Final Meeting Record
Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative (KVRI) Hybrid Board Meeting
Boundary County Annex
March 17, 2025, 6:00 p.m.

Board Members in Attendance:
Ben Robertson, Boundary County & KVRI Co-Chair
Chuck Roady, Landowner/Industrial
Ed Atkins Jr., Cooperate Agriculture/Landowner
Erik Olson, Soil Conservation/Landowner
Gary Aitken Jr., Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (KTOI) & KVRI Co-Chair
Heather Fuller, U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
Lee Colson, Social/Cultural/Historical
Remington Daniels, Business/Industry
Rick Alonzo, Mayor of Bonners Ferry & KVRI Co-Chair
Tim Bertling, Boundary County
Others in Attendance:
Ben Erickson, Citizen
Bill Lillibridge, Soil and Water Conservation Commission
Caleb Davis, U.S. RepresentativeFulcher's Office
Chris Bachman, Yaak Valley Forest Conservation
Greg Hoffman, U.S. Army Corps. of Engineers (USACE)
Jada Fairchild, KTOI & KVRI Admin Assistant
Jeremy Gaffield, Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG)
John O'Connor, Citizen
Kathryn Kolberg, Panhandle Health District (PHD)
Keegan Bordeaux, KTOI
Leon Basdekas, USACE
Theresa Wheat, KTOI & KVRI Facilitator
William Burquin, KTOI

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

Kathyrn Kolberg, PHD, provided a detailed explanation of the critical components of land development, with a primary focus on septic system development. She has 15 years of experience with the Panhandle Health District (PHD), where she currently serves as the Supervisor for Bonner and Boundary Counties. PHD is one of seven districts in Idaho, serving the five northern counties. The district's funding sources include county fees, septic permitting, food inspections, and land development applications.

In the 19th century, people began to recognize the connection between environmental health and public health. This led to a better understanding of contamination pathways, particularly the movement of pathogens in groundwater. By 1907, Idaho started addressing environmental health concerns related to stream protection. In 1940, the state established the seven health districts with the mission of preventing, promoting, and protecting public health. One of the key areas of focus was proper human waste disposal.

The Idaho Subsurface Sewage Disposal Rules were established to ensure proper waste management, and these rules remain in effect under IDAPA 58-01-03. Among the regulations is the requirement for a septic system permit and license. Permits are based on the number of bedrooms in the residential dwelling. Failure to comply with these regulations can result in potential violation fees. Every landowner who has a septic system after 1973 is required to have a license and permit as well as having the system properly installed.

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Idaho requires that all wastewater be disposed of properly, applying to both residential and industrial properties. Wastewater consists of liquids or water that contain black or gray water, including pollutants or sewage. The pathogens and other contaminants associated with wastewater are complex and can cause a variety of illnesses. These contaminants can pollute sink water, which is why it is classified as gray water. Many people do not fully understand what gray water is and may not realize that it cannot be rerouted onto the ground or used for gardening. Due to the potential for contamination, gray water must be disposed of properly. These wastewater regulations are in place to prevent the spread of disease, protect public health, and safeguard ground and surface water.

The Panhandle District issues more than 25% of all septic permits in Idaho. Of those permits, 35% are classified as "complex permits," meaning they involve factors such as groundwater, surface water, bedrock, steep slopes, and other challenging conditions. The complex permits are issued to prevent future eutrophication. Eutrophication will occur when sewage or wastewater is being discharged too close to the surface water and will degrade the environmental health. So proper placement of septic systems is critical for the environment, especially when several people use wells and groundwater for their drinking water. It is highly advisable to designate a replacement area for your septic system as a precautionary measure in the event of system failure. This replacement area must remain clear of any structures or tree plantings to ensure its functionality.

Prior to adoption of the Idaho Sewage Rules in 1971, several homes near Burke Lake in the Shoshone County were discharging wastewater directly into the lake. As the negative impact of this practice became evident, the community began working together to find solutions to prevent direct discharge. Initially, cesspools were used, followed by metal tanks and dry wells. Today, cement or composite tanks and drain fields are the standard. Metal tanks and dry wells are no longer utilized because they deteriorate quickly. If a metal tank is found, it is likely to have a rotting bottom due to the rapid breakdown of the material.

In modern systems, a septic system consists of two primary components: the septic tank, which separates sewage and provides storage for wastewater, and the drain field. It is crucial to prevent solids from leaving the septic tank to avoid clogging and system failure. Periodically pumping solids from septic tanks is important for long-term functionality of the system. All septic systems must have a designated area for a future replacement drainfield, to ensure that when the primary system fails there is a suitable area ready to use for installation of a new system. The primary and replacement areas must be protected and remain free of structures, vehicles, wells, or anything that may compromise its ability to support a septic system.

