

**Draft Meeting Minutes Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative**  
**January 23, 2023**  
**7:00 p.m.**  
**Hybrid Board Meeting Boundary County Annex Building**

**Board Members in Attendance:**

Bob Blanford, Business & Industry  
Chuck Roady, Landowner/Industry  
Tim Bertling, Boundary County, KVRI Co-Chair  
Gary Aitken, Jr., KVRI Co-Chair  
Don Allenberg Corp. Ag/Landowner  
Eric Olson, Soil/Conservation  
Sandy Ashworth KVRI  
Kennon McIntok, Conservation/Environmentalist  
Mike Klaus, City of Bonners Ferry  
Kevin Knauth US Forest Service  
Carl Petrick US Forest Service  
Don Allenburg, Landowner

**Agency/Others in Attendance:**

Ben Robertsen, Boundary County  
Marc Klimer, Office of Senator Risch  
Jake Garringer, Governor Little's Office  
Caleb Davis, Office of Rep. Fulcher  
Erik Sjoquist, IDL  
Dave Bobbitt, IDFG  
Cindy Lewis, NRCS, Bonners Ferry  
Theresa Wheat, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, KVRI Facilitator  
Dan Dinning, Boundary County  
Wally Cossairt, Boundary County  
William Barquin, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho  
Kierstin Cox, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho  
Dave Wattenbarger, Private Citizen  
Christy Johnson-Hughes, U.S. Fish & Wildlife  
Shelby Therrian, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho  
Bob Reed, Citizen  
Cole, Citizen  
Chris Bachman Conservation Director, Yaak Valley Forest  
Council

*Gary Aitken Jr.* called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. and introduced the new Boundary County Commissioner co-chair Tim Bertling and asked if he would like to say something. Tim said he is happy to be here, serve the community, be helpful and put out some timber sales!

*Theresa Wheat* Introduced herself along with Kierstin Cox, the New KVRI Recording Secretary. Introductions then followed from attendees around the room along with Zoom attendees

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*Gary Aitken Jr.* announced that we are celebrating 22 years for KVRI, with cake to follow. The Board members lined up for a photo with the cake, which was then served and enjoyed by attendees.

*Gary Aitken Jr.* announced that *Kevin Knauth* would be presenting the 5 Year Plan for the North Idaho National Forests. Maps and charts were passed out as well as an on-screen presentation.

-Idaho Panhandle NEPA Check Point Schedule

-Idaho Panhandle National Forests Integrated Vegetation and Fuels 5-10 yr Action Plan

**Idaho National Forest 5-10yr Plan Presentation, Kevin Knauth**

Kevin explained that in 2016 a committee was formed, with representatives and City officials interested in the forest management from North to South Idaho. They were responsible with coming together to create the 5-10 Year Plan and includes the following information: **Wildland Urban interface-** Did a project area fall in part or in its entirety within a county? Identified Wildland Urban Watershed. Is there restoration potential in the watershed? Within the vegetation, is it part of a watershed that has roadways that are fixable? Does it have presence of fish population, but possibly fish barriers within the stream courses that could be adjusted to open up longer reaches for those fish?

**Vegetatively-** Is it on the landscape and representative of age, classes, structure, and species composition? What would we anticipate seeing in this country? If not, is it something that we could go in and treat to restore it to something that is more common for the ecosystems?

**Bugs and Crude-** Across the landscape, do we have areas that have been hit heavily with insects and disease? Could problems be mitigated, with treatments within the landscapes?

**Timber Suitability-** How much of these areas in our forest plan are suitable for timber management and timber harvest? Those identified areas are going to be entered and re-entered on a regular schedule to maintain that landscape through timber. Anything harvested in that landscape, will need suitable tree stocking, through planting or natural re-generation within five years. It is required by the Plan to get that area restocked with trees.

Kevin then explained, in more detail, some of the reasons going into certain forest areas are more beneficial than others. The meetings are important to allow people to get together and really discuss the WHY on treating those specific areas. Also, allowing everyone to work together on these projects helps tell that story from a *County e*, *City Federal*, and *State* perspective as well.

More work has been done on other areas, in addition to the 10 Year Plan. due to the government collaborations n, obtaining grants and funding. Also, from 10 Year Wild Fire Strategies that include locations for treating and identifying checkerboard ownerships.

*Kevin Knauth* then asked if there were and questions:

A question was asked about what some of the acronyms mean. *Kevin* then pointed out some of those on the spreadsheet and said that the spreadsheet essentially shows the order in which the projects are being completed.

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The *North Zone* just finished Buckskin Saddle on the same Point District. We are just coming out of scoping on the Chloride Gold project. When we reach a decision on it, there will be 20 or 21 timber sales coming from it, and, over the next 15 years.

*Central Zone* is well on their way with some of their bigger projects. *South Zone* is right behind them with the work that they're doing. These are big vegetable and fuel type projects, along with landscape projects. The beauty of getting this amount of NEPA to a decision, and available to us, is that we can take a little breath, because we know that we have timber to go through the pipeline. We have hazardous fuels work, into the out years and, it allows us to do things like work with the State and Good Neighbor Authority in projects such as Scattered Lands. The next project that Good Neighbor Authority and IDL employees are going to help us with is what we call Sandpoint South. Both are smaller projects, but help with treating a lot of fuels in just the right places.

