

Meeting Notes
Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative
Grizzly Bear Subcommittee
November 18, 2019
Kootenai Tribal Office

Attendance:

Dan Dinning, Boundary County Commissioner and KVRI Co-chair
Rhonda Vogl, KVRI Facilitator & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (KTOI)
Felipe Cano, USFS; Priest Lake
Mandy Lammers, Landowner
Darcy Lammers, Landowner
Brian Johnson, IDFG
Scott Soult, KTOI
Brandon Diller, KTOI
Carol Kriebs, KTOI
Shannon Ehlers, KTOI
Jessie Grossman, Y2Y
Brad Smith, ICL
Evan DeHamer, IDFG
Wayne Kasworm, USFWS
George Hays, Landowner, ADC Board
Bob Blanford, KVRI Board
Ashley South, Yaak Valley Forest Council
Heather Fuller, USFS, North Zone
Brett Lyndaker, USFS
Mike Brown, Blue Sky News
Russ Talmo, Defenders of Wildlife
Clinton Daniel, Reg. Dir., Congressman Russ Fulcher's Office
Karen Schumacher, KVRI Recording Secretary & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (KTOI)

Opening:

Rhonda Vogl opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Introductions followed.

Wayne Kasworm presented on the **Selkirk and Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Monitoring**. This presentation can be found on the Kootenai Tribe [Website here](#).

Scott Soultz presented information regarding human-grizzly bear interactions. Items that were covered referenced several handouts that can be found on the Kootenai Tribe Website [linked here:](#)

- *Media Release Boundary County Waterways Board and Kootenai Tribal Wildlife Program Install Animal-Resistant Heavy Duty Trash Receptacles at Local Boat Ramps*
- *Human-Large Carnivore Incident Guide*
- *Safeguarding the Ranch, Farm, and Home from Grizzly Bears*
- *Appendix F. Montana conflict Grizzly Bear Management*

Following a brief mention of 4 bear-proof trash receptacles at local boat ramps, Scott opened with an acknowledgement of the contribution of information made by the Selkirk/Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystems (SCYE) Subcommittee of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC) “Draft” meeting notes from 11/6/19 at Idaho Department of Fish and Game (IDFG) Regional office in CDA, Idaho. He would like the group to explore our local needs, within the Selkirk/Cabinet-Yaak ecosystem, and define what the important issues are in order to bring that information back to the larger IGBC group.

Dan Dinning noted that 20 years ago, even 15 years ago there were no bears on the North Bench and no need for a protocol for bear/human interaction. In the last 5 years the number of bears has increased into that area. (As opposed to people moving into bear habitat – bears moved into where people are) Dan shared the agreed upon idea that the public needs to be involved in the sharing of information and the process of developing ideas and plans for what might help.

Discussion began regarding developing the possible methodology for public notification of Grizzly Bear information and sightings.

Scott continued with his hope that there will be funding to assist with the needs. Scott passed out the *Human-Large Carnivore Incident Guide*. It was noted that this was developed as a suggested methodology for internal Forest Service use and was not vetted by the general public. Scott hoped that it would provide a foundation for discussion and identify local needs for a public awareness process. Of note was the situational guidance to 4 different events.

1. Observance of Large Carnivore in High Human Use Area
2. Continued Presence of Large Carnivore in the Same Area
3. Carnivore Observed Feeding on Unsecured, Unnatural Food
4. Carnivore is Determined to be a Nuisance Animal

Scott also passed out Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) *Appendix F. Montana conflict Grizzly Bear Management* handout that demonstrates a flow-chart approach to human/bear conflict management and thought it would be helpful to get IDFG’s input on it. Currently IDFG does not have a process like that of MFWP and it was thought that the referenced handout might assist in the development of a decision-making process when dealing with human/bear conflicts.

Scott asked the group to discuss notification issues, questions and suggestions. He brought up a few for consideration and discussion.

*Phone Tree?

What would set up a call situation? Bears in orchard? Who would be the initial contact person?

*Hotline?

People would call in for information

*Facebook?

Although not everyone has an email or internet, it is still one point of possible notification.

In June 2019, we knew for sure that there was a minimum of 6 Grizzly on the North Bench before one male was eliminated following human/bear conflict.

Landowners present at the meeting recounted the incident that resulted in a grizzly killing 2 lambs. The case was made that just prior to the aforementioned incident, a neighbor had experienced a grizzly killing several (5) rams. It was thought that had there been notification(s), precautions could have been taken. They have small children, as do their neighbors, and different choices would have been made with fore knowledge.

A discussion was had regarding a phone tree that neighbors could use for alerting each other.