Typical use is hundreds of gallons of wastewater each day, so it is crucial to have an appropriately sized septic system to effectively treat the wastewater within the proper soil conditions. The goal is to ensure the wastewater is properly treated before being discharged into the groundwater or moving through the soil profile. Surface water encompasses more than just lakes and rivers; it also includes any drainage systems, ditches, and all bodies of water found on the earth's surface.

The rate at which waste water moves through the soil varies depending on the type of soil. This then, influences the size and design of the septic system. For example, dense clay soils have a slower absorption rate, meaning wastewater takes longer to percolate through the soil. As a result, a larger

septic system is required to prevent system failure and ensure effective treatment. In contrast, soils such as sand or loam allow for faster water movement, potentially requiring a smaller system.

Before a septic system permit can be issued, a site evaluation is required. This evaluation ensures that there is no groundwater interference and verifies that the septic system is not installed too close to any surface water or areas prone to contamination. Once the site is approved and the septic system has been installed, a follow-up inspection is necessary to confirm that the system was installed correctly and in the appropriate location. Site evaluations are typically not conducted during the winter due to the frozen ground, which makes it difficult to identify wet areas and drainage patterns that may become apparent in the spring. Evaluations are carried out by drilling test holes to a depth of 8 feet, which expose each soil layer and enable us to determine the most suitable system based on the soil composition. Piezometers, devices consisting of perforated pipes wrapped in plastic, are installed on-site for a period of 6 to 10 weeks to monitor groundwater levels. While these devices are simple in design, they meet the standards set by the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ). The PHD cannot determine if a site is currently suitable for a septic system unless a speculative site evaluation or a septic permit is applied for, and all requirements, paperwork, and field work is complete. This process is the only way to determine if a site is suitable for septic use.

If you require further information or have any questions, visit the Panhandle Health District's website at:

http://www2.phd1.idaho.gov/septic2007/search.html .

Leon Basdekas, USACE, provided an update on the water management at Libby Dam and outlined expectations for the upcoming summer. Currently, the Libby Dam is at 92% of normal. The Moyie and Yaak subbasins are slightly lower compared to surrounding subbasins. There is still approximately one month remaining for snow accumulation, though it is too early to make definitive projections. Snowpack was slightly below average in December, 2024 and January, 2025 but dropped significantly below average in February. However, the levels are now beginning to rise.

USACE conducts all of its official water supply forecasting with an approved process from the Hydro Met Committee, which is part of an agreement with Canada. These monthly forecasts determine the flood risk management winter drawdown targets and the Sturgeon pulse volume in accordance with the biological opinion. When the Corps begins to refill, they rely on the NOAA River Forecast Center (RFC) for daily inflow estimates. In early March, there were significant differences between the two forecasts, so a meeting was held with RFC to discuss the differing methods and results. The RFC's forecast is relying more on snow stations near the British Columbia and Alberta border in Canada. That area along the divide is drier than other parts of the basin this year.

- **Legislative Updates:**

Caleb Davis, Representative Fulcher's Office, said that the CR was passed and they will have this budget until September 30, 2025.

Heather Fuller, USFS, explained that the Sandpoint District Ranger, Ben Johnson, resigned so the Priest River Ranger and Heather will be covering the duties in Sandpoint until they are able to find a new District Ranger. The Bonners Ferry office lost several staff, most of them being the field technicians and

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USFS are currently trying to regain from that. However, Katkee Fuels is moving forward, it is only slightly delayed until the Biological Assessment can be completed, expected by July, 2025.

- **Sub-Committee Updates:**

Forestry Sub-Committee – The Good Neighbor Authority (GNA) passed the Explore Act which allows the inclusion of recreational services, as well as Tribes and counties are allowed to retain the revenue from GNA sales The Explore Act will also allow restoration projects on and off federal land. This Act is still in the process of being finalized, there will be another meeting held June 11, 2025 to discuss it further.

Grizzly Bear Sub-Committee – July 24, 2025, 10:00 a.m. at Boundary County Annex

Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL)- April 10, 2025, 10:00 a.m. at Boundary County Annex

Next Meeting is scheduled to be held on April 21, 2025, 6:00 p.m. at Boundary County Annex

The meeting ended at 7:34 p.m.

Meeting Recorded by Jada Fairchild