

Final Meeting Record
Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative (KVRI) Hybrid Meeting
Boundary County Annex Building
July 21, 2025, 6:00 p.m.

Board Members in Attendance:

Carson Watkins, Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG)
Chuck Roady, Landowner/ Industrial
Dave Bobbit, IDFG
Dave Gray, Social/ Cultural/ Historical
Don Allenberg, Corporate Agriculture
Erik Olson, Soil Conservation/ Landowner
Heather Fuller, U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
Jennifer Porter, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (KTOI)
Kennon McClintock, Conservationist/ Environmentalist
Lee Colson, Social/ Cultural/ Historical
Remington Daniels, Business/ Industry
Tim Bertling, Boundary County Commissioner

Others in Attendance:

Caleb Davis, Representing Fulcher's Office
Cassie Olson, Boundary Soil Conservation District (BSCD)
Dustin Schmidt, Watercraft Inspection Supervisor
Greg Hoffman, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)
Jada Fairchild, KTOI
John Bobbitt, Citizen
John O'Connor, Citizen
Karen Schumacher, KTOI
Leon Basdekas, USACE
Marc Kilmer, Representing Senator Risch's Office
Noel Duram, Lincoln County, Montana
Theresa Wheat, KTOI

- **Welcome and Introductions** were led by Tim Bertling at 6:00 p.m. to begin the meeting.
- **Presentations:**

Karen Schumacher, KTOI, explained that the Tribe received a Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWFR) grant from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), which is funding the efforts to reduce the volume of waste being sent to the landfill.

Composting is already a common practice among many community members for improving their gardens and lawns. However, it is increasingly being recognized as an effective method for diverting organic waste from landfills and reducing greenhouse gas emissions associated with landfill operations.

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The Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (KTOI) has long served as a steward of the land, and this grant provides a valuable opportunity to take visible action, both in support of Tribal citizens and the broader community.

One of the first improvements made through the EPA grant was the replacement of a nearly inoperable truck, along with the purchase of a new trailer. These upgrades enabled the Tribe to more efficiently collect recyclable materials and compost generated by citizens using in-home composters. These composters are capable of processing food waste within 24 hours, offering a significant benefit by keeping organic waste out of the landfill.

To support the development of a long-term, scalable waste reduction plan, the Tribe contracted with *Resource Synergy*, a Northwest-based sustainability consultancy. Resource Synergy brings expertise in applying technology and strategy to develop and implement decarbonization and waste reduction programs. When Boundary County withdrew as a composting partner, Resource Synergy helped identify a new partner.

The *University of Idaho's Sandpoint Organic Agriculture Center (SOAC)* stepped forward and agreed to partner on the project. As one of the university's few organic-focused programs, the center offers a variety of public education initiatives. This commitment to outreach strongly aligned with the Tribe's vision to include environmental education into local schools, helping students understand the connection between what we consume and how we return organic material back to the earth.

The grant money was also used to purchase an Earth Flow composting system, a 20-yard unit equipped with an auger that moves material through the system. This system will be installed and operated at the SOAC center. Wood and food waste will enter one end of the vessel and be transported through the system to the opposite end, where it will be converted into compost. From there, the compost will move to a second building with econo blocks used to separate out the compost in different stages of curing. Once fully cured, the compost will be both, used by SOAC and made available to the public.

In addition to composting, the grant made provisions for increasing the recycling efforts of the Tribe. After the County stopped their recycling efforts, a new program was found to ensure recycling would continue. The Tribal Solid Waste Advisory Committee (TSWAN) has offered to come to the reservation and pick up recyclable materials, ensuring they are re-purposed rather than sent to the landfill. The project will begin on a small scale but is expected to expand over time.

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Cassie Olson, Boundary Soil Conservation District (BSCD), provided an update on the current status of the Bonners Ferry Watercraft Inspection Station. The station opened as scheduled on May 23, 2025, despite initially lacking both power and water. Operations began strong, even with these early challenges, and the team continues to work through logistical issues, including staffing shortages.

A new building was installed at the site this year, and the station now has access to power however, it still relies on a portable water tank. While there has been some difficulty coordinating with the Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA) regarding water access, the team is weighing whether the effort to install a permanent water supply is worthwhile, especially given the possibility of relocating the station in the future.

The current location has proven problematic, as it is remote and difficult to spot from the road. They hope to find a new location for future years. As a result, staff believes a significant amount of boat traffic may be passing by unnoticed. After reviewing feedback and data collected last October, ISDA made the decision to limit inspections at the Bonners Ferry station to northbound traffic only for the 2025 season.

About three weeks ago, the inspection station entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Sheriff's Department. As a result, law enforcement is now actively patrolling to ensure that all northbound watercraft is stopping at the inspection station in accordance with inspection requirements. They have spotted eight boats so far and had them turn around.

