



DECISIONS AND ACTIONS

Steering Committee
Wednesday, November 19, 2014

Victoria Canoe and Kayak Club

Present: Rick Daykin, Alia Johnson, Vicki Blogg, George Blogg, Dorothy Chambers, Craig Elder, Patty MacDonald, Sara Stallard, Doug Critchley, John Noyes, Chris Bos, Jody Watson, Kitty Lloyd

Guests: Brad Drew (CRD Parks); Jacques Sirois (Friends of Victoria Harbour MBS)

DECISIONS			
1	Amend draft letter to municipalities re stakeholder referral role of GWI to include “and major development within the watersheds”		
Next Meeting: 21 January 2015			
ACTIONS		ACTION BY	DUE
1	Send amended letter to municipalities regarding stakeholder referral	Kitty	ASAP
2	Send photos of the signage on the Admirals bridge to Kitty	George	ASAP
3	Talk with Courtney Albert regarding ongoing issues and conflicts with boats and birds, discuss wildlife refuge areas	Jody and Kitty	Soon
4	Write a letter to paddling clubs asking to stay out of creeks during salmon spawn, after letter from anglers’ association received	Kitty/ Jody	When available
5	Provide a copy of wording of the motion and the decision from the Sportfishing Advisory Board, Victoria Area committee, re fishing regulations in Gorge during salmon spawn	Chris	When available
6	Send draft 2015 GWI Work Plan to committee via email, leave on January agenda	Kitty	ASAP
7	Presentation to GWI of Point Ellice Shoreline Restoration project, when ready	Kitty	Spring 2015

INFORMATION

Approval of Agenda: amended to include discussion of salmon fishing in the Gorge during spawning season

Presentation: Elk/Beaver Lake Dam Outlet Upgrade - Brad Drew, CRD Parks Planner

- Brad manages capital upgrades to Parks infrastructure (dams, bridges, trestles)

- Project was to replace a weir installed in 1968 by Saanich, at outflow from Elk/Beaver Lake at head of Colquitz River
- From 1880s – 1920s the lake provided Victoria's water supply. It also supplied water to a sawmill on Colquitz prior to 1880.
- Weir is in a channel blasted into the bedrock, very disturbed site
- Upgrade was required as part of the BC Water Act; the Dam Safety Office is the regulatory agency; also old weir was in very poor condition - starting about 6 years ago, concerns raised about erosion around the weir, and sandbags were deployed to protect the sides of the weir.
- CRD as the water license holder is considered the facility owner
- Important to get a functioning fishway back into the weir system, to allow passage of small and large fish into and out of the lake system; fishway on old weir had stopped functioning about 5 years ago
- Worked with Saanich operations and Northwest Hydraulics (consultants), costs shared by CRD and Saanich
- Maximum flows in the creek are set by Saanich (they have 2 downstream culverts that max out at certain flow levels); minimum flow rate of 57 liters/sec set by Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations
- Lake is very responsive to heavy rainfalls when soils are saturated. New weir is designed to control and minimize large releases; part of an effort to increase regional resilience to climate change.
- Main difference with new structure is the spillway, old weir provided very little control of storm water flows
- During 5 weeks of construction, area was de-watered, and creek flow was diverted and maintained through a flexible pipe
- During de-watering (2-3 times during process), fish were trapped and put back into lake: trout, bass, perch, carp, crayfish, pumpkinseed among species that were trapped
- Environmental monitor on-site throughout project, archaeological monitor for a week
- Under the old weir, pipes dating to 1890s were uncovered – rolled and riveted sheet metal pipes. Hope to eventually have a section of this pipe on public display.
- Staff gauges are on both sides of the weir now to read the lake levels. Weir height was determined after calculating a rule curve for the lake and creek system, as was done for Thetis Lake
- Monitoring will continue to track lake level
- Currently, flow is managed during drought for fish migration and spawning purposes as well as disaster and risk planning, but not for storm water – this could be subject of a future discussion
- Will there be a fish counting fence? An NGO has applied for funding for this, to Habitat Conservation Trust Fund
- Concerns were raised about this weir facilitating the introduction of invasive species into the lake and/or creek, but until the fishway in the old weir became non-functional 5 or 6 years ago, fish were free to come and go between creek and lake system
- The new dam and fishway is permitting free migration of fish up and down the creek as it has done for years with the old weir. The main upgrade has provided a much higher standard for the dam while providing greater water control and fish passage.

