


Cowichan Watershed Board Meeting Minutes	Monday October 26, 2020 9:30-11:30am via Zoom	 Cowichan Watershed Board
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Co-Chair: Chief William Seymour

Participants: Dr. Shannon Waters, Alison Nicholson, David Anderson, Debra Toporowski, Tim Kulchyski, Lori Iannidinardo, Dr. David Froese, Kristine Sandhu, David Slade, Dale Desrochiers

Regrets: Aaron Stone (co-chair), Stuart Pagaduan

Guest speakers: Dr. Aroha Miller and Dr. Kelsey Delisle – Ocean Watch/Pollution Tracker

Audience members: Members of the public

Minutes/support: Heather Pritchard / Tom Rutherford

Date: October 26, 2019

1	Welcome	Chief Seymour called the meeting to order.	
2	Approve Agenda	Motion to approve agenda by Tim K.; seconded by Kristine S. No changes.	Approved
3	Review and approve Minutes of Sept. 28, 2020	Motion to approve agenda by Debra T.; seconded by Kristine S. No changes.	Approved
4	Correspondence and Announcements	<p>Tom reviewed announcements in agenda package:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tom acknowledged the great work of the Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society for the Wildwings Festival. There are still 2 ongoing exhibits, the Vancouver Island Nature Artist exhibition at Just Jakes restaurant, and the Nature of Cowichan photo contest at the Ainslie restaurant • Larry George and Tom participated in a “Watersheds 2020” forum (virtual format); over 200 people took part in this workshop. Topic was “Stepping stones to collaborative watershed governance” • The Coastal Water Supplies AGM is coming up and Tom is scheduled as a guest speaker • Grant updates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Jill completed the federal Climate Action grant. If successful, the works will be coordinated by CWB. Partners include Cowichan Tribes, University of Victoria, Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society, and the Koksilah Working Group. Proposed works are within the “climate change adaptation focus” category while projects range from planting trees to watershed governance. Work would be completed over one year and the proposal is valued at \$250K. Positive aspects of the proposal include that it highlights indigenous leadership, which in itself 	For information

		<p>makes the proposed projects climate change mitigation. The CWB is a strong model of co-governance spanning 10 years; this project builds on that success.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Other grant proposals include funding for a sequel to the “Tim and Tom” video on fish; a technical grant to fund purchase of a DIDSON (sonar fish counter) (\$125k) by Cowichan Tribes to track fish and support stock assessment work on Koksilah (note: DFO has a DIDSON but they don’t have the capacity to assess Koksilah). ● Alistair MacGregor will be tabling a private members bill in parliament seeking to restrict tankers anchoring off-shore 	
5	Opportunity for public comment	<p>One public comment:</p> <p>Genevieve Singleton spoke about her concerns about the CVRD park acquisition fund. She encourages residents to write to directors asking that funds be reinstated since the fund value has decreased over time. This fund was established in 2008 after the community approved tax funds being allocated to parks. While it reached \$853K in 2018, it dropped to \$150K in 2019, and \$250K in 2020. It should be over \$1 million by now. The province purchased the Eagle Heights property as parkland, in part, because CVRD demonstrated commitment to the project by offering funds (though they were not needed in the end). While the federal target for protected areas is 17%, locally only 7.7% of land is in protected areas. Therefore the whole funding is required.</p>	For information
7	Presentation – Pollution Tracker (re: estuary and water quality targets)	<p>Dr. Aroha Miller (Manager of Ocean Watch at Ocean Wise) and Kelsey Delisle (Pollution Tracker) gave a presentation on their work on monitoring marine health (based out of the Vancouver Aquarium).</p> <p>See attached summary for details.</p>	For information and discussion
6	Updates from Executive Director	<p>BC Salmon Enhancement and Restoration Investment Fund proposal</p> <p>Tom gave a Powerpoint presentation. Highlights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Applied for resources to assess salmon stock abundance for Koksilah and Chemainus rivers (even though Chemainus River is not part of CWB jurisdiction) ● Instead of competing for same funds, it was decided to partner with support from Cowichan Tribes and Halalt First Nations (Cowichan Tribes is leading) ● Project rationale: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There are chronic low flows in both rivers affecting salmon populations 	For information and discussion

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The two watersheds are similar in geography, hydrology (including low flows) ○ There are recognized low flows in Koksilah River however no one has been collecting data on salmon in Koksilah for over 20 years, therefore, it is difficult to draw convincing conclusions on the impacts of low flows on salmon ○ There is also a potential Water Sustainability Plan in the works for Koksilah that is based on co-governance; if successful, this will be the first enforceable WSP in province ● The proposal asks for \$1.1 million over 3 years to assess salmon stock abundance. The goal is to quantify effects of low summer water by assessing Habitat Suitability Indices, traditional ecological knowledge, and through tracking impacts of low flows on critical habitats. Restoration plans will be developed and implemented. ● We will know by mid-November if a full proposal is requested which will then be due at end of 2020. Work could begin in spring 2021. <p>Questions/comments:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● David F. stated that we know low flows impact fish, so instead of more studies we need to do work on the ground. Tom responded that baseline data is commonly asked for to justify changes people are being asked to make. This data doesn't exist making it difficult to have buy-in. The proposal looks at how can we fix low salmon abundance? We know concepts for solutions – for example, if we stabilize gravel bars we can decrease river width and increase flows to move gravel therefore eliminating the need for excavators to do the work. However, we don't have the data we need to make confident recommendations for specific areas. ● Dale added that he supports Tom's points. Actions need to be sustainable over time and need to be based on principles, which require an understanding of the watershed provided by baseline data. This data also helps to establish priorities. 	
8	CWB Roundtable	<p>Tom led a roundtable that asked each person 2 questions. What watershed did you grow up in and what is your families' connection to it; and what should be CWB's #1 priority for 2021?</p> <p>Alison:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bowker Creek (in Oak Bay) ● Where we are in terms of a "whole of watershed": approach? Where are the holes that we need to focus on 	For information and discussion

