

Meeting Notes
Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative
Forestry Committee
November 21, 2019 9:00 a.m.
Kootenai Tribal Office

Attendance:

Kevin Knauth, Bonners Ferry Ranger District, US Forest Service (USFS)-District Ranger
Doug Nishek, Bonners Ferry Ranger District, US Forest Service (USFS)-Planning Forester
Dan Dinning, Boundary County Commissioner and KVRI Co-chair
Ed Koberstein, Bonners Ferry Ranger District, US Forest Service (USFS)-Timber Management
Beth Bigelow, North Zone, US Forest Service (USFS) - Archeology
Kevin Greenleaf, Landowner
Scott Soult, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Spencer Hanson, Idaho Department of Lands (IDL)
Lisa Ailport, City of Bonners Ferry
Talina Gossen, USFWS/Kootenai Refuge
Steve Petesch, USFS - Recreation
Brad Smith, ICL
Brett Lyndaker, USFS – Wildlife Biologist
Jen Anderson, USFS – Project Leader
Joe Heisel, USFS – Roads Manager
Brandon Diller, KTOI
Olivia Drake, 9BTrails & Boundary Back Country Access (BBCA)
Lawrence Drake, BBCA
Matt Philbrook, BBCA
Erin Plue, IFG
Jake Garringer, Governor's Office
Mitch Silvers, US Sen Mike Crapo's Office
Wayne & Colleen Garrigan, Landowners
Rich Scheer, Landowner
Mike Sheppard, Landowner
Arthur Dupont, Landowner
John Lefebvre, Landowner
Paul Sieracki, Landowner
Barbara Castellan, Landowner
Suzanne Arbo, Landowner
Ross Novinger, Landowner
Jason Cronister, Landowner
Teresa Cartwright, Landowner
Rhonda Vogl, KVRI Facilitator & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (KTOI)
Karen Schumacher, KVRI Recording Secretary & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (KTOI)

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Opening:

Rhonda Vogl opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. She informed the group that the meeting would be covering the Westside Restoration Project. The intent for these meetings is to provide transparency and opportunity for input and involvement by the general public. Introductions followed.

Kevin Knauth thanked all attendees for turning out and voiced his appreciation for the assistance from KVRI. All projects go through a number of stages. Forestry/Restoration projects utilize KVRI to help plan the way through the process. Prior to doing work they are required to go through an analysis (NEPA) (National Environmental Policy Act). Any proposal requires a hard look at impacts, like on watersheds. The Westside Restoration Project is a process with many steps. The complexity of the project and the resource areas of specialty that are supported by Forestry include fuels, wildlife, aquatics, hydrology and wetlands.

The drawing of a polygon begins the process of looking at opportunities on the landscape to do as much good work as possible.

The work that they are hoping to accomplish cannot be accomplished with just the funding from the government. Timber sales allow for bridging the funding gap.

Good timber sale purchasers work with the Forest Service and are integral to helping make the overall process work.

NEPA guides the process that the Forest Service follows and provides checkpoints for the restoration process. Vegetative and fuels reduction operations usually result in timber sales.

There are a number of check points early in this process. One is the work with KVRI in meetings at which a number of things may be brought into consideration. Field trips are integral to allow for idea-generating early in the process, and for inclusion in the effort. The field trip in early August was well attended and resulted in a number of ideas. It's vital to have those ideas early on because it's very difficult to go back once the project has been created. The difficulty can be compared to trying to put a chimney in place after a house has roofing material already on.

Check points include meetings like this. The plan begins with a determination of what work can be completed by going through the different areas. The work of crawling through the woods (gathering field data for analysis) has been completed. Ideas of where the treatments are needed have been identified. All the ideas go on the map. This larger area or proposed treatment areas usually shrink down with the consideration of watershed health and sediment input, for instance, as well as with property owners' input.

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The proposed action has been developed and the public will be asked to comment on the proposal during the public scoping period.

- Scoping is the initial proposed action for a project.
 - likely to occur mid-December.
- Scoping goes out for public comment for 30 days.
 - We will ask the public to read through and provide questions, suggestion and/or concerns.
 - Early input is always better.
 - If public comments are made during the scoping process, they have what is termed standing for objections to the project later in the process.
 -

Following that, the forest service will revisit with KVRI and review the overall plan and methodology.

A transportation analysis has been done to see which roads we would maintain and which roads are not in our system; and consideration is made for the probability of short term and long-term use. The questions are asked: what roads are out there; which roads will facilitate what is needed to be done and what access do we need long term? If a road is helpful for Forest Treatment, Fire Treatment, Suppression or Planting, it is kept.

Following planting, a particular road may not be needed for a while so the road goes into storage for 10 – 15 years.

The Forest Service is required to look at a minimum road system. There is only so much money available to maintain roads. Determining road choices relies on the cost of maintenance, risk of road failures and habitat security for grizzly bears. A consideration is given for what is available to determine what the minimum need is. Public input is helpful.

After analyzing public input on scoping, the Forest Service finalizes the proposed action and conducts an effects analysis.

Then a draft Environmental Assessment (EA) is developed and goes out to the public for another 30-day comment period.

Following the comment period on the EA:

- The FS will meet again with KVRI to review public comments.
- Comments are again accepted
- All suggestions are integrated as applicable into the Final Environmental Assessment; refining units, trails, road routes, etc.

A Draft Decision Notice (DN) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) documents are then created. These two documents are provided to the public and this period is referred to as the Objection Period. This is an opportunity for those who have already commented or made suggestions to resolve those concerns or objections.

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Following the objection period, if objections are not received, OR, they are able to be resolved, a Final DN and FONSI is signed and implementation can begin. Implementation typically begins with a timber sale. It is anticipated that the project decision will be signed one year from now.

Presentation of the project was given by Jennifer Anderson. The presentation can be found on the KVRI [website here](#). Maps are provided in the presentation.

Presentation included discussion of:

- Why the project area location was identified and selected?
- What the purpose and needs are
- What the proposed actions are

It was confirmed that there would be coordination of the project with Kootenai Wildlife Refuge with respect to recreation and fuels reduction in the area above the Westside Road and Lion's Den Road.

Discussion topics included:

- Proposed Burton Cabin Restoration
- Mile Marker(s) for the Snow Creek Road – Proposed Parking Lots
- Proposed Roman Nose parking space additions and warming hut
- Proposed Project and interaction with Bear Management Units
 - High use is not anticipated
- Allowance of motorized vehicles on trails is prohibited
 - All proposed trails are non-motorized use only
- Where and what type of road maintenance would occur
- Discussions on condition and public access on Ruby Creek road (not needed for the project as it's currently proposed).

Meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Meeting Notes done by Karen Schumacher, KTOI/KVRI Admin. Assistant