

Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative
June 17, 2019 – 7:00 p.m.
Board Meeting – University of Idaho Extension Office

Board Members in Attendance:

Adam Arthur, City of Bonners Ferry & KVRI Co-chair (Alt.)
Dan Dinning, Boundary County Commissioner & KVRI Co-chair
Gary Aitken, Jr., Kootenai Tribal Chairman and KVRI Co-chair
Ed Atkins Jr., Corporate Agriculture/Landowner
Dave Wattenbarger, Soil Conservation/Landowner
Bob Blanford, Business/Industry
Norm Merz, Idaho Dept. of Fish & Game (Alt.)
Kevin Knauth, District Ranger, US Forest Service (USFS)
Jim Cadnum, Industrial/Forest
Kennon McClintock, (Alt.) Conservationist/Environmentalist
Sandy Ashworth, Social/Cultural/Historical Interests
Rhonda Vogl, KVRI Facilitator & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (KTOI)

Agency/Others in Attendance:

Angela Cooper, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho Vice-Chair & (Alt.) KVRI Co-chair
Wally Cossairt, Boundary County Commissioner & (Alt.) KVRI Co-chair
Dave Gray, Social/Cultural/Historical Interests (Alt.) KVRI Board
Carol Kriebs, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, Environmental Director
Kent Rotchy, Boundary BackCountry Access
Karen Roetter, Senator Mike Crapo's office
Sid Smith, Senator Jim Risch's office
Tim Kastning, Congressman Russ Fulcher's office
Scott Soultz, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Christy Johnson-Hughes, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services
Jonathan Luhnnow, Idaho Dept. of Lands
Evan DeHamer, Idaho Fish & Game
Brian Byrne, Lochner Engineering
Rob Cleere, Lochner Engineering
Carrie Ann Hewitt, Idaho Transportation Dept.
Cody Luper, Lochner Engineering
Merritt Horsmon, Idaho Fish and Game
Olivia Drake, 9B Trails
Lawrence Drake, Boundary BackCountry Access
Matt Philbrook, Boundary BackCountry Access
Kurt Pavlat, Bureau of Land
Jacob Hinrichs, Boundary BackCountry Access
Kim Pierson, USFS, IPNF
Jeanne Higgins, USFS, IPNF
Marty Martinez, Citizen
Jessie Grossman, Y2Y
Wayne Wilkerson, Kootenai National Refuge/South Boundary Fire

Opening:

Co-Chair, Dan Dinning opened and welcomed everyone to the meeting; introductions followed.

Gary Aitken, Co-chair, asks for comments or amendments on the May 20, 2019 KVRI Board Meeting Draft Notes; notes were approved by consensus.

Presentations:

2019 Forest Legacy Update, Kennon McClintock

- Presents each year at KVRI
- Last year we put in all the Dawson Ridge Lands for Forest Legacy.
- Ranked sixth in country but it was not fully funded. Some lands taken out.

Kennon uses a PowerPoint presentation with discussion of 2019 Forest Legacy.

- Purple areas on map are owned by Hancock and Mulpus, large industrial timberland owners in Boundary County,
- Blue areas are what will be put in this year - 6,000 acres.
- Hancock and Mulpus want to put more areas into this (shows on map) on McArthur Lake Corridor. Working on two sections up high for Hancock and two for Mulpus. We have about 5,000 acres we will put in this year.
- Light blue areas are State land - Idaho Dept. of Lands
- Green areas are Forest Service land; white areas on map are private land.
- 80%, what does this mean? There are six mills in Northern Idaho – Moyie Springs, Chilco, Naples, Laclede, Priest River and Plummer. 80 % of those logs come from private land. This is why it is important to have conservation easements so that land doesn't fall out of timber production. Huge numbers of people moving up here and the land gets broken apart.
- Forest Legacy is a program run by the Idaho Dept. of Lands, and puts conservation easements on working forest lands to keep those lands producing timber which helps our economy.
- Boundary County – we have 800,000 acres in Boundary County. 574,000 in Forest Service; 35,000 acres owned by Idaho Dept of Lands; and 191,000 acres are privately owned.
- Of those 191, 000 acres, we have 23,000 in houses; 57, 000 acres in farming and agriculture; 31,000 in industrial forest lands. 80,000 acres is in small woodland owners.
- Moyie Springs mill cuts about 90 million feet per year. It takes about 140,000 acres to run that mill on a 40-year rotation so this means we would grow trees for 40 years. There are three mills in this county.
- 31,000 acres of working forest industrial land is well-managed by Hancock and Mulpus. The state is doing a good job as well. 66,000 acres of working forest lands will sustain a half a mill in this county. The rest of the logs usually come from out of town to meet that 140,000-acre need. Montana, Bonner Co, Eastern Washington...
- We have 80, 000 acres here but they are not well managed. People live here and they don't manage for timber production. This is why Conservation easements are important. If we want to keep our County's mills going – or meet the 80% needed for the six mills.

