

Final Meeting Notes  
Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative  
April 19, 2021  
7:00 p.m.  
Board Meeting via Zoom

**Board Members in Attendance:**

Gary Aitken Jr., Kootenai Tribe of Idaho Chair, KVRI Co-Chair  
Dan Dinning, Boundary County Commissioners, KVRI Co-Chair  
Chip Corsi, Idaho Fish & Game  
Kim Pierson, U.S. Forest Service  
Tim Dougherty, (Alt)Business/Industry  
Ed Atkins Jr., Corporate Agriculture/Landowner  
Dave Wattenbarger, Soil Conservation/Landowner  
Dave Gray, (Alt) Social/Cultural/Historical Interests  
Chuck Roady, Industrial/Landowner  
Adam Arthur, City of Bonners Ferry, (Alt) KVRI Co-Chair

**Agency/Others in Attendance:**

Wally Cossairt, Boundary County Commissioner, (Alt.) KVRI Board  
Kevin Knauth, Bonners Ferry Ranger District, U.S. Forest Service, (Alt.) KVRI Board  
Karen Roetter, Senator Mike Crapo's Office  
Jake Garringer, Office of the Governor  
Christy Johnson-Hughes, U.S. Fish & Wildlife  
Marc Kilmer, Representative Russ Fulcher's Office  
Micah Ellstrom, Idaho Fish & Game  
Tim Bertling, Boundary County Commissioner  
Robert Smathers, Idaho Farm Bureau  
Amber Kornak, Idaho Fish & Game  
Sara Straub, U.S. Fish & Wildlife  
Robert Akins, Idaho Fish & Game  
Angela Cooper, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho Vice -Chair, KVRI(alt)Co-Chair  
David Bogema, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers  
Hilary Whitcomb, U. S. Fish & Wildlife  
Barb Moore, Idaho Fish & Game  
Douglas Jones, Idaho Water Rights  
Robert Steed, D.E.Q.  
Rhonda Vogl, KVRI Facilitator & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho  
Karen Schumacher, Recording Secretary KVRI & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho

Meeting called at 7:03 pm by Dan Dinning.  
Rhonda Vogl read through the list of registered attendees admitted to the zoom meeting confirming that all had been introduced.

Dan Dinning asked for corrections or edits to the draft meeting minutes from March and none were had. Minutes passed by consensus.

### **Presentation: Boundary County Fire Prevention Cooperative Home Fire Safety Program**

Dan introduced Ken Homik, Idaho Department of Lands and Tony Rohrwasser, South Boundary Fire District. Ken and Tony shared the mission and purpose of the Home Fire Safety Program. They hope to help our community members protect themselves from fire danger to their homes. The group works in partnership with several different groups including the Red Cross and the McClaskey Estate to

- Provide home assessment at no charge to address wildland vulnerabilities
- Facilitate the installation of free smoke detectors to address fires originating from within the structure
  - Open to all residents
  - Target sensitive populations, e.g. elderly, homes
  - with children.

The presentation and contact information can be found on the KVRI website at: <https://www.kvricollaborative.com/kvri> by scrolling down to the 4.19.2021 meeting block.

Tim Dougherty shared his gratitude for the quick and efficient actions of our Fire fighters and IDL for containing flames when a cold front fanned the embers of a two-week-old Idaho Department of Lands planned burn and it appeared to have threatened Tim's property. Tim asked if there were funds available to landowners for fuel reduction around property.

Ken answered that the Firesafe Program, via John Ailport for the County, offered some grants with limited matching funds for that purpose.

It was agreed that it is important to get the safety measures and assessment opportunities information spread; especially in light of the escalating number of new residents in our community.

Rhonda expressed her gratitude for the example of support this presentation provides for our community and how we come together. She assured the group that KVRI would place the information presented on our website and share it on social media (Facebook) as well.

### **Subcommittee Updates:**

#### *Forestry Subcommittee:*

Kevin Knauth updated us on the Westside Restoration Project.

