

Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative
November 19, 2018 – 7:00 p.m.
Board Meeting – University of Idaho Extension Office

Board Members in Attendance:

David Sims, Mayor, City of Bonners Ferry & KVRI Co-chair
Dan Dinning, Boundary County Commissioner & KVRI Co-chair
Gary Aitken, Jr., Kootenai Tribe of Idaho Chairman & KVRI Co-chair
Dave Gray, (Alt.) Social/Cultural/Historical Interests
Ed Atkins Jr., Corporate Agriculture/Landowner
Dave Wattenbarger, Soil Conservation/Landowner
Kevin Knauth, (Alt.) US Forest Service (USFS), Bonners Ferry Ranger District-District Ranger
Chip Corsi, (Alt.) Idaho Fish & Game Commission
Bob Blanford, Business/ Industry
Rhonda Vogl, KVRI Facilitator & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (KTOI)
Sherrie Cossairt, KVRI Recording Secretary & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (KTOI)

Agency/Others in Attendance:

Tim Dougherty, (Alt.) Business/Industry, Idaho Forest Group (IFG)
Judy Morbeck, Congressman Raul Labrador's Office
Sid Smith, Senator Jim Risch's office
Kurt Pavlat, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Jessie Grossman, Y2Y
Norm Merz, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (KTOI)
Scott Soult, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (KTOI)
Jim Woodward, State Senator-Elect
Wally Cossairt, Boundary County Commissioner- Elect
Marty Martinez, Citizen
Even DeHamer, Idaho Department of Fish & Game, (IDFG)
Richard Klafki, Nature Conservancy Canada
Alison Squire, SCITWG Facilitator, Ziji Creative Resources Inc.
Christy Johnsen-Hughes, US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS-IFWO)
Jonathan Luhnnow, Idaho Department of Lands (IDL)

Opening:

Co-Chair, Dan Dinning opened and welcomed everyone to the meeting; introductions followed. After introductions Judy Morbeck's retirement cake was served.

The October 15, 2018 KVRI Board Meeting Draft Notes were corrected as described by Dan D. and approved by consensus.

Southern Mountain/South Selkirk Caribou Management Plan Overview Presentation : The Selkirk Caribou International Technical Working Group (SCITWG) presentation by Norm Merz, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho

The Selkirk Caribou International Technical Working Group (SCITWG) is a very diverse group; representation of Federal & State agencies, Tribes, First Nations in Canada, and Boundary & Bonner County Commissioners are just a few.

Status of Caribou in the United States

- 1983-1984 Caribou was listed as an Endangered Species in the Selkirk mountains
- 1985 Management Recovery Plan drafted
- 1994 Revised Recovery Plan
- 2012- FWS re-evaluated their listing and determined that their draft listing included all of the Southern Mountain herds not just the Selkirks which are consistent with Canada and their Species at Risk Act (SARA). Currently the FWS proposal is to list that group as threatened.
- In 2014- Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) re-evaluated the situation, the populations of all the herds continue to decline so the recommendation was to change that listing to endangered, which is still pending in Canada.

SCITWG Short term actions

- Winter census coordination
- Signage & text messages linked to radio-collar tracking to warn drivers on BC Hwy 3 of the potential presence of caribou on the roadway
- Predator monitoring and management
- Maternal pen plans
- Data sharing and fund raising

The Management Plan

- Part 1-Science background, state of our knowledge, updated as needed
- Part 2-Subpopulation Objectives
- Part 3- Implementation Plan-Update annually

Population Trend

- 2002-2009 had increasing population
- 2010 started to decline
- 2011 started to get concerned
- 2012-14 dropped substantially to quite a low number. This drop spurred the need to re-evaluate the status and increased management of Caribou.

Caribou are slow reproducing animals, don't reproduce until they are 3 years old, only 1 calf per year, high pregnancy rate of 95% and they have a low calf recruitment average of 12.5% (Selkirk subpopulation 1991-2003)

To replace herself in the population a cow has to live at least 12 years and produce 8 calves. Her maximum life span is only 15 years, so she has to live her full life and not only her but every cow in the population.