Question and Answers:

- As to minimum diameter logs that mills take.

- At year 40, you're going to have 20-30,000 feet per acre on most high-quality timber ground.
- We do get logs out of British Columbia also. This is a big help. They are in the 80% figure.
- Private lands are a big deal up here, to sustain our industry.

Kennon McClintock's full presentation is available on the KVRI website at www.kootenai.org

Idaho Transportation Department -- Highway 95 realignment project, Carrie Ann Hewitt

Rhonda Vogl introduces Carrie Ann Hewitt, presenter with Idaho Transportation Department.

- There will be a public meeting for the McArthur Lake project at Naples School tomorrow night, 4-7 PM.
- Tonight, we have HW Lochner people here - Rob Cleere, Project Manager; Cody Luper, Roadway Designer; and Brian Byrne, the Bridge Engineer. They are here for the public meeting tomorrow night, also, so they are able to join us tonight.

Carrie Ann displays PowerPoint presentation and discusses the following:

- Location of project near McArthur Lake; beginning and end of project.
- 45 MPH flashing lights on this corner and a significant dip in the road are some of the problems.
- Project history: this was in the ITD program in early 2000s but was removed from program due to high costs.
- This corner has significant icy conditions in winter causing crashes.
- Cost estimate in past was put together with all the bells and whistles. It was the Cadillac plan. It came out to 27 million dollars, far above expectations. It was bumped from the program. ITD did other cheaper options instead. Then a study was done in 2010 for safety improvements.
- ITD restriped the highway and did some brushing to help motorists visually.
- Switched to salt instead of sand and that helped with icy conditions.
- For ITD Safety programs, the different projects are ranked.
- In 2016, there was a fatal crash on this stretch. Unfortunate situation, but it made this project a higher priority.
- One mile of reconstruction is what we are looking at. We are realigning the sharp curve but not a straight stretch like the first plan. We will not need the 45 MPH curve reduction any longer.
- There is currently a culvert that will be replaced with a 300-foot bridge which wildlife will be able to go under. It was going to be a 160-foot bridge but the soils were so bad in that area. Weight of drill shaft sunk into the ground without effort. We had to double the length of bridge.
- Project is at about 9 million dollars now, one third of the original cost.
- Wetlands and wildlife also need taken into account on this project as well as cultural resources.
- As to culvert location, roadway and existing conditions.
- We are looking at 2022-2023 project years. The first year, in the Fall, we will construct temporary roadway which will go alongside the highway. This roadway is called a shoo fly. We will have it paved and ready to go. In Spring 2023, we can shift traffic over to that shoo fly.
- Some temporary road closures will occur that first Fall when the shoo fly is constructed.
- Two 12-foot lanes and six-foot shoulders on each side. We have plat maps here also that everyone can look at.
- Public comments are accepted online for two weeks.
- We will coordinate with Fish and Game and the Kootenai Tribe.

- As project continues, we will have final design done in 2020. Work to be done in 2022-2023.
- We are acquiring land from Fish and Game for this project.
- You can google ITD projects and find this web page. You can find updates for the project on that page.
- Tomorrow we will be out doing more drilling as we are trying to get more soil information.

Question and Answers:

- Closure will be temporary when building the shoo fly.
- As to prior experience of this project being bumped. Cannot say for sure that it won't be but this project has a lot of support and that helps. Oftentimes, there is controversy with projects but that is not the case here.
- While using the shoo fly, speed will remain at 45. Final speed will be at 60 MPH, per design plan.
- Will meet with Fish and Game tomorrow about wildlife fencing, and to go over the layout.
- Railroad is not a factor. Everything is outside of their right of way.
- **Carrie Ann Hewitt's full presentation is available on the KVRI website at www.kootenai.org**

Committee Updates:

Forestry Committee Update:

Kevin Knauth, USFS, talks about the new project; the Westside Restoration project. We are in the initial planning stages. We've had one project introduction meeting at the KVRI Forestry subcommittee meeting. Next plan is a field trip combined with a meeting. We will wait until our Specialists have more time in the woods to look things over. We will seek ideas and feedback on what kind of opportunities we have with this project.

- Scoping this Fall and then we'll have a Decision that same fiscal year.
- There are access challenges due to private land. We are looking at working with landowners for recreation because some trailheads are on private lands - maybe some reroutes.
- Looking from Cascade Ridge to north, just shy of Ruby Creek Drainage is our project area. This is south side of Cascade between Myrtle and Cascade. There is some private land in there.
- More to come on the field trip for Forestry subcommittee and any interested community members.

