

Meeting Minutes Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative
March 21, 2022
7:00 p.m.
Hybrid Board Meeting Boundary County Annex Building

Board Members in Attendance:

Gary Aitken Jr., Kootenai Tribe of Idaho Vice Chair, KVRI Co-Chair
Dan Dinning, Boundary County Commissioner, KVRI Co-Chair
Mike Klaus, City of Bonners Ferry, KVRI Co-Chair (Alt.)
Bob Blanford, Business/Industry
Chuck Roady, Landowner (Industrial)
Ed Atkins, Corp. Ag/Landowner
Erik Olson, Soil Consv/Ag Landowner
Dave Bobbitt, Idaho Fish & Game
Kennon McClintock, Conservationist/Environmentalist(Alt.)
Dave Gray, Social, Cultural, Historical(Alt.)
Carl Petrick, U.S. Forest Service

Agency/Others in Attendance:

Andrew O'Neel, Boundary Co. Office of Emergency Management
Cayden Stone, Student
Chip Corsi, Idaho Fish & Game(Alt.)
Christy Johnson-Hughes, U.S. Fish & Wildlife
Darcy Lammers, Private Citizen
Darren Parker, Office of Senator Risch
Dave Wattenbarger, Private Citizen
Dirk Mendive, Office of Representative Russ Fulcher
Frank Edelmann, Idaho Forest Group
Hilary Whitcomb, U.S. Fish & Wildlife
Jake Garringer, Office of the Governor
Jeremy Gaffield, Idaho Fish & Game
Juli Smith, Office of Senator Crapo
Kevin Knauth, U.S. Forest Service (Alt.)
Kim Pierson, U.S. Forest Service
Marc Kilmer, Office of Senator Risch
Marty Martinez, Private Citizen
Merritt Horsmon, Idaho Fish & Game
Michelle Richman, Idaho Water Rights
Mitch Silvers, Office of Senator Crapo
Norm Merz, Idaho Fish & Game

Ray Pease, Bureau of Land Management
Robert Akins, Idaho Fish & Game
Robert Smathers, Idaho Farm Bureau
Sarah Hendricks, Office of Species Conservation
Scott Soult, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Tim Bertling, Boundary County Commissioner
Wally Cossairt, Boundary County Commissioner (Alt.)
Rhonda Vogl, KVRI Facilitator & KTOI Admin. Assistant
Karen Schumacher, Recording Secretary KVRI & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho

Meeting was opened by Rhonda Vogl at 7:02 p.m.
Introductions were done around the room and then by each person attending virtually.
A welcome and brief introduction was done for new alternate for the City of Bonners Ferry, Mike Klaus and for our new Idaho Fish & Game Commissioner, Dave Bobbitt.

Gary Aitken, Jr. asked if there were any comments for the draft meeting minutes from February. There were none and the minutes passed by consensus.

Rhonda introduced Andrew O'Neel, Director of the Boundary County Office of Emergency Management. Andrew shared that the All-Hazard Mitigation plan is in the process of being updated. It is one of three plans that the county is responsible for keeping up to date. The other two are for emergency operations and community wildfire protection.

The hazard mitigation plan is multi-jurisdictional. It covers the jurisdictions of Boundary County, the City of Bonners Ferry, the City of Moyie Springs and the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho. All participate in the approval process. The hazard plan is updated every 5 years.

Emergency management is asking for public input to ensure that what they include is what the community agrees are the most important hazards to prepare for and that those are represented in the plan. These include both natural and man-made hazards. A survey has been created that will help in these efforts. The emergency management team is asking the public to take the 10-question survey either on line ([Here](#)) or on paper. Different businesses around Bonners Ferry have paper copies available. The office of emergency management will be picking them up. The outcomes will help them determine what areas are the most important for mitigation plans to be put in place and, as a result, what type of funding to pursue to put those plans in place.

Rhonda Vogl clarified that the actions that the county takes in the face of any of the unforeseen hazard events are to mitigate the possible outcomes from them. Rhonda also clarified that the county is obligated by law to ensure that the public is informed and has some say in the decision-making process and that KVRI is providing a very important platform for that to happen.

Darren Parker of Senator Risch's office asked if any part of the operations relies on amateur radio. Andrew answered that it does and they have met and are planning an exercise June 8th.

Darren went on ask if there are any repeaters (A repeater is generally placed on top of a tall structure or a mountain, and it is fitted with a powerful antenna system that allows it to collect weak signals and transmit them across a large area.) Thus, a repeater may expand a low-power handheld radio’s effective communication range to dozens, if not hundreds, of kilometers located on Forest Service lands. Darren cited a proposal that would require entity owning the repeater to pay a significant fee of \$1400 to support the infrastructure - the building and its maintenance, electricity, etc. This may pose a significant burden for amateur radio operators and pose a problem for mitigation plans using radio operators in those plans. Dan Dinning and Darren Parker agreed to connect on this post KVRI meeting.