- Biological Assessment sent to Fish & Wildlife Service
  - This is a consult process addressing
    - Lynx
    - Grizzly Bear
    - Bull Trout
  - They will review and send questions or suggested edits
  - The result will be the Biological Opinion
- A Forestry Subcommittee meeting will be scheduled with KVRI
  - Comments on the draft EA (Environmental Assessment) will be batched into

groups of similarity and reviewed

- Expect to have Draft Decision Notice (DN) out to the public by the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> week of June
- The Draft DN starts the objection period for any one that had a comment in the previous reviews and doesn't feel like it was addressed in the way they intended.
  - Last check for public to ensure the Forest Service is aware of concerns

Other news is the last of the timber sales from Boulder Creek:

- Idamont (10 million board feet) this has been advertised and is open to bids until May 13<sup>th</sup>.
- Timbuk Stew (17 million board feet)

Prescribed burning is in progress. Reduced moisture and windy conditions have resulted in earlier than anticipated burn opportunities.

- Leonia, Brush Lake & Placer Creek are ongoing
- Next will be the Deer Creek area
  - Some burns are to reduce fuels in timber sale units so that trees can be planted
  - Other burns will be natural fuel burns
    - Reducing potential fire fuels
    - Restoring fires role in the eco system
      - Lower intensity
      - Burns pockets of fuel
      - Leaves pockets of surviving trees

Summer employees are arriving. Most are in training. Those involved in recreation, wildlife and aquatics are coming back.

Forest service offices are still closed to the public but work in the woods is starting up again.

Kevin closed by referencing the importance of what Tony and Ken presented on with regards to fire home safety and how homeowners can play a vital role in protecting their homes.

#### *Grizzly Bear Subcommittee:*

Rhonda Vogl shared that the meeting was held March 25th via Zoom at 10am and had a great attendance. Wayne Kasworm shared the 2020 field results. His presentation and the minutes can be found on the KVRI website at: [Grizzly | KVRIID \(kvricollaborative.com\)](http://Grizzly | KVRIID (kvricollaborative.com)) by scrolling down to the 3.25.21 meeting block.

Rhonda also shared that Scott Soultz had put together ads that have been in the Bonners Ferry Herald to alert community members to the fact that bears would be/are emerging and information for them to receive alerts and/or to contact should they have a problem bear on their property. Additional ads will run in the fall. Appreciation is extended to The Kootenai Tribe of Idaho for funding these helpful ads.

Christy Johnson-Hughes provided the input that the funding of \$25,000 aimed mostly at helping landowners, for the new bear management specialist is in process of being distributed.

Christy also shared that the intent of her agency is to continue to work on finding a way to make this a permanently funded effort.

Barbara Moore of Idaho Fish & Game introduced the new bear management specialist noting how thrilled they are with her positive attitude, energy and experience.

Amber Kornak told the group that she started a week ago and has worked in wild life since 2012 following graduation from Oregon State University. Dan asked Amber if she had ever been to our area before and Amber said no.

### **Old/New Business:**

Rhonda Vogl brought into consideration the question of being in person for our May 17, 2021 KVRl meeting. All agreed that while it was something they each wanted, different agencies still were restricting face to face meetings at this time. Meeting face-to-face will be reconsidered.

### **Federal and State Agency Updates:**

*Karen Roetter of Senator Crapo's office:*

The big report is that there are finally some concrete numbers on SRS (secure rural schools). Idaho is going to get \$19.2 million this year for SRS.

- 30% goes to the schools
- 70% goes to roads bridges and infrastructure
- Boundary County will receive \$856,962.72
- Bonner County will receive \$685,024.76

Senator Crapo is actively involved in trying to establish a permanent endowment for this.

*Marc Kilmer of Congressman's Fulcher's office:*

Representative Fulcher has joined some other members of Congress in supporting a few different bills that would provide funding for forestry education and also encourage the planting the trillion trees initiative.

