

Meeting Notes Kootenai
Valley Resource Initiative
November 23, 2020
– 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
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

Agency/Others in Attendance:

Wally Cossairt, (Alt.) Boundary County Commissioner
Kevin Knauth, (Alt.) Bonners Ferry Ranger District, U.S. Forest Service
Dave Gray, Social/Cultural/Historical Interests (Alt.) KVRI Board
Jace Hogg, Office of Species Conservation
Scott Soultz, KTOI
Chuck Roady, Private Landowner
Sara Straub, F&W, Kootenai Wildlife Refuge
Karen Roetter, Senator Mike Crapo's Office
Brandon Diller, KTOI
Jon Moen, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers
Carol Kriebs, KTOI
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
Mitch Silvers, Senator Mike Crapo's Office
Jeff Gilberg, Private Landowner
Rhonda Vogl, KVRI Facilitator & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Karen Schumacher, Recording Secretary KVRI & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho

Rhonda Vogl went through the list of attendees asking for introductions
Gary Aiken asked for corrections or edits to the draft meetings from October
minutes and none were had. Minutes passed by consensus.

Karen Schumacher shared an overview of the new KVRI website. She reviewed the navigation of the website as well as some of the aspects that would be helpful to the community and KVRI board members.

- Photo Albums
 - Field trips
 - Retirements
 - Fair
- Archived Elements
 - Meeting Documents
 - Meeting Presentations
- Calendar of Events
 - KVRI and Subcommittee

The website can be accessed at: www.kvricollaborative.com

Jon Moen - US Corp of Army Engineers shared a presentation of the Libby dam operations from 2020 and some of the calculation changes they are making for 2021 operations period. The presentation can be seen at <https://www.kvricollaborative.com/kvri> by scrolling down to the November 23rd meeting block.

Dan Dinning asked questions regarding how the WY2020 operation would have differed under the new WY2021 procedures. After consulting information, Jon followed up Dan's question by saying the new procedures, had they been applied in WY2020, would have resulted in a deeper drawdown of the reservoir during the winter and early spring period.

Jeanne Higgins- U.S. Forest Service updated the group on the pending decision by congress for USDA forest service projects under the Great American Outdoors Act to be considered for 2021. Congress is reviewing and it is estimated that decisions will be made shortly.

- North Idaho projects focus on shelf ready projects waiting on funding
 - Toilets at sites needing repair and/or replacement
 - Trails that have deferred maintenance
- One big ticket item is for the Kit Price Camp Ground.

The projects for the whole country were posted on Friday for the public to access. Those can be seen at [US Forest Service NEPA Projects Home \(fs.fed.us\)](https://www.fs.fed.us)

No projects were proposed by the Forest Service for the Land and Water Conservation Fund in North Idaho

There are two projects proposed for FY2021 via the State of Idaho Legacy for the Moyie River Corridor.

FY21 is with congress and FY22 proposals are out for comment which ends November 30th.

Committee Updates

Kevin Knauth - U.S. Forest Service, gave an update on the KVRI Westside Restoration project

- Environmental assessment is complete
 - Release expected early next week
 - 30-day comment period begins after release and is expected to run through December and into part of January.
- **Local Interest Information**
- CFLRP annual report is being finished
 - Should be available to review next week
- Firewood Permits are still available
 - Free Use
 - Contact the district office to get by email or in person
- Christmas Tree permits are now available
 - Free – 3 to a family
 - Forms Available
 - Outside district office
 - Online via <https://www.recreation.gov/tree-permits>

Subcommittee Updates – Rhonda Vogl

W.A.C. - The support letter for wildlife fencing in Copeland was complete

TMDL – Letters have been sent out to both Kevin Knauth and Chad Ramsay to ensure approval for the time of both Jonathan Luhnnow and Brandon Glasier as volunteers in our monitoring efforts. It is greatly appreciated that these and other individuals have stepped up to learn and assume the monitoring roles handled so well for so many years by Kevin Greenleaf, Dave Wattenbarger and Jerry Garten

