

Final Meeting Minutes Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative
May 16, 2022
7:00 p.m.
Hybrid Board Meeting Boundary County Annex Building

Board Members in Attendance:

Dan Dinning, Boundary County Commissioner, KVRI Co-Chair
Dick Staples, Mayor, City of Bonners Ferry, KVRI Co-Chair
Gary Aitken Jr., Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, KVRI Co-Chair
Bob Blanford, Business/Industry
Carl Petrick, U.S. Forest Service
Chip Corsi, Idaho Fish & Game (Alt.)
Ed Atkins, Corp. Ag/Landowner
Kennon McClintock, Conservationist/Environ. (Alt.)
Sandy Ashworth, Social, Cultural, Historical

Agency/Others in Attendance:

Christy Johnson-Hughes, U.S. Fish & Wildlife
Darcy Lammers, Private Citizen
Darren Parker, Office of Senator Risch
Dave Gray, Social, Cultural, Historical (Alt.)
Dirk Mendive, Office of Representative Russ Fulcher
Genny Hoyle, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Greg Hoffman, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers
Jace Hogg, Office of Species Conservation
Jake Garringer, Office of the Governor
Karen Roetter, Office of Senator Crapo
Kevin Schaffer, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers
Kim Pierson, U.S. Forest Service
Leon Basdekas, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers
Robin Fox, NOAA Weather, Spokane
Ryan Bart, U.S. Fish & Wildlife
Scott Lawrence, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers
Scott Soultz, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Sean Wilson, Idaho Fish & Game
Shawn Young, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Troy Smith, Idaho Fish & Game
Wally Cossairt, Boundary County Commissioner (Alt.)
William Barquin, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Rhonda Vogl, KVRI Facilitator & KTOI Admin. Assistant
Karen Schumacher, Recording Secretary, KVRI

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Meeting was called at 7:02 pm by Dan Dinning. Dan asked if there were any corrections to the April 18th draft meeting minutes. None were had and the minutes passed by consensus.

Dan introduced Robin Fox from the Spokane office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). Robin's presentation can be found at [KVRI | KVRIID \(kvrriid.kvricollaborative.com\)](https://kvrriid.kvricollaborative.com) and scrolling to the May 16th meeting block. Robin reviewed our overall weather pattern for this La Nina year. She noted that our area is approximately two weeks behind in our snowpack melt. The graphs shown also demonstrated that we are wetter and cooler as expected for La Nina. Robin shared the higher than normal water levels, cooler temperature outlook and discussed the low chance of flooding.

Question: Carl Petrick asked if the weather followed a forecasted pattern or if it was surprising. Answered: Robin replied that the La Nina pattern was indicative for what we are seeing but not quite to the degree that we are seeing it.

Question: Carl Petrick asked if she had any input regarding the potential fire forecast.

Answered: Robin thought that we would have a slower and less impactful fire season for North Idaho.

Dan Dinning asked Robin if she would stay on through the Libby Dam presentation for questions.

Dan asked Leon Basdekas of the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers up to present on the Libby Dam operations for Spring, 2022. This presentation can be found at [KVRI | KVRIID \(kvrriid.kvricollaborative.com\)](https://kvrriid.kvricollaborative.com) and scrolling to the May 16th meeting block. Leon gave a brief professional history including his time in Colorado and decision to take advantage of the USACE senior water manager opening, that started in September of 2021.

Leon reviewed the 2021 operations and expected operations for 2022 noting that the annual sturgeon pulse (outflow to accommodate sturgeon spawning) began May 16th and is expected to continue for approximately 30 days.

The April through August inflow for Libby Dam is forecasted to be 111% of our average but it was noted that there is a low but existing chance of meeting or exceeding flood stage.

Leon concluded with his contact information and invitation to any with questions to contact him. He turned the presentation over to Greg Hoffman, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers.

Greg reviewed the history of released water since the early 2000's. Greg emphasized that the what we are looking at now are a different set of objectives as they relate to sturgeon recovery and biology. Greg pointed out the support in the room of several biologists that do the research to support the objectives. One of the objectives is courtesy of the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho. The tribe purchased Nimz ranch property several years ago and has done a tremendous amount of restoration work to it. In 2018 they released early life stage burbot and did a lot of in-depth growth documentation. Those efforts emulated pre dam conditions of getting water out on the landscape. Today, with the technology that exists and with the water levels at 111%, there exists a great opportunity to do the same thing as was done with Burbot, with Sturgeon. Larval fish need to get somewhere they can grow and survive. Places like the restored Nimz

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ranch offer that opportunity.

Question Asked: Dan Dinning asked how they were getting the water from the river onto the landscape.

Answered: Shawn Young explained that there are connected channels dug out at certain elevations within the levies. Once the water hits a certain level, it can then move steadily into landscape. The contoured landscape offers various depths. The warmer temperatures encourage plankton growth and the combined efforts offer the fish larvae a better opportunity to flourish.

Question asked: Dan Dinning asked for an elevation correlation to the flow of 30KCFS.

Answered: Greg explained that it would equate out to the 1760, well below flood stage.

Question asked: Carl Petrick stated that he understood that the goal was for the larvae to go into the flood plain and asked if the load of oxygen and/or predation were issues.