Dan Dinning added that the current culture is different then times before and that people are wanting a reasonable answer for how to manage bear/human interactions. Dan stated that we have an opportunity now to develop a plan that is designed to let people know about a bear before it gets into trouble. Because bears are (should be) in hibernation, we have an opportunity to prepare. He noted that this offers a potential to use a conflict specialist to help develop protocols that would help deal with human/bear encounters, and encourage bears to utilize native habitats.

Discussion was had about developing protocols to reduce human-bear interactions, encourage bears to utilize native habitats, and be proactive before there are issues. Scott distributed "*Safeguarding the Ranch, Farm, and Home from Grizzly Bears*".

Russ Talmo, from Defenders of Wildlife, provided information from his involvement with various entities in the Pacific Northwest. He noted that the issue (public need for information) is the same regardless of geographical location and that he feels it is not feasible to expect current staffing to manage and conduct information sharing to the general public for proactive action. He mentioned existing automated phone trees, and offered the suggestion that locally, neighborhoods can effectively use a phone tree.

Scott asked what would triggers the call – a bear, a grizzly bear or other predators? A bear getting in an orchard or just seeing a bear? Discussions commenced.

Dan revisited the question of what action can be done proactively? A question was asked if the agencies can do something before a bear gets into trouble (e.g. hazing) to encourage it to return to its habitat. Brian Johnson of IDFG responded that yes, they can but the outcomes are inconclusive. The bear may stay or it may return. It is unknown how effective harassment/hazing is for bear removal. Current staffing does not allow for all bears to be dealt with by agency personnel. It's one thing for a biologist to be notified when a bear is getting into trouble but it's entirely different for proactive or simple notification.

Wayne Kasworm added that there is a wide spectrum of actions people will take from buckshot (that is harmful) to making noise and also allowing dogs to chase bears away.

Jessie Grossman of Y2Y asked if landowners are more likely to be proactive and inform each other now or are they also looking for more of an agency structure for this to happen in.

There seems to be agreement that a lack of awareness/lack of foreknowledge, when a grizzly is in an inhabited area, was a problem. If another neighbor would have called, there would have been more of an opportunity for different actions. It was thought our community would be on board for a phone tree type of system, where neighbors contact one another.

A concern was voiced that there is no compensation in Idaho for the loss of livestock etc. from Grizzly while there is if the same thing happens as a result of a cougar, black bear or other predator.

Similar to above, Scott voiced the belief that the local interest is here for the grizzly subcommittee to move a proposal of grizzly notification forward. Dan underscored this and Jessie, with Y2Y, said they would like to help.

“Scott provided the brochure “Got Grizzlies”. It was suggested that for grizzly bears that are not in the recovery area (i.e. Bears Outside Recovery Zone (BORZ)), and are visiting private lands, it is believed that there are two layers to the process. One is informing and educating people – there are bears. The other layer is more proactive and specific to neighborhoods, and specific incidents where people are living in bear habitat – how to live with bears. “

There is interest to move this process forward. Scott referenced the Livestock Loss Board hand out on safeguarding the ranch, farm and home. Ideas that might work for the local community include neighbor networks, livestock carcass management, dealing with crops, grain and livestock feed and household garbage among others. Everything we’re dealing with has been dealt with in other places, but we need to develop our own unique process to work for our community.

Fencing discussion continued. It is not feasible to fence every property but for those that it is; there is a program offering to pay 50% of the fencing materials. Scott and his Tribal Wildlife technicians are limited in what they can do. We can readily access materials (educational). Can we possibly fund grizzly bear conflict person up here? Who is going to manage that person? Deliberations ensued.

The issue of when a grizzly is on private land was discussed. There are a lot of options to pay for fencing projects including in-kind labor, materials and other financing. It was mentioned that landowners will experience more ownership of the project, and maintain it, when they have invested something into it.

Rhonda Vogl supported the discussion adding that this is truly what the KVRI collaborative is all about. Informing public, working together towards a solution. Scott passed out his last brochure about living in Bear Country.

The idea of having someone as a community liaison was revisited. Scott would like to send the KVRI grizzly bear subcommittee issues discussed today up to the IGBC. The case could be made that the Priest River Region also has a need for a similar community liaison. One person might be spread too thin. Perhaps another person – different community/ecosystem. Maybe two people with two different job descriptions.

Whoever they work for – will determine how much and what types of work they can do. Someone doing the preventive piece may provide more flexibility. Getting clear on what a person’s

role/responsibility is will be helpful to all people involved. Who's the messenger and what is the message? There are a lot of options. Partnerships between agencies aids in creation and funding of a position. There are multiple avenues worth exploring.

The next meeting is set for January 23rd at 10 am at the Kootenai Tribal Headquarters. Scott suggested 3 topics

1. Grizzly bear notification process
2. Community liaison/conflict specialist - Job description/who is the messenger
3. What do we need to do to get monetary compensation for grizzly bear livestock deprivation in Idaho?