



As usual, this is the second of two newsletters in 2016 - if you missed the first one, please click here for our June 2016 newsletter:

<http://www.steelheadsociety.org/news/june-2016-ssbc-newsletter>

2017 Annual General Meeting – Saturday, January 28th

The Steelhead Society of British Columbia is pleased to announce this year's AGM, which will be held on Saturday, January 28th at the same location as previous years: the BCGEU (8555 – 198A St., Langley BC).

We will be hosting John McMillan as our featured guest speaker this year, one of the leading authorities on steelhead in the world - we know many of you are looking forward to hearing from him, and it will be an unbelievably interesting discussion. And as if John wasn't enough of a draw, Greg Wilson will be in to talk about the COSEWIC Process, and Sean Bennett and Mike Wallace will be joining us to give updates both on how our habitat projects from previous years are doing, and what is planned for this year's proposed project on Guichon Creek.

As usual, we will also get updates from our two branches: the Northern Branch (Troy Peters, Chair), and also the Vancouver Island Branch (Duncan Lewis, Chair).

AGENDA

10:00 a.m.

- Opening & Welcome (President B. Braidwood)

10:15 a.m.

- Speaker(s)

11:00 a.m. - Break

11:15 a.m.

-Speaker(s)

12:00 - Break

12:30 p.m.

- Business of Society:

- President's Report

- Treasurer's Report

- Membership Report

- Nomination Committee-elections

1:00 p.m. - Adjournment

You must be a member to attend, and of course memberships (and some great swag) will be available at the door. We look forward to seeing you there!

Annual SSBC Pub Night Fundraiser

Wow – what an amazing event it was this year! Thanks to the fundraising efforts of many, and the generosity of all who attended or participated as part of a sold-out crowd, we raised over \$40,000 as a result of this year’s Pub Night! Even more important, due largely to the overwhelming generosity of those who donated prizes, services, and their time, overhead cost for this event was almost \$0. This means that nearly every dollar raised goes straight back into protecting Wild Steelhead! Thank you once again to everyone who came out and joined us for a terrific event.

In addition to the many meetings we attend, advisory boards we sit on and phone conversations we have, the following is a brief summary of some other significant issues and projects that the SSBC has been involved in since our last newsletter:

New project on Guichon Creek

The SSBC approved funding of \$12,500 for a new habitat restoration project on Guichon Creek which was just recently completed! Guichon is a tributary of the Nicola River (the Thompson River’s primary steelhead spawning tributary) and is heavily impacted at the top end. The plan involved partnering with a large ranch to implement 10km of cattle exclusion fencing, as well as breaking ground on five riparian sites that are in need of restoration.

In support of Bill C-228

The SSBC endorsed Fin Donnelly’s introduction of Bill C-228, an Act designed to amend the Fisheries Act to move from harmful open-net pens to safer closed-containment systems within 5 years. It also requires the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans to develop, table, and implement a transition plan to closed containment within 18 months of receiving Royal Assent. This bill unfortunately did not pass, but any coverage of this topic is a step in the right direction.

Letter regarding removal of Salmon River diversion structures

The SSBC recognizes the importance of the prompt removal of the Salmon River diversion structures on Vancouver Island, and wrote a letter to Stephen Watson of the BC Utilities Commission urging the application to remove these structures be processed as soon as possible. The decision to decommission the dam and diversion channel is a positive move forward for the future of the Salmon River, as well as an important example of how similar hydro projects across our province need to be reviewed.

BC Hydro intends to have a detailed program, including goals and timelines, submitted to the BC Utilities Commission by February of 2017, and we are hopeful work will begin that summer.

Donation to Skeena Wild

Speaking of sensitive areas that need more protection, the SSBC donated \$1,000 to Skeena Wild to aid them in their legal battle against Petronas/PNW LNG at Flora Bank on Lelu Island, one of the most important parts of the Skeena estuary.

