

Nootka Sound Watershed Society  
Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday Jan 25, 2017  
Council of Chiefs Room, Tsaxana 7:00pm

1. Welcome and Introductions –

Attendance:

Kent O'Neill, President Ken Smith, GR Streamkeepers Section Paul Kutz, Western Forest Products Frank Collins, Tahsis Salmon Enhancement Sam Kagan, Stewardship Coordinator Louis VanSolkema, Councillor, Village of Tahsis Teresa O'Neil, Interim treasurer Kadin Snook, Fisheries Coordinator, MMFN Rick Jones, GR Rod and Gun club Jason Kydd, TSES volunteer	Marcel Miner, GR Streamkeepers Craig Blackie, Grieg Seafood Mike Austin, DFO, Conuma Hatchery Dave Davies, DFO, Community Advisor Dale Desrochers, DFO Roger Dunlop, Biologist, Nuuchalnuh Kevin Pierce, BC Wildlife Federation Dave Willis, DFO
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2. Review and adopt of the Agenda – 1st Roger, 2nd Craig
3. Review and adopt of the minutes Nov 30, 2016 – “draft agenda” changed to draft minutes, adopted
4. Review of action items from Nov 30, 2016 meeting -

Action Items: NEW ITEMS

Action	Who	Completed
Tahsis Water leases – does WFP hold them? Still active? ask Paul Kutz	Dave / Craig/ Paul	Done Paul - went thru WFP water leases, printed out map (can forward electronically) looks like WFP holds all the leases along the water... other leases (in estuary) held by others, are labeled with reference numbers and can be identified online.
Follow up with brochure / quotes for printing	Kent / James (may have some ideas for printing)	Ongoing - Sam to take over
Final Report for PSF transport tank	Status of report	Ongoing - Sam to take over
Conuma side channel report	Craig – to distribute by email	Ongoing
Overview maps / look at riparian work	Roger	Ongoing - Roger put together PowerPoint about means to restore riparian zones, will be held off until next meeting/special session to hold Rogers presentation
Thank you letter/ certificate – Pat/Dick	Kent/Lyndy	Done
Follow up with WCA – finalize contract	Kent	Done
Check if there was a past motion to use/ change the Lodge Owners funds	Kent	Ongoing
Signage/ pictures at Big Bend –	Sam and Craig	Ongoing

Action Items: ONGOING ITEMS

Action	Who	Completed
Letter to Minister re: budget cuts with DFO, the impacts / effects that has.	Kent	ONGOING – has started - Kent has asked for input
Terms of Reference	Kent	ONGOING Kent looking at a simpler version and will present to us at another meeting.
Talk to Jason re: Restorative Justice	Kent	ONGOING – conversation started

**5. Old Business**

**a. Fisheries Stewardship Coordinator Report**

- i. Work has begun on Nootka lodges fundraising plan, includes putting together fundraising packages as well as looking into lodges buying and selling NSW merchandise to fundraise. Priority will be to develop an effective reporting method to stay on top of fundraising once Sam’s contract is up.
- ii. Brochure - Sam presented updated brochure draft. Some suggestions made to choice of pictures and information on “threats to salmon” section. Sam will revise and send out again.
- iii. Website updates: write up on Big Bend restoration, Tahsis estuary monitoring, resource page and the addition of the drone video from the Burman broodstock collection ongoing.
- iv. Tahsis Estuary Monitoring - PSF has granted us an extension until September 30th 2017 for reporting on Tahsis estuary monitoring project. This will give us a chance to purchase and use this equipment for this years sessions. More info to come on this years sessions.

**b. Fisheries Habitat**

Big Bend - Roger proposes renaming unnamed Big Bend Creek to Chermar Creek. Voted - Consensus reached. **ACTION:**Roger will look into Muchalaht name of the creek- both names to be included on interpretive signs at restoration site.

Roger - spoke of his plan of restoring riparian areas. Some mechanisms in action already through regulations in logging. Need to address three environmental processes that restore fish habitat. This issue tabled to next meeting.

**c. Hatchery Update  
Conuma – Mike Austin reads SEP report**

Coho smolts to be released this May (all clipped) 208 584

Skretting donated one ton of 1.5ml feed

Skretting requesting tax receipt -

**ACTION** Craig to email Kent with exact cost of “one ton” of food and Kent will ask WCA for charitable tax receipt for Skretting.

Dave Davies asks about plans for next year - Mike Austin answers that the 16/17 group (Conuma Chinook) no changes to plan.

Change was instated this year with new river release group

Seapens- pens moved closer to estuary to address the issue of increased percentage of strays. Mike explained that the Conuma River had shifted to the other side of the bay and the pens need to sit where the Conuma influence is stronger.

