

Meeting Notes  
Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative  
January 25, 2021  
7:00 p.m.  
Board Meeting via Zoom

**Board Members in Attendance:**

Angela Cooper, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho Co Chair & KVRI Co Chair  
Dan Dinning, Boundary County Commissioners, KVRI Co-chair  
Chip Corsi, Idaho Fish & Game  
Jeanne Higgins, U.S. Forest Service  
Bob Blanford, Business/Industry  
Ed Atkins Jr., Corporate Agriculture/Landowner  
Dave Wattenbarger, Soil Conservation/Landowner  
Sandy Ashworth, Social/Cultural/Historical Interests  
Adam Arthur, City of Bonners Ferry & KVRI Co Chair

**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  
Scott Soult, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho  
Chuck Roady, Private Landowner  
Sara Straub, F&W, Kootenai Wildlife Refuge  
Karen Roetter, Senator Mike Crapo's Office  
Carol Kriebs, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho  
Jonathan Luhnnow, Idaho Dept. of Lands  
Norm Merz, Idaho Fish and Game  
Jake Garringer, Office of the Governor  
Christy Johnson-Hughes, U.S. Fish & Wildlife  
Gregory Hoffman, U.S. Army Corp. of Engineers  
Jon Moen, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers  
Kennon McClintock, Consv/ Environmentalist (Alt) KVRI Board  
Kim Pierson, U.S. Forest Service  
Marc Kilmer, Representative Russ Fulcher's Office  
Robert Akins, Idaho Fish and Game  
Sue Ireland, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho  
Merritt Horsmon, Idaho Fish & Game  
Brittany Morlin, U.S. Fish & Wildlife  
Stefany Bales, Office of Senator Risch  
Douglas Jones, Idaho Dept of Water Rights  
Alice Hanley, U.S. Fish & Wildlife  
Jason Pyron, U.S. Fish & Wildlife  
Evan DeHamer, Idaho Fish and Game  
Molly McCahon, Lakes Commission  
Mitch Doherty, Vital Grounds  
Shannon Brinkman, U.S. Fish & Wildlife  
Christopher Swanson, U.S. Fish & Wildlife  
Jesse Grossman, Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative

Shawn Young, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho  
Darren Parker, Office of Senator Risch  
Rhonda Vogl, KVRI Facilitator & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho  
Karen Schumacher, Recording Secretary KVRI & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho

Meeting called at 7:08 pm by Dan Dinning

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

Dan Dinning asked for corrections or edits to the draft meetings from November minutes and none were had. Minutes passed by consensus.

**Presentations:**

Dan introduced Chris Swanson, state supervisor for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Chris expressed gratitude for the collaboration with KVRI and stated that the new emphasis in North Idaho was largely due to KVRI. It was explained that Brittany Morlin would be shifting her focus solely to North Idaho and largely the Kootenai River. Chris introduced Jason Pyron of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife.

Jason echoed the gratitude expressed by Chris and explained that their group is looking to refocus efforts on the forests/river areas that are under the care of landowners, tribes and private organizations. He offered his support to the efforts and stated he looked to assist in empowering Brittany's work efforts.

Chris Swanson turned the presentation on The Partners Program over to Brittany. The presentation can be [viewed here](#) by scrolling down to the January Meeting.

Brittany has worked for the fish and wildlife service for 10 years. She loves what she does with the Partners Program. Brittany was asked by Christy Johnson-Hughes, assistant to the state supervisor in the Coeur D'Alene office, to give this presentation to KVRI about the Idaho Partners program in order to address questions as well to address the ability to use partner funding towards grizzly bear conflict reduction. The Program is evaluated by congress by acres and stream miles restored. They are willing to put dollars towards imminent threats especially if it can include a restoration component.

In general Idaho F&W recognize additional resources are needed on the ground to help reduce human bear conflict. Funding is being provided through other programs and by using creative solutions.

**Recently Contributed.**

90K for an IDFG Management Specialist to provide outreach and assistance.