Answered: Shawn Young confirmed that historically some of the Burbot were lost due to being trapped under the ice during winter, some were eaten. But, he explained, these are really replicating the natural, overall ecosystem concept. It is hoped that this application will work for the Sturgeon as well.

Dan Dinning concluded the presentation by pointing out the significant staff changes that have occurred since the pandemic and that it is not clear who should be contacted in the event significant water events. Dan asked Leon, Greg and Robin for input.

Leon will get that information to Dan but Robin stated that Andrew O'Neel, Director of the Boundary County Office of Emergency Management, would be a great contact.

Sub-Committee Updates:

Forestry- Kim Pierson- U.S. Forest Service

- The Snowload timber sale is a 13 million board foot sale and is out for advertisement
 - Bid opening will be June 14th
 - It is the first of four timber sales out of the Westside Restoration Project
- Prescribed burning is slow due to our weather but they have managed to get 350 acres done with a helicopter up in Boulder Creek
- Logging activity is picking up soon in the Katka area
- There are a few small sales across the Bonners Ferry area due to windfall

Dan Dinning asked about the forestry money coming down. Carl Petrick answered that there is a delay and there are indications that some lines will see a lot and some will not. Carl also wanted the group to know that the recreation program has been elevated. The region one forests are seeing more and more people. Joshua Uriarte has done an excellent job so they have made the decision to elevate that position to a full leadership team position.

Kim Pierson added that CFLRP was unfortunately not funded. The consideration started out with the collaboratives standing at 10th and ended at 18th. It looks that they are slotted fourth for funding next year. On a good note, this allows for more organization and preparation.

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Kim confirmed that another meeting for the collaborative groups will be scheduled to work on deciding where can we put projects to maximize dollars and impact.

Congressional Updates:

Karen Roetter from Senator Crapo's office no update – just encouraged all to vote

Darren Parker of Senator Risch's office – Darren encouraged the collaboratives to support projects through the lens of Wildfire Urban Interface (WUI), those that improve drinking water and projects that include tribal support. He further suggested that Myrtle Creek is an excellent case study for what projects could be done that could prevent something like that happening again. He encouraged the group to consider hitting these targets that the infrastructure bill would support.

Dirk Mendive of Congressman's Fulcher's office Their offices are moving through a hiring process with a few staff changes and are hoping to fill those in the CDA office soon. Congressman Fulcher, through the natural resource committee, is focused on providing input and support for how wildfires should be treated.

Jake Garringer of the Governor's office had no update

Agency Updates:

U.S. Fish & Wildlife – Christy Johnson-Hughes Christy agreed with suggested focus on possible funding for the WUI, the drinking water and tribal lead and collaboratives. She stated that there's some really good ideas out there for proposals particularly associated with grizzly bear conflict reduction. It is felt that this is a good opportunity for the tribe to put forward a proposal for a conflict management specialist and clarified that USFW want to provide whatever assistance they can for a proposal such as that one and, in particular, for improving the tools and increasing the education for community members. She noted that the Tribe or the state can put in a proposal for a conflict management position.

Christy went on to say that these supports are also needed in other areas further south of Boundary County.

A federal conflict specialist has been hired by USFW, but he is located in Montana. He will be traveling to Idaho in the near future to introduce himself. He will be getting a handle on how grizzly bear management is done in Idaho. Christy shared that there has never been federal funding for a conflict management specialist position before and the fact that they are willing to share in the funding for this position in Idaho demonstrates the significance and value of addressing concerns for grizzly and black bear. Meetings will be held with various agencies to attempt to gather ideas and prioritize steps moving forward.

Idaho Fish & Game – Chip Corsi Approval was granted to upgrade the Grizzly Bear conflict specialist position to that of a seasonal biologist with an increase of \$6.00 more an hour. It is

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hoped that this may encourage more applicants. Chip offered thanks to DEQ and Bonners Ferry City Council for the greenlight to restore hunting and fishing opportunities in the Myrtle Creek 23,000-acre area this year. It is hoped that next year's review cycle goes through with code making this more permanent.

Chip let the group know that June would be his last KVRI meeting on the board as he is retiring.

U.S. Forest Service – Kim Pierson Bog Creek work is expected for this summer. They will be working in there beginning July 15th with the plan to finish this part in 2022. The only thing they have left is one large culvert.

On the Priest Lake side, the decommissioning is done. That was associated with being able to open that road. The work is being done through the Good Neighbor Authority allowing them to use contract work.

Work will start this summer with expected completion by next summer which will allow work to move forward with the goal of getting that road open and begin to have public access again. Kim emphasized that it is a huge win working with Fish and Wildlife service and working with Border Patrol to meet the needs of the bear and to balance that with the needs of security for our border.

Kim confirmed to Dan Dinning that Bog Creek (Bluegrass) is one of two areas, the other being Long-Smith, that need to be brought into compliance for Bear Management. The other piece of that is to have the Over Snow Vehicles (OSV) travel plan decision made by FY23 as well.

Finally, they are excited to be going back to the office around June 6th. Kim mentioned that many of the newer employees have never seen the new building. They are planning an open house in July.

There were no further comments or questions and the meeting was called at 8:20 p.m.

Karen Schumacher – recording secretary - KVRI