Threats and survival rates: Anything that effects calf survival or the longevity of the adults has a major impact on the population. As far as they know most of the adult Caribou in the Selkirks die from predation. And calf deaths are still unknown. They suspect predation as well. Habitat modification plays a major role in increasing caribou predation risk.

Part 2 Management Plan Vision

- The vision for the South Selkirk Caribou is to retain and bolster the wild herd in the southern Selkirk Mountains so that it is able to persist over the long-term and contribute to the conservation of Southern Mountain Caribou.
- Active management (i.e. human intervention) will be necessary to ensure the long-term health, persistence and a transboundary distribution for this subpopulation, which may eventually support subsistence harvest and recreational hunting.

Population Objective: Working with Idaho Fish and Game, they developed a habitat based population objective using the Kinley and Apps model for suitable habitat. Based on that information they have set a population of 90 animals as the objective. To meet that objective they have broad ranging actions.

- Maintain appropriate habitat quality and quantity within the Management Area so that is it capable of supporting the 90 South Selkirk Caribou in the population objective that was developed
- Adaptively manage the implementation projects
- Look at areas that there may be some opportunity to do some things consistent with Caribou conservation

Part 3: Update Annually

Whenever they have adequate information, they will get together with their partners to review where they have been, the current situation and where they need to go.

Management Plan next steps

- Finalize Draft Plan
- Comment period, ends Nov 30
- Comments appended to Final Plan
- USFWS Handoff ---early in the New Year
- Spring SCITWG Meeting

What is the status of the Caribou as we know it today?

South Selkirks

- In March 2018, 3 cows, radio collared, were not pregnant,
- 1 died due to mountain lion predation, 1 collar worked for only a short period of time, and the 3rd cow is collared and currently south of Hwy 3

- When radio collared animals get near Hwy 3 they put notices on the signs at the base of Kootenay Pass to warn motorists that Caribou may be near the Highway

Purcells

- 3 bulls, 1 cow (cow pregnant, all are collared). The fate of the potential calf is unknown.

Montana

- Observation on Oct 31, 1 female, 1 male about 25 miles south of the Canadian border. The male was seen a couple days later about 4 miles south of the border. A few days later, a bull was seen near Moyie Lake in BC. Likely the same bull, but not confirmed. The cow has not been seen since the original sighting in Montana.

Revelstoke Maternal Pen Population (captive rearing facility)

- 1 calf would not leave the pen.

Maternal pens

- SCITWG attempted a maternal pen on the Nature Conservancy in Canada last year but the 140% snowpack was too much to continue; after the census found only 3 animals it wasn't worth continuing on
- The Revelstoke maternal pen has been operational for the past 5 years; has shown increase in calf and adult survival. It will not be run this year.
- A pen further north has been even more successful with the population growing from about 30-70 in 5 years

Short term actions

- Capture the animals left in the Selkirks and Purcells move to Columbia North herd in Canada, a stable herd, allow to breed and exchange genetics
- Capture the 2 Montana animals and move to maternal pen
- Move females into pen, subsequent soft release into Columbia population, males will be released directly into Columbia population due to the risks of confining antlered, more aggressive males in a pen.

Long Term Actions

- Maintain habitat protections in place
- Keep monitoring wolves and lions in British Columbia(track surveys)

Long term goals

- Build a captive rearing facility in which to house the Caribou year-round to produce enough animals to re-release into the wild
- Planning phase, ongoing now, to be completed March 2019
- British Columbia has hired a wildlife veterinarian to develop a plan to help generate funding through the Canadian Province and Federal Government
- If that captive rearing is successful, in 5-10 years they will begin discussing where those animals will be released (locations)
- Goal of re-populating the existing herds in the South Selkirk and South Purcells

Discussion followed concerning the long term plan for genetic integrity; the need for human intervention in management, natural reproduction in maternal pens, herd and individual movement, the risk of capture without snowpack, and future funding. Norm stated that to get the animals captured and moved to Columbia North population is all funded at this time.

