

**Final Meeting Minutes – Forestry Subcommittee**  
**June 21, 2023**  
**10:00 a.m – 11:30a.m.**  
**Hybrid Meeting, Boundary County Annex Building**

**Agency/Others in Attendance:**

Bob Blanford, Business & Industry  
Bob Smathers, Idaho Farm Bureau  
Brad Smith, Idaho Conservation League  
Caleb Davis, Office of Rep. Fulcher  
Chuck Roady, Landowner  
Cindy Lewis, NRCS, Bonners Ferry  
Doug, Nishak,USFS  
Ed Atkins, Corp. Ag/Landowner  
Ed Koberstein ,USFS  
Julie Smith, Office of Senator Crapo  
Karissa Huntsman, Idaho Conservation League  
Kevin Knauth, USFS  
Norm Merz, IDFG  
Shelby Therian, KTOI, Fish & Wildlife Dept.  
Taylor Bradish, IDL  
Theresa Wheat, KTOI, KVRI Facilitator  
Tim Bertling, Boundary County

**Active Sales:**

- Currently, there is only one active sale called "Snow Low" in the Snow Creek drainage area.
- Faust is moving equipment for Alta in that area.
- Other active sales include Timbuk Stew, Camp Stew, Robin Hood Deer Stew, Boulder Dash, Black Boulder GNA, and Hell Roaring Timber sales in Boundary County.
- Snow Low sale is about 50% complete, while the others are almost finished with just a few units left.
- Timbuk Stew in Boulder Creek still has about 25% of the sale remaining.
- Compliance work is being finalized for Itemont, another Boulder Creek EA sale, with no hauling left.

**Upcoming Sales:**

- Two sales are scheduled for the next fiscal year.
- Heartwall sale will be in the Camp Nine Area, Green Mountain, with an estimated volume of approximately two and a half million board feet.
- Caribou Snow sale will take place in Upper Snow Creek, and it is a committed conventional timber sale with an estimated volume of around four million board feet.

**Kevin Knauth** provided an update on the condition of Ball Creek. He personally visited the area and observed significant damage, with a substantial amount of material crossing the road around the 5.6-mile mark, rendering it impassable. Another washout occurred near English Creek, making the road unsafe for travel beyond that point.

The road failure resulted from the force of the creek washing it down, causing a deep and wide washout. Notably, a tree and a boulder were carried away downstream, illustrating the intensity of the water.

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Unfortunately, due to budget constraints, immediate action to address the road failure is not possible. Kevin has reached out to Vince Archer at the regional office to inquire about potential disaster funds for post-fire road failures. However, he is still awaiting a response regarding funding availability and the application process.

To ensure safety, the gates on Trout and Ball Creek remain closed due to ongoing hazards from falling trees and rocks. The road conditions beyond the 5.6-mile mark are deemed unsafe for vehicles, and opening the gates without addressing the hazards could lead to potential accidents and vehicle entrapment.

Kevin emphasized the need to identify the appropriate NEPA vehicle for making the road system safe and removing hazardous trees. He acknowledged the importance of considering consultation requirements, particularly with regards to grizzly bear concerns.

Finding contractors capable of performing hand falling in Ball Creek's steep and rocky terrain poses a challenge. Kevin also highlighted the importance of minimizing the impact on green programs while salvaging merchantable products.

The primary objective is to make the roads safe and reopen the gates, specifically for Trout Creek, a significant trailhead system. Kevin is actively exploring options and gathering information regarding the NEPA process, consultation timelines, and the possibility of transporting salvaged materials through the gate on the "powder road."

The participants discussed the value of salvaged materials in relation to the cost of road repairs. Kevin noted the need to further assess the situation and determine if the salvaged materials would generate enough value to cover the expenses.

Concerning Ball Creek, Kevin highlighted the significant amount of material, including sand, that had moved through the woods due to surface runoff. This had caused the ditches to fill up and led to erosion in English Creek, potentially requiring the replacement of a pipe with a bridge. The timing of the repair work was discussed, with consideration given to allowing sufficient time for any additional damage to occur before proceeding with the fix.

In terms of salvage, Kevin mentioned the possibility of using a 250-acre salvage seed, which has been successfully employed in Montana. However, the viability of this option depended on consultation and ensuring compliance with relevant regulations.