Other Projects and Timber Sales

- **Black Boulder**
- Good Neighbor Authority sale.
- Part of Boulder Creek project.
- Late this third quarter, this summer, we will advertise that sale.
- **Camp Stew**
- To be advertised and sold in September
- This is a Stewardship project, as part of our Camp Robin project area.

As we roll into next Fiscal year 2020, we have two more sales within Boulder Project area and one more in the Camp Robin project area. Three sales in FY20.

Other ongoing things:

We did analysis in **Grouse Bear Management Unit.**

- Purpose is to bring BMU within grizzly bear access amendment standards
- We will see a Draft Decision early this week to start objection period
- No veg work. Access management work and road storage work only.
- This is a challenging BMU due to high percentage of private land.
- USF&WS took conservation easements on private lands into account when setting standards but it continues to be a challenge. This will be open to further discussion as we move forward. We don't have control of access on private lands.

Dan makes comments as to agreements made with private landowners (which have expired) to keep those roads gated. As standards are calculated, some of those landowners have gates; we can call that secure, but we are looking at it further.

Further discussion on private landowners and gates on private property. All owners leave those gates closed and try to better secure those roads. How to provide better security? Is a gated road clearly a closed road? USFS does not count them as actually closed roads. Discuss with USF&WS.

Christy Johnson-Hughes, USF&WS, appreciates this discussion. A road on the landscape can still potentially be used even by pedestrians. People can hike in, so the USFS needs to talk to us about that, as it is problematic. People hiking cause disturbance to the bears; human presence on the landscape. It is all highly variable. I am not aware of how much use this area gets. If a road is made more difficult to traverse, that is better for bear habitat.

Kevin continues – **Grouse and Blue Grass BMUs** are the two that are not meeting standards. Work on Blue Grass standards will depend on Bog Creek analysis so when Record of Decision is signed, it will allow work on the Blue Grass BMU. We are hoping for an October Decision.

Winter Travel Planning: USFS has a map, internally, with regards to Wildlife Management. Moving forward, we will have public meetings and get input from snowmobilers, etc. There was discussion of different sites for public meetings. There will be one in Bonners Ferry.

As to public comments, Rhonda Vogl asked how to submit them for the Westside Restoration project. Public can come on tour, submit comments at Bonners Ferry USFS office or to KVRI. Get those ideas in early. Scoping expected in the Fall. We have not set a date yet for the tour.

Saddle Creek Road washout: Repairs start in one week. Work is being done with federal highway dollars so it is on their schedule.

Smith Creek Road: We plan to grind the asphalt, use calcium chloride solution and roll it into a packed condition. Next year, we'll do it again. We are talking to Border Patrol, who would like that road in best possible condition. Maintenance of a road with asphalt coming apart like this...we won't be able to afford this maintenance in the future.

Jeanne Higgins, USFS:

Discusses Shared Stewardship. Most are aware that an agreement between USFS and State of Idaho recently identified two landscapes. Jeanne discusses that Governor would like two areas confirmed by July 1st. She expects that in the next few weeks, there will be an announcement. One will be in North Idaho and one is in Southern Idaho. Will have a G2G meeting with the Kootenai Tribe. Stay tuned. This will be a cross boundary pilot project and likely over a million-acre sized landscape.

Dan states that KVRI and IPNF are already doing Shared Stewardship in some ways, referencing the Westside Restoration project.

Norm Merz, Idaho Fish and Game:

- We are continuing to work on McArthur Lake drawdown.
- There is a patch of timber along McArthur Lake; we are looking at a timber sale for next Spring.
- Whitetail and Mule Deer Management Plans are out for review. This is a six-year plan for managing the species. There will be a public meeting on Thursday, June 19, 5-7 p.m. at the Ponderay Event Center.
- IDFG crews are putting out cameras to ascertain wolf abundance regionally and state-wide. They should all be out by end of month.
- Free fishing day was held a few weeks ago. We had a good turnout.
- Chronic Wasting Disease (CWD) has been documented in Libby. One animal tested positive. IDF&G will do CWD sampling in this region, which was already planned.

Evan DeHamer, Idaho Fish and Game, discusses on how CWD is tested using the lymph nodes. Sampling will target road kill and/or animals that indicate sickness. During hunting season, we are hopeful that hunters will cooperate to increase sample collections for testing purposes. Further discussions occurred on CWD, harvesting a deer, consumption of deer meat.

This is an Ungulate disease; deer, elk, caribou, moose, etc. This disease is more likely where there are high concentrations of wildlife, such as artificial feeding areas, captive deer or elk farms, etc. Once the disease agent is present on the landscape, it can last a long time. Disease transmission (not just CWD) tends to be higher in areas where large concentrations of animals are congested and/or eat in the same areas. CWD response program has been developed in the event CWD is detected in Idaho. CWD has been detected in other states/provinces, so there is a lot to be learned from other agencies. It is being handled in many different ways, in different areas.

