

Watershed Committee

Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 26 February, 2003 in the Aquatic Centre Meeting Room #1

Present:

Paul Smith- WCVI/AMS; Murray Watkinson-WFP; Domenico Iannidinardo-WFP;
Jim Mitchell-G.R. Council; Pat Dennison- G.R. Resident.

1.0 Paul called the meeting to order at 7:15 p.m.

2.0 Introductions around the table

3.0 The agenda was approved by consensus

with the following changes: Chris won't be attending because of illness so Paul will update everyone on status of Burman/Gold fry release.

4.0 Minutes of the previous meeting

Pat commented that the sentence reading: "Pat talked about Steelhead" should be changed to omit "cwt's" and insert "with adipose fins missing".

5.0 Old business arising from the minutes

Both letters to DFO and Mowchaht/Muchalat were reviewed and corrected and approved. Jim apologised for not bringing the report on the effects of stirring up the ocean floor in front of the mill site, what is down there, and the potential impacts to the ecosystem and he will try to bring it at the next meeting. Jim talked about the Conuma River Off Channel Project being delayed for another year due to a lack of funding. Paul talked about the funding criteria for various organizations based on the province and federal documents ranking the watersheds for priority. Paul stated that the west coast doesn't rank very high in these documents therefore finding funding is tough. Murray discussed the concerns from WFP around the issues of drawing too much water from the Leigh Creek watershed and affecting the habitat for resident salmonids and Trout. WFP has a gauge in place by the bridge and in the past the records have shown that the hatchery has drawn too much water from the system leaving it crucially low. WFP is worried that the extra draw for the off channel will not leave Leigh Creek enough water to support the resident populations. Paul will look into this with the hatchery. Discussions followed on starting with the off channel first without support from hatchery surplus water and seriously re-evaluating the tie in to the hatchery water supplies at a later date. Question was raised once again on what would happen if the hatchery were shut down by DFO as has been the rumours. Murray talked about the Forest Investment Account (FIA) funded projects and the reduced funding for this year. The demands on the money far exceed the supply. Lots of inventory work and a few fish habitat projects are planned. The Oktwanch River has shifted so work is required to design intake on the east side channel as defined by the hydrologist. Another project is the clay cut bank next to the Gold River on the north side of town. WFP is thinking of moving the road up above the bank for about 2 km of new road. No guarantee that it will go ahead, but it is seriously being considered. The cost might be in the range of 300-400 k. Paul talked about the meeting between Dave Davies, Chris Erikson, Steve Emmonds, Jamie James, John Frame and himself on the

status of rearing the fry from the Burman and Gold River systems before release. Discussions followed on the issue of the DNA and the otolith sampling that showed the high percentage of Robertson Creek fish in the Gold and Muchalat Rivers. Should we be releasing Robertson Creek fish into the Gold/Muchalat as fry or raise them to 1.5-5 grams then release? Should we be releasing them at all? Are there any wild fish left in the system, as no data seems to exist to verify this. Everyone agreed that more DNA and otolith sampling needs to be done on an annual basis to determine if in fact this is a concern or just a freak incident. This is something that the Gold River Rod and Gun Club and Stream Keepers could take on with DFO support. Paul will get Chris to provide an update on the Robertson Creek issue for the next meeting. Paul talked about the guidelines for watershed management planning and that he is not finished with the power point presentation on this subject yet. He hopes to have it finished for the next meeting providing he can find access to a projector and laptop computer. Murray commented that all the plans in the world are useless unless commercial harvesting in the oceans is controlled. Discussion followed on the Alaskan fishery and the percentage of WCVI Chinook that are caught annually by this fishery. Also discussed was the size of the plan and how we should proceed with our next steps. Murray talked about WFP compiling all the assessment data together to determine annual rate cut. FIA will fund some of these assessments and projects.

6.0 Minutes of previous meeting approved by consensus

7.0 Correspondence

Paul talked about the watershed planning guidebooks sent to us from the province and how they mirror the guidelines that he is using for the power point presentation with some additions and changes. We should look at both pieces of information and combine the two or discard based on our objectives etc. Paul discussed the letter from the province on Steelhead populations in the Gold River this winter and handed out the charts reflecting the early season returns from 1999-2003.

8.0 New Business

The sea lice study update was tabled until the next meeting when Chris could attend and discuss. Paul talked about the maps from WFP for Hutchinson Creek and how they would tie into the final report being completed by Domenico and Dave. There was no other new business.

9.0 Action Items

1. Paul will contact the Conuma Hatchery regarding concerns over the amount of water being drawn from Leigh Creek.
2. Paul will contact Chris to provide an update on the Robertson Creek issues for the next meeting.

10.0 Presentations

There were no presentations.

11.0 Open Discussion

There were some discussions around the Robertson Creek Chinook issues with the Gold River and the potential to have the same issues exist with the Steelhead populations. There is old cwt data that shows Robertson Creek Steelhead being caught in the Gold in the past also.

12.0 Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned at 9:00 pm. Next meeting is on Wednesday, March 26, 2003 same time, same place.

