

Roundtable Report
2023/03 SEHAB meeting
Paul Cipywnyk, North Side Fraser Burnaby to Mission
CA: Isaac Nelson

Summary

- 1. Any issues that are affecting groups and their projects that are directly related to DFO**

Ongoing issue of coho prespawn mortality.

Development projects are having negative impacts on watersheds and creeks, and there is continuing frustration at a lack of cooperation between various levels of government.

Many groups are reporting ongoing pollution events, some resulting in serious fish kills, ranging from sewage overflows to construction sediment to release of toxins into storm drains, and are frustrated by slow or no response from ECCC. There is continuing lack of coordination between DFO and ECCC.

- 2. Any positive things that are directly related to DFO**

Groups report good communication and relations with their CA and tech.

- 3. Any things coming up that DFO should know about**

Nothing in particular

- 4. Any issues that are affecting groups and their projects that are related to other agencies.**

Concerns about homeless encampments creating dangerous conditions for volunteer streamkeepers to operate in. There is difficulty in getting municipalities, police, and various levels of government to tackle this issue.

Some groups mentioned getting senior levels of government to increase the level of fines that can be levied by municipalities, as municipalities tend to be more responsive to local pollution events.

There are some concerns about how reconciliation may affect the work of volunteers, as additional voices come to various tables.

Group reports

Stoney Creek Environment Committee

These are some of the concerns from Stoney Creek Environment Committee - some are local and others concern the wider community in matters that adversely affect all of us as stream keepers.

1. Often we have pollution events in our watershed and report these to all the respective authorities and we are spending far too many hours reporting and following up on these events. Often the respective cities don't trace where the pollution comes from and when they do they won't tell SCEC who the polluters are. The maximum fine that can be issued by cities or municipalities is only \$500. This is regulated by the province and although we have been lobbying hard to try to get the fines increased, it's extremely difficult and challenging.

We see a great need for DFO to take the lead in helping influence the provincial ministry to change these restrictions. \$500 is of little significance to a large developer. Compared to other countries we're far behind in regulations. On researching this I found that once a fine has been issued in other countries stream keepers are then permitted to sue the polluter for the damage caused, as well as for punitive damages.

Some polluters have been caught disposing of cooking oil in catch basins, which has had the effect of increasing the Ecoli readings to 240,000 as found when we had the creek water regularly tested by an independent lab. As a result, Coquitlam again fined the polluter but we don't know who they are. The city did have flyers made up and distributed to local restaurants to try and educate them.

Another major concern to our group is the practice of concrete trucks washing down on the side of the road after doing a pour. We have taken numerous photos of trucks doing this and have scraped concrete out of catch basins. The resulting high pH from this event kills fish. We have taken measures to meet with Concrete BC and the cities of Burnaby and Coquitlam, and have worked towards education and resolution, but again we feel that enforcement from DFO is sorely lacking. Once again, the stream keepers are at the end of the line spending their limited volunteer hours dealing with these regular occurrences.

Pollution events are classified differently, so investigations can fall to DFO or ECC Canada. ECC Canada is so under-manned that it's impossible to get much follow up from them. This needs to be fixed.

Likewise, we often find that DFO is under-staffed. For example, in habitat assessment it's difficult for their representative to service all the requests from every stream keeper group.

2. Another huge concern for us is encampments throughout our watershed. Some are occupied whilst others are abandoned. The city won't clean these up so it's left to stream keepers, since the RCMP officer died from engagement with one of these people. There's a definite threat to public safety and DFO does nothing to help aid or assist stream keepers in helping to solve this very serious concern. We have seen toxic waste, gas cylinders, and other refuse strewn all along sensitive habitat and we can't go in there as no one wants remove it. I made a presentation to our city's Environmental Committee about this to try and get something done; that was in February and we're still at a standstill. If DFO enforcement was to ask the RCMP for an eviction order then they can be served and removed. Unfortunately, the current situation fails the general public and stream keepers, who far too often are left to clean up the sites after the damage is done and the occupants have moved on, leaving mounds of garbage, tents, belongings and stolen goods.

There was a recent story in the Chilliwack local news about this topic, and there was much discussion among stream keepers at our recent Roundtable Meeting; it seems that every group is now dealing with this issue. The inaction has to STOP and DFO needs to get enforcement happening to protect these watersheds.

<https://burnabybeacon.com/p/abandoned-encampments-stoney-creek>

3. In the summer last year, I had someone knock on my door asking if I wanted to buy sockeye salmon. All of these fish were taken from the Fraser River illegally. There were new posts daily on Craig's List daily, advertising salmon sales, from Boston Bar, Chilliwack, Richmond, Vancouver and the North Shore during the summer run.

SCEC sent an e-mail to two senior DFO staff members - Rebecca Reid and Adam Silverman – to ask how many First Nations were successfully prosecuted for illegally selling salmon. To date, no one has answered this simple question. I even went as far as going to my MP and sent him a copy of my e-mail, and his office hasn't got a reply on this either.

I know of one DFO enforcement officer who saw the same group of individuals three times netting fish. If the ever-dwindling Fraser River salmon aren't managed as a conservation priority rather than left to partisan politics they are doomed. Tolerating this type of abuse is a slap in the face to those of us who volunteer hundreds of hours every year to protect and enhance the resource.

While mainstream media did not want to touch the illegal fish sales issue, BC Wildlife Federation and the Fishing With Rod website brought it to the general public's attention.