25K for Conflict Prevention tools that will largely be defined through the input of KVRI and include things like fencing waste transfer stations and electric fencing

30K for Research & Monitoring via IPNF for continued efforts in collaring and hair trapping

35K for IDFG Cons Officer & Monitoring for conservation of threatened species

CBP funding for the Cons Officer and Monitoring for the Bog Creek Project

Brittany went on to explain how the Idaho Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program provide technical and financial assistance to landowners interested in restoring and enhancing wildlife habitat on their land. Local cooperators for Boundary County include

The Nature Conservancy, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, Boundary Soil Conservation District, and Idaho Fish & Game.

Early involvement is encouraged if assistance with streamlining permitting is hoped for.

For more information Brittany can be contacted at [Brittany\\_morlin@fws.gov](mailto:Brittany_morlin@fws.gov).

Christy Johnson-Hughes provided clarification and a reminder that during the last KVRI meeting it was mentioned that the fish and wildlife service were trying to increase their presence and availability for grizzly bear and other threatened species. Mentioned was funding for an officer and for bear conflict management. Christy asked that it be noted that bear conflict management funds were originally slotted for 15K but Chris Swanson authorized another 10K so now that funding is at 25K.

The one thing that is on hold is the Bog Creek Road mitigation project as it is in litigation. That particular position, a state position, would be within the Bog Creek project. The focus for now is on first three items.

Chris Swanson concluded the presentation by expressing thanks for this important partnership and underscoring their desire to listen and be a part of and to understand better our needs. Chris enjoys coming to our area and appreciates the beauty. Chris felt that they are being proactive by providing some funding/seed money to grow the efforts such as Grizzly management. They are committed to staying invested and feel lucky to have Brittany and Jason on board who are nationally recognized for their efforts.

Dan asked about the impact of increasing habitats for threatened and endangered species, especially, Grizzly Bear, down in the valley. Are we not then inviting a lot more bears into the conflict area? When we start making it more inviting will we will not have even more bears and conflict?

Chris and Brittany indicated understanding and wanted to make sure that we understand this is in a starting mode and there is opportunity to discuss and accommodate.

Dan agreed that this was something that could be discussed in a different meeting.

Dan introduced Kevin Knauth of the Forest Service to give the Summary of the CFLRP Annual Report for FY2020. The presentation can be [viewed here](#) by scrolling down to the January Meeting.

The C.F.L.R.P. project with the Forest Service produces an annual report. Kevin reviewed a summary of that report and discussed some of the high points.

The annual report is an opportunity each year to put into words all the great work that has occurred over the previous fiscal year.

A lot of that work is tied to the collaborative effort that the Forest Service has with KVRI and the community.

This is an annual accounting of how well they are doing in attempts to accomplish what was originally proposed.

For this project area they have exceeded what the original proposed accomplishments were in a lot of the different areas.

Of note regarding the actual volume harvested in Fiscal Year 2020 was 13 million board feet; assuming 5000 board feet per truckload means that approximately 2,600 log truck loads moved along our roads.

Also, of note is that the FS did a good job treating fuels during a COVID-19 year. Of the 1,824 acres treated, some was done via pile burning, a little bit of prescribed burning, and the rest via commercial thinning on the landscape. Reducing fuels on the landscape has a significant impact on reducing smoke in the air and reduction in costs of fire suppression. As an example, last year the Perkins Lake fire started in a treated, harvest unit but grew to less than 1/10 of an acre in total size. This allowed fire crews to keep it from spreading into the untreated areas adjacent to this unit. This means that a 40 acre treatment unit has the affect of protecting many hundreds of adjacent acres.

The fire was controlled within a couple of hours which put limited smoke in the air versus had it got out of that into the timber surrounding it a fire could have resulted that put smoke into the air for days or weeks.

The total cost was probably an engine and a dozen people versus the possibility of many engines and crews and helicopters and the use of retardant with planes and all the things that come with fires that do get larger.

Kevin concluded with a table showing the jobs supported and maintained with the purpose of this to give a sense for how much that this work does to support community jobs.

Dan expressed gratitude for the report and work done. Kevin added that this report also sends a signal back to congress about what is working and what is a good investment to encourage continued funding.

Dan asked the congressional staff if they had any further needs in that order to help back in D.C.