Another road affected by a washout was Forest Service Road 408, which is currently closed from the McGinty Ridge Trailhead to the junction with East Fork 638 Road. Kevin explained that the repair work for Road 408 would be more extensive than it appeared, as the underlying support for the road was compromised. He mentioned exploring funding sources and potential contract combinations to make the project more feasible.

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Road 408 remained open to non-motorized traffic such as pedestrians, horses, and mountain bikes, while Ball Creek and Trout Creek were entirely closed to all road users. Kevin mentioned that he hadn't personally visited the specific washout location on Road 408, but he had seen a photo indicating that it occurred approximately 250 yards from a previous work site.

Efforts are underway to expand the polygon in order to accommodate more work and funding opportunities. Areas such as Boulder Creek, Camp Robin, and potential pre-commercial thinning locations were considered for inclusion. This expansion not only allows for more accomplished work and funding credit but also aligns with public demands for fireproofing homes and protecting land from wildfires.

The collaboration with organizations like the NRCS offers financial benefits. By utilizing the Good Neighbor Authority, agreements can be modified to allocate funds for contracting work when the timing is appropriate. This approach optimizes available funding and avoids returning unused funds. During the discussion, challenges related to contracting and spending authority limits at the Idaho Department of Land (IDL) were also brought up. The fiscal year discrepancy between IDL and federal agencies hinders agility in work planning and execution.

There is a need for improved flexibility and increased spending authority for IDL to address time-sensitive projects effectively.

The participants emphasized the importance of finding solutions to these challenges and enhancing collaboration between federal agencies and IDL. Suggestions were made to grant greater spending authority for Good Neighbor Authority projects, enabling better efficiency and prompt restoration actions, such as addressing the Ball Creek slide.

During the meeting, there was a discussion about the Legislature's lack of awareness regarding the speed at which certain processes are conducted. It was suggested that engaging in discussions about these matters could be beneficial as the Legislature has been a supportive partner in the past. The focus was on refining the work within their capabilities and finding ways to enhance the spending authority component to strengthen the program. The issue of having to seek assistance from another entity for contract-related matters was raised, which was deemed unnecessary and inefficient. The challenges of funding allocation and timing were highlighted, with the need to demonstrate available funds before initiating contracting processes. This often resulted in delays and inefficiencies within the program. The idea of exploring emergency declaration funding was proposed, particularly for projects related to soil stability after fire incidents. It was mentioned that obtaining an emergency declaration could potentially provide additional financial resources. The importance of considering various avenues for post-fire work and not relying on a single approach was emphasized.

It was also discussed how to manage and mitigate potential wildfire risks across both public and private lands in the region. They acknowledged that wildfires can originate on private land and spread to public lands, emphasizing the importance of fuel breaks and coordinated efforts to protect both areas. This includes getting private landowners actively involved in treating their properties to prevent fire spread.

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They also discussed the proactive strategy being pursued by the Kootenai National Forest, which involves exploring different avenues for mitigating fire risk, such as the introduction of Khaki Fuels, a company that could potentially help manage fuel loads and reduce fire risks in certain vulnerable areas. These areas include steep faces like the one below Clifton, which the team identified as a significant fire risk.

The group agreed on the need for strategic and preventative measures, including shaded fuel breaks and controlled burns in between draws. The implementation of these measures would, however, require careful planning, access, and the cooperation of neighboring private landowners.

**Theresa Wheat** discussed a collaborative grant through the Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative (KVRI) and the US Forest Service Foundation. The primary focus is on community education and outreach, particularly about fire safety and prevention.

One proposed strategy is to create short, engaging videos to inform the community about the five-year plan and fire prevention measures. The budget for this project is around \$6,200, which should cover at least one video's production.

Theresa emphasized the importance of transparency with the community about ongoing efforts and invited team members to share any ideas they have. This grant provides an opportunity to execute these ideas with financial support.

The discussion continued around creating engaging, three-minute educational videos on fire safety and grizzly bear interactions for the community. The group explores cost-effective production methods, possibly involving local students or affordable professionals. They consider using drone footage to illustrate land treated with fuel breaks. Further topics for videos, such as fire restrictions and reducing grizzly bear attractants, are discussed. As the meeting concludes, they plan a follow-up meeting and discuss an upcoming grant deadline.

The meeting was called at 11:30 a.m.

Minutes prepared by Kierstin Cox