

Meeting Notes
Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative
February 22, 2021
7:00 p.m.
Board Meeting via Zoom

Board Members in Attendance:

Gary Aitken Jr., Kootenai Tribe of Idaho Chair, KVRI Co-Chair
Dan Dinning, Boundary County Commissioners, KVRI Co-Chair
Adam Arthur, City of Bonners Ferry, KVRI Co-Chair
Chip Corsi, Idaho Fish & Game
Jeanne Higgins, U.S. Forest Service
Tim Dougherty, Business/Industry(Alt)
Ed Atkins Jr., Corporate Agriculture/Landowner
Dave Wattenbarger, Soil Conservation/Landowner
Sandy Ashworth, Social/Cultural/Historical Interests
Chuck Roady, Industrial/Landowner

Agency/Others in Attendance:

Wally Cossairt, Boundary County Commissioner, (Alt.) KVRI Board
Kevin Knauth, Bonners Ferry Ranger District, U.S. Forest Service, (Alt.) KVRI Board
Dave Gray, Social/Cultural/Historical Interests, (Alt.) KVRI Board
Jace Hogg, Office of Species Conservation
Todd Higen, Idaho Water Rights
Sara Straub, F&W, Kootenai Wildlife Refuge
Karen Roetter, Senator Mike Crapo's Office
Carol Kriebs, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Jake Garringer, Office of the Governor
Christy Johnson-Hughes, U.S. Fish & Wildlife
Jon Moen, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers
Kim Pierson, U.S. Forest Service
Marc Kilmer, Representative Russ Fulcher's Office
Robert Akins, Idaho Fish & Game
Sue Ireland, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Stefany Bales, Office of Senator Risch
Alice Hanley, U.S. Fish & Wildlife
Mitch Doherty, Vital Grounds
Shannon Brinkman, U.S. Fish & Wildlife
Shawn Young, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Darren Parker, Office of Senator Risch
Mitch Silvers, Office of Senator Crapo
Ryan Hardy, Idaho Fish & Game
Ryan Bart, U.S. Fish & Wildlife
Frank Edelman, Idaho Fish & Game

Hilary Whitcomb, U.S. Fish & Wildlife
Tim Bertling, Boundary County Commissioner
Brandon Diller, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Robert Smathers, Idaho Farm Bureau
Rhonda Vogl, KVRI Facilitator & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Karen Schumacher, Recording Secretary KVRI & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho

Meeting called at 7:03 pm by Rhonda Vogl.

Rhonda Vogl read through the list of registered attendees admitted to the zoom meeting confirming that all had been introduced.

Gary Aitken Jr. asked for corrections or edits to the draft meetings from January minutes and none were had. Minutes passed by consensus.

Presentations:

Gary introduced Ryan Hardy, principle fishery research biologist, Idaho Fish & Game. Ryan's Presentation can be found on – line here: <https://www.kvricollaborative.com/kvri> by scrolling to the February Meeting.

Ryan discussed the challenges they are experiencing with Sturgeon spawning in areas that do not encourage population growth. Specifically, areas of clay and sand are not conducive. Prior to the building of the Libby Dam the number of Sturgeon are estimated to have been 8000. Today, 45 years later, it is estimated that the number is 1700.

Ryan shared the information they hope continued research efforts would assist with.

- Age specific survival
- Effects of timing and size on survival
- Juvenile abundance
- Growth

Due to the collaborative efforts of many organizations, especially the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, the numbers of Sturgeon have gone from almost extinct to more promising results. Mitigation efforts have proven successful and monitoring efforts have provided very helpful information that gives optimism.

The story of the Burbot is much more encouraging. The efforts that began in early 2002 have been hugely successful. The use of parental based tagging (PBT) has been a game changer that allows the agencies to gather and apply data. Some of that includes:

- Age specific survival
- Effects of stocking location, size, and age at release
- Juvenile and adult abundance
- Recruitment bottlenecks

Shawn Young, of the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, followed up Ryan's presentation. This presentation can be viewed on the KVRI website at:

<https://www.kvricollaborative.com/kvri> by scrolling down to the February 2021 meeting.

Shawn began with two of the goals they have for the Aquaculture Program.

- Rebuild population abundance

- Experimental early life stage releases to investigate habitat dynamics

The first tribal hatchery was started in 1989, over 30 years ago, for Sturgeon.

There is a balance in the number of fish they decide to release and the amount of food available to support those numbers. The key is the use of adaptive management.

Shawn reviewed some of the learning opportunities they have and shared that there is an effort underway to determine if the PBT used for Burbot may be a consideration for Sturgeon.

Shawn concluded with stressing how important the environment is to the continued success of their efforts.

Dan Dinning asked a few questions with the intent to clarify the numbers and ages of Sturgeon and the number of wild recruitments.

Presentations concluded with Sue Ireland thanking KVRI for the collaboration that has been so significant.

Subcommittee Updates:

Forestry Subcommittee:

Kevin Knauth touched on the Westside Restoration Project.

They have gone through the comment period on the draft EA and the team is looking through those comments and addressing them and looking for any kind of red flags that identify something showing where they need to shore up analysis.

The internal team meeting of all of specialists is scheduled in March and at that point they will hear from anyone with any concerns or any adjustments that are needed to make within the project.