Darren Parker – new state representative for Senator Risch replacing Mike Roach agrees the report is an excellent tool for their office to show every dollar put into CFLRP is a dollar spent on the ground and jobs in Idaho. This is a success story that the senator enjoys sharing.

Marc Kilmer of – above and beyond and thanks

Dan introduced the next presentation: KTOI and Army Corp of Engineers Idaho fish and game request:

Sue Ireland began by thanking everyone for their time and the opportunity to share some information.

Sue shared that a request will be made to the Army Corp. of Engineers regarding some hydro operations to help support burbot early life during egg incubation and spawning Sue reminded us that it was in 2002 with congressional help and support from KVRI and The Kootenai Tribe that an appropriation was made that helped us to coordinate together and prepare a conservation strategy collaboratively with the community and

our agency partners for the Burbot.

This is a fish that's gone from almost extinct in the 1990's to now a success story of an abundant population supporting subsistence and sport fishing.

The conservation strategy has five areas of focus:

- hydro operations
- habitat
- conservation
- monitoring and evaluation
- outreach

This request is addressing a hydro operations component that might help the Burbot.

More will be presented in-depth at the February KVRI meeting so that everybody can get up to speed about all the cool things that are happening.

Shawn Young shared some about the biology and life history of the Burbot. One of the unique characteristics of burbot is that they migrate and spawn at the coldest time of the year. Most fish usually spawn in the spring or early summer when things are warming up.

The Kootenai restored population have the peak of the spawning around mid-February to late February. Burbot need 1 – 2 degree Celsius for optimum survival.

There is a tendency for deformities in abnormal development if it gets too warm and they just will not fertilize properly.

If you get 3 to 4 degrees Celsius, you'll get survival but you start to see mortality and if it gets warmer than that you're going to have heavy mortality right from the beginning.

The adults will still spawn even if it is warm enough to kill all the eggs immediately. They are going to go through their annual cycle regardless of temperature. It is important that the very cold water is available when it's time for them to spawn.

Greg Hoffman shared how a system operation request for a special hydro operation could be implemented and what that means. Early inflow forecasting information from this water year looks like it may be shaping up to be a winter that could probably support these efforts. In many years such as this year, flows remain low through January and February, and late February is the time that the temperature in the reservoir is cold enough that providing low flows for the last part of month, when burbot spawn, often leads to appropriate spawning temperatures for burbot in the Kootenai River near Bonners Ferry. The KTOI Burbot APR team is assessing a potential operation that would provide low flows for the last half of February while still achieving the required Kootenai Reservoir end-of-month target elevation for flood risk management objectives

Another consideration is of course hydropower so Bonneville Power Administration has been involved in discussions. More information will be available next week and KVRI will be updated as the process progresses.

Sue further informed the group that the Systems Operation Request (SOR) was developed collaboratively with Idaho Fish and Game, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, British Columbia, The Army Corp as well as The Kootenai Tribe. More information on

this will be provided next month.

### **SubCommittee Updates:**

#### **Forestry**

Kevin Knauth touched on the Westside Restoration Project

They are working through the comments received on the on the draft EA  
They are also going to be treating on BLM lands and doing some work on the refuge because the project has those adjacent neighbors, they are making sure that they treat everything that they can.

Dan asked if a forestry subcommittee meeting would be scheduled to review the comments.

Kevin said that once the comments have been categorized to facilitate addressing in a more organized fashion, then a subcommittee meeting will be scheduled.

#### **Grizzly Bear Subcommittee**

Rhonda Vogl will send out more information on a notice for the March 25<sup>th</sup> meeting which will be via zoom. She indicated that we'll be getting close to the time when bears start emerging so this next meeting should be a good discussion with a lot of topics including getting ads out, informational pieces and education as well as more on a local conflict specialist. We are looking forward to another good robust grizzly bear subcommittee meeting full of good input and good information.

#### **TMDL Subcommittee**

Next meeting will be around the second week of March.

Dan indicated that it was mentioned that the subcommittee will be discussing the selenium issue.

Fish and Wildlife Department have done so much of the research and they have so much good information on all of this.

Notice will be going out shortly in the hopes that people can clear that date and time that should be around the second week of March with a 9:00 AM start time.

