

Meeting Notes
Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative
Forestry Committee
May 23, 2019, 1:15 P.M.
Kootenai Tribal Office

Attendance:

Kevin Knauth, Bonners Ferry Ranger District, US Forest Service (USFS)-District Ranger
Doug Nishek, Bonners Ferry Ranger District, US Forest Service (USFS)-Planning Forester
Dan Dinning, Boundary County Commissioner and KVRI Co-chair
Ed Koberstein, Bonners Ferry Ranger District, US Forest Service (USFS)-Timber Management
Beth Bigelow, North Zone, US Forest Service (USFS) - Archeology
Sid Smith, Senator Jim Risch's office
Tim Dougherty, Idaho Forest Group (IFG)
Carol Kriebs, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, Environmental Director
Scott Soultz, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Brad Smith, Idaho Conservation League
Matt Nykiel, Idaho Conservation League
Lisa Ailport, City of Bonners Ferry
Evan DeHamer, Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game
Bret Lyndaker, US Forest Service, Idaho Panhandle National Forest
Brandon Glaza, US Forest Service, Idaho Panhandle National Forest
Matt Philbrook, Boundary BackCountry Access
Kent Rotchey, Boundary BackCountry Access
Karen Roetter, Senator Mike Crapo's office
Ed Wingert, Idaho Dept. of Lands, GNA
Erik Sjoquist, Idaho Dept. of Lands, Timber
Andrew Moore, Idaho Dept. of Lands, GNA
Michelle Norton, US Forest Service, Sandpoint Ranger District
Jennifer Anderson, US Forest Service, Fire/Fuels
Rhonda Vogl, KVRI Facilitator & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (KTOI)

Opening:

Rhonda introduces herself and welcomes everyone, followed by introductions around the room.

Kevin Knauth gives background:

Forestry committee is a subcommittee of KVRI Board. We usually give update of ongoing activity and what is coming up. Updates will be given today and we are kicking off newest project that we are calling Westside Restoration project. This was formerly called Caribou Snow and before that Westside Fuels which does not tell the whole restoration story.

Westside Restoration

- There will be an Environment Assessment (EA) on this project. Westside is in pre-analysis stage right now. I will update earlier projects first.

Previous projects:

- Boulder – Decision got signed last fall. This year, Black Boulder GNA sale will come out this summer.
- IDL is helping us with that sale.

- Camp Robin – Camp Stew project, Stewardship Sale, Camp Dawson project. Stewardship sales will have other types of activities – can pay for them this way, like trading stumpage value for work. Near end of summer, we will rollout.
- 1st quarter – October and beyond, looking at Robin Hood timber sale which is a traditional sale.
- Boulder Dash timber sale, out of Boulder project.
- North Star Stew – next summer, another Stewardship sale.
- Volume estimates: 17 mmbf and next year is 33 mmbf in FY20

New Project– Westside Restoration Project

- Schedule-wise we are looking at 3rd quarter FY 21 for Decision and sales come out beginning the same year.
- Scoping timeline we will talk about today.

Front end work first. Look for opportunities for what we have to do. Then scoping and public feedback. Next is the NEPA phase.

Doug Nishek discusses Westside Restoration Project, using Google Earth:

- Doug discusses Myrtle fire in 2003.
- This is a city water source.
- We are staying on theme to reduce fuels and risk to watershed. Fires usually come from the south, in this area.
- The Sundance fire (1967) burned through the Caribou Creek drainage also. Need to reduce the fuels as much as we can.
- Proactive approach. Three drainages, not just one. What ecosystem elements are functioning and which are broken?
- Big project area loop – core is about drinking water. Also, landscape restoration.
- Disturbances in past have been roads, logging, Sundance fire.
- Working around wildlife protection measures, checkerboard ownerships will be challenging.
- What is the potential in that project area for various resources? We want to solicit comments and ideas from the community.
- What can we do better? What is our community vision for this area? We are here for ideas.
- Some areas will be burn only since we can't get there.
- Maybe there will be some recreational opportunities.

