

**Final Meeting Notes Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative**

**June 21, 2021**

**7:00 p.m.**

**Board Meeting via Zoom**

**Board Members in Attendance:**

Dan Dinning, Boundary County Commissioner, KVRI Co-Chair  
Chip Corsi, Idaho Fish & Game  
Carl Petrick, U.S. Forest Service  
Tim Dougherty, Business/Industry  
Dave Wattenbarger, Soil Conservation/Landowner  
Chuck Roady, Industrial/Landowner  
Sandra Ashworth, Social, Cultural, Historical

**Agency/Others in Attendance:**

Amber Kornak, Idaho Fish & Game  
Barb Moore, Idaho Fish & Game  
Kim Pierson, U.S. Forest Service  
Mitch Silvers, Office of Senator Crapo  
Ryan Bart, U.S. Fish & Wildlife  
Shannon Brinkman, U.S. Fish & Wildlife  
Brittany Morlin, U.S. Fish & Wildlife  
Dave Gray, Social, Cultural, Historical, (Alt.) KVRI Board  
Wally Cossairt, Boundary County Commissioner, (Alt.) KVRI Board  
Carol Kriebs, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho  
Georja Kriebs, Private Citizen  
Christina Hacker, U.S. Fish & Wildlife  
Stefany Bales, Office of Senator Risch  
Frank Edelman, Idaho Fish & Game  
Kevin Knauth, Bonners Ferry Ranger District, U.S. Forest Service, (Alt.) KVRI Board  
Christy Johnson-Hughes, U.S. Fish & Wildlife  
Marc Kilmer, Office of Representative Russ Fulcher  
David Bogema, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers  
Rhonda Vogl, KVRI Facilitator & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho  
Karen Schumacher, KVRI Recording Secretary & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho

Rhonda opened the meeting with introductions at 7:02 p.m.

Dan Dinning asked if there were any comments or changes for the May meeting notes. None were had and minutes passed by consensus.

Dan introduced the presenter, Amber Kornak, Bear Management Specialist, Senior Technician, Idaho Fish & Game. Amber discussed her background and qualifications for her new position and shared a PowerPoint that showed some of the work she is doing. She also challenged the group to identify bear (type) in a variety of pictures. Some were quite challenging which

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reinforced the need for continued public education efforts. Amber's presentation can be seen at <https://www.kvricollaborative.com/kvri> by scrolling to the June 21<sup>st</sup> meeting block.

Questions followed.

Dan Dinning asked about the expectations of landowners having ownership following the use of the temporary electric fencing. Amber agreed and said that owners will be expected to maintain. Once it is permanent, it is theirs. There is a cost share option that may be used. Amber also stressed that it will really depend on the situation. Some owners do the fencing on their own and others, for instance, 4H users, are keeping animals for a portion of the year and a permanent fence isn't necessarily something they want or could use. They are looking at each case individually.

Dan also asked Chip about the Bear I.D. test that was developed years ago and if it was still available for use. Chip affirmed that they do still have one and it is used in hunter education courses but it is not something required, but is strongly encouraged.

Barb Moore, Idaho Fish and Game, was introduced by Rhonda. Barb reviewed the need for a rough outline for the allocation of the \$25,000 in funds being granted from USFWS for Amber's work in the field. There were four categories suggested:

- \$9,500 for temporary electric fencing
- \$9,500 for permanent electric fencing
- \$5,000 for Bear resistant garbage cans
- \$1,000 for motion activated scare sensors

It was emphasized that this is a rough guideline and is flexible; allowing for trading things here and there.

Dan asked the board if there were any concerns about the budget. None were had and the budget passed by consensus.

Dan asked Amber how many contacts she has already had for bear management. Amber answered perhaps a handful.

Christy Johnson-Hughes took a moment to thank Barb, Amber and Chip for explaining the needs and the scope of work. The idea is that this year's efforts will provide an outline as a guide for the future. Christy said that \$25,000 has already been earmarked for 2022.

Rhonda voiced her appreciation adding that everyone is on the same page and agreeing that the priority is that assistance goes out to landowners in real time. Rhonda expressed her

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appreciation for the robust approach this process has followed for over a year and a half. It is impressive and appreciated.