Gary asked for any questions for Andrew, none were had.

Gary introduced Kevin Knauth to provide the annual update on CFLR.

Sub-Committee Updates:

Forestry- Kevin Knauth- U.S. Forest Service

Kevin provided an overview of the 2021 CFLR Update. This update has been provided annually during the span of the 10-year CFLR funding. This year marks the conclusion of that funding.

Of note: During the summer of 2021 there were 5 wildland fires in recently completed fuels reduction treatment areas that were human caused. Because the areas were treated, firefighters were able to bring the fires under control within a single operational period, with all fires being held to 1 acre in size or less without the extra cost of bringing in aerial or other costly support measures.

Accomplishments	2021	Over the 10 Yrs
Acres Planted	793	4200
Acres of Treatment for Fuel Reduction	1388	15000
*Acres treated outside WUI	1100	11000
Acres of Timber from Sales	1422	10600
Roads Maintained (Miles)	120	1000
Timber Sold(million board feet)	26	159
Trails restored/maintained (miles)	296	2500
Aquatic Passages	1	30

In 2021:

- 2021 the Kootenai River Habitat Restoration Program continued to create, enhance and protect habitat for native fish and wildlife
- The Tribe constructed habitat restoration project at Elk Mountain Farms.
- The Tribe completed Phase 2 of the Ball Creek Tributary project.

NEPA projects accomplished over the 10 year funding period are:

- East Fork Meadow Creek
- Twentymile Creek
- Hellroaring
- Deer Creek
- Boulder Creek Restoration
- Camp Robin
- Mission Brush
- Templeman HFRA
- Westside Restoration

Chuck asked for a one-page white paper of what was just shared.

Rhonda shared appreciation of the work done and that there is more to come. KVRI has teamed up with Panhandle Forest Collaborative and Shoshone-Benewah Collaborative in an unprecedented joint collaboration. Their application has been ranked for funding and that funding is looming.

A question was asked about what to expect in the next 10 years.

Kevin answered: Both in Boundary and other parts of the Panhandle there is a heavier focus on projects that cross boundaries that reduce fuels on federal lands and strive to bring financial opportunities to private landowners to do the same kind of work. It is expected they will continue to have a heavy reliance on partners to help us accomplish the work. Good Neighbors and IDL were cited as an example.

Kim Pierson added that another piece of pie is the focus on the recreation industry. They have seen both an increase and a difference in use. They are looking at how to build, sustain and work collaboratively to make the biggest impact and accommodate all the users that want to be in and use the National Forest

Dan Dinning asked Kevin to share some information about bringing the Bear Management Units (BMUs) into compliance with the Grizzly Bear Access Amendment.

Kevin shared that there remains a lot of grey area in this but believes that when all BMUs are in compliance then the Forest Service may have greater flexibility to perform restoration work utilizing more road systems in our BMUs.

They are hoping to do some restoration work in the Trout and Ball creek drainages in the future, but work is currently restricted due to BMU standards. It is hoped that once standards have been met in all BMUs (the goal is to do so by the end of calendar year 2023) the Forest will have the opportunity to discuss with F&W and potentially stretch those side boards within those BMUs so that they can continue this important restoration work in those drainages.

It was confirmed that both Bluegrass and Long-Smith BMUs are not in compliance.

Bluegrass is waiting on the Bog Creek Road construction to be completed, so that the Forest Service can then complete the necessary road storage.

The Long-Smith BMU is out of compliance due to some recent road building that occurred on private timberlands within the BMU, so the Forest Service will need to store approximately 2 miles of road to offset.

There were no more questions.

TMDL – Rhonda Vogl

The subcommittee met on March 10th. Bob Steed and Todd Higenes headed that up. Selenium is now listed on the integrated report for Idaho. That report should come out sometime in April. The Kootenai Tribe is really stepping up and testing regularly.

Gary Aitken, Jr. added that they are doing what they can and are working with sister tribes but they Canadian government has different processes. Rhonda added that there is also Montana DEQ making this issue transboundary between states as well as countries.

Rhonda added that the citizens monitoring will be placing monitors in 11 streams late spring.

Rhonda added that Todd has assumed the role watershed analyst replacing Bob Steed.

Grizzly Subcommittee

The next meeting is scheduled for April 20th at 10 a.m. This will be a hybrid meeting. Wayne Kasworm will be giving his annual report. There is a lot going on with the Grizzly Bear.

Agency Updates:

U.S. Fish & Wildlife – Christy Johnson-Hughes

There are some additional funds in the Grizzly support account and Christy's office is considering the request out of Bonner County to expand into that county. While there are sufficient funds for things like electric fencing and other supplies, there is a question of if the specialist will have time. The agency has Hilary Whitcomb and Brittany Morlin helping out with some of these issues. They are hoping to talk about the funding at the Grizzly Bear Subcommittee meeting on April 20th. It seems like a natural extension to current efforts in view of the bears extending movement on the landscape but they do want to get agreement from all on a plan.

