

Nicola Lake Working Group - Meeting Notes

Topic: Agriculture

Date & Time: December 3rd 2012 from 12 to 4 PM

Location: Merritt Civic Centre – 1950 Mamette Avenue, Merritt, BC

Attendance: Vern Latremouille, Herb Graham, Barb Jackson, Michael McDonald, Guy Rose, Stewart Murray, Allison Guichon, Tracy Wimbush, Lee Hesketh (guest), Harry Sandur, Arnie Narcisse, Mike Simpson, Tracy Thomas

Regrets: Randy Murray, Lorna Latremouille, Matt Williams, Frank Rizzardo, Kim Poupard, Kim DeRose, Neil Todd, Peter Schmid, Jo-Ann Fox, Upper Nicola Band, Nooaitch Band, Susan Roline, Trevor Owen, Ian Gordon

Objectives

- Increase knowledge and awareness around agriculture related issues, solutions and management practices
- Approve previous meeting notes
- Review the second draft of the *Nicola Lake Plan*
- Add or adjust *Nicola Lake Plan* objectives/action items based on today's presentation

1. Welcome & Introductions

Mike and Tracy welcomed Nicola Lake Working Group members, along with guest speaker Lee Hesketh to the meeting.

2. Agriculture related recommendations

The Group reviewed agriculture related recommendations from WUMP, it should be noted that most of the recommendations could be related to agriculture in some way, ie. collecting rain water, however the Group only looked at agriculture specific recommendations including:

- Revisit and identify potential new storage dams given water deficit
- Encourage farms to undertake nutrient management plans
- Encourage agriculture, mining, and other industries to adopt best management practices around water use and conservation
- Undertake specific studies, contaminant inventory and storage sites assessment

3. Lee Hesketh

Lee was brought up and continues to be involved in the family ranch in the North Okanagan. He has been doing work around habitat restoration since the mid-80s and has been working with BC Cattlemen's Association since 1999, delivering the Farmland Riparian Interface

Stewardship Program (FRISP) as a liaison between government agencies and the agriculture sector. Generally, he works with people to improve land management practices and works with agencies to help them understand ranching and ranchers. He explained that ranchers generally have a different perspective from urban folks as ranchers tend to stay on their land for generations; this long term perspective affects decision making on the land. Lee's family has a goal and obligation to manage their property for the long term. Regarding cattle and watersheds, there is no silver bullet and the answer to most questions is, "It depends".

Scientists are now able to use DNA to identify where bacteria (including *E.coli*) come from. A graduate student from the University of Victoria studied how to identify the source of bacteria present in water. A source study was conducted in the North Okanagan (Vernon) due to high *E.coli* in water samples. Vernon's drinking water is drawn from below Coldstream Ranch; the Ranch was blamed for the *E.coli* in the water samples. The bacteria source testing showed that only 30% of the bacteria came from livestock and the remaining 70% came from dogs, horses, and birds (ducks/geese). We have to be careful to make sure we know what the problem is.

Ranching has a bad track record but that has greatly improved over the past 50 years. The care for the land that ranches and rancher provide needs to be recognized; ranchers protect large tracts of land. There are still problems and there can always be improvement. The Environmental Farm Plan (EFP) process has helped improve practices, there are many in place. Writing an EFP is voluntary though still highly effective; we need more funding for EFPs. In addition, we need the urban community to support the rural areas, food should be a high priority, healthy food is essential for healthy people, and this is a health issue.

The first question in this area should be to identify what the problem is in Nicola Lake. If a specific problem hasn't been identified then there is no clear direction to take. First you need to look at what is actually happening in the Lake.

Ranches in the Nicola Valley have taken great strides to improve their production systems. When the International Cattlemen's Association toured this area in summer 2012, all ranchers spoke about the environment. Ecological goods and services hold great value to society in general. Land managers/ranchers can make management decisions that greatly affect ecological issues. There are changes to the federal *Fisheries Act* and the Provincial *Water Act*; we do not know how those changes will affect our industry.