#### **Subcommittee Updates:**

*Kevin Knauth of the Forestry Subcommittee:*

Kevin began with an update on the Westside restoration project

- The draft decision notice went out on June 11th
  - This gives the public and all interested parties an opportunity to look at the decision document which outlines what is planned to move forward on that project
  - Those who have already given some comments either during scoping or during the draft EA have what is called standing during the objection period
  - Objection period kicks off at the time that the draft decision notice is released
    - It is a 45-day period for individuals to take a look at that draft decision and see if they believe that the issues that they raised earlier on in the planning process have been identified and addressed as part of that draft
      - If not, this period gives them another opportunity to bring that issue forward to the forest service' attention and a decision can be made on it following that 45 day objection
- At the conclusion of that, when all objections have been resolved, they will move forward to issue a final decision
  - It is expected that the final decision will be out in September of this year
  - The projects that are going to come out of the Westside restoration project will begin with the first timber sale offering which is expected to be next spring

Beginning June 15th bear season was over allowing operations to begin in the woods.

- GNA sale in the Black Boulder area has begun or will begin
- Timbuk Stew Road work is beginning in preparation for logging activities
- Deer Placer is operating
- Expecting 3 or 4 blowdown sales
  - trees were left in units to produce seedlings
  - the wind came in and blew those down
    - looking at selling and removing those trees

It is possible that we are on a trajectory for an earlier fire season than what we're typically accustomed to.

Forest Service fire crews are helping in the Southwest, New Mexico specifically.

- a. their fire season comes in the spring while we're still hopefully a little wet
- b. as our fire season starts Midsummer those guys come and provide help for us for the remainder of our season
- c. it's a good exchange program that we have

There is a five-acre fire in Priest Lake they are actively trying to suppress.

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Bog Creek has a number of projects planned that the Forest Service is doing in conjunction with Customs and Border patrol.

One is reconstructing about 5 miles of the Bog Creek Road and then opening it for Border Patrol use.

Forest Service will implement some road storage to bring that bear management unit into compliance with the grizzly bear access amendment.

That decision for this project did go to court and the ruling was in favor of the Forest Service meaning activities at this point are clear to move forward as soon as July 16<sup>th</sup>.

Border Patrol does have a contractor in place and they plan to begin that road reconstruction activity July 16<sup>th</sup>.

Forest Service is going to be doing some of that road storage and decommissioning and that work will begin on the Priest Lake side, the western side of that bear management unit, this summer.

Either next summer or the summer after the work on the Boundary County, Bonners Ferry side will begin.

Kim Pierson added that Customs and Border Patrol made a commitment for paying a big portion of the road decommissioning as well as for the monitoring. They are required to have a bear safety officer with them at all times in the camp and they also made the commitment to fund a conservation education officer over the installation and the life of the project.

Chip Corsi agreed to check on the status of those commitments within the week.

Christy Johnson-Hughes expressed her appreciation while working with Border Patrol and Forest Service on this very involved process. Together a project has been created that could actually go forward and will meet the needs of the bear in in the long run. Although it was not an easy thing to go through and it took us a while to get there, it really feels like it was also a good example of all the involved federal agencies working together and trying to make the best of the situation. Christy is excited to see the project move forward.

Kim Pierson also expressed her appreciation towards he Fish and Wildlife Service for finding some common ground in a process where we had some give and take and we worked together to find solutions.

Rhonda concurred adding that whether it's grazing rights, property owners or national security, there are many, many spokes on this wheel that are all important.

Rhonda said there are no subcommittee meetings on the calendar at this time but that a TMDL subcommittee meeting would be planned for this summer. The monitors are back out there and there's been several people dedicating their time and energy to that.

Rhonda added that she did want to speak briefly on the grizzly bear subcommittee. Lori Roberts, from my IGBC (Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee), asked for somebody to talk a

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little bit about what the subcommittee grizzly bear subcommittee and KVRI was all about as far as their management. Scott Soult, the tribe's wildlife biology manager, who is heavily involved in the IGBC and the grizzly bear subcommittee, volunteered and did a really great presentation to the IGBC executive committee on the work that's been done between US Fish & Wildlife Service and KVRI. Rhonda wanted to thank Scott, even though he is not here in the meeting tonight.

**Old/New Business:** Karen Schumacher updated the group on the Fair dates (August 10<sup>th</sup> through the 14<sup>th</sup>) and the theme of "Barn in the USA". The fair booth set up is scheduled for Tuesday, August 10<sup>th</sup> at 5:30. The traditional feast of tacos and huckleberry cobbler will be served following the booth set up.

