

Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative
September 17, 2018 – 7:00 p.m.
Board Meeting – University of Idaho Extension Office

Board Members in Attendance:

David Sims, Mayor, City of Bonners Ferry & KVRI Co-chair
Dan Dinning, Boundary County Commissioner & KVRI Co-chair
Sandy Ashworth, Social/Cultural/Historical Interests
Dave Wattenbarger, Soil Conservation/Landowner
Kevin Knauth, (Alt.) US Forest Service (USFS), Bonners Ferry Ranger District-District Ranger
Tim Dougherty, (Alt.) Business/Industry
Chip Corsi, (Alt.) Idaho Fish & Game Commission
Rhonda Vogl, KVRI Facilitator & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (KTOI)
Sherrie Cossairt, KVRI Recording Secretary & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (KTOI)

Agency/Others in Attendance:

Karen Roetter, Senator Mike Crapo's office
Judy Morbeck, Congressman Labrador's office
Jonathan Luhnnow, Idaho Department of Lands (IDL)
Carol Kriebs, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, Environmental Director
Marty Martinez, Citizen
Christy Johnsen-Hughes, US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS-IFWO)
Dianna Ellis, Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge
Kirsten Kaiser, District Ranger in Troy, MT, Kootenai National Forest
Cassandra Olson, Boundary Soil Conservation
Greg Becker, Greg Becker, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Boundary/Bonner County
Sue Ireland, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (KTOI)
Ken Homik, Idaho Department of Lands (IDL), Fire Warden
Anthony South, Yaak Valley Forest Council (YVFC)
Ashley South, Yaak Valley Forest Council (YVFC)
Chris Hughes, US Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)
Norm Merz, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (KTOI)
Even DeHamer, Idaho Department of Fish & Game, (IDFG)
Carol Kriebs, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (KTOI), Environmental Director
Paul & Charlie Wells, landowners

Opening:

Co-Chair, David Sims opened and welcomed everyone to the meeting; introductions followed.

The July 16, 2018 KVRI Board Meeting Draft Notes will stand as corrected.

Kootenai National Forest (KNF) Current Fires and Projects Update Presentation –Kirsten Kaiser, District Ranger, Three Rivers Ranger District

Kirsten's presentation began with a brief introduction and included updates on the current fires, project updates and recreation information on Kootenai National Forest (KNF).

Kirsten was born and raised in Montana. She has been on the Kootenai National Forest on and off since 1990 and has been the District Ranger on the Three Rivers District at Troy for nearly 7 years. She is familiar with the Idaho Panhandle because at one point in time she was the Forest Planner for both the Idaho Panhandle and the Kootenai National Forest. Kirsten explained that the Forest Plans are pretty similar however the difference is how the Forest Plan states how they manage their Roadless areas.

The Kootenai National Forest is 2.2 million acres and the Three Rivers District is 609,000 acres.

Current Wildfire Information

- 68 fires this year, over 12,000 acres burned (the average for the last 20 years has been 150)
- The Three (3) largest fires are:
 - Davis fire - 6614 acres
 - Gold Hill - 6500 acres
 - Sterling - Complex 1500 acres

The last three years are similar to what the IPNF has been experiencing. It is the second year in a row our fires have made it into Canada and burned their planned timber sales.

Kirsten handed out packets describing the projects on the Kootenai National Forest. Most of the 609,000 acres are in the same Selkirk Cabinet-Yaak Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone. They have some of the same species as IPNF (Grizzly Bear, Lynx, Bull Trout, sturgeon). But they don't have the Caribou. Their district is divided in BMU's sub-planning units and they rotate around those sub-planning units based on the need to treat. On their projects they seek to offer different opportunities to purchasers. They offer large and smaller sales of 2-3mmbf or less.

A detailed Summary of 2018 Projects is available on KVRI Website www.kootenai.org

Dan D. thanked Kirsten for the KNF's cooperation back and forth on our Buckhorn project.