Presentation: Friends of Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary - Jacques Sirois

- Described the area encompassed by the Victoria Hbr MBS: from Ten Mile Point to MacCauley Pt, and throughout the whole harbour up to Portage Inlet

- MBS's were originally established to control market hunting for meat and feathers. Victoria Hbr MBS established in 1923, but now is more or less ignored by Canadian Wildlife Service, no enforcement of regulations regarding disturbance to birds in the MBS
- There is an amazing abundance of wildlife right outside harbour limits, including Orcas, elephant seals, a rockfish protection area, as well as the huge variety of bird life
- Jacques would like to "re-invent" the MBS, look into other conservation designations for the area and raise the public profile of this unique urban area that has so much wildlife
- He is a co-warden at Trial Is Ecological Reserve, they've removed many invasive species and there's been a resurgence of owl-clover, a very rare and endangered species
- Other regional wildlife success stories are the return of the purple martin, coho in Colquitz/Craigflower systems, native Olympia oyster, the Garry oak meadow in Uplands Park. Lots of success stories, but nowhere in downtown area that tells the stories to the public. GW Nature House is great, but is rarely open and not very accessible to downtown visitors
- Wants to promote a broad regional vision, including "re-wilding" of the Gorge
- Even the recently updated Oak Bay Official Community Plan makes no mention of the amazing waterfront of that municipality, there are no interpretive signs explaining what you can see from the shoreline there
- Jacques has spoken with MP Murray Rankin – he wants to leave a legacy, and likes the idea of this regional vision
- Has approached the UVic Environmental Law Centre, 16 law students now looking into different possible conservation designations for the area and what level of protection they would confer, advantages of each.
- Maybe a Biosphere Reserve, which might not protect the area, but would raise the awareness and profile of the region
- Tourism industry is moving away from a "take" industry to ecotourism, this initiative would fall in line with that approach
- Jacques has been going to meetings of the Friends of Shoal Harbour MBS (north of Sidney) – very active group, they have established an "All Bufflehead Day" on 15 October – the date that the buffleheads return to Shoal Harbour every year
- Wants to gather photos and post on Facebook site, let people know about the abundance of wildlife here
- Link to FB site: https://www.facebook.com/pages/Friends-of-Victoria-Harbour-Migratory-Bird-Sanctuary/752393481502217?sk=timeline&ref=page_internal

Boating and wildlife issues in the lower Colquitz River

- Many meetings in the past with the Canoe and Kayak Club regarding bird disturbance in the migratory bird sanctuary and creek estuaries in the Gorge Waterway
- PISCES has been dealing with this issue in the Colquitz since 1990s
- Esquimalt Anglers, who maintain the fish counting fence on Craigflower Cr, have photographic evidence of boaters disturbing birds. Someone has cut down a large tree that used to block access to the creek channel so that now the canoes can go right up the river
- VCKC Members' newsletter went to all members of club informing them not to use the Colquitz, but not all members follow club rules
- Many photos from waterfront homeowners of kayakers/outriggers going up the creek and disturbing birds there

- What is the solution? Additional signage is needed to identify it as a migratory bird sanctuary. Saanich has put up a sign under the Admirals Bridge; maybe an official sign from the Canadian Wildlife Service at the mouth of the creek
- Propose a letter be written to paddling clubs and rental companies to try and resolve this. Suggestion that the wording be “GWI will take alternative action if collaboration on this issue cannot be reached”
- Could also have discussion with CWS regarding establishment of wildlife refuge areas in the Gorge, similar to those established on Esquimalt Lagoon a few years ago
- ACTION: Draft a letter as per above, after Chris Bos drafts one from the anglers group