4. Following on from this, many in the stream keeping community have considerable worry and serious concern that the whole dynamics of fisheries management is seeing all our efforts being pushed aside and go unrecognized, instead being replaced by another level of engagement where management will be dictated by First Nations, while stream keepers who have been working diligently in their respective watersheds for many years will be forced out of the picture.

SCEC coordinates with the cities of Burnaby and Coquitlam, DFO, and all the other parties who have a right of way. We have been caring for, improving, and successfully bringing back salmon to our watershed since the mid 1990's. Last year we saw over 488 coho and 1,600 chum come back to our watershed. This illustrates that we know our watershed and know what we are doing. We have advocated for habitat improvements resulting in fish being brought back to areas they weren't able to access for sixty years.

To force us down a path where we are expected to be involved in yet another layer of dialogue and discussion with people who know far less about the watershed than we do is counter-productive and will create an unnecessary drain on our already overstretched volunteer hours and finances.

Hatchery Coordinator, PCDHFC

Hatchery: Grist Goeson Memorial Hatchery (Port Coquitlam District Hunting & Fishing Club)

Successes and Projects

1. Supplied Coho parr for the UBC Tide Gate Study currently underway.
2. Hatchery Software: Communications with Isaac Nelson and Scott Ducharme are ongoing towards achieving the vision and development of online Software for Local Hatcheries. The intention is to allow access to, once developed and tested, and use of the online software with all local hatcheries. A prototype is in the beginning stages of development, however funding is required to allow a Full Stack Web Development Team (FFSWD) complete the project with our input. I originally started the project with BCIT in fall of 2021, and soon realized that for quality, continuity, and a reasonable completion date, a full time FSWD team is required.

I really believe tools like this software will be transformative for local hatcheries and ALL Stakeholders in terms of;

1. Delivery of focused daily **Operational Quality** through improved Management and day to day decisions.
2. Promote **Daily Accountability**, "allowing average people to deliver Excellence" by all Stakeholders.
3. Delivery of and **Standardizing** Operational Processes (SOP's).
4. Plan and Execute - **Prioritize** "tasks" and ALL Stakeholder resources across ALL hatcheries.
5. Decision Support Tools- Improve ALL Stakeholders ability to **"take action"** on priorities.
6. **Create** Fish History - full data integration from Broodstock Capture through Fry Release for fish stocks.
7. **Eliminate** multiple layer Stakeholder "same" data entry.
8. **Educate & Improve** Training, Skill Levels, Cross-Functional capabilities (ie. training modules)

Concerns, Issues

From a watershed perspective I am unaware of any current short-term habitat challenges. GGMH members have a difficult time understanding some of the WUP water flow levels in the Coquitlam River, especially with transitions from heavy to lower levels of water flow, at times the transition is abrupt versus gradual. Concerns surround the impact of water flows, especially during important seasonal time periods that affect spawning, outmigration, fish stock retention, etc. and topics of discussion surround the impact on redds being wiped out, fry being trapped in pools, or streams supporting the main river.

Relations with Various Levels of Government

My experience in dealing with multiple levels of government is limited. I am part of the KRSP group, which involves DFO CA's & Specialists, Metro Vancouver, BC Hydro, Kwikwetlem First Nations, local stakeholders, and a Coquitlam municipal representative.

Overall the representatives on this committee are committed, diverse, and well versed, with various experiences and expertise. Reaching consensus can be slow, sometimes very slow, then commissioning and execution on decisions can be very very slow, with so many layers of approval. Overall theme...SLOW!

DFO Staff

Isaac Nelson

Community Advisor, North Fraser

Eric Kukulowicz

Enhancement Support Technician

Both Isaac and Eric are great to work with. Their levels of confidence, skills, work ethic, cooperative natures, responsiveness and professionalism need to be acknowledged!

Byrne Creek Streamkeepers Society**Spawner Report for 2022:**

Our run started late, and extended late.

COHO:

Female Not Spawned	6
Female Spawned	10
Male Not Spawned	10
Male Spawned	13

TOTAL COHO

Female 16 with 10 confirmed spawned

Male 23 with 13 likely spawned

CHUM:

Female Not spawned

Female Spawned 4

Male Not Spawned

Male Spawned 4

TOTAL CHUM

Female 4 with 4 confirmed spawned

Male 4 with 4 confirmed spawned

TOTAL SPAWNERS of both species 47

TOTAL CONFIRMED SPAWNED FEMALES of both species 14

First fish October 25, 2022

Last fish processed January 7, 2023

Fish Kill:

We had a serious fish kill that wiped out everything in the creek in late January. Something elevated the pH in the creek for nearly an entire day. The City of Burnaby notified us of the spike, and we went out and counted hundreds of dead fish, frogs, etc. We have not heard if the source was identified.

Fry:

We were not sure if eggs in the gravel survived the elevated pH flow that wiped out the creek in January. However, we did spot half a dozen chum fry on March 9, though we have not noticed any fry since.

Foreshore Park

A major issue for many of our members this year was a City of Burnaby proposal to remove parkland in Fraser Foreshore Park to build a composting waste facility. The plan would have destroyed rare wetlands, and off-channel habitat that was enhanced over 40 years ago. While the site was not in our watershed, it was nearby, and many of our members dedicated dozens of hours of volunteer time to fight this initiative. Other concerned citizens pitched in, and we had plenty of print and TV media exposure. The City finally capitulated and said it would look for another site.