#### **Old/New Business**

Rhonda shared that we have a KVRI board member who has announced that he'd like to retire. Jim Cadnum, industrial/landowner representative, would like to retire and he has recommended a replacement for himself and offered to be the alternate for that position.

KVRI bylaws state that the three co-chairs will make that decision on the replacement. It has been recommended that Chuck Roady fill that spot. The co-chairs will be making that decision sometime in the near future.

#### **Federal partners and State partners**

*Karen Roetter of Senator Crapo's office* shared The Senate majority and minority leadership has reached an agreement and right now it looks like the filibuster will be preserved.

*Stefany Bales of Senator Risch's office* echoed what Karen said and stated that Senator Risch remains the chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee for now until leadership is transferred to Senator Menendez. This committee is mainly focused on confirming nominees that are moving through the committee. Senator Risch remains on the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. Secure Rural Schools is a hugely important issue to him as it is to the rest of the delegation so he will continue to work hard to ensure that program continues.

*Darren Parker of Senator Risch's office* introduced himself and shared that when Mike Roach decided to retire he gave Dan a call is now based out of Boise working on natural resource issues for the senator with the priority for this year to secure all schools.

*Marc Kilmer of Representative Russ Fulcher's office* shared that the house is still working through some details in terms of organization. Representative Fulcher will still remain on the natural resources committee on the next session of Congress with a focus on securing rural schools.

*Jake Garringer of the Governor's office* shared that legislature opened two weeks ago and the Governor delivered his state of the state address.

The Governor did make mention of collaborative initiatives, his budget recommendations and his building Idaho's future package.

The package included:

- A one- time \$20 million transferred to the fire suppression deficiency bond
- 450,000 in ongoing funding of general fund money to bolster shared stewardship
- A one-time general fund spending in the amount to 90,000 for vehicles for good neighbor authority

Public health as well as education and transportation remained the governor's top priorities.

### **Chip Corsi – Idaho Fish and Game:**

The Commission meets this week with decisions on moose. sheep and goat regulations. Also, the commission will make their decisions on biennial big game (deer/elk/antelope/bear/lion/wolf) season recommendations in March.

A virtual open house meeting is scheduled for February 18th followed by a call-in night where staff will be sitting by phones answering public questions on the 23rd from 5:00 to 7:00.

The agency is looking at pretty sharp cutbacks, region wide, in the different units, for cow elk hunts.

It is proposed to add more opportunity back into the general A and B tag hunting season for elk.

Chip shared big news that a bull trout caught in Lake Ponderay was a half inch shy of the world record that has been in existence in Lake Pend Oreille since 1947!

Elk, deer, and moose are being collared which will be followed by collars out on Lions, Wolves and Bears later to help in knowing more about predator prey relationships.

Dan asked Jeanne Higgins if she would like to speak about her upcoming retirement.

**Jeanne Higgins, U.S. Forest Service**

Jeanne shared that she plans to retire at the end of February from her long career in federal service that began in 1980

She has enjoyed working with the group and had been reflecting on what KVRI has accomplished and stressed that she had not seen quite as near the level of commitment with other efforts as KVRI. She felt KVRI has been a model for collaboration and she is grateful for the commitment to improving forest conditions such as being one of the top producers of timber over the last several years across the country. She stressed that it is not just about timber it's about all the watershed restoration projects and about habitat improvement work as well as the work that we've been doing to improve our recreational facilities.

Jeanne concluded with information regarding a large commitment by the delegation to support and have continued support for secure rural schools.

Funding was set aside under Title Two of that act and it is thought that those funds should be distributed here soon

Funding via the Great America Outdoors act is still waiting for congressional approval and it is hoped that funds from that will be coming soon

Free firewood permits will continue through the end of March and then after that we'll evaluate whether it will continue with free permits or go back to some form of a fee permit.

Kim Pierson shared her gratefulness for working with Jeanne and added that they are excited to have a new building and that they can't wait to invite us to come see the beautiful new campus.

Dan concluded by reminding all that the next KVRI meeting is on Feb 22 7pm via zoom Meeting called at 9PM.