Kirsten also shared some recreation Information that might be of interest to Boundary County residents:

- Rate increase on campgrounds next year
- Dorr Skeels area will become day use and part reservation in the future
- Kilbrennan Lake- existing boat ramp improvements
- Yaak River Campground has a boat launch and they will create a boat ramp there
- Snipe town has a proposal for expanding existing claim on Yaak River to do suction dredging
- Swinging Bridge replacement will start next fall, watch the website for that timeline

Fleming Creek Fire - A Cooperative Success-Ken Homik, Fire Warden , Idaho Department of Lands

Ken Homik is the Fire Warden for the Kootenai Valley Forest Protective District of the Idaho Department of Lands in Bonners Ferry.

He explained the IDL Fire Policy is very clear. Objective is to maintain an effective and aggressive fire readiness organization to suppress fire in the incipient state. They are an aggressive initial attack fire agency. They like to put them out small.

They can't do it alone, all fire management organizations recognize the value of cooperation and developing and maintaining relationships. No one has enough resources alone to attack a fire like the Fleming Creek Fire.

They have a series of cooperative agreements that enable them to work with Forest Service, the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and other states to get resources as necessary as they need them to address the fire issue they may have. Locally they work very hard with the local cooperators within the valley. They recognize that they have valley bottom fire protection and can't always get to the fire as our rural cooperatives can so they work very hard to maintain relationships with them for initial attacks.

They meet weekly with representatives from every fire department and other fire management agencies and emergency services to stay connected and work on fire management planning to be ready whenever they are needed. They are constantly building and maintaining relationships.

Fleming Creek Fire

- Started August 24
- Prolonged period of high fire danger
- Hot & Dry, Smokey Skies
- Winds South 15-20 mph
- Relative Humidity 30%

Initial Response

- Detected from the West Side Road and called in to 911
- North Bench and South Boundary rolled resources right away
- IDL then sent their fire engines and assistant warden on scene
- Immediately ordered helicopter, an available aircraft shortly after
- Ordered everything locally available from Forest Service, Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) and Boundary County. Everything available was on its way
- They established command and span of control to provide for public safety
- Assessed values at risk and where the fire was going
- Ordered and managed resources as appropriate

There being a lot of resources at risk aided in their ability to gain resources as needed as quickly as they did. He explained how they divided the fire into two divisions, created a structure protection group, and showed where the staging areas were established. He shared how the fire retardant is used and how the water from the river was advantageous in helping stop the fire spreading into areas of risk.

Evacuations were carried out flawlessly by the Boundary County Sheriff's Office with assistance from the Idaho State Police. Everyone did an excellent job and cooperated so well. The combination of ground and air resources was the key to the success of fighting this fire. It was a great demonstration of how coordination works in fire management.

By August 28 it was reported as 100% contained. It is still not completely out, the landing pile still smoldering.

Current Status

Estimated Cost to date \$1.1 Million
Some control line rehab and seeding
Cause still undetermined
Investigation ongoing

Ken's complete PowerPoint Presentation is available on KVRI website at www.kootenai.org

Large Fire Update -US Forest Service – Kevin Knauth

Slide Creek Fire

- 35 acres
- Lightning start on July 30
- Controlled on August 17
- Timber Company Land (Hancock)

Smith Creek Fire

- 998 acres
- Lightning start on July 28
- Forest Service Land
- Max personnel assigned -11

Copper Mountain Fire

- 486 acres
- Lightning start on August 2
- Started in the US and burned into Canada
- Max personnel assigned-180
- Fires stopped at land that was harvested and replanted , the fire did not burn through those plantations , a lot less fuel in them, everything is younger and greener, spaced well

Discussion about amount of smoke this season; does the Forest Service receive extra funding to fight fires sooner; concerns of such long seasons of impacts to the economy and impacts air quality. Kevin K. explained that it's a lot less a case of funding but more of an issue of the weather and the burn window needed for prescribed burning. Sandy A. added that the fire seasons are longer and the drought issues the states are dealing with contribute to our smoke issue too. It is just sometimes beyond our human control.