Discussion between Mike and Roger on historical stray percentages and why historically surface water was not used to imprint Conuma fish to their river (because there were was negligible straying historically). Roger supports the better monitoring of stray percentages.

Mike - the plan will be to move pens to other side of the bay and integrate surface water to rearing.

Dave Davies brings up the collaborative agreement renewal and whether the group would like him to begin the process. Some alternative options are discussed such as having an agreement without the contract - this would mean NSW or WCA or some other body (such as MMFN - brought up by Kadin Snook) would hire extra staff (ie. Shane Christiansen). Kent adds that NSW is not equipped to hire staff and could only pay directly for costs such as clipping and feed. **ACTION:** Kent/Dave Davies to look into our options - Dave Davies will need to begin the process of writing up new collaborative contract within the next 1-2 months.

**ACTION:** Mike Austin to forward wages and fall/spring hours of extra hire (Shane Christiansen) to Kent O’Neil

Motion to pay skretting for cost of chinook feed 1st - Roger, 2nd Kadin, motion adopted.

#### **Tahsis –**

Frank Collins reports a few problems they have faced and are currently facing:

1) Leiner River Chinook - currently 157 000 at 1g - couldn't achieve proper otolith marking due to weather and surface water - in take froze, river got too low. Jason got it going again but not in time for marking. Result is Leiner otolith marking is 2.1 instead of 7.3 this year.

2) Tahsis river Chinook - currently 80 000 at Conuma hatchery for otolith marking.

Looking at changing plumbing so that they can otolith ark both river groups simultaneously. Talked to Will about getting funding for adjusting plumbing. **ACTION:** Dave Davies to attend TSES meeting and discuss with Frank the possibility of a PSF application.

Frank Collins asks Mike Austin if TSES can do same otolith mark on both Leiner and Tahsis River Chinook. Mike Austin responds that it's not possible.

Frank Collins adds that the TSES is experiencing problems with their seine net, and that enhancing net will cost \$800. The TSES has these funds and will enhance net.

Frank raised question of vaccine order - motion approved to pay for 3 bottles of vaccine (900\$) at last meeting - Mike knows to talk to Lyndy about putting that order together

#### **Zeballos -**

Craig reports 15 000 chum almost ready for feeding - Grieg Seafood to provide feed and health trays. Things look pretty good as per Craig.

Roger raises question of circular tanks - are they going forward with this? Craig added that the possibility has been evaluated but that he doesn't know where it's at.

#### **d. Fisheries Management / Area 25 Harvest Committee updates**

##### **Year end review meeting took place (need to find date) Kent O'Neil reported on meeting:**

Review of the past year, some talk of anticipated numbers for next year although there was not a whole lot of discussion on this. Overall it was a pretty productive and calm meeting.

Roger added: Barry Crow from Area D Gillnetters approached him about stewardship fishery. Roger says - get this stewardship fishery set up early when fish are valuable. Kent brought up idea to involve a buyer in the planning. Roger adds idea of buying the stewardship, packaging and selling it to fundraise.

**ACTION:** Kent to talk to area D Gillnetters about stewardship fish.

##### **e. Coho fence**

Roger - need to plan who, when, etc.

Usually early April work begins on the fence. Marcel would like to put in some more plywood.

**ACTION:** Ken/Marcel will bring this year's requirements for updates to the next meeting

Roger adds that he would like to help with counts on this fence.

Roger brought up his Charm salmon counts on the Burman River - results: 130 000 fish days, with average 6.5 day lifespan in the river. This was extrapolated to 44 000 chum salmon having spawned in the Burman River. Roger also noted that they had a skewed sex ration similar to Chinook

#### **1. New Business**

## ii. Roger Dunlop's Proposed Motions

Motion #1 – Renaming Big Bend Creek to Chermar Creek - approved.

Motion #2 - Mating Policy for Chinook salmon in all NSWS funded projects

Motion #3 - Smolt Size and Feeding Policy

Roger Dunlop wants to get the conversation and consideration for these motions started here, doesn't necessarily expect the group to adopt them all now.

Discussion ensued about Motion #2:

Roger - it's well known that chinook don't mate randomly - bucket spawning doesn't cut it. Male age is heritable, so we have 3 year olds in population that have accelerated maturation because are over fed. (due to hatchery processes)

Roger suggests - our projects only fund operations that use lengths to match up breeding pairs.

Mike Austin informs the group that the Conuma Hatchery/SEP follows genetic guidelines, and that these are being reviewed as we speak with heritability experiments

Dave Willis advises that changes in genetic guidelines for the SEP won't be made until all the information from revisions and experiments is in.

