

**Draft Meeting Minutes Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative
February 13 , 2023 7:00 p.m.
Hybrid Board Meeting Boundary County Annex Building**

Board Members in Attendance:

Carl Petrick, US Forest Service
Chuck Roady, Landowner/Industry
Ed Atkins, Corp. Ag/Landowner
Eric Olson, Soil/Conservation
Gary Aitken, Jr., KVRI Co-Chair
Kennon McIntok, Conservation/Environmentalist
Tim Bertling, Boundary County, KVRI Co-Chair
Tim Dougherty, Business & Industry
Sandy Ashworth, Social, Cultural, Historical

Agency/Others in Attendance:

Aaron Black, Idaho Fish and Game
Austin Terrell, OSC
Caleb Davis, Office of Rep. Fulcher
Cindy Lewis, NRCS, Bonners Ferry
Christy Johnson-Hughes, U.S. Fish & Wildlife
Chris Bachman Conservation Director, Yaak Valley Forest
Dan Dinning, Private Citizen
Dave Wattenbarger, Private Citizen
Dave Gray, Social/Cultural/Historical
Don Allenberg, Corp. Ag/Landowner
Frank Edelman, Idaho Forest Group
Greg Hoffman, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Jake Garringer, Governor Little's Office
Jeremy Gaffield, Idaho Fish & Game
Jim Cadnum, Landowner/Industry
Julie Smith, Office of Senator Crapo
Josh Stanley, Idaho Fish & Game
Karston Skeen, Private Citizen
Kevin Greenleaf, Private Citizen
Kierstin Cox, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Marc Klimer, Office of Senator Risch
Mark Rhodes, Idaho Fish & Game
Murreleen Skeen, Private Citizen
Michelle Richman, Idaho Natural Resources
Nancy Mabile, Economic Development Specialist
Patty Perry, Private Citizen
Scott Soult, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Sean Wilson, Idaho Fish & Game
Theresa Wheat, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, KVRI Facilitator
Wally Cossairt, Boundary County
William Barquin, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Xavier Boychief, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho

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Gary Aitken Jr- Called the meeting to order at 7:03. He announced that we would have the privilege of listening to some previous KVRI contributors and founders share their perspective along with the history of KVRI. Gary then facilitated introductions in the room and Theresa Wheat then assisted Zoom attendees in their introductions.

Following introductions, Gary asked if there were any corrections or comments for the January Meeting Draft minutes. None were had and the minutes passed by consensus.

Murreleen Skeen was the first to talk about her time with KVRI, she introduced us to the concept of how choices made by individuals and communities can shape the future. She reminded us that our choices today will have an impact on the community our grandchildren will live in.

Murreleen Skeen shared a quote by Margaret Mead “never doubt what a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can do to change the world, indeed it is the only thing that ever has,” She then shared a news article from an interview she gave on March 21, 2002.

She said that she felt that the County government has progressed greatly during our tenure and she is proud of our accomplishments. She discussed how to organize an economic development committee, form subcommittees, set and complete goals, and make sure that the future of the County is secure. They were frustrated that decisions were being made for the County without input from the people in the County. They formed land use committees, one of which was a water resources committee, an agriculture and timber and wood products committee, a recreation committee, and a committee for economic development. We interviewed people in the community to get their input on what they would change and what they would do. For the first time in our County’s history the individual government, governments of Boundary County, the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, Boundary School District, The City of Bonners Ferry and The City of Moyie Springs have formally entered into a historic partnership. This partnership enabled us to take a closer look at our own economic issues and identify areas that needed work. We also worked on widening the South Hill, creating an underpass to link the Kootenai River and downtown Bonners Ferry, and hiring an Economic Development Specialist. We also worked on Wetlands issues, the Kootenai River White Sturgeon Recovery Plan. She expressed her gratitude for the progress made through the partnership of local government to build a better future for our County.

Patty Perry was the next to speak. She discussed the challenges and opportunities facing the community. She mentioned that in their previous experience working with the Council and other organizations, they had found that achieving the Tribe's goals would not be possible without the support of the wider community. In particular, much of the restoration work along the river required collaboration with private landowners, and it was important to identify shared goals and areas of interest. As a result, the Tribal Council proposed creating a community group to foster this kind of cooperation. They decided to reach out to local officials and gauge interest in this idea. She expressed that the beginning of the collaborative effort was crucial because the County, City, and Tribe were all entities with staying power. She explained that they had observed many other collaborative efforts come and go, due in part to the fact that those entities did not have the same power as those present in the community. Also, other collaboratives were often hindered by individuals with their own interests and agendas.