Discussions and questions continue regarding Chronic Wasting Disease and possible compensation for hunters (recuperate processing costs) who shoot an animal with this disease; this process/details are not fully determined and response will be adaptive/situational depending on if CWD is detected. It is unlikely that compensation for processing and associated costs will be offered. IDFG will keep the public informed/seek public input as plans are developed.

Dan Dinning questions as to Grizzly Bears being seen on cameras on the north bench, and shown on social media. How can we be proactive? Norm states that the biggest issues are attractants to bears, i.e. garbage, dog food, bird feeders. If a bear does not get what it needs, it will likely move on. Last year's bear went from choke cherries to plums and then got in trouble. Bears are more apt to go after feed and grains than the livestock. Looking at Canada, Creston Valley, there are many bears living in the

Valley and managing to stay out of trouble. Easy access to food will encourage bears to be around people. Huckleberries will be ripening soon, which will also help to encourage bears to move out of the valley.

Christy Johnson-Hughes discusses reports and videos of the bears seen. Many are brown-colored black bears. We are tracking where the bears are coming from. (Only grizzlies with collars are trackable, not all bears have collars)

Sid Smith, Senator Risch's office:

- Senator Risch and Senator Crapo introduced the reintroduction of the SRS (Secure Rural Schools) to establish a permanent trust fund. There are many details to it, but it will establish an endowment fund. Along with a one-time endowment, annual commercial receipts generated on USFS lands will be deposited annually into the fund. As timber harvest grows, funding to counties will grow. The SRS formula will determine distribution. Once payments hit a certain level, they will be capped at the highest total SRS payment. In addition to a stable payment from the endowment fund, counties will also receive traditional timber harvest receipts. This is something that Senator Crapo has been working hard on, with Senator Wyden and we are co-sponsoring it; I deflect most of the credit to them.
- We also introduced a bill to designate biomass coming off of federal lands as a renewable resource. We've worked on this for a number of years, using biomass in biofuels and such. Currently, Biofuels coming off of federal grounds cannot be designated as renewable. All three Senators again (Crapo, Risch, Wyden), have worked on this.

Tim Kastning, Congressman Fulcher's office:

I want to compliment KVRI and all the work you have done for so many years. Congressman Fulcher is a Freshman in the minority party. He spends a lot of time with the agencies. He has been working on a few things.

- One of these is regarding NEPA support; unofficial report is read by Tim, as to increasing efficiency on the environmental analysis process. This changes the authorities on doing full NEPA processes.

Jeanne Higgins weighs in on NEPA discussion: Draft Rule was published last week and public comments will be taken for next sixty days. Partially included is a number of Categorical Exclusions. Agency has a lot of data related to no significant impact. There are several categories that the Agency is proposing. Also, some changes to the handbook/manual to change language about some of the processes. This is in the scoping status at this time. We would be happy to discuss.

Tim continues.

- Congressman Fulcher, along with Senators Risch and Crapo support Idaho Disaster Declaration which had to do with several Idaho counties and the heavy rainfall experienced this past Spring. President has approved on June 12th.
- A letter to Vicki Christiansen, Chief of U.S. Forest Service, is read out loud regarding concerns of recommended wilderness areas in Region 1, signed by the entire Idaho Delegation which is supporting access to our forests.

Bureau of Land Management, Kurt Pavlak

- It was mentioned in the Westside Restoration project that BLM has small inholdings there and we will cooperate fully. USFS staff has contacted us about this. The last thing we want to see are any straight lines on the landscape due to a property line issue. We will help however we can. Thank you to Kevin and his staff for contacting us.
- On NEPA, BLM has been directed by the Interior Department for about a year now that EAs will take six months to complete from scoping to signing of Decision Record, at 75 pages or less.
- We normally do not do EISs in our field office but there is policy for the Bureau that EISs will be completed in one year at no more than 300 pages, I believe, which has been unheard of and is a good thing.
- We are fast-tracking our NEPA right now. And, we feel it is a very good thing and we can speed up actually getting things done on the ground. That is the BLM side on NEPA.

Dan questions on if the Kootenai Wildlife Refuge has been contacted on the Westside Restoration Project. Kevin states USFS has not specifically reached out.

KVRI September meeting dates change from the 16th to the 23rd. KVRI Board approves date being changed to September 23rd.

Christy Johnson-Hughes, USF&WS, thanks the Kootenai Tribe and KVRI for the tour and presentations for the USF&WS Project Leaders during their meeting held in Bonners Ferry the first week of June.

Next KVRI Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for July 15, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. at the Boundary County Extension Office.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Rhonda Vogl

KTOI Administrative Director/KVRI Facilitator