

# **Nanaimo River Watershed Roundtable**

## **Zoom Meeting**

**July 22, 2020 1:00 pm.**

## **Minutes**

In attendance: Paul Chapman (NALT), Kayla Harris (NRWR Coordinator, Andrew McNaughton (Snuneymuxw), Bob Colclough (NR Estuary Log Storage Association), Nick Leone (DFO-Restoration), Steven Baillie (DFO-Stock Assessment), Louise Shuker (Community), Erica Blake (DFO- Community Advisor), Julie Pisani (Regional District of Nanaimo, DWWP), Jean-Michel Hanssens (Community Stewardship Advocate), June Ross (VIWCC), Douglas Wood (Port of Nanaimo-Health, Safety, and Environmental manager), Cantara (DFO), Captain Satinder Singh (Port of Nanaimo, VP Marine Operations and Harbour Master), Honey Nampack (Harmac Pacific), Pam Jorgenson (Mosaic Forest Management), Mike Squire (City of Nanaimo, Manager of Water Resources).

### **1) Brief Introductions**

### **2) Approval of Agenda**

- Water Quality Discussions was added under New Business.
- Benthic Invertebrate Monitoring moved above DFO Activities on Nanaimo Chinook.

### **3) Meeting Chair – Andrew McNaughton**

### **4) Approval of June 24, 2020 meeting minutes with amendments**

- Draft Minutes from June 24, 2020 approved with no additional changes.

### **5) Business Arising from Notes**

- **Financial Update** – Paul Chapman
  1. Balance at last meeting was \$4490. Of the \$4490, \$225 is allocated for transportation for Rivers Day events.
  2. Kayla has submitted hours for coordinator hours for \$1400 for time worked from January to June.
  3. The remaining budget for the group to use is \$2865
- **General Roundtable Updates** – Roundtable
  1. **Invasive Species Workshop** – Louise Shuker

- Louise Shuker provided an update on Invasive Species Workshop. Louise reached out to the Nanaimo Cedar Farmer's Institute committee members regarding the Invasive Species Workshop. The consensus among the committee members was to continue to postpone the event until a later date due to COVID-19.

## **2. RDN DWWP Update – Data Collection – Julie Pisani**

- Julie Pisani provided an update on the Regional District of Nanaimo's Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Program's annual training where fourteen different stewardship groups and volunteers from across the region participate in annual training water quality sampling to provincial protocols. The participants are refreshed on how to use the turbidity meters and YSI meters for conductivity, dissolved oxygen, and temperature. The training has been done in small-group training sessions outside. The first session was rolled out on Monday July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2020. The next sessions were scheduled to take place on Friday July 24, 2020 with six more sessions scheduled for July 27<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>, and 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020.
- Quennell Lake Watershed Stewards are a new stewardship group joining the network. They are starting monitoring for water quality this year at two locations on outlets of Quennell Lake.
- A new site for water quality monitoring will also be added to Richard's Creek this year.
- Other locations currently monitored in the Nanaimo River watershed include Beck Creek, Holden Creek, Nanaimo River and Chase River. NALT, Quennell Lake Watershed Stewards, Vancouver Island University are the three lead stewardship groups performing the sampling.

## **3. RDN DWWP Update – Outreach – Julie Pisani**

- Many activities for the DWWP have been put on hold following Water to Earth Month in March and April. All activities for Water to Earth Month were able to be moved to a virtual format during that time. Activities were directed to wind down in May due to COVID-19. Currently awaiting direction from upcoming RDN Board meeting in addition to internal discussions to determine how to proceed. There is still a Rivers Day event that the City of Nanaimo wishes to organize. Currently working on ideas for virtual or distanced activities to do with awareness of rivers and creeks within the area.