One of the main issues that brought everyone together was the Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) of the lower Kootenai watershed. The Tribe had been studying the streams in the area and found that the Moyie River and its tributaries were out of compliance and needed a plan to bring them into

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compliance. The fear was that if nothing was done, the area would not be able to sustain itself. The Moyie River was especially important for the power plant and landowners along the Kootenai River needed to be able to continue their livelihoods. To prevent the area from being listed, the group decided to work towards a total mass limit for pollutants, with temperature being the main concern. As a result, a committee was formed to address the issue.

The KVRI Committee started working on the TDML, but discovered a new approach called potential natural vegetation TDML that looked at what vegetation the stream side could provide. Once this requirement was met, compliance was achieved, making more sense for everyone. The temperature was not the only issue, but it was the main driver. Other issues were addressed as well. It was noted that a more ridiculous approach could have been taken, but instead, a common-sense approach was taken and it worked.

Wetland/Riparian, The Idaho Department of Agriculture and Soil Conservation District partnered to implement TMDL on private lands. In response to large quantities of farmland being purchased and converted to wetlands, a Wetland Committee was formed to create small pockets of wetlands only in areas that were already wet. This was seen as a better alternative to wholesale conversion of farmland to wetlands by a committee working on a wetland conservation plan, particularly from a wildlife perspective. The Tribe provided valuable scientific information and had people in place who could work with State agencies to help make informed decisions.

Grizzly bears and The Forest Service also provided useful information. The goal was to work together to find solutions that would benefit the community, particularly with regard to Grizzly bear conservation. The ultimate aim was to help the Grizzly bear population recover so that people could return to the woods. One note highlights the importance of the Science Guy's role in providing information without pushing any agenda, and everyone else working together to make decisions based on that information.

Wildlife Auto Collision Committee- discussed various safety measures such as flashing lights and tunnel construction, but ultimately concluded that there was no single spot they could designate as a wildlife corridor. As development increases and wildlife move around, they had to accept that they would not be able to control the movements of the animals.

Forestry-, Committee - discussed their work with the Forest Service to determine the best ways to support the district and fit into the Five-Year and Ten-Year Plans. The Community Forest Landscape Restoration Act provided an opportunity for funding, and the group worked on several projects and successfully obtained funds for restoration. However, some of the funds were pulled from other districts, which was unfortunate. The group applied for another round of funding but was unsure about the outcome. Despite this, there are still plenty of opportunities for the community to work with the Forest Service on restoration and timber harvest projects, and they have a track record of working together to identify the best places to go and the types of projects to pursue. With the recent fire, there may be immediate needs for restoration and potential for harvesting, and the community has a lot of opportunities to move forward.

If someone had something that they believed was a good fit for the group, they could bring it forward for discussion, and the KVRI could help by holding meetings, informing the public, and bringing people together on natural resource issues. While some items may not have been a good fit for the group or

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were not substantial enough to warrant a committee, the main goal was to provide the community with the opportunity to come together and discuss important issues. It took some effort to get Federal agencies to the table, but it was important to involve them in addressing the issue at hand. The Tribe's Federal nexus and responsibility to the community made it a valuable partner in bringing different groups together. Some people challenged Gary Aitken, Sr. on why they were giving away their sovereignty. Ultimately, forming partnerships and working collaboratively can lead to more effective solutions that benefit everyone involved.

Patty Perry emphasized the importance of staying grounded and connected to the land when working on projects related to natural resources. She also highlighted the goal of fostering a community approach to addressing the issues, which was a new concept for their community at the time. She expressed gratitude for her time with KVRI and what a privilege it was working for the community!

Dan Dinning- spoke about the unique and nationally recognized community approach to addressing resources in the area. He mentioned the Boundary Road lawsuit and how it was a pivotal moment for the community in standing up for their rights. He highlighted the importance of building relationships with Federal agencies, such as the US Fish and Wildlife, Idaho Fish and Game, and Corps of Engineers, and how it took years to develop trust and understanding with them. He emphasized the benefits of having community input and engagement with these agencies in making decisions that affect the community. He also talked about the importance of transparency and openness in decision-making, which was lacking in the past. Finally, he stressed the need to protect the community engagement process and to always operate in the light of day.