Other interesting points:

- *E. coli* 157 is deadly to humans, especially when an immune system is weakened, that is why it is important to know if bacteria from cattle are present in water
- High precipitation events will cause high run off, it is important to consider this during the selection of feeding/watering sites

- Are the riparian corridors healthy? If so, there will be generally higher *E.coli* because there are more animals attracted to the water due to the plants
- Waste material, manure, can be managed positively and used on the land base
- Funding Example - Dave Zehnder in the Central Kootenay Regional District (CKRD) created an environmental tax for the land base, collecting \$25 from every land title within the CKRD. The funds go back into the community rather than into a general fund.
- We need stable long term funding, there are matching programs available and solutions to help groups (like this one) to get off the ground
- FRISP workshops are being set up – Lee and others will be making presentations to different communities on a speaking tour this winter – this may be something that this group is interested in attending
- Need to understand the indicators as to whether your management planning decisions are effective and be ready to make changes if they are not
- Everybody can use land management planning skills including urban people, dandelion control, lawn watering, dog walking etc.
- Lee handed out copies of *Cattle - Grazing Our Watersheds* (available at <http://www.cattlemen.bc.ca/docs/cattle%20grazing%20in%20watersheds.pdf>)
- Lee handed out copies of *Livestock, Drinking Water and Fish* (available at http://www.cattlemen.bc.ca/docs/livestock_drinking_water_brochure.pdf)

In summary, Lee's lessons for the Nicola Lake Working Group were:

- Don't point fingers – we're all in this together
- Use good science – don't fix a problem that isn't there
- Maintain agriculture – large tracts of agricultural land can maintain and steward the environment if done well

4. Approval of the November 14th meeting notes

- The meeting notes were approved, and they will be posted on the website

5. Feedback on *Nicola Lake Plan*

- The working group collectively reviewed the second draft of the Nicola Lake Plan and made changes directly into the document.
- **ACTION:** Tracy will “clean up” the draft Nicola Lake Plan based on the revisions made during the meeting and send out the third draft to Working Group members

6. Add or revise *Nicola Lake Plan*, agriculture related objectives

- The working group would like to have water testing conducted on Nicola Lake to provide baseline data for improved water quality

7. Fraser Basin Council Update

- Since the last meeting, Tracy has been updating the Nicola Lake Plan, working on Working Group membership, seeking updates to WUMP from the province, TNRD and City of Merritt, and planning upcoming meetings and workshops. Arnie Narcisse joined the Working Group, representing the Lower Nicola Band. Arnie stated that first nations need to be consulted on future activities and any resulting impacts need to be accommodated.
- The Eurasian watermilfoil workshop will be hosted in the Fraser Valley on Friday February 15, 2013 and videoconferencing will be set up in Merritt. If NLWG participants want to attend in person that is possible.
- No word on the larger funding application that the TNRD submitted to Union of BC Municipalities yet

8. Next Meeting – January

- **ACTION: Tracy will send out a doodle poll for the January meeting**

4:00 PM Meeting Adjourned

Action Items

Item	Completion Date	Current Status
Tracy - set up water quality presentation/speaker	January 7th	underway
Tracy – set up foreshore development presentation/speaker	January 15th	not started
Tracy – set up Eurasian watermilfoil workshop	February 15th	underway
Jo-Ann Fox – send out “herbicide in water use” information to Group	January 1 st	underway
Tracy – compile current status of WUMP recommendations from Provincial and Regional Governments and send out to Group	December 15 th	underway
Tracy – conduct literature review of WUMP studies, fisheries data etc. relating to the Nicola Plan	January 15th	not started
Randy Murray & Susan Roline - provide an update on the status of WUMP recommendations made to the TNRD and City of Merritt respectively	December 15 th	underway
Tracy and Mike – set up spring public meeting	April 15th	not started