Discussion on Motion #3:

Roger suggests that the NSWS adopt a policy that we don't fund "couch potato fish" starting this year. Ie. We are overfeeding the smolts to a greater size than necessary - this is exceeding feeding capacity in this inlet.

Kevin Pierce adds that through his years as fisherman he has gotten to know a lot of biologists, and had learned that the average fish was 2.2lbs

Roger adds that he has pictures of common fish in Campbell River at 1.3m. Adds that we want big fish which requires delayed maturity (reduced feeding) - this may result in lowered survival but those that survive will be consist of fewer of these returning three year old fish and we will see larger older fish return instead.

Next a discussion on what Roger has described as an imprinting issue:

Roger - fish are failing to imprint which is leading to the high percentage of strays that we are seeing. We need to consider discontinuing satellite operations (such as Burman and Gold enhancement) and focus our efforts on monitoring and imprinting the Conuma River stock. Money would be better spent tagging and monitoring Conuma fish.

Roger proposes a slot limit: consider reducing our catch of big fish and instead focus fishing efforts on fish under 77cm.

Roger adds that currently, not only are we producing more 3 year old fish, but we are not catching them because they end up under size limit.

Kent adds that the gillnetters have been encouraged to use smaller net sizes

Roger adds that the ideas he is presenting are his as a biologist, and are not currently backed by anyone.

Kent raises issue of his personal experience as well as the group's capacity - doesn't think that we have the experience to push a vote on these issues. Kent also raises the economic issue - reducing number of fish may have negative economic impacts on this area.

Roger counters that any negative impacts will be worth it to restore appropriate age structure to fishery

Dave Davies asks whether we can achieve both - a natural age structure and lots of fish. Kent adds that the landscape has already changed significantly.

Dave Willis states that research (Ruth Withler from DFO) shows that Conuma River fish have certainly moved around/strayed, however Burman River still has native Burman River fish.

Mike Austin adds that if you start playing with size of fish at sea pens, will change whole program (eg. currently fish go in at 3g, if we do earlier release that might mean no pens, less imprinting, less returns) may mean may less fish. We are working towards changes but need to work through the system and wait for studies to come in.

Dave Willis adds that Ruth is working on studies researching the ratio of wild to hatchery fish in a system required to maintain genetic diversity.

Mike adds that the impetus was always to make more fish. Roger counters that sea pens started being used in 1984. To change methods now may have lots of consequences but not necessarily a high price to pay if it is done right.

Kent challenged this notion stating that to lodge owners and MMFN there may be a high cost.

Roger responds that long term and in terms of conservation it would be worth it. Kadin adds that conservation should be a priority.

Frank Collins asks whether DFO corresponds with biologists at US hatcheries along coast. Dave Willis responds that US hatcheries operate differently than ours with segregated hatchery programs.

Roger brings up the idea of having Ruth attend our meeting to help with the decision.

Dave Davies - this decision will affect a larger body of communities as we represent many people. Need to have more input to make a decision.

Roger adds that we have an opportunity to do something different, may be worth considering trying something different ie. trying his proposals on the Gold and Burman stocks to gauge how these changes will affect these stocks. Concludes that he just wants the group to be well informed to make this decision. **ACTION:** Roger to circulate more information

This discussion was tabled and will be further discussed at Rogers presentation next meeting.

Next new business:

Craig informs us that Grieg Seafood has applied to treat sea lice with hydrogen peroxide in Esperanza using the same protocol as previously used. The issue is sea lice numbers are raising, and that they've tried using Splice (a feed treatment) with minimal success. This was due to a major algae outbreak when Slice treatments were started, so the treatments were variable. Hydrogen peroxide is the next step. Craig wants to make us aware of this.

Roger raises issue of containing lice after treatment because hydrogen peroxide will not kill all lice. Roger suggests doing treatments in contained area to eliminate lice from system. Craig confirms that the lice will be contained.

Next new business:

Kevin Pierce shares that with the backing of the BCWF, he would like to help fundraise for the NSWS to produce more fish. Kent thanks him for his enthusiasm and looks forward to discussing further.

AGM / Elections – to be held next meeting

## **2. Correspondence**

Roger - SST Visualization – distributed by email

Roger - Great paper describing climate forcing links to OUTSIDE coast zooplankton assemblages – distributed by email

## **3. Financial Report**

Motion to have Teresa O'Neil take over Cheryle's duties as treasurer: 1st Craig, 2nd Frank. Motion approved.

Financial report is brief this meeting due to change over:

No change in accounts since last meeting except for lodge fund.

Sitting at \$107 000

## **4. Next Meeting - Wednesday Feb 22, 2017 7 pm - WFP Boardroom**

## **5. Adjournment**