Gary Aitken Jr. explained that he had a discussion with Darrell Kirby, and was fascinated by his stories, which sparked a lot of thought about what they could do now. One thing that stuck with Gary Aitken, Jr. was the feeling of frustration experienced by the agencies and their lack of voice. However, he noted that their Tribe had a Federal Nexus, which allowed them to engage and listen, and how they were able to utilize this to bring the community together. He explained that when he got everyone together, it was difficult at first, but the hard times that the whole community were having helped spur them on to fight the good fight. Aitken realized that building relationships was key, and that Darrell Kirby's passion for the community was inspiring. He said that Kirby had nothing but warm memories about the process and building relationships. He noted that Kirby's true love for the community and his passion were evident. Gary reflected on the importance of unity within the Tribe and community. He shared that in many other Indigenous communities across the United States and Canada, there is often a lot of conflict and violence with neighboring communities. However, in our community, they have been able to put aside differences and work together towards common goals. By coming together and sharing information, the community can make informed decisions that will benefit everyone. He discussed the progress that the community has made over the years. He talked about how the Tribe used to have a bad reputation and a stigma because of alcohol abuse, but they have worked hard to overcome that. He also noted that the community has come a long way in the past 22 years, going from fighting and distrusting one another to being a blueprint for collaboration and getting things done. The community's success has attracted attention from other people who want to learn from their example. It may look like an overnight success, but it actually took at least 10 years of hard work. He expressed his gratitude towards anyone who has offered their help, perspective or insight in any way to their community. Gary is proud of their community and KVRI, as they are able to work together and accomplish their goals for the betterment of their community, even if they don't always agree on everything. The KVRI tribe works to help their

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community and they are involved in the decision-making process to ensure that their areas are treated with care. Overall, Gary believes that their sense of community is a beautiful thing. Gary mentioned the importance of being able to effectively fight litigation, which was one of the notes taken earlier. He then shared a personal anecdote about a coffee cup his father had, that sparked his reflection on the significance of his work with the Hatchery and the Council. He explained that he had worked with the Hatchery on the Burbot Monitoring Program, and had gained valuable knowledge from his time on the ground. When he had the opportunity to join the Council again, he was able to bring that knowledge to the policy level and contribute to the community's success. He expressed appreciation for the accomplishments of KVRI and acknowledged the significance of its history

Theresa Wheat spoke about the upcoming subcommittee meetings and the importance of getting them started. The Grizzly Bear Subcommittee meeting is scheduled for February 27, while the Forestry Subcommittee meeting is expected to be in mid-March, although a specific date has not been set yet. The TMDL Subcommittee meeting will address water contaminants and the issue of selenium, and Shawn Young, Director of KTOI's Fish & Wildlife Department will present a few slides on the topic in April. Wheat emphasized that there is a lot of work to be done and many issues to address, and she encouraged everyone to get involved in the subcommittees and contribute to the future of KVRI.

Gary Aitken Jr. emphasized the importance of staying power for the success of the collaborative, which he said comes from the fact that the entities involved will continue to have representation and be players in the community forever. He contrasted this with some other native communities where he has felt different, saying that the relationships and community that KVRI has built sets it apart. He also noted the importance of the collaborative's national recognition, which he said was highlighted by the CFLRL funding and the attendance of Federal legislators and their representatives at the meetings.

Tim Dougherty- emphasized the importance of having leaders at the meeting and using the opportunity to bring important issues to their attention. He also highlights the significance of building trust and respect in relationships, even if there are disagreements. Tim gives KVRI high praise and calls it the "Cadillac of Collaboratives," recognizing the hard work that has gone into establishing and maintaining the Collaborative.

Sub-Committee Updates:

Forestry- Carl Petrick provided an update on the Forestry Committee's agreement, specifically regarding pockets of salvage timber. The Committee has found there is a lot of interest in this topic and they are working on finding a way to balance supporting green programs while also evaluating salvage opportunities.

Congressional Updates:

Marc Klimer, Senator Risch's office: discussed the progress made by their office regarding the next steps after the Idaho petition. They are working with the Delegation in Idaho and Montana to ask the President to include a cottonwood fix in his budget. They are also still trying to work on the Port Hill situation, but it's taking longer than expected.

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Jake Garringer, Governor Little's Office: mentioned that no bills have been signed by the Governor yet. He also mentioned a letter sent by Governor Little and 24 other governors opposing the Biden Administration's implementation of EPA Waters of the United States until the pending Supreme Court decision. Additionally, he expressed appreciation for the history shared during the meeting.

Agency Updates:

Caleb Davis, Office of Rep. Fulcher: spoke about the ongoing funding agreement with Fish and Game Headquarters in Boise to support the Conflict Management Specialist and other initiatives, such as Grizzly bear monitoring and research efforts. The listed species, which is considered threatened, is being closely monitored in consultation with the Forest Service. Davis mentioned that there are potentially many projects in the Boundary County area, so they are working cooperatively to ensure that there are no delays. He also discussed the recent positive findings in Wyoming and Montana on the Grizzly bear petition decisions. Davis expressed gratitude for the presentations and emphasized the importance of telling their story and to lobby for their initiatives in Washington D.C. He mentioned that building relationships over the last four years is paying off, and they will continue to represent the State to the best of their ability.

Next meeting will be March 20, 2023.

There were no further questions and the meeting was called at 8:45 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Kierstin Cox