended

Windrem described the valuable streambed obstruction survey that Lundquist is conducting on behalf of the county, and announced that he will accompany her on a July 6 field trip to take GPS observations and photographs of barriers on Kelsey, Scotts, and Middle Creeks. Dills said that the Scotts Creek Watershed Council is also going to conduct a walking tour (date still to be determined) along that creek between the Hendricks Road bridge and Decker bridge. He added that money can be obtained to remove the barrier to migration at the latter location (an old flashboarded dam), but not to replace the bridge itself, since it's on private land. Although water flows over the dam during the migration season and it might not physically obstruct fish passage, there's a big scour hole behind it, and hitch seem to avoid deep holes. Morgan: avoidance of deep holes might have been an evolutionary advantage since that could be a prime location for predators. Dills: a culvert at 4337 Hendricks Rd seems to be a significant barrier; he has observed substantial numbers of chi below this location but none at all upstream.

Lynch reported a number of large boulders in Seigler Canyon Creek opposite Anderson Marsh (of unknown origin) that in his opinion bar migration altogether. Large schools used to be present in this creek but none have been seen there since 1997. On Schindler Creek the barrier at Highway 20 has been equipped with a fish ladder, but no migrating hitch have been seen in the creek for many years. Geary: a lot of debris has been thrown into Schindler Creek, not trash so much as tree branches and cuttings etc, and the flow is by no means as strong as it was 20-30 years ago. No one present knew about any upstream diversions that could be responsible for flow reduction.

Dills is conducting a series of workshops related to ongoing assessments of the Middle, Scotts, & Kelsey Creek watersheds, with capacity building for the volunteer watershed groups, and planning to coordinate this effort with the Fire Safe Council. Supervisor Denise Rushing is revitalizing the council and finishing a countywide fire safe plan that includes emergency evacuation guidelines. Assessment reports, which are part of the Clear Lake Basin Management Plan, might lead to chi-related funding possibilities.

Windrem: at the last meeting we discussed the collapse of the threadfin shad population and the ways this might affect hitch populations. The two species compete for food, but are also subject to the same predators, which mean heightened hitch predation when shad are no longer available. It's very important that we exert pressure on the University of California to fund the Clear Lake Fisheries Biologist position that Greg Giusti has requested. Perhaps it would help to get the Board of Supervisors or statewide elected officials to weigh in? Morgan: tribal support might especially influential with UC.

Lynch: what patterns of population decline have emerged from our four years of volunteer observations? Windrem: we started with the premise that the primary problem was streambed obstructions resulting in loss of spawning habitat, but there is plainly something

else going on as well, since there have been no new barriers erected during the past few years, but nonetheless the hitch seem to be absent from places where they were observed in some quantity when we started looking. For example, large schools were seen in Middle Creek in 2005, but none at all during the past two seasons. Lynch: maybe it's development. Morgan: the threadfin population collapse might be related to the inability of fry to get back into the lake if the streams dry up earlier than usual. They spawn later than chi and would be more sensitive to this hazard. Lynch: we need to start fish tagging in order to get some definitive answers. Morgan: spawners might be giving off pheromones that lure others up the stream where they are located. Windrem wonders if something of that sort could have been operative last year, when spawning schools entered the mouth of Middle Creek but instead of continuing directly upstream turned left into Scotts Creek instead. Morgan described a salmon spawning run on a Klamath tributary that was deliberately "jump started" by depositing spawning adults upstream.

Dills mentioned that Lake County has been moved to DFG Region 2, based in Rancho Cordoba, and has been assigned a biologist, Jay Rowan.

At the next meeting we hope to get reports from Greg Giusti and others on progress in encouraging scientific investigations. Brandon will make sure that Jay Rowan gets a specific invitation. In the meantime, Lundquist: will investigate DFG archives and make copies of any relevant information that they have. Brandon: we need to archive oral histories from tribal elders. Geary: has found some of those but unfortunately most of the testimony is in Pomo rather than English.

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

Meeting adjourned at 4:30PM.