

Final Meeting Minutes Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative
November 15, 2021
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
Dick Staples, Mayor of Bonners Ferry, KVRI Co-Chair
Bob Blanford, Business/Industry
Chip Corsi, Idaho Fish & Game
Chuck Roady, Landowner (Industrial)
Sandy Ashworth, Social/Cultural/Historical Interests

Agency/Others in Attendance:

Brad Smith, Idaho Conservation
Carol Kriebs, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Dave Gray, Social, Cultural, Historical (Alt.)
Hilary Whitcomb, U. S. Fish & Wildlife
Jace Hogg, Office of Species Conservation
Joshua Uriarte, Office of Species Conservation
Karen Schumacher, Recording Secretary KVRI & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Kim Pierson, U.S. Forest Service
Marc Kilmer, Office of Representative Russ Fulcher
Matt Butler, U.S. Forest Service
Mike Edmondson, Office of Species Conservation
Mike Ward, U.S. Forest Service
Nate Rogers, Idaho Dept. of Lands
Rhonda Vogl, KVRI Facilitator & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Robert Akins, Idaho Fish & Game
Sarah Hendricks, Office of Species Conservation
Scott Soult, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Stefany Bales, Office of Senator Risch
Tim Bertling, Boundary County Commissioner
Tim Dougherty, Idaho Forest Group, Business/Industry (Alt.)
Tim Patton, Boundary County Citizen
Wally Cossairt, Boundary County Commissioner, (Alt.)

The meeting was called at 7:05 by Rhonda Vogl who then facilitated introductions of all Zoom attendees and those attending in person.

Dan Dinning called for any corrections to the draft meeting minutes for October. None were had and the minutes passed by consensus.

Dan asked those giving the presentation to introduce themselves and gave them the floor.

Nate Rogers of Idaho Dept. of Lands & Matt Butler of the U.S. Forest Service

Gave an in-depth review of the 2021 Fire Season. You can see the PDF of this presentation at: [KVRI | KVRIID \(kvrivcollaborative.com\)](https://kvrivcollaborative.com) by scrolling to the November 15 meeting block. The presentation began with an overview of the drought conditions from April of 2021 to November of 2021 and how they changed rapidly from no impact to exceptional. Spring saw Bonners Ferry at the second driest on record in over 100 years and Priest River at the driest ever dating back to the 1890's. It was noted that there were quite a few treated areas for prescribed burning that ignited within a three-week window of treatment. The more active fire intensity and control issues were noted as a significant indicator that the moisture content of North Idaho was very low.

One example of this was the Deer Stew treated area. Trees had been planted and as the crew walked through the black duff, there was smoke coming up, out from their footprints.

Coeur d'Alene dispatch fires tripled the previous record for Spring. As of June 22, there were 103 fires equaling a 274% increase of the 20-year average.

The fires put a strain on resources. Daily coordination calls were used to determine where resources were a priority. Priority was often considered as those areas that were close to homes and infrastructure.

An example was given of unexpected results using the Trestle Creek fires. Trestle Creek fire #6 was kept small for a couple of weeks. It was hard to get crews into it because it was too hazardous. Three weeks after the start, at 10pm and 80 degrees with low humidity, at 5500 feet, the fire took off. The fire was at two acres and they had fought it for half an hour and had to pull off. Twenty minutes later it jumped to almost 50 acres. This was an area not expected to engage so aggressively especially at that time of year.

Other information shared included:

- Idaho Panhandle Fires
 - 77% Lightning Strikes
 - 23% Human Caused with a majority being the result of debris burns
- Coeur d'Alene Interagency Dispatch Zone
 - 123 Fires
 - 40% Lightning Strikes
 - 60% Human*
 - 6 or 7 Arson
 - Majority Debris Burns

*This impacted the decision to implement the fire restrictions.

It was asked if the human caused fires could be attributed, in part, to newer residents not familiar with the impact of dry, high fire potential.

Both presenters agreed that they felt it was the opposite. Most new comers were highly fearful of fire and were quicker to report on any smoke seen. It was thought that many of the fires that were caused by humans were, in fact, by longtime residents used to doing things a certain way at a certain time of the year.

It was asked if they were able to identify the arsonists.