## **4. NALT Beck Creek Outreach – Paul Chapman**

- Community discussions on water quality and sources of water quality issues on Beck Creek. NALT is hiring a Stewardship Coordinator for the end of August/early September. Once the position is filled NALT, they will work on a plan to continue with the outreach in a COVID-19-safe manner.
- **Port of Nanaimo Oil Spills and Slicks Update** – Captain Satinder Singh
  - i. Captain Satinder Singh of the Port of Nanaimo provided an update on proposed monitoring of hydrocarbon contamination in the harbour by Nanaimo Port Authority. The oil spill response that was proposed to the group has costs associated with it.
  - ii. Nanaimo Port Authority is willing to participate. Port of Nanaimo currently has cameras on harbour, conducts patrols on land and water, conduct frequent dock checks for marine vessels in the harbour, and enforces a standard of vessel care with owners of vessels within the harbour.
  - iii. NRWR was interested in learning more about the impacts on oil spills and slicks in the harbour and to learn more about what can be done to address these issues.
  - iv. The program is intended to be a pilot project. The Port Authority has the infrastructure in place to operate the pilot project by utilizing the Port's radar to monitor spills in the harbour. The spills would be able to be seen in a timely manner to help mitigate the issue and maintain harbour cleanliness. Port Authority would be able to respond initially to spills. The Canadian Coast Guard is responsible for the spills. In Canada, the polluter pays for the spill clean up through insurance. The Rutter system costs \$1500 per month for rental costs. Over the period of a year the rental costs would add up. The project would be tested through a pilot project over 6 months.
  - v. Some concerns regarding jurisdictional responsibilities were raised regarding oils spills and cleanup.
  - vi. Additional comments from Captain Singh: The Canadian Coast Guard (CCG) oversees industry's operational role in the regime, ensures industry's appropriate response to marine pollution incidents, and is responsible for national spill response management. In the event of a spill, the closest regional

CCG station will be called. If the polluter is willing and able to respond, CCG oversees the response as the Federal Incident Commander. If the polluter is unknown, unwilling, or unable to respond appropriately, CCG takes charge of the response as On-scene Commander.

- vii. Further discussions will occur outside of the meeting and an update will be provided to the group at a later time.
- viii. **Action Item:** Nick Leone proposed to put a list of questions that can be put forward to Captain Singh to address at a later date.
- **Benthic Invertebrate Monitoring Project** – Julie Pisani
  - i. Julie Pisani provided an update on the Benthic Invertebrate Monitoring Project that has recently begun to be assembled in partnership with Snuneymuxw First Nation, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Ministry of Environment, Regional District of Nanaimo Drinking Water and Watershed Protection Program, and the City of Nanaimo. The project aims to start a monitoring program for Benthic Invertebrates on the Nanaimo River and its tributaries.
  - ii. Benthic invertebrates are the insects within the water that the salmon eat and are an important food source within the aquatic ecosystem. By sampling benthic invertebrates, we are able to gain a better understanding of water quality that is broader than what water chemistry data can provide. By sampling the benthic invertebrates, we gain a better understanding of productivity in the river and potentially trace to sources of contamination on the river. It is also an important indicator of pre-restoration. The practice is to sample invertebrates present prior to restoration and after restoration has been completed to observe how those aquatic communities are being enhanced and improving over time.
  - iii. Currently, roles and responsibilities have been delineated and the group is mapping out a sampling program. Management falls to Ministry of Environment with Rosie Barlak as she is the person within the group that is certified with the federal biological monitoring program. Locations throughout the upper and lower watershed has been proposed and are being reviewed for reconnaissance. Once this has been approved, the group will need to work with Mosaic for sampling in the upper watershed regions.
  - iv. The date for reconnaissance has been flagged for August 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020. The group will be looking at two sampling teams for 2020. The long-term vision is for 2021 to have a community monitoring component with training for community stewards to engage with the benthic monitoring, particularly

Snuneymuxw First Nation community members as there has been expressed interest.