Ed Koberstein describes project area in blue outline:

- Myrtle, Snow and Caribou drainages. Bottom corner of map, we included around Dodge Peak, White Mountain. Since we're in that area, we should include. WUI boundary is adjacent to private ownership. Purple and pink are commercial veg opportunities. A lot of focus in this area since we haven't been there for so long due to the 1967 Sundance fire.
- As to Sundance fire area – early seral stands are approaching high density. Showing both state ownership and private ownership. Shaded sections show recent state endowment areas as provided by IDL. It can be confusing with all the overlays.
- Chances for commercial thinning opportunities and we found several: three thousand acres of past harvest, late 50s to 90s, so these are chances for thinning.

- Caribou burned intensely with Sundance Fire. Around 7,000 acres of potential thinning opportunities.
- Conceptual at this time, not ground-truthed. Some helicopter opportunities, also, which we will talk about. Risk in terms of fire hazards are there. Lots of hazardous fuels adjacent to private lands. That face does not have good access. Difficult terrain.
- Discussion as to helicopter availability, subsidizing. It is a question of can they operate in winter? They are all on fires in summer
- Three drainages: northern third of area is Myrtle Creek drainage which is Bonners Ferry Municipal watershed. Bottom 25% is Caribou area. Southwest prevailing winds push fire right towards Bonners Ferry.
- No veg activity has been done in Caribou Creek area for over 50 years. Stand conditions are overstocked.
- Further discussion – Stands are too thick to use fire along the face, a lot of risk there.
- There are backcountry areas also. Burton Ridge and along divide toward Roman Nose and Two Mouth Lakes – as to how MA5 relates to the watershed – different criteria. Currently we do not have commercial areas identified in MA5.
- Are there general forest areas up there? This is newest MA5 area map.
- WUI boundary has just been amended but not final step. Converts and takes in Pack River. Homes up there that are in Boundary Co.
- Grizzly bear area also to be considered.
- Small piece proposed in MA5 by Dodge Peak – sliver of it going into Pack River drainage.
- Can show old growth as well. Includes both dry and moist site old growth. Myrtle Creek drainage, face of Burton.
- As to white bark pine restoration, looking at opportunities.
- No Recreation trails link for display yet. Pat Hart has list.
- Group discussion on Two Mouths lakes; the trailhead is on company ground so we are looking at ROW or relocate trail to public ground. Same with Snow Falls trail as some is on private land. Fix trail heads, new signs.
- Group discussions on revamping Roman Nose area and parking lot, signs, warming hut and ATV incursion – need to get a handle on that. Revamp snowmobile and Nordic trail area. People used to plow out and groom and then we lost funding. That was in the 90s.

Group Discussions

- Group discussion on Two Mouth, as it starts on Hancock and was logged; half trail is clear cut so we should reroute. Tie into Harrison maybe? Same is true of Myrtle Peak, to try to get off Hancock and up to Myrtle. Pat has lots of ideas too - at least obtaining easements. Contract as a stewardship to get money to pay? Hancock may not even need that road. But it changes user experience even with easement. Two Mouth piece of trail on private road system is a mess and is not the same experience.
- Discussions as to change in roadless and access now in another area....part of project was to come back in and reburn undergrowth in lower Myrtle drainage. Some planting got done too. Need to figure out how to approach.
- As to Myrtle fire – Dan speaks to what happened, city water source and water tasted bad after that fire. Need to protect that from occurring again. Old growth improvement – keep big trees.

- Group input as to wanting a warming hut on Roman Nose off main road system. Same with Burton. If we could get in new road, maintain for ATV and snowmobile access. Some are not USFS roads.
- There will be a road maintenance component to this project as we move forward.
- Will do a transportation analysis and crunch numbers within the BMU

Dan Dinning speaks as to Shared Stewardship and IFRP:

- Rhonda, Ron Abraham and Dan went to this conference which was about Shared Stewardship. This project fits right in with the concept of Shared Stewardship, with Federal, State and private ownership. An example was given of a 100k acre area. Treatment in that area should look at a fuels reduction and fire protection standpoint. With this project, we have stumbled into this exact scenario. Further comments on Shared Stewardship. I would like to coordinate more. As to Molpus Hancock ground and coordinating with that. Let's see what we are dealing with from a fuels perspective. Also, at the IFRP conference, they spoke of only treating 40,000 acres. Anything under that does no good. Start pulling in state, private and federal and we can do some real good for the watersheds.
- Further discussion of Shared Stewardship. IDL will get more information for Forestry Committee on Molpus Hancock.
- As to Myrtle – it is fish bearing. Set back is 150 feet from non-fish bearing and 300 feet from fish bearing. Classification is important as well as the fact that it is a municipal watershed.
- As to roadless in Myrtle project in the past, we were limited but there were tradeoffs.
- Lisa Ailport gives City of Bonners Ferry perspective. We want to protect our water source. I will share that the city is working on investing in another water source. Have dug a well in city limits. By this fall, we should have a back-up and use it most of the time so we can diversify our water sources.
- Kevin – next steps – our specialists are looking at this polygon/project area, and will plan field surveys and data collection and trail flagging this summer. Imperative that folks put their heads together soon so we can include anything that you bring up. We can come back in 30 days or you can stop by the office. Maybe we can get some things identified. We will bring before the Forestry meeting before scoping. Field trip planned for July 11th for the team for USFS.

We can meet again to discuss ideas and see if we (KVRI) need to go out on a field trip. And we can get our trail and recreation folks here too. Hopefully in next 30 days we can get some ideas.

OSV winter travel plan

- This is a separate plan. We can analyze and never construct it. Putting a warming hut in and then USFS wanting to take it out. So, winter travel planning will identify the areas that are open. If a warming hut is part of it, then that gets considered in this restoration project. Project may complement the winter travel plan.
- Discussion as to parking at Highland Flats Snowmobile parking lot – not big enough. What's there is the total ownership of what the County has there. County has used up all space – bathrooms, parking, etc.
- Group discussion had on going up that hill on Roman Nose; it crosses private lands and other owners and we have an agreement in place, with the state, now. When we look at people moving into Snow and Myrtle...futile effort.
- Discussion as to how many go up to Roman Nose on the weekend. Can park at Ruby but that doesn't handle a lot. Landowners mad since we park on side of road. Then Falls Creek also. No grooming but

gets ridden hard. BackCountry group is going to purchase a groomer. Reason some don't go is due to condition and rough snow. If groomed, folks can get up there. How are they getting there then? Snow Creek – then pull off and unload. Ruby – can only park on road. Discussion as to actual numbers of Roman Nose snowmobilers and routes taken to get there.

Next meeting:

- First, collect input ahead of July 11 field trip for USFS. Then Forestry subcommittee field trip up there. Then schedule another meeting. Once we have all those ideas, we can look at them all. Scoping in November.
- Discussion on source water protection programs. Understanding that it might only be for private side. Also, AOP will be limited in this project. Brett Lyndaker will help with wildlife and such. 80% is in BMU, in BORZ. Orange on the map is in Myrtle BMU for the Selkirks.
- Recreation, Roads access, stream work, vegetative opportunities, white bark pine included. Since Myrtle, we now have IDL, not company ground, so we need to work together. IDL got those roads in December. Picked up most roads in Myrtle by IDL from Molpus but they still own some as well as Hancock. Need to get on same page, road wise.
- Discussion had on winter travel plan and this project. Caribou still a factor in this area as this is still in Caribou recovery zone – it is reduced. Suitable habitat matters as this is still a listed species.
- There will be a chance in Winter Travel Plan for folks to give ideas to us. Don't miss window of opportunity – where is the use and where do you want to be? Who is accessing, and how many? Meetings will be in several places including Bonners Ferry. Jeanne Higgins is our Forest Supervisor and she will decide how to launch those public meetings.

Discussion on Black Mountain Lookout, Beth Bigelow

- The Tower will go back up. Hoping to have it completed this summer. Will have a great view, basically the same.
- Offsite mitigation results in that we will repair Burton Lookout. This has been done many times but it sits in a windy area and gets a lot of damage.
- Next meeting will be scheduled at a later date.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:20 p.m.

Rhonda Vogl

KTOI Admin Director/KVRI Facilitator