Following this a subcommittee meeting will be scheduled.

Other activities are ongoing and somewhat affected by what appears to be an early spring break up.

- Camp Stew/Robinson Lake work continuing
- Hell Roaring continuing
- Boulder Dash (higher up) will be beginning

Grizzly Bear Subcommittee:

Rhonda Vogl shared that the meeting is scheduled for March 25th via Zoom at 10am.

TMDL Subcommittee:

Next meeting will be March 10th at 9 a.m. via Zoom.

Rhonda thanked Chip Corsi for his idea of this meetings combined KTOI and IDF presentation on the Kootenai River Fish.

Old/New Business

Rhonda shared that Jim Cadnum, industrial/landowner representative, is retiring from the board but will serve as an alternate. Chuck Roady has accepted the position and comes highly recommended. Chuck served on the board when KVRI first began and is happy to be back again.

Federal partners and State partners

Marc Kilmer of Representative Russ Fulcher's office

Congressman Fulcher received his committee assignments for this session of Congress and he's on the Energy Natural Resources Committee but he's also the ranking member of the Public Lands, Forests and National Parks Subcommittee. This has bearing on all the public lands in Idaho and they will be happy to work with everybody collaboratively in that position.

Stefany Bales of Senator Risch's office Stefany did not have a whole lot to add to what Marc shared but did let us know that they are just moving through the budget process in Congress. Stefany expressed her amazement at the accomplishments made collaboratively with our fish efforts from the time she was previously involved with KVRI around 2004 to now.

Darren Parker of Senator Risch's office

It is expected that former Secretary Tom Vilsack will be confirmed to be Secretary of Agriculture. The other nominee that's of significance for Idaho is Congresswoman Deb Haaland to be Secretary of the Interior. That will be processed tomorrow morning in the Energy and Natural Resources committee. At that time, members of the Senate have opportunities to ask her questions about how she feels on various issues. Darren will stay abreast of that and will provide any updates to anyone interested in those.

Mitch Silvers of Senator Crapo's office said he did not have an update but added his appreciation for the collaborative work done by KVRI over the years.

Jake Garringer of the Governor's office

Susan Buxton has accepted the role of Parks and Rec director (interim director since September), and JFAC advanced the \$50 million IDWR component of the governor's Building Idaho's Future package (there's also a \$9.1 million BIF request for IDEQ).

Christy Johnson- Hughes – US Fish & Wildlife

Christy introduced new staff members who will be in contact with KVRI in the future. They are all enthusiastic to work with KVRI.

- **Alice Hanley of Fish & Wildlife/Refuge Program** (Alice was on the meeting but her microphone wasn't working.)
- **Ryan Bart** – New sturgeon lead working very closely with Jason Flory who is mentoring Ryan. Christy is really hoping that as we get further along in the process, we can invite Ryan to do a presentation
- **Shannon Brinkman** - New grizzly bear lead
- **Hillary Whitcomb** - Working on Caribou work and also assisting with some grizzly bear consultations.

Christy thanked us for letting their office do a presentation last meeting and wanted to ensure that all were aware that the \$40K is strictly for grizzly bear / human conflict reduction. Brittany has solicited ideas from several members of KVRI and people who have worked with grizzly bears and has assembled a bunch of great ideas that will be shared at the grizzly subcommittee meeting.

Jeanne Higgins expressed her gratitude for her time spent working with KVRI. She also wanted to acknowledge the successful work done on the CFLRP projects. Jeanne is retiring. Gary Aitken Jr. thanked Jeanne for her time and expressed his pleasure at being able to work with her. Rhonda Vogl echoed Gary's pleasure as well.

Chip Corsi – Idaho Fish and Game:

Chip echoed enjoyment of the presentations given as well as the efforts of KVRI over the years. Chip remembered that due to Zoom versus in person we were not able to celebrate the KVRI birthday as we normally do!

The one big thing they are focused on right now is the Bi-annual big game regulations setting. They are right in the middle of scoping and looking at:

- some cutbacks on Cow Elk permits
- restoring more of the archery and muzzleloader hunting that goes with the general elk tags (opportunity that was reduced after the severe winters of the late 2000's)
- looking at modifying mule deer seasons
 - a little bit for unit 1 (reduction of 1 week)
 - for the rest of the region the proposal is to standardize that to a two-week season starting November 1 going through the 14th
 - This is an effort to hopefully improve the Buck portion of the population

A public input Q&A session via telephone will be tomorrow. They will have staff on the phones from 5 to 7 in the evening.

Kim Pierson

Kim thanked Jeanne for the fabulous leadership that she's provided to the Idaho Panhandle NF. Kim will be filling in as the Acting Forest Supervisor in the interim of the next four months. Molly Ryan will be serving as the Acting Deputy Forest Supervisor. Molly is a Ranger from the Beaverhead-Deerlodge National Forest and has a lot of background in recreation and is excited to be here.

Kim is hopeful COVID conditions will continue to improve and that they can start making a plan towards getting employees in the office this spring. The forest continues to work and serve the public through mainly telework at this time. The Regional office has completed outreach efforts to fill Jeanne's position and are advertising it this week.

Gary concluded by reminding all that the next KVRI meeting is on March 15th, 7pm via zoom. The meeting was called at 8:42PM.