

Fwd:



Scott Griffiths <griffiths.scott67@gmail.com>  
To: danni@cowichanwatershedboard.ca

Wednesday, September 6, 2023 at 12:33 PM

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Scott Griffiths <griffiths.scott67@gmail.com>  
Date: Wed., Sep. 6, 2023, 12:25 p.m.  
Subject:  
To: Jill Thompson <info@cowichanwatershedboard.ca>

Just reading your article on the Cowichan river. I live on the lake and watch as the lake drains every spring. I tried Brian Houle to lift the Weir gates he said he's not allowed till April as directed by fisheries. I try the cowichan lake Weir ready group. I try fisheries. I try first Nations. Year after year nobody wants to raise the gates early to hold back the water.. and yes there is plenty of cool water flowing for the juvenile fish heading to the ocean in spring problem is it should be flowing over the Weir and locked up gates instead the gates are wide open and all the reserve water is flowing out... This year they were asking tubers to stay out of the river in June because of high flows making it unsafe and a month and a half later groveling for the water they let go with gates wide open. Why can't this happen gates up early as spring weather and stream flows dictate. I can look at my beach look at a few streams and rivers in my area and think here we go again draining the lake with Weir gates wide open and no flows recharging the lake.. not a fan of the Weir increase as this will create a flood similar to 2019-2020 but potentially worse with two added feet in height and a similar weather pattern shows up with snow in the hills then slammed by atmospheric rivers. That two extra Feet should be down stream not lingering to add to the flood. Control the gates in spring early and keep them raised. And make sure the gates operate fully and correctly for ease of use as contracted with the Crofton mill...

Cowichan Weir External Inbox x



Tom Rutherford  
to Scott, me, Jill

Sep 18, 2023, 2:50 PM (17 hours ago)

Hi Scott,

Given my role working to support the weir project on behalf of the Cowichan Watershed Board, your note got passed on to me to respond to. I Hope you are well and had a good summer up at the lake - pretty dry where we are by the Kinsol Trestle - looks like we're losing mature cedar trees on my property that are turning brown and dying. Certainly not something we've seen in the past 30 years.

Appreciate your letter and ongoing concern about water management and, as usual, some really good questions. I've attached the lake level graph to this note as it kind of illustrates what you (and I) are saying.

You are right, the Catalyst license does not currently allow them to start storing water prior to April 1 but it's not Fisheries that provides guidance on water management but, interestingly enough, the BC water authorizations folks who work in the Ministry of Forestry.

Given the way a weir works, it can't start storing before the lake level drops below the top of the weir. If the gates are up or down it doesn't make any difference. If they close the gates before the lake is below the top of the weir it forces more water over the top - it doesn't reduce the flow out of the lake at all. And... this year the lake dropped low in March - but then went way over the top of the weir again in April and did not drop down to a level where storage could begin until well into May. At that time the gates were raised. I have attached the graph that shows this (the black line is lake level and the pinkish horizontal line the elevation of the top of the weir). If we had a higher weir - some of the "excess" of water in April and May could have been saved and let out over the summer - rather than just having it flow over the top of the existing weir until lake levels dropped enough for the weir to be a factor.

If you check it out, you'll see that the black lake level line hits the pinkish weir ht. line around the 10<sup>th</sup> of May - that's when the weir could actually store water - and that's when the gates were closed. I will say that they're not just slammed shut - the river level has to drop slowly enough for fish to get out of side channels so they're not stranded by the river dropping suddenly all at once - so that process takes a few days "wasting" some water in order not to strand fish.

The only way I can see to store more water in the spring to avoid the low flows (and the significant fish kill we experienced for the first time this year) is to have a higher weir so we can start storing earlier - as you suggest.

As always - happy to follow up on this if it would be helpful. I'm slowing down a bit these days but appreciate your interest, knowledge and long history at the lake.

Tom R

One attachment - Scanned by Gmail

2023 Cowichan Lake Level - 2023 (Black) & 2021 (Blue) & 2019 (Green)

