

**Chi Council for the Clear Lake Hitch**  
**Minutes of the April 24, 2019 meeting at the Lake County Ag Center**  
Submitted by Victoria Brandon, Chi Council secretary

**Present:** Peter Windrem, Victoria Brandon, Terry Knight, Dean Rogers, Terry Knight, Dave Cowan, Ben Ewing (by phone)

The minutes of the March 27, 2019 meeting were approved as presented.

**Hitch observations to date.** Windrem distributed a spreadsheet containing a partial list of his observations to date and those other observers have reported to him; when complete this information will be entered into the existing database. Substantial schools of spawning hitch continue to be reported from several locations, including Forbes creek, where hitch haven't been seen for years. Ewing: has come up every week since March and only caught two hitch in the lake, both off the Konocti Vista harbor. He's observed a total of about 130 at all his viewing sites, mostly on Kelsey at Soda Bay Road. Maybe all the adults are up in the creeks. Rogers: has seen immense numbers of fry, probably hitch, near the headwaters of Cooper that he thinks will get back to the lake all right. It's possible for a knowledgeable observer to distinguish hitch fry from suckers with a closeup look; a magnifying glass helps.

**CLERC.** A number of sitings have been posted to their online reporting system, but unfortunately locations are provided solely by GPS waypoints without naming the creek and location which will make it hard to integrate these results into our database.

**USFW.** Last week USFW hosted a Clear Lake Hitch Conservation Strategy Meeting led by fish and wildlife biologist Amber Aguiler. Various attendees agreed to start preparing different sections of the document: at present all that exists is an unsorted pile of data, some of it very old and outdated. The next meeting will be on May 18. The Cal-Neva fisheries workshop scheduled for April 4-5 was canceled because of bad weather.

**CDFW.** Ewing: hitch seem to be doing very well in Thurston lake.

**County Department of Water Resources.** Cowan: working on improving the permitting process for pier and dock construction. He met with contractors last week, and proposed an Oct 15-Dec 31 window for construction in lake. This is considered the time that fish impacts would be minimal, but lake levels are so low then it's difficult to get the work done. It's important to pinpoint the threat: driving pilings seem to be the main issue, with associated noise and turbidity, so perhaps the other aspects of construction could take place later without being harmful. Permits can take 6-9mos to issue and cost up to \$20K not counting construction.

**Middle Creek Restoration Coalition.** Windrem: the coalition is trying to get a meeting with the Army Corps.

**Tribal Activities.** Rogers: doing a project on Robinson creek. Will look for fry and see if they're getting trapped. Several weeks ago more than 100 hitch seemed to be trapped behind Sentry Market and reported to CDFW game warden Mike Pasco. Rogers tried to organize a rescue but by then most of them had found their own way back to the lake.

## Other topics

- CalTrans is working on Highway 20 adjacent to Blue Lakes and wants to know if there are hitch in the lakes. Ewing: not as far as he knows, he has electrofished there and hasn't seen any.
- Rogers: last year he saw quite a few suckers trapped in a fish ladder in Schindler creek, that he caught and moved downstream, but they were so damaged it's unlikely they survived. Whoever is responsible for maintaining this structure (CalTrans?) should be informed.
- Windrem: mitigating the barrier at the Main St bridge on Kelsey should continue to be the #1 priority but improvements at the detention dam would also help: substantial schools have been reported in Kelsey this year but no hitch at all have been seen above the dam. Flows through there were extremely strong earlier in the migration. Ewing: will investigate the area and try to schedule a project there during the summer when the creek is dry.
- Cowan: is working with Habematolel to get funding to clear blackberries out of Clover creek. Rogers: the worst barrier is at the old Christmas tree farm just downstream from the bypass. Cowan: they are also extremely thick in town at Second St.

**Next meeting:** 3:30PM Wednesday May 22, 2019, at the Ag Center.