

Chi Council for the Clear Lake Hitch

Minutes of September 26, 2007 meeting at Lake County Agricultural Center

Submitted by Victoria Brandon, Chi Council secretary

Present: Peter Windrem, Victoria Brandon, Linda Juntunen, Lee Morgan, Carolyn Ruttan

Minutes of July 25 meeting approved as presented.

Windrem began by describing a meeting that he, Brandon, Greg Giusti, and Erica Lundquist had on September 24 with Dr. Lisa Thompson, an ichthyologist from UC Davis, with the purpose of raising her level of awareness about Clear Lake and the hitch, and in the hope of encouraging university sponsorship of hitch research. He passed around copies of a comprehensive packet of materials on the Chi Council that he had assembled to provide background material for her, including the MOU, pictures and maps from the website, and summary reports and tables of observation data covering the last four years of work. After an hour of discussion the group then went out in the field to examine observation locations and migration barriers on Adobe and Kelsey Creeks. Thompson was very impressed with the work that our crew of volunteers has done to date, and Windrem is optimistic that continued coordination with UC & DFG scientists will result in a worthwhile research project. Funding is of course a major issue.

Juntunen promised to share this information with Greg Dills and keep eye out for grant opportunities, which she pointed out can be submitted through the RCD since the Chi Council is under their umbrella. Aside from facilitating grant applications, the RCD also provides insurance (essential), and templates for such things as obtaining access to private land. Ruttan: tribal grant money may also be available. Windrem: who should be on a grant-writing committee? Ruttan suggests Jay Rowan from DFG.

Migration barrier photographs recently taken by Windrem and Lundquist are examined: concrete sills in the streambed under bridges are the worst offenders, and we should explore other methods of shoring them up. A photograph of the Main St bridge on Kelsey Creek shows footing exposed because the gravels in the streambed have been scoured away and it is at a much lower level than in the past. Modern technology now provides methods to support bridges without supports that obstruct or narrow the streambed. The tribes might be interested in pursuing grants to remove and replace troublesome bridges in the context of restoring populations of this culturally significant fish. Robinson Bridge on Middle Creek, which will cost millions to replace, should be the first priority, followed by the Decker bridge on Scotts Creek and the Main Street bridge on Kelsey. Brandon: heavy investment in replacing the latter is questionable since the detention structure stops most of the hitch before they even get that far. Windrem: detention structure is a hot potato; it might not even be serving its function (groundwater replenishment), but the gradient is so extreme that mitigation would be very difficult. Juntunen suggests that replacement of Robinson Bridge could provide a wonderful partnership opportunity for the tribes and the county. Windrem will contact Bob Lossius of the Department of Public Works as soon as possible, and if he expresses interest try to set up a meeting with him, Robinson and Habetolomel Environmental Directors Irenia Quitiquit & Paula Britton, and Greg Dills representing the RCD. Ruttan says that larger projects tend to stand a better chance of obtaining grants, so it might be a good idea to include the removal of Decker Bridge in the same proposal. Juntunen: that would require the cooperation of the Scotts Valley band too. Jody Larson is their Environmental Director.

Ruttan reports that the barrier removal project on Clover Creek financed by the Tribal Wildlife Grant Robinson obtained several years ago is nearly complete, and looks excellent.

Morgan says that Lee Johnson, a fisheries biologist (!) has been appointed as the new Mendocino National Forest head ranger. We should try to involve him in our work.

The Chi Council has been invited to host the annual Year in Review celebrating the work done by all the watershed groups. A firm date has not yet been set, but this event will take place in the second or third week in January, which is perfect timing for recruiting volunteers for the 2008 monitoring season. Windrem stresses the need for acknowledging the efforts that our volunteers have done up to now, and suggests that we mail out a packet to all of them ahead of time, including reports and photographs. Juntunen: reminding the other CRMPs that the Chi Council is one of them would assist in volunteer recruitment. Brandon: Greg Giusti has offered to print out big posters that could be displayed at the YIR. We've got a lot of great photos by now, so let's make good use of them.

Now is the time to start planning in order to get water temperature monitors ("hobos") in place before the run starts. Juntunen says she's trying to get a grant to assemble sampling kits that could be distributed to a few of our volunteers in order to get more detailed information.

Windrem: the Chi Council has been asked to sign the county's Weed Management MOU. Ruttan says that they are trying to extend the partnership as widely as possible, beyond the existing collaboration with the Forest Service, BLM, tribes, and cities of Clearlake and Lakeport. Additional grants are being sought but there's already a team of workers solely occupied in eradicating invasive aliens. "Tree of heaven" infestation in Middletown and on the CalTrans right of way is the next major target. Windrem is authorized to sign the MOU on behalf of the Council.

Ruttan announces that Mike Umbrello, who happens to be the Executive Assistant to the Tribal Administrator at Big Valley Rancheria but is acting privately, has employed legal counsel to pursue federal Endangered Species Act listing for the hitch.

Next meeting: 3:30PM on Wednesday October 24, at the Ag Center.

Meeting adjourned at 5PM