Grizzly Bear – Met on November 19th via Zoom

- Community Notification Process (Nixle) Updates
 - Public notice/newspaper ad on Bear Awareness
 - Article for publication Fall/Spring
- Opportunities for online public outreach
 - Mitch Doherty – Missoula Bears website
- Human/Bear conflict prevention
 - Laura Jungst, USFS, Three Rivers Ranger District
 - Jessie Grossman, Y2Y
 - Brittany Morlin, USFWS
- Community Liaison/Conflict Specialist
 - Discussions on possible funding options and position for education/outreach in Boundary County
- Refuse areas in Boundary County

Christy Johnson-Hughes shared with KVRI the availability of funding for the Human/Bear Conflict Specialist position through USFWS Grizzly Bear Funding Opportunities

1) Support an IDFG Conservation Officer for 2 years to assist with bear/human conflicts and education. Funding was provided through the Grizzly Bear Recovery Office to IDFG.

2) \$15,000 for Boundary County/KVRI to assist with information and education. This may include signs, fencing, bear spray workshops, etc. We are looking for a proposal from either the Boundary County Commissioners or KVRI with projects to reduce grizzly bear/human conflicts.

3) Partners for Fish and Wildlife projects/NRCS funding opportunities. I would like our Partners program to do a presentation on their funding opportunities and current projects in north Idaho. I would like to add more grizzly bear-related projects to our portfolio, such as habitat-oriented projects, maybe some fencing, migration habitat, etc.

All of this needs to be done in partnership with KVRI and landowners. The only item that has been finalized is the funding for the Conservation Officer. Otherwise, she is asking for help identifying the highest priority needs they can help with in north Idaho.

Dan Dinning asked Christy to clarify why there was a need to wait for funding dollars. Christy described the process of needing input and needing to file for the grant even though the dollars are already earmarked.

It was agreed that the co-chairs of KVRI would meet and discuss.

Jake Garringer of the Governor's office shared The Western Governors' Association hosted the webinar, *Local Groups in Land Management*, on Oct. 21, 2020. The presentation opened with remarks by **Idaho Gov. Brad Little** The link to access those remarks is: <https://westgov.org/news/article/watch-local-groups-in-land-management-webinar>

Karen Roetter- Senator Crapo's Office had no updates.

Rhonda Vogl – KVRI reviewed the proposed KVRI meeting dates for 2021 and asked for board input on the January and February dates. It was agreed to have the meetings on January 25 and on February 22. The meeting dates in their entirety can be seen at <https://www.kvricollaborative.com/kvri> by scrolling down to the November 23rd meeting block.

Chip Corsi – Idaho Fish and Game Shared that the agency is going into the big game regulation season cycle in January. The process takes a couple of months and will be considering a reduction in Unit 1 cow elk tags. Fish and Game Commission will finalize decisions in March.

Chip also provided input on the position they are looking to fill for bear management. It is hoped that this will be filled and in operation by the first of April

or May. (When bear is coming out of dens) They are looking for someone who can deal both with people and bears.

The agency is heavy into deer sampling for CWD and encourages hunters to provide samples. The testing is provided at no cost and will help them track any progression of the disease in our area. There is currently no CWD in our area.

Christy Johnson-Hughes – U.S. Fish and Wildlife provided an update on Caribou. There are funds set aside for research for caribou. The hope is to try to understand what is going on with the southern Selkirk population. USGS and Canada have agreed to explore research ideas. Once they have a proposal together, they will submit to USGS. They are hoping for a two-year research program. The conversations are just beginning. This is part of the recovery plan for implementation. Christy will continue to update us as information becomes available.

Jeanne Higgins –U.S. Forest Service shared that a publication was released last week regarding some updated regulations on NEPA. Of possible interest were some categorical exclusions particular to roads

- Storage
- Decommissioning
- Restoration
 - New for restoration exclusion activities that do not include commercial timber harvest can be categorically excluded up to 2800 acres

The information can be seen in full at <https://www.kvricollaborative.com/kvri> by scrolling down to the November 23rd meeting block.

Dan Dinning on the Roadless Commission shared that at the last meeting our area's presentation was done on the Westside Restoration. Dan emphasized that there were multiple presentations from different offices and that the one by our group was by far the very best. Dan asked Kevin to convey to his group that they did an absolutely wonderful job.

Chairman Aiken wished all a Happy Thanksgiving. All echoed and the meeting was called at 8:21