### **Correspondence:**

The City of Bonners Ferry has a new logo and it has been added to the KVRI website and letterhead.

Rhonda received an email offering a meeting with Washington DC Andrew Williams who is Senator Crapo's deputy Legislative Director and also the policy person for the natural resource, environmental and ESA issues for the office. Mr. Williams will be in North Idaho for a day and is requesting to meet with KVRI, co-chairs and board members who are interested in meeting as well on August 9<sup>th</sup> between 9:30 and 11:00am.

Mitch Silvers added that Andrew Williams came to work for Senator Crapo in DC approximately two years ago. Both his first and second scheduled trips were postponed due to pandemic concerns. So, after two years, this will be his first trip to Idaho.

Rhonda will coordinate letting those invited where the meeting will take place.

Rhonda mentioned that Tyler Nimke, from Stimson, has asked for KVRI support in a conservation easement. The current project includes over 10,000 acres of Stimson lands in Idaho.

It was agreed that the request should be presented to the city, county and tribe and individual agencies for consideration leaving KVRI neutral.

Also suggested was a presentation by Stimson allowing all to entertain the support at the same time.

### **Federal/State Agency Updates:**

*Mitch Silvers for Karen Roetter, Office of Senator Crapo*

Senator Crapo has joined with Senator Jim Risch to fully fund the PILT (Payments in Lieu of Taxes) program for fiscal year 2022. Also introduced again is the Secure Rural Schools.

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In addition, along with Senator Risch, letters have been written to appropriators on Pacific coastal salmon funding dollars. Also submitted are letters for full appropriation for the collaborative forest landscape restoration act funding money.

Chief Vicki Christiansen has been testifying on budget matters regarding the proposed Forest Service Fiscal Year 2022 budget.

Finally, there are also letters to the appropriators asking for support and for additional wildfire funding money realizing that as the years go by the wildfire suppression costs are becoming more and more of a driver of the agency's overall budget.

*Stefany Bales, Office of Senator Risch,*

Stefany thanked Mitch for summarizing all the appropriations activity that is being worked on together. Stefany mentioned that the Senate energy committee held a nomination hearing last week on a request for Tracy Stone-Manning to lead the BLM (Bureau of Land Management). Concerns came up during that hearing regarding her 1989 involvement with some extremists who spiked some trees on the Clearwater National Forest.

Stefany is happy to talk to anyone with questions.

Also noted was that the Committee on Indian Affairs had a nomination hearing to consider Brian Todd Newland to serve as Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of the Interior.

*Marc Kilmer, Office of Representative Russ Fulcher*

Marc did not have an update

*David Bogema, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers*

David did not have an update but noted that water levels were a bit higher than earlier anticipated.

*Carl Petrick – U.S. Forest Service*

Carl shared that Chief Vicki Christiansen announced her retirement and they are expecting a new chief in August or September. Carl, answering a question from Dan Dinning on when they expect lift restrictions and to be returning from teleworking, stated that federal agencies are submitting a plan on the 19<sup>th</sup> of July. Union regulations require a 30-day notification period so even if they were to decide on how and when people should come back to work, it would still be a 30-day period wait following that.

*Christy Johnson-Hughes, U.S. Fish & Wildlife*

Christy had no update but said they are looking forward to doing a presentation possibly in July with the Army Corps of Engineers on the SLOPES programmatic so we can talk about some of the other work that we do, not just grizzly bears, and how we coordinate with the Corps.

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*Chip Corsi, Idaho Fish & Game*

Chip explained that last week our commission met to revise the wolf hunting and trapping rules that they had adopted in March in response to Senate bill 1211 from the Idaho legislature.

It is a fairly prescriptive piece of legislation so there is not a lot of wiggle room for the Fish and Game. Basically, the short and long of this is there will be expanded methods of take for wolf harvest across much of Idaho with a real emphasis on private land. The Commission had some concerns about trapping in grizzly bear country. Because of this the public lands side of unit one will stay pretty much the same

Brad Corkill, our current Panhandle Fish and Game Commissioner, does go off the Commission here in another couple of weeks I don't have a have not heard a date yet when Governor Little plans to make a selection to replace him but I expect hopefully that'll be in July.

There was no further input and no questions were asked.

Dan Dinning closed the meeting at 8:26 and said the next KVRI meeting will be July 19<sup>th</sup> via Zoom.