

Meeting Notes
Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative
June 15, 2020 – 7:00 p.m.
Board Meeting – Telemeeting

Board Members in Attendance:

Dan Dinning, Boundary County Commissioner and KVRI Co-chair
Angela Cooper, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho Vice-Chair & (Alt.) KVRI Co-chair
Adam Arthur, City of Bonners Ferry & (Alt.) KVRI Co-chair
Chip Corsi, Idaho Fish & Game
Bob Blanford, Business/Industry
Sandy Ashworth, Social/Cultural/Historical Interests
Kevin Knauth, (Alt.) Bonners Ferry Ranger District, U.S. Forest Service
Ed Atkins Jr., Corporate Agriculture/Landowner
Dave Wattenbarger, Soil Conservation/Landowner
Rhonda Vogl, KVRI Facilitator & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Karen Schumacher, Recording Secretary KVRI & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho

Agency/Others in Attendance:

Carol Kriebs, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Sue Ireland, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Tim Dougherty, Idaho Forest Group
Kim Pierson, U.S. Forest Service
Jonathan Luhnnow, Idaho Dept. of Lands
Norm Merz, Idaho Fish and Game
Jane Jacoby, Yaak Valley Forest Council
Karen Roetter, Senator Mike Crapo's Office
Marc Kilmer, Representative Russ Fulcher's Office
Douglas Jones, Dept of Water Resources
Jake Garringer, Office of the Governor
Stefany Bales, Senator Jim Risch's Office
Matt Nykiel, Idaho Conservation League
Tonia Brooks, Bonners Ferry Herald

Opening: Rhonda Vogl opened the meeting at 7:01P.M

March 16 minutes- final and approved

Rhonda read a list of names and asked those present on the call to indicate so. Those whose names were not called introduced themselves.

There Were No Presentations:

Committee Updates:

Forestry Subcommittee: Kevin Knauth provided an update on the Westside Restoration Project.

- Scoping was in December and was allowed to run through January.
- Specialists are now taking proposed actions and doing the analysis
- Scoping will help refine the proposed actions that are analyzed in the Environmental Assessment (EA).
- The Draft EA will go out for public review and comments.
- Necessary adjustments will be made to the draft EA as a result of those comments
- A final decision will be reached in February
- The first activity timber sale is slated for next summer.

Other events:

- Post-harvest work is going on
- Some road work is going on as well
- Stewardship sale work on Smith Lake campground is going on.
 - Culverts repositioned for drainage/gravel going in.
 - Youth crew just started this week replacing picnic tables and fire rings via grant.

Our engineers really understand the importance of our recreation sites. All campgrounds are up and running and hosts are in place for summer operations. Recreation work force is on to help maintain trailheads, bathrooms and campgrounds.

Fire folks are all ready for the local fire season and currently helping out in Region 3 (Southwest) with that fire season.

Forest Service offices are not open to the public yet because they are following USDA's phased approach. Offices are in phase one now. There are two weeks in each phase before consideration for the next phase.

Free Firewood Use permits are being provided. The public is asked to call the office.

Dan Dinning asked for an update on Boulder.

Looking into fiscal year 21(Oct 1) Timber Sales:

- Timbuck Stew: 17 or 18 million board feet. This was a bigger sale but it was split into 2 sales (IdaMont)
- IdaMont: 9 million board feet.
- The first sale out of the Westside Restoration Project is Caribou Snow - 5 million board feet.
- Camp Robin project area's next sale is Hart Wall – 3 million board feet

TMDL: Rhonda Vogl updated that there was a meeting via telephone in April to address a consultation invitation by Idaho DEQ to change the status of the Kootenai and Moyie Subbasin TMDL.

EPA approved the shade rule largely, in part, due to the stellar job of our citizens monitoring group, the three amigos, Kevin Greenleaf, Dave Wattenbarger and Jerry Garten. Because KVRI is the watershed advisory group, Bob Steed brought the change of status to the subcommittee. Rhonda sent an email to run this by the KVRI board and is now wanting to make sure that this is in the minutes.

- The Integrative Report (IR) changed the priority status of the subbasin to low
- This will be revisited in 2026

This action item does not require a signature, but says we approve the IR showing a low priority status at this time.

Matt Nykiel with Idaho Conservation League (ICL) was heard:

- Asked what the purpose of the change was.
- Asked what was the status prior to the proposed change.

Matt stated that he was just a little confused about what the change in designation really meant. He stated that he is happy to talk to Bob directly.

Rhonda Vogl stated the report is sent to Congress each year. No work will be done on temperature TMDL until 2026; thus, the reasoning for the low priority status. Per Dan Dinning, there is no change in designation; just a change in assessing it. Dan asked if there was anyone that did not wish to approve this? No objections were made to the Integrated Report so it is noted as approved.

Dan and Rhonda: We are looking for someone to train to replace the current citizens monitoring group. Please contact Rhonda to help with this. We don't want this to fall through the cracks. We need to get 3 or 4 people out there with Dave, Jerry and Kevin to learn the ropes this summer. Citizens monitoring of the stream temperatures is valuable.

Grizzly Bear: Rhonda Vogl shared that there were 3 meetings held prior to the COVID shut down at which time we were trying to hammer out a good alert system for the community.

- The Nixle alert system was decided on but before we were able to construct a written protocol for the use of that, the Pandemic occurred.
- However, the Nixle system alerted about a problem bear that was getting into unprotected bee boxes recently.

- We hope to fine tune the community alert system once we can start holding meetings again.

