

Watershed Committee

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

Present:

Paul Smith- WCVI/AMS; Murray Watkinson-WFP; Domenico Iannidinardo-WFP; Jim Mitchell-G.R. Council; Chris Erikson- DFO; Tom Hopkins- Conuma Hatchery; Tim Davies- Grieg Seafood's; Dick Dennison- G.R. Resident/GRCC; Pat Dennison-WFP

1.0 Paul called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

2.0 Introductions around the table

3.0 The agenda was approved by consensus

with the following changes: Paul will not be giving the power point presentation on watershed planning.

4.0 Minutes of the previous meeting

No changes or omissions.

5.0 Old business arising from the minutes

Tom talked about Leigh Creek water use and the fact that the water levels drop real low in the summer so only a small amount of surface water is used, while the well water is relied upon for the majority of usage. The well water comes from the Conuma River water table. Tom stated that if the hatchery was shut down the cost of running a well for the off channel project would be \$2000 for hydro and \$2000 for maintenance. Paul asked what timeline this was based on. Tom replied the summer months i.e. May to September.

Murray asked if the off channel would be using Leigh Creek or well water for phase two. Tom replied that it would be mostly well water. Chris commented that the habitat gained by the off channel would be tenfold compared to the loss of fish in Leigh Creek because of low water. Having said that they are not going to deliberately kill fish in Leigh Creek if it can be avoided. Chris updated everyone on the status of the Burman, Gold, and Muchalat River fry survivals. Burman River- 50,000, Gold River- 280,000, Muchalat River- 50,000. Chris stated that 100 % of Muchalat River fish were marked with a right ventral clip and 40,000 Burman fish with a CWT. Dick asked how many would be held in net pens and which will be held where. Chris replied that the Muchalat would be held in Muchalat Lake and the Gold in the estuary of the Gold River. The Gold River fish will be towed down the inlet for release.

Burman River fish will be flown by helicopter from the hatchery to the Burman River. Tom commented that we should hold a meeting to discuss the future of Gold River stocks. Jim requested that representatives from the local stewardship groups be allowed to sit in at this meeting. Pat asked where the funding is coming from for the CWT's. Chris replied that it comes from the PIP program. Tom commented that two new taggers were hired locally, one from Tahsis and one from Gold River. Jim asked what percentage of the Coho was being clipped this year. Chris stated that it is 100% for Conuma River Coho. Paul discussed the future of the meeting room status because of the cancellation of the funding from DFO for the Stewardship Coordinator

position in Nootka Sound. Murray stated that WFP has offered their meeting room for all future meetings. Paul will contact Pat when the meeting room is required to book it. Tom congratulated Paul for the excellent work he has done for the community and stated that maybe council could find money to continue his efforts. Jim replied that he has spent the last 4 months doing just that and has secured funding to keep the office open from a couple of local businesses and has pledges from other organizations to be confirmed. Jim will be working diligently to find funding to keep this position (voluntarily) and office functional for at least one year. Dick asked about the status of the office equipment. Jim replied that the NCN/WCVI Aquatic Management Society has stated that all the assets will be shipped back to Port Alberni unless a local group can provide the proper insurance coverage for them. The Gold River Stream Keepers Society looked into the costs and found out the cheapest was \$750 annually. The directors decided that the cost was more than they could handle. They also felt that this flies in the face of what stewardship was supposed to be about and that the assets should be left in the community. Paul is looking into other options. Paul talked about the Gold River Watershed Management Plan direction and how we might continue to move forward without funding. Some discussion followed on finding a copy of the Nimpkish River plan and looking it over. Paul will try and contact Brenda Bauer or Aleria Ladwick to see if they can point us in the right direction or provide a copy. The committee agreed to plod along at a snails pace with the Gold River Watershed Management Plan doing what it can for free until funding becomes available or improves.

6.0 Minutes of previous meeting approved by consensus

7.0 Correspondence

Paul talked about the correspondence from Roger on the decommissioning of the Heber/Crest. Jim commented that it was too bad that Roger wasn't here to address this as he is still unsure how this will be accomplished i.e. diverting water from Crest Lake into the Heber River. Some discussions followed on how the diversion was created and the amount of fill used to create it. Paul talked about the email from Wilf Luedke (DFO) on the Robertson Creek Hatchery strays in the Gold. It seems that DFO is split on whether this is a common occurrence or one time "freak" thing. Discussion followed on the amount of hatchery fish being caught in the Gold River by the Gold River Chinook Project in the past and the recreational catch of the same. Consensus was reached that this is definitely a regular occurrence and has been since the 1980's. Jim asked if the province has ever been invited and attended our meetings. Paul replied that in the past they were invited but never attended and he has lost track of who the contact is now because of the restructuring that has taken place. Jim asked if anyone has seen data on the Robertson Creek Hatchery steelhead strays that also occur every year in the Gold River. Reply was no. Paul and Jim will try and look into this.

8.0 New Business

Chris talked about the sea lice study in Nootka Sound funded by DFO. Brent Hargreaves came up last week to help establish a base line study area in Muchalat Inlet. Beach seining was the method used. Sampling is also being done as well as checking for sea lice. Pat asked if DFO could take DNA samples of these fish to determine if they're of Robertson Creek origin. Chris replied that because of the site locations it would be difficult to identify which

system they came out of. Tim asked if they were sampling other species besides salmon. Chris replied not at this time. The study will be from 8-12 weeks; twice a week is the time frame depending on funding. Tim commented that this gives DFO an area to study where no fish farms exist to create a database to compare to the Broughton area. Jim talked about the future direction of the watershed committee and getting away from the ad hoc based format to making the committee a legal entity, which will allow more control over finding funding and possibly give us more credibility in governments etc. Pat talked about the need for the committee to function as the main board, which all other groups work under. Paul agreed and stated that this is how the committee was originally set up and in his opinion has functioned to date. The only problems have been getting consistent attendance at all the meetings. If everyone agrees to change over to a legal entity it is very easy to do but will cost money and will require actual membership with dues to finance overhead costs. This was why it was set up as an ad hoc committee, because the West Coast Aquatic Management Society provided the funding for these costs. Consensus was reached to legalize the committee at a later date after further discussions to redefine Terms of Reference, create bylaws etc.

9.0 Action Items

1. Paul will contact Brenda Bauer and Aleria Ladwick on the Nimpkish River Watershed Plan document.
2. Paul and Jim will try and locate data on Robertson Creek Hatchery Steelhead strays into the Gold River.
3. Paul will contact the province to invite them to send a representative to our meetings.

10.0 Presentations

There were no presentations.

11.0 Open Discussion

There was some discussions on the benefits of the sea lice study and laying the issues to rest once and for all or showing the problems are real and being able to deal with them finally.

12.0 Adjournment

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