when assessing and reporting on targets?

Shannon:

- Multiple watersheds across country and now raising daughters in Cowichan watershed
- Reporting on targets and meeting a whole of watershed approach; we need to connect this messaging to our own health; we need to emphasize that places of solace are important for health

David F.:

- Fraser River watershed
- Raise the weir and find a license holder

Debra:

- Cowichan River watershed; Debra has a childhood memory of a fish ladder at White Bridge
- Raising the weir and reporting on targets; we also need to drive the message home that everything is connected and therefore projects aren't for "some" but for "all"

Tim:

- Little Shuswap River, and since 3 years old the Koksilah and Cowichan rivers junction
- Weir and all things associated are a priority; stocks and numbers and their health helps us understand the water flows and temperatures

David S.:

- Cowichan River watershed
- Weir and all things associated are priority to return Cowichan River and Bay to healthy condition; also the Koksilah WSP

Dale:

- Red and Assiniboine River junction
- Setting achievable results while keeping human health and safety in mind

Lori:

- Cowichan watershed
- Water quality

Chief Seymour:

- Cowichan watershed
- Weir; work in side channels also important for fish, we need

		to restore habitat and numbers	
9	Other	David S. asked Tom if he has some idea of funds required for Pollution Tracker work. Tom replied that it is expensive, around \$50K to \$100K depending on scale. Ocean Wise folks will provide some but CWB will have to fund raise. Lab analysis is a major cost. Davis responded that this work is important as we need baseline data if we want to assess change.	For information
10	Adjourn	Next meeting – Mon. November 25 th , 9:30am	Adjourned (11:25 am)

Summary of presentations/discussion:

1. Presentation on the marine Pollution Tracker

Tom provided an introduction to Kelsey's and Aroha's work for Ocean Watch and Pollution Tracker. This work may be relevant to the Estuarine Health indicator.

Kelsey:

- In 2015, they started the 1st project in Canada monitoring coast-wide marine pollution
- The goal is to create consistent comparable data on chemical contaminants to inform priorities, identify sources, and conduct research
- They analyze sediments and mussel tissues for chemical contaminants and micro plastics; samples are collected every 3 years
- They have many partners including First Nations and community groups
- Full analysis consists of 14 contaminant classes, with a maximum of 547 different chemicals
- There is an interactive map where you can check measured contaminants at selected sites
- For Cowichan Bay, Kelsey proposes sampling in 2 phases: phase #1 - establish 3-4 sample sites to assess contaminants of concern in sediments and mussels; then based on results of #1, in phase #2 there would be a long term study that looks at contaminants in clams

Aroha:

- Aroha looks after reporting and interpretation of results from Kelsey's work; her work is to create a bridge between the science and the users of the information; the first big project was for Howe Sound
- The Howe Sound report has 7 themes (e.g., species and habitats, stewardship, clean water, etc.); reports include actions for community, governments, and other groups; the report also includes 7 main action groups (research, protection, restoration, etc.)
- Depending on budget available they can create short or long and detailed reports
- The information sharing process includes a community workshops to identify issues, share results, gather input

Questions:

- David S. asked why Cowichan Bay was not selected before? Kelsey was not sure but generally sites chosen based on partners; external funding is required
- Debra asked how the 3 or 4 sample sites are selected? We want to be able to eat clams from Kilpali beach, an important clam harvesting site. Kelsey responded that exact sites haven't been discussed. Site selection involves community input.
- David S. enquired about funding sources. Kelsey responded that they don't have funding for Cowichan Bay at this time however they are always fundraising. Seeking joint funding is an option. DFO is a major funder, and government agencies are targeted. They are open to working with groups on fund raising. Aroha's projects are philanthropist funding so may have some for action plans and reporting (currently developing proposal for this).
- Shannon stated she heard that a world wide plastic shortage related to a high demand for covid response supplies that contain plastics. There is concern that these items will show up in the ocean more and more and over time they will show up in seafood. How do plastics fit in with program? Kelsey confirmed that they are looking for microplastics in sediments and mussels. There are several projects looking at where microplastics are coming from and their impacts on micro organisms.
- Lori added that microfibers are another related concern. We should be working with companies that, for example, manufacture washing machines and their filters. Kelsey responded that Pollution Tracker has a plastics lab and is looking at sources of microplastics and how to eliminate them. They are working with apparel makers to assess which fabrics shed fewer microfibers. They have washing machines with filters to assess effectiveness.