Christy later added that there are three Grizzly Bear Petitions from three different states under review for the delisting of the Grizzly Bear. Her department is helping but she has no information on the decision as it is being made at the headquarters department level.

Norm Merz – Idaho Fish & Game

Norm provided an update on the work being done on MacArthur Lake. They have cleared right of way and are ready to realign the highway as well as have Northern Lights do the relocation of the power lines.

It was asked if they are going to continue work with an additional 40 acres this fall or winter?

Robert Akins answered that it will most likely be winter on the west side of the highway.

Idaho Fish & Game – Chip Corsi

Chip let us know that the Grizzly bear support person position is open and they are actively interviewing.

Also, Idaho Fish & Game is still looking to have Border Patrol shift dollars to IDFG as a result of Border Patrol work on the Bog Creek Road. Those dollars will help in beefing up the enforcement side of things.

Chip reminded us that we have senior conservation officer, Jeremy Gaffield, Grizzly Bear Enforcement and Education ready and prepared. It was agreed that bears are finding their way

more and more to Bonner County and that they represent a legitimate concern...thus a need for grizzly bear dedicated staff to broaden the geographic scope a bit.

The Commission is meeting in Boise this week and Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) is an important topic. Although it has not made its way into North Idaho, they are doing rigorous testing.

Chip introduced Dave Bobbitt as the Idaho Fish and Game Commission Panhandle Region representative. Dave has been on since August and has had to deal with a lot of issues quickly. An attendee asked for confirmation that the only CWD case near us was in Libby. Chip confirmed that.

Chip also mentioned the request in the works by Chuck Roady to open up the 24K acres in the Myrtle Creek preserve. Although they missed the rule making cycle, Chip feels it's not a big deal and mentioned that getting D.E.Q. on board might be the fastest route. Chuck mentioned that they are waiting on City Council. Mike Klaus, representative attending for the City, said he had been in touch with DEQ and this is an issue in motion.

U.S. Forest Service – Carl Petrick

Carl shared that he is expecting a budget around April 11th but is disappointed about the ranking received for CFLRP funding.

He is pretty sure that by May 27, their offices will begin to open and allow meeting in person. He is looking forward to meeting with KVRI in person.

Kim provided input saying that the work on Over Snow Vehicle Panning (OSVP) is on-going and they are making good progress. They are rolling forward with all committees which is allowing us to move forward with proposed actions. Although they are not certain about CFLRP funding, they are still hopeful.

Carl added they are going to be signing an agreement with the National Deer Association in a partnership agreement to accomplish some of the needed precommercial thinning work that is helpful in fire prevention and wildlife habitat protection. He is hopeful that this will be a model for other partnerships in the future. On April 4 there is a big contractors meeting. Barney Gant Associate Deputy Chief, will speak to the audience. Carl added that even when there are dollars available, people are still needed to do the work. He is hopeful that Mr. Gant's presentation will help spread the word that they do have the funds and are looking for people to do the work.

Dan Dinning asked for clarification about the National Deer Association and its role. Carl provided the information that it is a result of two organizations combining and stated his positive experience working with them before in the South. He is hopeful this small introduction of work will allow for a trusted relationship to form and more productive opportunities in the future.

Dan asked for confirmation that the association is the contracting agency not the boots on the ground and Carl confirmed. Carl stated that this is just one more tool in the tool box. They are trying to have the maximum impact possible with the funding they get.

Congressional Updates:

Senator Jim Risch's Office - Darren Parker Joked about how they stole Marc Kilmer from

Congressman's Fulcher's office and turned the update over to *Marc Kilmer*.

- Congress passed the Omnibus funding, which sets appropriations levels and allocations for the remainder of the 2022 fiscal year, out of short term with continuing resolution.
- There remains concern for CWD in Idaho down by Lewiston area. Federal help is forthcoming.
- U.S. Senators Jim Risch and Mike Crapo authored a fix to preserve rural counties' Secure Rural Schools (SRS) payment allocations and it is now signed by the President.

Congressman Russ Fulcher's Office - Dirk Mendive stated that he is filling in for the vacancy left from Marc due to his departure from Congressman's Fulcher's office. He wished Marc the best and provided a bit of background on himself mentioning that he is from Coeur D'Alene and is now in his fourth year in Boise.

No further congressional updates were had.

New Business: Rhonda Vogl shared that Idaho Forest Restoration Partnership (IFRP) will be meeting April 12 and 13th virtually and that KVRI funds were available for any of our board members who are interested in attending. The conference explores priorities stipulated by Congress, the role of collaborative groups in implementation, and expectations for the outcomes of the investments. Agenda copies were provided and information is on line [here](#).

The next KVRI meeting is hybrid and is being held on April 18th.

The meeting was called at 8:15 p.m.

Karen Schumacher, KTOI/KVRI Recording Secretary