*Christy Johnson-Hughes of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Office:*

Christy welcomed Amber and shared that they are working with Fish & Game to get the funding to them so that Amber has tools to work with out in the field such as temporary fencing, bear safe trash cans or whatever is needed to respond in real time to potential human bear conflict situations and minimize those opportunities as much as possible. Brittany Morlin is working with Fish and Game to get that money through their grant solution system so that it's available.

They are also having further discussions about grizzly bear management and how it may be possible to create a long-term type of commitment in this area and can be more actively involved in supporting the community as it continues to grow.

*Jake Garringer of the Governor's office:*

A couple of appointments were made as of the 8th of April.

- Brian Olmstead and Dean Stevenson were appointed to the Idaho Water Resource Board
- Roger Chase and Albert Barker were reappointed

Other than that, the session continues and the governor and team in Boise are staying busy.

*Kim Pierson of the U.S. Forest Service:*

Kim was excited to announce that they have a new forest supervisor coming to the Idaho Panhandle. Carl Petrick is currently the forest supervisor of the Mississippi forests and prior to that he was the forest supervisor of all of the Alabama forest. Carl will be here in June.

They are moving forward with the GAOA, or the Great American Outdoors Act, projects. There is \$3.1 million that came to the Idaho Panhandle for this year and they are focusing on recreation items:

Deferred Maintenance like:

- replacing toilets
- fire rings
- tables

Infrastructure such as:

- Kit Price campground
- Shadowy Saint Joe campground
- Hiawatha trail

Kim expressed an interest in sharing at a KVRI meeting and soliciting input for some of these ideas and opportunities to really maximize how they spread that funding.

The other information shared was that the Bog Creek Road contract was awarded by Customs and Border patrol and it is intending to do the work on the Bog Creek Road this year.

Lastly, they are still in the process of trying to move forward with the over snow vehicle planning. They are discussing the option of going in tandem with the Kootenai National Forest or doing the work alone.

*Chip Corsi of Idaho Fish and Game:*

Chip expressed the excitement had about having Amber on board and getting Grizzly Bear Conflict Management/Prevention technician position up and running.

The assistant Wildlife bureau chief in IDFG HQ gave word that they are moving forward with getting agreements to get the \$25,000 for "tools" (e.g., fencing materials, bear proof containers, etc.) in a mode ready to spend. The intent is to continue to share information through KVRI to make sure people have a say in and are on board with what materials are purchased with these funds.

Brian Johnson announced his retirement for this month but has been able to take a little bit of time with Amber and tour her around meaning that Amber's already been out meeting folks. They are seeking a lateral transfer from another conservation officer position into Brian's position.

All proposals for the Big Game season have passed.

- Maintain extra doe tags
- Reduce cow elk tags

The cattle association and others gave input to the Legislature to further liberalize wolf hunting and trapping for wolf through legislation, with intent to reduce numbers from the current 1500 (summer estimate, when population is at its highest level). Waiting to see what happens with that.

*Robert Akins of Idaho Fish and Game:*

Robert added that they are starting to get work done up in Boundary County. They have two technicians on up there and their third technician is starting in 20 days. Robert confirmed for Dan Dinning that the Boundary Creek and Smith Creek advisory committee are still engaged.

*Robert Steed of D.E.Q.*

Robert received the letter from K.V.R.I. a couple of weeks ago regarding the selenium in the Kootenai River. Robert doesn't have any answers yet but believes he will be meeting with the Director Wednesday of this week to discuss. He stressed that the letter was very well thought out and felt the approach taken was great. (Sent to the State Department and copied to DEQ)

They are finally filling a vacant position that they have had since COVID-19 and will have one of the person's first task be to help the TMDL subcommittee with some of the data management for the temperature data over the years.

*Douglas Jones of Idaho Water Rights*

Doug provided information on the announcement of adjudication effort for the Palouse Basin that went out last week as well as information about the ongoing efforts for Clark Fork and Ponderay areas. It was clarified that only a portion of these considerations touch into Boundary County.

There was no correspondence to review.

Dan confirmed our next meeting would be May 17<sup>th</sup> at 7pm via Zoom.

Meeting called at 8:32.