*Norm's detailed presentation is available on the KVRI website at www.kootenai.org.
The Draft Management Plan and information about comments are available on www.restoringthekootenai.org.*

Additionally, SCITWG members provided a more complete presentation earlier in the day for stakeholders. A recording, along with that presentation, can be obtained on <http://www.restoringthekootenai.org/OtherFWProjects/Caribou/>

Committee Updates

WAC Committee Update: Rhonda Vogl

- Signed purchase agreement for \$4000 for the Wildlife Detection Sign
- The sign made it to Boise but the radar and camera got left in ITD shop. She is working on getting those to Brice Sloan.
- The Nature Conservancy will hold those funds and use them for maintenance and batteries on the existing wildlife warning signs.

TMDL Committee Update: Rhonda Vogl

- TMDL Subcommittee meeting scheduled tomorrow at 1:30 pm
- Bob Steed will be here to update on the TMDL for the Lower Kootenai/Moyie Subbasin
- Monitors have been pulled and Kevin Greenleaf supplied the data

Forestry Committee Update- Kevin Knauth

All three (3) sales from the Deer Creek Project have been sold for a total of 24mmbf

FY19 Updates

- Boulder EA signed on Oct. 31
- FY19 first sale in the spring- Black Boulder GNA Sale
- Camp Robin EA decision to be signed Dec. 2018 or Jan. 2019, 2 sales in FY 19

FY19 Sales

- Camp Robin Project 22mmbf
- Boulder Project 6mmbf

FY20 Sales

- Boulder Project 25mmbf

Bog Creek Update

- Progressing steadily
- All comments have been addressed
- Moving into Final EIS and draft record of decision very soon
- Hope of a decision later in the spring
- Allowing work to get done in the coming operating season
- As part of that the FS will be looking at road storage in the Blue Grass BMU to bring it into compliance with the Grizzly Bear Access Amendment

Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC) Meeting Update- Rhonda Vogl

- Rhonda V. attended the meeting in Libby, MT on November 7, 2018. Wayne Kasworm presented.
- Learned about the ongoing investigation of the Grizzly killed in the Spruce Lake area in Boundary County

9B Trails Update-Rhonda Vogl

Rhonda reported that the 9B Trails have asked to speak at our next meeting in January to bring us up to date on their progress.

Fish and Game Commission Update- Chip Corsi

- The Commission approved the Burbot Fishery Season to start Jan 1, 2019. Congrats to everyone.
- The Commission meeting kicked off the 2 year cycle for Big Game Regulations; starts scoping, meetings and public comment period. There will be at least 3 opportunities for the public to weigh in on Big Game
- Installing wildlife cameras as a population estimate tool. If successful, it will have a wider application such as Grizzly Monitoring; less expensive than genetic studies and safer and cheaper than flying

Fish and Wildlife Service Update- Christy Johnson-Hughes

Christy reported that their office will not be hiring this fiscal year and will be prioritizing their work load.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) - Kurt Pavlat

- Last month the Coeur d'Alene Field Office toured the various phases of the KRHRP.
- Phase 1 of the KRHRP included the BLM Hideaway Island. Thanks to Sue Ireland for coordinating the tour, 8 BLM folks came up for the tour.
- Real pleased with what's been done, looks really good; BLM applauds the Tribe and the partnership that accomplished the work.
- Also toured the Two Tail Project, it's been 10 years since the timber sale. Will do some tweaking up there over the next few years. Lots of Lodge pole pine coming into the larch understory, will have to do something with that.
- Two Tail was a large timber sale for BLM, 5MMBF total volume removed.
- Also did some work with Phil Schneurle on Parker Ridge

Senator Risch's Office Update-Sid Smith

- Tracking the Farm Bill (includes Forest Provisions); hoping Congress will vote soon.
- They are hearing that the House and the Senate negotiators would like to get it done and off their plate before this Congress expires and they have to start all over again; they are very close to the finish line.
- On a continuing resolution now-Hoping to get remaining 7 funding bills resolved before Dec. 7; Remaining funding bills include Forest Service appropriation.

Next KVRI Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for January 14, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. at the Boundary County Extension Office.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.
Sherrie Cossairt,
KTOI/KVRI Admin. Assistant