Karen Roetter stated that it was very interesting to her to hear about the how the fires stopped on the lines where there are managed lands. And she reminded everyone that Senator Crapo and Senator Wyden from Oregon got that fire fix in so that the Forest Service is not constantly borrowing from their planning funds to fight fires. That will go into effect 2020. She also requested a copy of the Copper Mountain Fire to send to Senator Crapo.

Fleming Creek Project Update- Cassie Olson, Soil Conservation District

Cassie gave a brief overview of the 319 Grant proposal they prepared to submit to DEQ on the Fleming Creek Road last year for culvert replacement and road resurfacing. Although they ranked #2, the funding did not come through and they had planned to resubmit it again this October. They received

news in August that there was some leftover money and if they could get their paperwork in quickly and get the project done by Dec. 31 it was theirs. They are now waiting for permits and will begin work by the end of October. She will update us after the project is completed.

Forestry Committee Update- Kevin Knauth

The Forestry subcommittee met on September 6.

Camp Robin Project Draft EA

- Reviewed the comments received
- Comments are in support and no real concerns
- Decision in November

Boulder Creek Project

- Released a draft decision notice
- Received one objection from Alliance of the Wild Rockies; Addressing those objections now
- Decision in October

Deer Creek EA

- All three sales have sold this fiscal year

Bog Creek EIS

- Currently responding to comments
- Received 107 comments, very well written by people who truly had interest in the project
- Analyzing a modified alternative submitted by KTOI and the County, along with the 4 main alternatives
- Draft decision by the end of November

A Detailed CFLRP Project updates available on the KVRI website at www.kootenai.org

Misc. Updates:

- Boulder Creek road is open
- The Coppers Falls road is closed for culvert replacement for another 10 days
- Black Mountain Lookout is being moved, starting tomorrow, will be taken apart and starting next year reassembled ½ mile down the road at a good vista

Burbot Recovery Update-Sue Ireland, KTOI and Chip Corsi, IDFG

Sue I. and Chip C. shared some Burbot Restoration information. A full Burbot Recovery Presentation will be at the Oct. or Nov. KVRI Board meeting with detailed information.

The Kootenai Tribe had a Burbot public release event during Fair Week and the Tribal Youth Burbot release at Deep Creek; both went very well and the future of the Burbot Fishery on the horizon was discussed. Chip answered questions about the future Fishery going before the Commission in November.

WAC Committee Update- Rhonda Vogl

There will be a Wildlife-Auto Collision (WAC) Sub-committee meeting on Sept. 20, 2018 at 1:30 pm at the Kootenai Tribal Office. They will be discussing the future of the Animal Detection Sign.

Grizzly Bear Committee Update-Rhonda Vogl

There will be a Grizzly Bear Sub-committee on October 11, 2018 at 1:00 pm at the Kootenai Tribal Office. Wayne Kasworm will be discussing Bear Management News with the committee and will be at the October KVRI Board Meeting.

Chip C. added a Grizzly Bear update about a bear in the river bottom between town and Moyie and also one in the Smith Lake area.

Update on Riverside Road Project- Dianna Ellis- Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge

Federal Lands Access Project

- Aug 8- they had 2 public meetings
- Biggest concern from the community is the 4 hour closures that could occur with this project
- 2020 construction year
- Federal Highways expects a 70 % design in December and another public meeting will take place

Contributions received from:

- Friends of Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge- \$2000
- FWS \$150,000 FY18 and \$100,000 FY19

The Department of Interior is undergoing boundary realignment. The FWS boundaries will include WA, OR, Idaho and some of western MT. They will lose the Pacific Islands.

Dianna shared that she will be retiring on September 28, taking advantage of the agency's early retirement program. Her supervisor, Alice Hanley, the Project Leader of the Inland Northwest NWR Complex, will be filling in in her absence and they don't know when the position would be filled. The Board shared their regrets of her leaving but congratulated her on her retirement.

Next KVRI Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for October 15, 2018 at 7:00 p.m. at the Boundary County Extension Office.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Sherrie Cossairt,
KTOI/KVRI Admin. Assistant