

Final Meeting Notes
Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative
May 17, 2021
7:00 p.m.
Board Meeting via Zoom

Board Members in Attendance:

Gary Aitken Jr., Kootenai Tribe of Idaho Chair, KVRI Co-Chair
Chip Corsi, Idaho Fish & Game
Kim Pierson, U.S. Forest Service
Bob Blanford, Business/Industry
Ed Atkins Jr., Corporate Agriculture/Landowner
Dave Wattenbarger, Soil Conservation/Landowner
Chuck Roady, Industrial/Landowner
Adam Arthur, City of Bonners Ferry, (Alt) KVRI Co-Chair
Wally Cossairt, Boundary County Commissioner, (Alt.) KVRI Board

Agency/Others in Attendance:

Tim Dougherty, Idaho Forest Group, (Alt)Business/Industry
Carol Kriebs, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Stefany Bales, Office of Senator Risch
Frank Edelman, Idaho Fish & Game
Josh Jurgensen, U.S. Forest Service
Scott Soult, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Merritt Horsman, 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's
Sara Straub, U.S. Fish & Wildlife
Angela Cooper, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho Vice -Chair, KVRI, (Alt.) Co-Chair
David Bogema, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers
Hilary Whitcomb, U. S. Fish & Wildlife
Rhonda Vogl, KVRI Facilitator & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Karen Schumacher, Recording Secretary KVRI & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho

Meeting called at 7:02 pm by Rhonda Vogl.

Gary Aitken Jr. welcomed all and Rhonda Vogl read through the list of registered attendees admitted to the zoom meeting confirming that all had been introduced. Gary asked for corrections or edits to the draft meeting minutes from April and none were had. Minutes passed by consensus.

Gary asked our presenters to begin.

Presentation: Great American Outdoors Act by Kim Pierson, Acting Forest Supervisor and Josh Jurgensen, Forest Recreation Program Manager, USFS.

This presentation can be viewed on the KVRI website at: [KVRI | KVRIID](https://www.kvriid.com)
([kvricollaborative.com](https://www.kvricollaborative.com)) by scrolling to the May meeting block.

Kim took a moment to thank the group for the opportunity to collaborate on what the future may look like with the funding they are using from the act. The Great America Outdoors Act (GAOA) is for the purpose of taking aggressive steps to address deferred maintenance of our recreation and trail infrastructure for the enjoyment of current and future generations. Kim introduced Josh and turned the presentation over to him.

Josh spoke about the short turn around they had from when President Donald J. Trump signed the Great American Outdoors Act into law on August 4th, 2020 to the deadline for submitting proposed projects for 2021 and 2022.

Funds are to be used for priority Deferred Maintenance (DM) projects and divided as:

- 70% to the National Park Service
- 15% to the Forest Service
- 5% to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- 5% to the Bureau of Land Management
- 5% to the Bureau of Indian Education

For the Forest Service this equates to up to 1.4 billion dollars over the five-year period of 2021 to 2025.

Josh reviewed the criteria for what makes a GAOA project competitive.

In March of this year, they received approval for 11 projects for 2021. These projects and the impact they will have is listed in the presentation. Congress has not yet approved the projects for 2022.

Josh also requested support from community, partners and stakeholders for the short- and long-term phased projects. These short- and long-term projects as well as ideas for the future can all be seen in the presentation on-line at: [KVRI | KVRIID \(kvrivcollaborative.com\)](https://kvrivcollaborative.com) by scrolling to the May meeting block.

Rhonda thanked Kim and Josh and said how nice it is to see these projects being accomplished that serve the social needs of our communities.

Tim Dougherty thanked the presenters and encouraged the continued attention to these maintenance projects and feels stewardship is a great way to continue to fund, unfunded projects.

Kim added how important it is to take an implementation idea with the end result in mind and to consider in the beginning how efforts can have an outcome that pays for itself or is conducive to other work being done. Recreation is changing and Kim mentioned that the acting director of recreation felt this trend would continue and that it is expected we will continue to see more emphasis in the agency on this.

Chip Corsi also thanked the presenters and referenced the continued population growth and suggested consideration for funds available through Fish & Game with an emphasis on putting things back into shape (versus new). A question was asked about the status of and possibility for funding boat dock repairs.

Josh felt that GAOA funding is a unique funding opportunity that offers a real good job of leveraging resources and historically they have used waterway grants. This may be a leverage with the GAOA if things can be planned smart over the next 3 to 4 years.

Rhonda Vogl suggested the non-profit group 9B Trails would be a good match as they work to fix spaces allowing people to get outdoors. People have experienced how great the outdoors is and they won't forget.

Subcommittee Updates:

Kevin Knauth of the Forestry Subcommittee:

Kevin shared that in relation the question on docks posed by Chip Corsi, that he and his aquatics folks have been discussing some of the vegetative and streambank erosions caused by folks essentially creating or expanding some of those ad hoc boat launches. It is now a matter of trying to figure out how to do the planning for it and then have monies attached.