Coquihalla Canyon barrier removal

For the past few years, we have been pushing work to be done on the large rock barrier that has formed in the Coquihalla Canyon. The assessment has finally been completed on this boulder and a plan is being prepared for later this summer. We have long been prepared to help fund or take the lead on this project, and will continue to push hard to get this completed.

Seymour River barrier removal

Alongside the barrier on the Coquihalla, the Seymour River barrier has been an ongoing concern for us and the SSBC was pleased to contribute to the plan of action that is now taking place on that waterway. 50,000 cubic metres of rock and earth had blocked the passage of all anadromous fish, but now a long-term controlled low-velocity rock blasting plan is underway, with the first phase already completed.

We mourn the loss of Eric Carlisle – creation of a bursary in Eric's name

Steelhead in British Columbia have lost one of their greatest advocates with the recent passing of longtime SSBC Director, Eric Carlisle. We mourn the loss and miss seeing him on the river or at our monthly Board of Director meetings.

In honour of Eric's memory and the tremendous work he has done for wild fish in this province, the Steelhead Society has decided to set up a scholarship / bursary in his name, which will be awarded annually to a BCIT student in the Fish & Wildlife Ecological program.

Keeping the Thompson River wild

Once again, there has been some discussion with regards to the worthiness of a hatchery on the Thompson River. Science has proven time and again that this is a poor idea, and the Steelhead Society of British Columbia does not support placing a hatchery on the Thompson. Our mandate is for Wild Fish in Wild Rivers, and we will continue to fight to keep the Thompson River, and others like it, wild. There is no evidence of any kind showing that hatcheries are beneficial to wild salmonid stocks – in fact the opposite appears to be true: <http://www.steelheadsociety.org/news/roll-hatcheries-steelhead-management-pollard-2013>

Northern Branch update

The Northern Branch has continued with monitoring water levels and quality in the Exstew slough. The Skeena River never flooded this spring so no fry were trapped this year. It is hoped that work can start in the spring with fixing the problem.

The Catch & Release study on the Bulkley River has been completed – thanks to all those who helped. Data is being compiled and a preliminary report is hoped for early in the New Year.

Our fundraising raffle was well received and we raised \$5,000. Thank you to Chuck Holyk from Headwaters Fish Reproductions for the Steelhead mount that was won by Shane Ito. Second prize was a Spey reel donated by Dan Holder of Stamp River Reels which was won by Rosemary McKenzie. Third prize was won by John Utz, which was 22 tied in hand steelhead flies donated by Mike Papais.

We also held a concert fundraiser at Sherwood Mountain Brewhouse with blues musician Keith Scott performing. It was a good time enjoyed by all who attended.

We helped out with DFO's school program where Coho are captured and eggs are taken. The schoolchildren then raise the Coho in aquariums in the class room and will release the fry in the spring. It is a great program to teach children about anadromous fish, and will also hopefully encourage them to be stewards for our resources. We enjoyed helping once again.

The Northern Branch worked with DFO to start another habitat project on Simpson Creek which is a tributary to the Copper River. There were spawning pools for Chinook built a few years back, but high water has scoured those and we are looking at rebuilding and maintaining them to ensure Chinook can continue to spawn there.

This fall we were involved with DFO's SFAC/SFAB process and attended meeting throughout the northwest.

We are always looking for people to get involved. If you would like to help please send an email to: steelheadtroy1@gmail.com

Thank you,
Troy Peters

Island Branch update

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That wraps up the December 2016 Newsletter from the SSBC, direct to your inbox. You can always reach us through our website (www.steelheadsociety.org) and on Facebook (www.facebook.com/SSBCMMain). You can also purchase hats, shirts, crests, and other swag in our online store, including our “Northern Branch” section! (<http://steelheadsociety.org/catalog>)

Thank you once again for your support of our goal to preserve Wild Fish and Wild Rivers in beautiful British Columbia.

Kindest Regards,

The SSBC