

2018 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. In 2017 our group of enthusiastic volunteers worked on several 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.

In January, QISES hosted an evening presentation given by speaker Dave Clough at the community hall. Dave entertained and informed us about salmon, taking care of their habitat, and how local streamkeepers can get involved. We held a Streamkeepers weekend workshop in May for 16 participants, led by Mr. Clough.

In February, QISES Board members participated in an afternoon planning session, with discussions about future projects and issues. One issue that remains unresolved is the demolition of the old office and the superstructure that covers the aluminum tanks, left over from the hatchery days and no longer in use. We have been attempting to sell/give away the tanks, which must go before the roof overhead can be torn down.

In March, QISES and Sierra Club hosted an open house in which TimberWest presented their Forest Stewardship Plan to the community. Rick Monchak from TimberWest spoke about the Plan and answered questions from the audience.

Our major project this year was the installation of a video camera, supported by a generator and battery system, which allows us to view and count returning chum and coho without holding them up at a closed fence. Supporting infrastructure was also built, including a floating dock and ramp for easier access. The new system was used in the 2017 fall count, and meets our expectations.

DFO continues to support the society with an annual grant, as well as giving us on-the-ground support. DFO Community Advisor Stacey Larsen's help is ongoing in a variety of ways.

Good rapport was maintained with other 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 upstream end of the Hyacinthe Bay Road culverts.

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. Drought conditions were extreme near the end of summer and early fall. A small beaver dam at the outlet of Mud Lake was beneficial in keeping the lake level high, which we were able to access through waterlines to augment downstream flow through the dry period. Due to the extreme drought conditions, the EcoCenter pond which supports coho fry dried up. The water level in McKercher Creek was so low that we were unable to siphon water from the creek to the pond, but we did manage to salvage many of the coho fry and release them into McKercher Creek.

The Granite Bay group of keen volunteers was busy carrying out water quality studies, fry trapping, tracking and graphing rainfall, and using stream gauge readings to measure discharge. The group keeps a careful watch on the Granite Bay Creek watershed. As well as Granite Creek, a volunteer also carried out fry trapping on Kutala Creek (Leishman's Road).

At the EcoCenter, we installed brass wall plaques to honour special donors Gay Rogers and Hilary Stewart. We had HRDC funding in place to hire a summer student, but received no applications for the position. Therefore, the Center remained closed for the summer. Board member Eileen Sowerby attended the Saturday farmer's market for several weeks to promote the society, with T-shirts, bumper stickers, pamphlets and children's books available for sale.

Many volunteers were out on the streams weekly in October and November counting salmon returns in Granite, Drew, Village Bay, Open Bay, Hyacinthe and Klunis (Heriot Bay) Creeks. Returns were generally lower than average for 2017, which may have been partly due to the lateness of the fall rains, slowing the progress of the spawners. As mentioned above, the counting fence camera was successful and give us footage of chum and coho (and otters and mink) swimming into the lake. Leeches were an issue in the fall, attaching in large numbers to returning chum (and one coho) as they waited to get into Hyacinthe Creek. They occur naturally, but have not been seen before in such large concentrations.

Thank you to Frank Gleeson and Perry Johnston for managing the Society's bookkeeping activities, and to Chan, Nowasad and Boates for their help with our year-end statement. Total volunteer time given to the society was close to 2000 recorded hours, half being attributed to the new camera and infrastructure at the counting fence. I'd like to thank our volunteers, and particularly the board of directors, who gave many hours of their time attending meetings and stepped up when work needed to be done. We thank both Quadra Island Tru-Value stores for their generous Spirit Board Points system and customers who donate their points to QISES. Donations are gratefully accepted and can be mailed to Box 413, Quathiaski Cove, BC V0P 1N0.

Janis McLean
President