The answer was they believed an individual had been detained but that the follow up information is not available to them

Kim Pierson added that as a result of the fires, salvage activities were going to occur. They are streamlining the process by using a template. There was a lot of acreage burned and based on the use of a regional template the salvage will be occurring at the Character Complex site.

Dan asked about any concerns that may be had for challenges in court as was seen after the fire out at Newport a few years ago (Tower Fire).

Kim responded that by using the regional template they are hoping to possibly prevent that from happening.

Scoping begins on Friday November 19th.

***Due to widespread power outages virtual attendance was limited and interrupted.**

Tim Dougherty was asking Kim about the process for deciding on salvage activities when our power went out.

Attending in person were four representatives from the Idaho Office of Species Conservation (OSC). KVRI took time (in the dark!) to acknowledge and request that they introduce themselves and share a bit about their efforts.

OSC is dedicated to planning, coordinating and implementing the State's actions to preserve, protect and restore species listed as candidate, threatened and endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA). The OSC provides constituent services for state, federal and private stakeholders seeking assistance with ESA issues.

Attending and introducing themselves and the work they do were:

Mike Edmondson

Mike was appointed administrator by Governor Brad Little in May of 2021. His primary responsibilities include providing the overall direction for agency operations and coordinating Endangered Species Act programs with federal, state and private partners. Mike has served OSC since 2008 and continues to serve as Program Manager and Policy Advisor for OSC.

Joshua Uriarte

Joshua serves as Species Program Manager and Policy Advisor for OSC. He has been with OSC since January 2015. His primary responsibilities include providing technical support and coordinating with federal, state and private partners as they relate to the sage-grouse recovery in Idaho.

Sarah Hendricks

Dr. Sarah Hendricks has been the Terrestrial Project Manager for the Wildlife Division of OSC since September 2021. Sarah joined OSC in August of 2020 as an Idaho Science and Technology Policy Fellow through the McClure Center for Public Policy Research at University of Idaho. As a project manager, Sarah works out of the Moscow office and aids with species policy, recovery planning efforts, and stakeholder needs in Northern Idaho

Jace Hogg

Jace Hogg serves as the Federal Land Coordinator for OSC. His primary duties include being the staff support for the Idaho Roadless Commission and coordinating

State agency comments on USFS Forest Plan and BLM Resource Management Plan revisions. He joined OSC in February of 2020.

There was significant discussion about listings, impact and the mechanisms for endangered species.

Subcommittee Updates

Forestry – Kim Pierson – USDA Forest Service

Kim shared her enthusiasm for the signing of the Westside Restoration decision. Noted was the interest in where the infrastructure funds are going to take the agency. She was sure that would include some CFLR funding and they are looking at how that might look and how to get rolling. That portion is something Kim has asked Mike Ward to take on during his temporary time with the agency.

Mike shared that he had met with KVRI and is looking to the forest group to make some recommendations. He is also looking at how to pull the three different collaboratives together to prioritize and to KVRI to provide leadership with that.

Wildlife Auto Collision (WAC) – Rhonda Vogl

Dan outlined the impact that the committee has had on reducing the number of lives lost on highways with animal crossing tunnels and fencing. Rhonda followed with more information about the various subcommittees and the upcoming WAC meeting.

The next WAC meeting will be virtually held on December 1st at 10:30 am. They will have updates from Idaho Department of Transportation, George Shutes. KVRI was involved in purchasing signs informing drivers of wildlife crossings. George moves the signs around to areas that are showing heavy crossing activity. The use and nature of what is crossing through the wildlife tunnels will also be discussed. Idaho Fish and Game will also give stats on how well those tunnels are doing. There will be a discussion on the funding for projects such as fencing needed to funnel wildlife into one of the tunnels. KVRI wrote letters of support for the grant being submitted for that purpose. Rhonda concluded with asking any who are interested to consider attending.

Old Business:

Rhonda explained the process of sending letters to all board and alternate board members every two years asking if they are willing to continue to serve. The letters have been sent out and we are beginning to received those signed letters back.

Dan mentioned the handout provided listing the 2022 KVRI meetings with our next meeting scheduled for January 10th. Dan thanked all who attended.

The meeting was called at 8:40 P.M.

Karen Schumacher, KTOI/KVRI Recording Secretary