Norm Merz added that it seems to be working well and that Brian Johnson and Sheriff Kramer are working on how to make this work and what criteria is needed. The important thing is that it is a work in progress. It is not a notification for every bear but definitely for problem bears. It was noted that a lack of notice doesn't mean that you don't need to take precautions. Dan Dinning noted that bears are living amongst us. If they cause problems, the Sheriff and Brian are coordinating.

Discussion followed regarding the process of if a bear mortality is counted against that recovery area if it is due to an auto collision.

Sue Ireland brought information to the group regarding coal mining activity in the headwaters of the transboundary Kootenai River: As a result of coal mining activity by Teck Resources, which operates five large metallurgic coal mines in British Columbia in the headwaters of the Kootenai Basin, increasing amounts of contaminants are being detected downstream of the mines in the Kootenai River watershed.

Some items of concern are:

- Elevated trends of nitrates and selenium.
- Studies of fish tissue and egg ovaries in the last few years in the Kootenai River in Idaho have revealed selenium levels that exceed the EPA criteria for selenium
- High selenium levels have been known to cause deformities and reproductive dysfunction in fish. Certain species are more susceptible than others.
- Teck Resources is proposing a large-scale expansion of one of their coal mines.
- Federal Assessment of this expansion is currently not required because the expansion is proposed on an existing mine that is already in operation.

Sue is requesting a chance to bring a group of experts to the next KRVI meeting to provide information to KVRI and the community regarding this subject.

Dan Dinning indicated the importance of informing elected officials so they can recognize and support our concerns.

Matt from Idaho Conservation League (ICL) stressed the importance of a Federal assessment. Indicated it would permit a review of the impact beyond the British Columbia/Canadian border. Current review is under provisional laws of British Columbia and they don't require an analysis impact on mines across international borders into Idaho and Montana. Stated that is why a federal review is so important. This would give folks in Montana and Idaho to have a chance to have those interests included in the process.

Rhonda – This is definitely food for thought for the KVRI board and partners. Stated it would be worth considering to write letters while we have the chance to make a difference. Suggested that this be a part of our July meeting.

Dan requested that Stefany Bales and Karen Roetter contact their bosses' offices with this information and let us know in July if we can take some action.

Karen, Stephanie, Jake Garringer and Mark Kilmer all voiced agreement and support.

Angela Cooper added a quick note that this issue is really important to the Tribe and that it is good to know we have all of you on our side when things come up. She voiced thanks expressed from the Tribe.

Idaho Fish and Game Idaho Fish and Game (IDFG), Chip Corsi:

IDFG is investigating mortality of a grizzly bear on the Westside Road– no more information.

Collaring of deer, elk, moose, wolves, black bears and lions is ongoing.

- Gathering information about predator prey relationships
- The mortality rate of collared moose is higher than we expected to see; appears parasites, to include ticks, a major factor.
- CWD – Montana took a forensic look at the disease spread.
 - Estimated to have been there approximately 10 years.
 - No physical barrier between here and there.
 - We tested extensively and it has not turned up.
 - If here, very low incident level.
 - Folks do need to be on look out.
 - We will continue to test this fall.

Robert Akins, new habitat biologist for McArthur Lake is coming on board. Evan took a promotion as staff biologist for Lake Pend Oreille habitat restoration work. Robert will come to the next KVRI meeting in person.

Per Chip, IDFG has mostly had crew working from home; today they started two rotations with half the crew in each, trading off weeks. They anticipate being fully staffed at the office sometime by August, possibly before, depending on virus status.

Kim Pierson – (for Jeannie Higgins): voiced appreciation for our efforts in meeting and the conversations we are having. Kim noted that the CFLRP advisory committee would be meeting next week to go over information. Kim is the point of contact. She is trying to get clarification on some items and will champion the work.

Jake Garringer of Governor Little's office: Encouraged all to visit the website for pandemic information and gain knowledge of healthy practices.

Mark Kilmer of Representative Russ Fulcher's Office: Had no updates.

Stefany Bales of Senator Jim Risch's Office: Was involved in our initial CFLR proposal and remains impressed with the work KVRI has done. Stefany reviewed some of the action items noted in Washington D.C. regarding stimulus, unemployment and law enforcement.

Karen Roeter of Senator Mike Crapo's Office: Indicated that the high points in senate had been hit.

Johnathan Luhnaw of Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) was commended for the work on Peterson Hill by Dan Dinning. Per Jonathan:

- The logging activity is going quickly but still a bit to do.
- Appreciation expressed for the letters of support from the county and Tribe
- East side of highway is ahead of schedule.
- After logging, there will be follow up treatments and reforestation.
- 9B trail organization has roughed in a few miles of mountain biking/hiking trail on the top of Peterson Hill.
 - Should get graveled in and be up sometime in July. Pretty good trail system.

New Business _ Rhonda Vogl stated that a KVRI website is in development by Karen Schumacher

Approval for this is being run by the KVRI board tonight. Currently the site for KVRI information is available to the public on the Kootenai Tribe site. It is starting to bog down a bit. This will also be brought to the Tribe council for approval.

The Cost is approximately \$468 a year plus an additional \$45 a year after this year for domain hosting. The site will be much more user friendly and will have links to The City of Bonners Ferry, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho and Boundary County.

It was suggested that once things are moving forward Karen could walk us through the site in person.

Dan asked if there was anyone opposed. There was not and now noted that the new site is approved.

Karen reviewed the 2020 Fair booth plan of Pioneer Days to Modern Ways and confirmed that the booth was reserved and paid for.

Next meeting July 20 – extension office. May be in person but that is tentative.

Meeting Closed at 8:30