

2016 President's Report

The purpose of the Quadra Island Salmon Enhancement Society is to protect, maintain and restore Quadra Island salmon and their watersheds. To this end, the Society's two main roles include 1) maintaining, monitoring and enhancing watersheds and fish habitat, and 2) providing public education and raising awareness. Our last AGM was held on April 9, 2015. Since that time, our group of enthusiastic volunteers have worked on many projects to support our mandate. It's easy to overlook how much this group of volunteers accomplished in a year, so the following review is a good reminder of our achievements.

We continued to discuss the future of the counting fence at the outlet of Village Bay Lakes. The QISES board and other concerned members came together in February to discuss various options for the fence. The present system is very labour intensive during adult salmon migration, with twice daily visits by committed individuals, particularly Larry Hafemeister, Lauren Miller and Pete Calverley. There are also safety issues since the fence must be accessed by boat twice a day during all kinds of weather. We continue to explore a better alternative in 2016.

Good rapport was maintained with relevant agencies regarding issues of mutual interest. We continue to review and comment on any TimberWest blocks that may have stream issues. At our request, Emcon again cleaned the large woody debris blockage at the Hyacinthe Bay Road culverts, and the Walcan road crew maintained the large culvert at the Reed Lake outlet.

The annual release of coho fry from the pond at the EcoCenter took place as usual in late spring, when 500 new fry from the Quinsam Hatchery were added to the pond, thanks to DFO and volunteers Al and Doug. Unfortunately, the coho fry succumbed to drought conditions when the pipe from McKercher Creek feeding into the pond became plugged, despite the herculean efforts of Roto Rooter and QISES volunteers to remedy the situation.

The EcoCenter was open during July and August with the help of HRDC funding. Gina Nickoloff did an excellent job of staffing the center, welcoming and educating 270 visitors. She also attended the summer farmer's market to promote the society. A special thanks to Eileen Sowerby and Lawrie Bowles for orientation and supervision of Gina during the summer. Another new volunteer, Max Vanry, helped out at the EcoCenter and in various other capacities. Thank you to John Fraser for building bookshelves for the EcoCenter to display our book and report collection.

As usual, the drought-proofing program on Hyacinthe Creek was active, and again proved it's worth helping to maintain at least minimal flow during the summer for both coho fry and trout. It was a tough summer for coho fry and resident trout. With little precipitation in May and June, there was no reserve for the summer months. By July, water levels were already very low. The beaver activity at Reed Lake and site #3 wetland along the Walcan Road was again an asset. We attempted to take advantage of their water storage during the dry summer. Quadra streams fed by wetlands seemed to

have the greatest advantage for maintaining flow, although Hyacinthe Creek fell to very low levels a few times. We are concerned that potentially large numbers of coho fry and resident trout were lost when smaller feeder streams dried up completely.

In late summer, Gary Brettnacher carried out fry trapping in Drew Creek, capturing and releasing surprisingly healthy numbers of coho fry. Trails and roads were cleared to access Saxon and Luoma Creeks for logjam clearing and restoration work. Eileen Sowerby has 'adopted' Kutala Creek in the vicinity of Leishmans and Whalebone Roads, carrying out inspections and fry trapping on this small fishbearing stream.

The Granite Bay group of keen volunteers was busy carrying out invertebrate surveys, water quality studies and juvenile sampling, and generally keeping a careful watch on the Granite Bay Creek watershed.

Many volunteers were out on the streams weekly in October and November counting salmon returns in Granite, Drew, Village Bay, Open Bay and part of Hyacinthe Creeks. Chum and coho returns remained generally good for another year, with a record number of chum returning to Open Bay Creek. A surprising number of pinks turned up again in McKercher and Hyacinthe Creeks, as well as a new pink return at Open Bay Creek. The counting fence at Village Bay Lakes was operational, with volunteers counting and releasing coho and chum into the lake system. The number of coho returning to Village Bay Lakes was down compared to recent years.

Thank you to Frank Gleeson and Bruce Bjornson for continuing to manage the Society's treasurer activities, and to Laurie Brydon for her role in the year-end statement. And another thank you to Lesley-Ann Hart for updating our website. Total volunteer time given to the society was approximately 900 recorded hours. I'd like to thank our volunteers, and particularly the board of directors, who gave many hours of their time attending meetings and stepping up when work needed to be done. For more information about QISES, visit our website at quadralsalmon.ca.

Janis McLean