*Carl Petrick* talked about how the IPNF is #1 or #2 in the Region and in the top 10 in the nation. The large landscape projects that they have equate to large timber sales and some of the small timber purchasers and operators cannot compete at that scale so they would like to improve the mix of timber sale sizes so some of the smaller timber operators and purchasers have more opportunities.

With the absence of a strong Timber Program, there tends to be old bridges, unmaintained roads, infrastructure in general is not great. The timber sales bring in an abundance of money for road construction and maintenance, fixing of bridges and aquatic organism passage. We probably have about \$50,000 to do road maintenance on the North Zone, split three ways in three districts. Anyone who has experience in that kind of work knows that that it does not go far.

Timber sales also help with recreation programs, allows improvements to recreation areas, and an opportunity to fix things from a recreation perspective. It is a world of leveraging funds and if there are not funds coming in, there is nothing to leverage. If you have the money, its doubled by leveraging and getting grants, and they work hard to do those things.

They plan extensively when it comes to reducing fuels around private lands. Weather, helicopters, and so many other key factors play a role on having the perfect control burn. It could take up to 10 years for everything to line up right. So, when there is a natural ignition high up in a drainage, they will take a good look at where they are. When the end of season is likely to take place, and then assess how long would it take to treat 25,000 acres of fuels the way they do it, it could take 10 years and might not get it done as well as what that fire did for us. It did make a lot of folks nervous last year with the fire so close to homes, but those same folks will not need to be nervous for the next 15 years.

*Kevin Knauth* said he lobbied the Chief hard and told him when he was in Coeur d'Alene. We have got to be able to burn when the opportunity presents itself. Sure, enough it did, and we had two helicopters help burn 1,800 acres of awesome fire. That is what we need to be doing more of in the beginning and at the end of the fire season.

*Sandy Ashworth* asked if there is some kind of public education program or presentations as a way to create something where we could educate the public. This would help them better understand the importance of fires as well as the work the Forest Service does to protect us and our land.

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*Kevin Knauth* agreed that we have the skills and tools to make something like that happen and suggested a video that can be posted online and on television.

*Sandy Ashworth* preferred in-person meetings where direct questions can be asked by the public and answered by knowledgeable individuals.

*Eric Olsen* made a point that the perception the public has about fire safety is not the image that the Forest Service would like to be represented and hopes we can do better to change that.

*Carl Petrick* said that they are working on a plan for March to do some kind of fire meeting to better educate the public, and possibly expand it to other areas as well. He also said that he talks to people who are interested and passionate, but don't have backgrounds in forestry or wildlife. He then explains to them how the forest has changed in terms of composition, species, structure, and fire suppression. They are just amazed and gain a completely different perspective. He has been pushing hard with forest television ad campaigns such as Build *Healthy Forests in Idaho*. He agrees though, that we all need to do a better job of helping the average person understand. Carl stated that the Forest Service is a lot better than a lot of other places, but there is still a lot of work to be done.

*Gary Aitken Jr.* stated that he is glad that they understand that there is a need and opportunity for more work to be done. He also agrees that some kind of public outreach needs to be taking place, and that we can do more to reach the younger generation through online social media presence. As well as helping the community gain some support and understanding on the Forest Management Plan.

*Kevin Knauth* agreed and added that we can have civil and educational public meetings and hopefully come together with differences to better understand each other.

*Gary Aitken Jr.* opened the floor for questions and there were none.

Before the close of the meeting, Gary asked if there were any corrections or comments to the November, 21<sup>st</sup> 2022 Draft minutes. No changes were needed and they were approved.

*Theresa Wheat* asked for t new members wanting to join Subcommittees and be involved. The sub committees include Forest, Grizzly Bear, and TMDL. She realizes that there is a lot of work to be done. She hopes that we can work together through the Subcommittees and do more outreach and social media.

*Gary Aitken Jr.* shared that there is a lot of wisdom and new blood between us, exciting times are ahead where we can grow, learn together, and forge a new and better path to the future.

**Sub-Committee Updates:**

*Forestry- Nothing to report*

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**Congressional Updates:**

*Marc Klimer, Senator Risch's office: Senator Risch did speak with someone at Customs and Border Protection on the issue of the reduced hours at the Porthill border crossing and they believe there is progress but it is moving slow. There are not exact details right now to share but he hopes to have a good update soon and that Canada is on the same page.*

*Jake Garringer, Governor Little's Office: The Governor delivered his State of the State address and release the Executive Budget two Mondays from this week. The Governor recommended \$100M for Outdoor Recreation to help the State cope with record increases and he also recommended about \$600K in spending authority to address Chronic Wasting Disease.*

**Agency Updates:**

*Caleb Davis, Office of Rep. Fulcher: Fish and Game Commission will be in Boise for their quarterly meetings to discuss and take action on setting new Sheep, Goat and Mountain Goat Regulations for the next two years. They will also be discussing funding for the Grizzly Bear Program.*

Next meeting will be February 13, 2023.

There were no further questions and the meeting was called at 8:55 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Kierstin Cox