Kevin moved on to the update on the Westside Restoration Project.

- Subcommittee meeting for Forestry was held Thursday, May 13th at the Fairgrounds
 - Example concerns/questions were shared and discussed
 - There were a lot of good questions and time spent one on one with specialists
 - Everyone was brought up to date
 - Draft Decision notice expected June 11
 - Kicks off 45-day objection period
 - For individuals who felt their comment/suggestion was not heard
 - Allows for reminding of issue and proposal of solution
 - Final Decision Notice expected in September
- Very little happening with timber sales now due to Spring bear emergence
 - Double Bar D sale is doing some decking
 - This is out of the Boulder Creek project
- Prescribed Burning had an active and early start
 - Challenge is moving snow to access areas
 - Trying to finish up what we have out there soon
 - Concerns are high about the season's dryness due to lack of rain
 - Asked public to be thoughtful of burning efforts
- Most of the seasonal staff are on board
- USFS Office is still not open to the public, but they can be reached by phone and are happy to help.

Rhonda Vogl thanked Kevin and said it had been a robust forest service meeting with a good direction for the westside project.

TMDL

Rhonda shared that Kevin Greenleaf had sent an email saying the team would be meeting at 8am Friday to go out in the streams to begin the switch out of monitors as they typically do this time of year. Ed, Jonathan, possibly Brandon, Dave, Kevin and Jerry will be heading out.

Correspondence: There was no correspondence

Old/New Business: The group was asked to provide thoughts/input for the consideration of the June 21st meeting as an in person or via Zoom. Agencies present stated that they are still restricted and although they would like to be in person again, meeting by Zoom is still the route they need to go. KVRI Co-chairs agreed to support that and it was agreed the meeting in June would be held via Zoom.

Federal and State Agency Updates:

Chip Corsi of Idaho Fish & Game shared that Amber Kornak, IDFG; Bear Management Specialist for Bonner and Boundary Counties, has hit the ground running and is out meeting people. Other updates include:

- No bear crisis yet
- They are actively recruiting for a replacement for Brian Johnson
 - Looking to fill as a lateral transfer
 - Hoping to have information on this in the next couple of weeks
- Legislature passed a bill with intent to substantially increase wolf harvest
 - Senate bill 1211 signed Thursday, intent of the bill is to reduce wolf numbers closer to the minimum established at de-listing (mid-summer population estimates...when numbers are highest...have been at @1500 each of the past 2 years, the State de-listing plan called for maintaining at least 150)
 - Although the legislature has stated it is not the intent of the bill, language in the bill appears to be in conflict with state law on authority of the Fish & Game Commission to regulate harvest and methods of take for game animals.
 - Fish & Game is working through aspects of the bill with legislators
 - July 1st the bill takes effect and Fish & Game is looking to have a clear path forward by then

Christy Johnson-Hughes of U.S. Fish & Wildlife

- The offices are still working through the processes of getting the funding for Amber, the bear management specialist.
 - The grant process is a new program and they are still working the kinks out.
 - They hired a grant specialist that is familiar with this program and is helping to facilitate this.
- There was so much done at the beginning of the year, time is now focused on getting things on the ground and getting them implemented.
- They continue to speak with partners about grizzly bears and how to manage living in a community where there are people and grizzly bears.

Marc Kilmer, Representative Fulcher's office

No legislative update but he will want to introduce us to the transition staff in DC.

Sara Straub, Kootenai Wildlife Refuge

- Expanded Fishing Opportunities Proposed at Kootenai

- The Draft Revised Compatibility Determination for Fishing is available for public review and comment from 05/04/21 to 07/06/21 and more information is available on the refuge website at: [Expanded Fishing Opportunities Proposed at Kootenai NWR - Kootenai - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service \(fws.gov\)](https://www.fws.gov/expanded-fishing-opportunities-proposed-at-kootenai-nwr)
- They are working on plans to develop some really beneficial pollinator habitat
- They are hoping to also add some interpretive opportunities for visitors

Kim Pierson, U.S. Forest Service

- Carl Petrick begins his role as the new forest supervisor June 7th
 - He looks forward to meeting our group and will attend our June meeting
- The Bog Creek contract has been awarded by Customs and Border Patrol
 - PDX Power Services is the company out of Montana
 - Border Patrol is responsible for having a bear monitoring protocol in place
 - They will be hiring a bear monitor
- Over snow planning will begin following final approval from regional office
 - Hopes are for getting on the KVRI agenda to talk about this

Stefany Bales, Senator Risch's Office

Stefany had no update but requested contact information for Amber, bear management person and Chip agreed to send that on.

There were no other items. Gary Aitkens Jr. voiced his appreciation for all the input and called the meeting at 8:00.