- v. 2020 is about mapping out sampling locations and collecting a first year of baseline data. This would be a multi-year project that involves partnerships among various agencies. Sampling will take place at the end of August and early September.
- **DFO Activities on Nanaimo Chinook – Steve Baillie**
  - i. DFO had a number of questions for the productivity of the system and conditions for the growth of the chinook in the Nanaimo River. Wanted to compare the upper watershed above of Second Lake—main stem versus the tributaries because of the cold water influence of Fourth Lake as well as the addition to sites below First Lake Area where rearing will take place for the majority of September run chinook. There was also an area below the highway to encompass the rearing area of fall run chinook. Several proposed sites were selected, from which two sites for each of the four areas would be used.
  - ii. DFO has been doing some monitoring of the summer run chinook into the river. Last week spot counts recently occurred at borehole area and junction pool at the south Nanaimo River. Total enumeration of those spot checks was 140 adults 262 jacks. This shows that the summer run is still relatively healthy for this year.
  - iii. DFO budgets have not been set yet. Addressing data gaps is yet to be determined. Funding will become available although it is not yet set out for field activities. DFO is looking at chinook migration paths at the borehole and white rapids area. Electronic monitoring to observe fish and associate this date with discharge levels to gain a better understanding of what flows are and are not barriers for the chinook.
  - iv. DFO wants to address more data gaps based on the habitat report. This work is still underway. An updated habitat report has not been received yet as it is not yet complete. DFO will receive a preview before the updated report is complete. DFO is continuing to work on the recovery potential assessment for Cosewic. DFO field activities are still restricted at this time.
- **Nanaimo Estuary Geese Fencing Update – Andrew McNaughton**

- i. Andrew McNaughton provided an update on the Nanaimo Estuary Geese Fencing project that has been underway. Recently geese molt-season occurred and Tim Clairemont of Guardians of the Mid-Island Estuaries conducted a count between Sooke and Qualicum and found 1120 molt-geese which is a very low number. Of the 1120 geese, 579 geese were recorded between Lantzville and Qualicum. Presumably, the Nanaimo estuary will be hit the hardest. Tim has lost his two employees and will discuss these issues in August.
  - ii. A brief presentation may be provided to the NRWR regarding the concerns and status of the project in the future.
- **Mission and Vision** – Kayla Harris
  - i. Due to time constraints, Kayla will be drafting the mission and vision statements to circulate to the group based on the comments and feedback that were provided prior to the meeting. The group decided that versus a draft being done up by Kayla that time would be allowed for those that had contributed to the Google documents to explain why they had written what they had...where it had come from. The mission and vision will be added to the top of the next meeting agenda for review and discussion.
  - ii. There was also discussion about potentially scheduling a separate meeting in the September for the Mission and Vision as part of the Strategic Plan to be completed.
- **Berm Removal on the Nanaimo River** – Nick Leone
  - i. Additional discussion occurred regarding work that is being done to remove some historical berms on the Nanaimo River. The berms were constructed nearly 100 years ago to support various forms of development near the river estuary at that time. There have been affects to tidal flux and normal estuarine dynamics in terms of freshwater entry and upland tidal movement. The removal of the berms is to initiate a natural estuarine process for the estuary and tidal environments.

## 6) New Business

- **Water Quality discussion** – Paul Chapman & Julie Pisani

- Water quality issues went to social media regarding the swimming hole under the Duke Point overpass on the Nanaimo River. There was a report to the Ministry of Environment regarding a spill. Ministry of Environment is the authority to deal with pollution and spills in watercourses. They called the RDN to see if they had any infrastructure in the area that may be related to the spill. There is no wastewater infrastructure in that area so that is ruled out.
- RDN recommended that the Ministry of Environment contact Main Road and Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure that deals with rural roads and drainage in rural areas. The Ministry of Environment reached out to Main Road which was found to have been doing a culvert flushing on Aikenhead Creek which is a tributary to Nanaimo River located upstream of the swimming hole. Enforcement and compliance rests with the Ministry of Environment and Main Road and their practices for culvert flushing. Communications to the public will continue.
- Island Health is the authority for recreational water for swimming beaches and swimming holes. Island Health has been made aware of the issue. There are only a few beaches that are on Island Health's regular sampling list. In the past, RDN has advocated for certain locations to be added to their sampling regime.
- For Island Health, there has been an issue with lack of resources; however, there may be a case to advocate for this particular swimming location on the river to be added to their sampling program. Island Health would be responsible for any signage and communications.
- Snuneymuxw First Nation needs to be notified sooner in the future for any spills or contamination.

#### 7) Next Meeting:

- **Next meeting is set for Thursday August 20, 2020 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm.**
- Suggestions were made to make the meeting dates for the **third Thursday of each month**. The group agreed that this would be suitable for ease of scheduling.
- The shorter one-hour meetings were agreed to continue.
- **Action Item:** Andrew McNaughton has volunteered his Zoom account for the next meeting. Julie Pisani can provide her Zoom account as a back up if needed.

#### 8) Adjourned: 2:20pm