

Meeting Notes
Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative
October 19, 2020 – 7:00 p.m.
Board Meeting via Zoom

Board Members in Attendance:

Angela Cooper, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho Vice-Chair & (Alt.) KVRI Co-chair
Chip Corsi, Idaho Fish & Game
Bob Blanford, Business/Industry
Ed Atkins Jr., Corporate Agriculture/Landowner
Dave Wattenbarger, Soil Conservation/Landowner
Kevin Knauth, (Alt.) Bonners Ferry Ranger District, U.S. Forest Service
Wally Cossairt, (Alt.) Boundary County Commissioner

Agency/Others in Attendance:

Mitch Doherty, Vital Ground
Carol Kriebs, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Jonathan Luhnnow, Idaho Dept. of Lands
Norm Merz, Idaho Fish and Game
Marc Kilmer, Representative Russ Fulcher's Office
Jake Garringer, Office of the Governor
Robert Akins, Idaho Fish and Game
Christy Johnson-Hughes, Fish & Wildlife
Gregory Hoffman, U.S. Army Corp. of Engineers
Bob Smathers, Idaho Farm Bureau Federation
Mitch Silvers, Senator Mike Crapo's Office
Wesley Hubbard, Private Citizen
Jeff Gilberg, Private Citizen
Olivia Drake, 9B Trails
Rhonda Vogl, KVRI Facilitator & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Karen Schumacher, Recording Secretary KVRI & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho

Opening: Angela Cooper opened the meeting at 7:04P.M

Rhonda Vogl facilitated the introduction of all present.

The September 20th KVRI minutes were approved by consensus.

Mitch Doherty of Vital Ground was introduced as the presenter. Mitch explained that Vital Ground's mission is to protect and restore North America's grizzly bear populations by conserving wildlife habitat, and by supporting programs that reduce conflicts between bears and humans. Mitch's presentation can be found at:

<https://www.kvricollaborative.com/kvri> by scrolling to the meeting date of 10.19.2020 and clicking on the presentation link.

Vital Ground reviewed and prioritized grizzly habitat needs across Washington, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming and identified 88 priority areas of which one is the Kootenai Valley. Our valley is home to a variety of endangered species.

The project, called the Kootenai Valley Linkage Project, involving the Hubbard farmland of over 1000 acres, has several goals including:

- Secure habitat within a wildlife movement corridor between the Purcell, cabinet and Selkirk mountains for a wide range of wildlife species.
- Protect over 1,000 acres of prime agricultural soils.
- Protect and support restoration of over 8,000 feet of riparian area along the Kootenai river.

Mitch explained the benefits to landowners of utilizing the Agricultural Land Easement (ALE), designed to protect the long-term viability of the nation's food supply by preventing conversion of productive working lands to non-agricultural uses. It is thought the current project can act as a catalyst for other agricultural producers in the valley to take advantage of the money available through the Farm bill that supports the protection of ag land and puts money back in the pockets of the landowners.

Jeff Gilbert asked for a definition of a conservation easement. Mitch explained that an easement is a legal agreement between a private landowner and an entity. In this instance the agreement is the purchase of development rights which prohibits future subdivision and protects the ag land and other conservation values in perpetuity.

Committee Updates:

Kevin Knauth, Forest Service

The Westside Restoration Project is at the Draft Environmental Assessment stage. Getting this to the public in draft form is anticipated to be done by the end of October. Following that will be the 30-day comment period.

The final decision is anticipated to be by the end of March followed by implementation (timber/restoration) which is slated for first quarter next year.

Timber sale delivery into FY21

Boulder creek Project has two:

- Timbuk Stew
 - Expect to solicit proposals in November.
 - This is a Stewardship project and includes all other restoration activities such as road maintenance, aquatic organism passages, recreation as well as the vegetation management piece too
- Idamont
 - This is a traditional timber sale – road maintenance/road work and is slated for bids in the second quarter (late winter, early spring)

Over snow vehicle planning has been discussed for a couple of years. In FY21 this is coming back on line due to some regional funding received. Kootenai National Forest has the same requirements to do over snow vehicle planning so it may make good sense for us to plan

that effort together. It is believed that there are some opportunities to do joint planning that can increase efficiency and allow the public to comment on a larger scale.