So far during the 2025 season, the Bonners Ferry Watercraft Inspection Station has inspected 2,148 northbound vessels. While the station primarily focuses on northbound traffic, a few southbound boaters also stopped by, recalling the process from last year. The vessels were inspected and seven confirmed to have come from infested waters. Four of those required hot water decontamination due to contact with aquatic invasive weeds.

The station has received strong community support this year. In an effort to further support the program, invasive species stickers are now available for purchase at the station. Additionally, Super 1 Foods has partnered with the program and is also selling the stickers. Meanwhile, the inspection station located at the Samuels gas station has inspected 3,556 southbound vessels, primarily from Canada and Montana. Thanks to coordination with law enforcement, four boats were successfully turned around before proceeding further.

Theresa Wheat and Jada Fairchild, KTOI, shared details about the upcoming Boundary County Fair, scheduled for August 4–9, 2025. Anyone who would like to help with booth setup, it is scheduled on Tuesday, August 5 at 9:30 a.m. Coffee and light refreshments will be provided for volunteers and all are welcome.

Final Meeting Record
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The booth will feature information about KVRI, its Sub-Committees, recent field trips, and other ongoing projects. There will be a variety of giveaways and stickers available.

For decorations, the booth will be adorned with faux vines and fairy lights to create a warm and inviting atmosphere. They encouraged everyone to stop by and visit the KVRI booth during the event.

- **Sub-Committee Updates:**

Forestry Sub-Committee: The next meeting is scheduled for November 12, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. located at the Boundary County Annex Building.

Grizzly Bear Sub-Committee: The next meeting is scheduled for July 24, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. located at the Boundary County Annex Building.

TMDL Sub-Committee: The next meeting is scheduled for October 15, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. at the Boundary County Annex Building.

- **Legislative Updates:**

Heather Fuller, USFS, provided an update on the Katkee Fuels Project, which remains on schedule. The public comment period is open through July 24, 2025, with a final decision expected by August or September. USFS is currently pursuing funding opportunities, as there is no budget secured at this time for the helicopter logging component of the project.

She also shared that the Moyie Meadows Field Trip was a success. A final decision on that project is anticipated in the fall of 2025.

Carson Watkins, IDFG, provided several updates from the July Commissioners' meeting held in Coeur d'Alene. He noted that each year, IDFG produces a statewide wolf population estimate. This process takes time, as it relies on data collected from hunting and trapping harvests throughout the year. The annual estimate is based on the previous year's data, following the pupping season in the summer. This year's estimate is 1,235 wolves, approximately 100 fewer than the previous year, indicating a continued downward trend in the population over the past six years.

The Commissioners selected the recipients of this year's Community Challenge Grant. A portion of the funds allocated to the Panhandle region was awarded to support local activities in Boundary County. Specifically, \$2,500 each was granted to the 1st Hunt Foundation and the Kootenai Valley Sportsmen Association to help fund the youth pheasant hunt at Boundary-Smith Creek.

Final Meeting Record
Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative (KVRI) Hybrid Meeting
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July 21, 2025, 6:00 p.m.

Regarding bear activity, Carson noted that there have been few recent issues. Residents experiencing problems have successfully mitigated them by installing electric fencing.

Marc Kilmer, Representing Senator Risch's Office, reminded everyone of the "*Big Beautiful Bill*," noting that it has officially passed. During discussions leading up to its passage, there was considerable debate regarding a proposed public lands provision that would have allowed for the sale of certain public lands. Both Senators Risch and Crapo opposed this proposal, and it was ultimately excluded from the final version of the bill. While Senator Risch supports local land management, he did not support Senator Lee's proposal to sell Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and U.S. Forest Service lands.

Marc also highlighted another legislative milestone; the *Secure Rural Schools Bill* passed unanimously in the Senate and now awaits action in the House.

Caleb Davis, representing Fulcher's Office, explained that the House is closely monitoring the status of SRS funding and, once a viable opportunity arises, will do everything possible to advance and pass the legislation.

- **Old/ New Business:**

Greg Hoffman, USACE, extended an invitation to everyone to attend the Libby Dam Commemoration, celebrating 50 years of operation this summer. The event offers a great opportunity for those interested in learning more about the history of the dam and connecting with individuals who were involved during its construction. The celebration will take place on August 23, 2025, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. (MST).

The August meeting has been canceled due to participation by KVRI in the Boundary County Fair. The next scheduled meeting is September 15, 2025 at 6:00 p.m. located at the Boundary County Annex Building.

The meeting ended at 6:43 p.m.
Meeting recorded by Jada Fairchild