Salmon fishing in the Gorge

- Julian Anderson submitted an email expressing concerns that fishing in the Gorge is happening during the spawning season
- Not illegal to fish in the Gorge, suggested a letter be written from GWI asking for clarification
- C. Bos agrees with Julian’s concern. For some reason a restriction for the Gorge that is usually in effect was not put in place this year by DFO. The anglers are concerned that this regulation did not go into effect this year.
- Chris is head of the Victoria Committee of the Sportfishing Advisory Board (SAB). They are asking for a time and area closure in Portage Inlet during the spawn and migration. This request will give the GWI letter more weight
- Chris will keep the GWI posted
- ACTION: Draft a letter to DFO following receipt of the submission of SAB letter to DFO

Harbours Program Update

- About to submit an application to National Wetland Conservation Fund for 3 years of funding to re-do the harbour surveys (subtidal, intertidal, backshore) done in 2000
- Eligible harbours for this grant (ie non-federal lands) are Esquimalt Lagoon, Portage Inlet and Gorge Waterway though we hope to get all 5 harbours surveyed at the same time
- Several projects within this proposal, including coastal riparian survey, inventory of shoreline trees, tidal marshes and wetlands
- Focus is on eelgrass, Olympia oysters, birds, and will include an assessment of ecosystem shift potential of tidal marsh habitats with climate change and sea level rise – ie coastal resilience to predicted changes
- Mapping will predict future changes, constraints and opportunities
- Work with municipalities, how can we protect areas identified as vulnerable, establish buffer areas; connectivity between marshes
- Repeat the harbour bird surveys of 1999
- Will identify critical areas for restoration and/or protection within the harbours, e.g. waterfront road ends
- Create habitat within the Gorge by adding marsh habitat along the park walkways, adding riprap to increase surface area and rocky habitat in intertidal areas, without having to remove sea walls
- Doug Critchley expressed concern that the surveys proposed will be qualitative, was hoping for something more quantitative and scientific; suggested that we use the Landsat 8 that is used by state of California to see whether this technology could be available to use (use satellite fluorescence imagery to analyze chlorophyll a in nearshore waters)

Coordinator Updates

- GWI work plan for 2015 will be sent out by email for comment, leave on agenda for January meeting
- Meeting schedule for 2015 – continue with bi monthly schedule

Point Ellice Shoreline Restoration

- Project is officially finished, last work party was Oct 26, had lots of help from Greater Victoria Green Team and Rotaract
- Need to submit a final report and will make a presentation to the PEH board
- Could do a speakers series talk if enough interest in this; at least provide a presentation to the GWI in spring.

Partner Updates

- **PISCES** – no report
- **Esquimalt** – planting 80 street trees through BC Hydro grant, new kids' park on Fraser Street, new app for Esquimalt Parks with maps and audio tours, good feedback on Dogs in Parks program, pending approval of council there could be seasonal off-leash areas at Fleming Beach, Saxe Pt and Gorge Park; the Greater Victoria Green Team helped plant 30 trees at Saxe Pt
- **Victoria** – received grant to pay for some of the missing bridge connections on David Foster Way harbour path, part of Trans Canada Trail; planting continues in Cecelia Ravine Park
- **CCSSES** – 771 coho salmon, 3 cutthroat counted so far, rain this weekend should bring more fish through the fence; only 2 dead fish this year – this is very good, usually mortality is around 10% due to pollution from stormwater runoff; otherwise all fish appeared healthy and in good condition; 1141 fish in the Craigflower, 2:1 female to male ratio; 4 school groups this year at the Colquitz counting fence; Haig Brown Fly Fishing Club did some fish sampling at various sites on the Colquitz, they found a low number of juvenile coho in the count, a bit concerning following the highest count recorded in 2013; planning to run the counting program in spring to assess the out-migrating juvenile coho, need to raise \$1500 to fund that; Tillicum Mall has come forward to help by providing a storage room for their gear
- **FoSC** – have only seen 5 fish officially in Swan Creek, 10 anecdotally, planting of native plants along creek
- **GTCA** - community garden in Gorge Park is slowly progressing
- **BGCA**: Great turn-out for invasive species removal events in Cecelia Ravine; Sara also reported that there is potentially some new funding available to revive the South Island Aquatic Stewardship Society, which has been dormant for a couple of years

Adjournment: 9:45pm