The weather is wet and pile burns are beginning. IDL has been doing some already. Forest Service pile burning is expected to begin this week.

Rhonda Vogl, W.A.C. & Grizzly

W.A.C. (Wildlife Auto Collision) subcommittee met on September 29th via zoom. The McArthur lake realignment project was discussed. The ITD (Idaho Department of Transportation), Results of the draw down and the benefits of that was updated to us by Robert Akins. More about that will be given tonight by Norm Merz and Robert.

Grizzly bear subcommittee meeting was on October 13 via zoom at which the success of the Nixle alert system was reviewed and the development of a phone tree system was discussed. Brian Johnson, Idaho Fish and Game, noted that IDFG has already started putting together a phone tree. Brian also noted that IDFG already has written protocol on the process of communication with the public. It was decided that we need to keep the protocol simple and easy to follow. The next Grizzly bear meeting is scheduled for November 19th at 1:15 pm via zoom. The meeting will focus on the possible funding and logistics for hiring a community outreach liaison person.

Chip Corsi, Idaho Fish & Game

Challenges continue with the attempts to capture the grizzly that has been causing mischief in the Three-mile area. The bear has not threatened any humans, but it is still hanging around.

Big game season is in full swing. Weather is a bit challenging. Covid has interfered with some of the elk check stations.

Norm Merz, Idaho Fish & Game

Extending the wildlife funnel fencing further down from McArthur Lake was discussed at the last W.A.C. meeting. The potential extension of the fencing at McArthur Lake is a standalone project and will not affect the planned IDT Highway 95 project. Public outreach for this project is still needed, therefore the funding sources being looked at has money available soon but the timing will not line up with McArthur lake time line. However, it may provide funds to extend the Copeland funnel fencing north 1.2 miles passed Brush Lake Road. The road kill database showed 30 animal mortalities reported in this area, but it is unknown how many more were unreported. The third tunnel (northern most) gets only about 10% of the use as the other 2 tunnels in Copeland. The grant proposal would look to extend that fence within the IDT right-of-way on forest service lands. Some coordination would be needed with IDT and Forest Service. The fencing would be expected to help curb wildlife mortalities and increase public safety. They should be in a better position next year to solicit funds for McArthur Lake proposal.

Robert Akins, Idaho Fish & Game

Tundra Swan Season opened today.

Yearly underpass totals show a high volume of white tail and elk in other underpasses and the belief is that the fencing for the third pass is too short and extending it will encourage the animals to use that third underpass more.

Waterfowl opened up with some limited use. Counts this morning of vehicles indicate a higher number of hunters.

Pheasant program opening day for youth was low. Regular season opening looking strong. A lot of birds are being seen and hunters are getting their limit of two.

Marc Kilmer, Congressman Russ Fulcher's Office

Congress out of session until December 11th.

Mitch Silvers of Senator Mike Crapo's Office was on this call but technical difficulties prevented an update.

Jake Garringer, Governor Little's Office

Just a quick update that is not resource related but is being shared in order to get the word out: The funding for families available at StrongFamilies.Idaho.Gov, opens Wednesday and is for eligible parents that can apply for the funds to purchase or receive reimbursement for eligible educational materials, devices, and services.

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

Sent out updates on Wolverine and Western Bumblebee requests for information.

Jonathan Luhnnow, Idaho Dept. of Lands

Pile burns have begun. There is more to do on Peterson Hill as well as some at the Smith Lake property and various other places. They are shaping up projects for next year. Precommercial thinning is at 1000+ acres. Planting for fall is at ½ million trees and 1700 acres. That covers Boundary and Bonner Counties.

TMDL Subcommittee citizens monitoring group update was given by Dave Wattenbarger 4 people went out to learn about the work involved in monitoring and had a good trip. 6 sites were visited. Another trip is planned for the later part of this week to visit the rest of the sites.

Next meeting November 23rd – 7pm via Zoom.

Meeting called 8:30

Minutes prepared by Karen Schumacher