

Draft Meeting Notes
Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative
January 14, 2013 - 7:00 p.m.
Board Meeting – University of Idaho Extension Office

Committee Members in Attendance:

Ron Abraham, (Alt.) Kootenai Tribe of Idaho & KVRI Co-Chair
Dan Dinning, Boundary County Commissioner & KVRI Co-Chair
David Anderson, City of Bonners Ferry Mayor & KVRI Co-Chair
Tony McDermott, Idaho Fish & Game Commission
Sandy Ashworth, Social/Cultural/Historical
Bob Blanford, Business/Industry
Ed Atkins, Jr., Corp Ag-Landowner
Jim Cadnum, (Alt) Landowner (Industrial)
Linda McFaddan, (Alt), U.S. Forest Service

Patty Perry, KVRI Facilitator, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Janet Satchwell, KVRI Recording Secretary, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho

Agency/Others in Attendance:

Kevin Greenleaf, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Chip Corsi, (Alt.) Idaho Fish & Game Commission
Dave Gray, (Alt.) Social/Cultural/Historical
Norm Merz, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho
Mac Lefebvre, Timber Supply
Lee Pinkerton, Boundary County Commissioner
Brad Smith, Idaho Conservation League
Wayne Wakkinen, Idaho Dept. of Fish & Game
Jennifer Anderson, Bonners Ferry R.D. – U.S. Forest Service

Opening:

Ron Abraham opened and welcomed everyone to the meeting; introductions followed. Ron thanked the group for all their hard work and accomplishments in 2012, and he wished the board members and participating citizens the same for 2013.

The group approved the draft meeting notes from November 19, 2012, by consensus.

The group celebrated KVRI's 11th birthday with a carrot cake and a group picture was taken of those in attendance. The KVRI entity was formed October 2001, and the first meeting was held January 2002. Patty reported we were making good strides and thanked the Board and the community for their work.

Presentation and Forestry Committee Update:

District Ranger Linda McFaddan, Bonners Ferry Ranger District, USFS, reviewed the KVRI Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP) accomplishments for FY2012. Except for a few targets the projects were completed. The FY2012 and FY2013 documents will be available on the Kootenai Tribe website www.kootenai.org at KVRI – Documents. The Forest Service 2012 annual report will be sent to the Washington D.C. office after local reviews and a copy will be made available to KVRI. Linda also reviewed the FY2013 project opportunities.

A board member asked about “Prescribed Burn – Habitat Improvement/fuels red” costs. It is at the bottom of the FY2012 accomplishment table under FY2013 target.

‘Prescribed Burn – Habitat Improvement/fuels reduction’ has a total target of 535 acres for FY2013. Of that total, 435 acres is the target for the WUI @ \$250/acre for a total cost of \$108,750. The table presented at the meeting shows only the Bethlehem Burn (110 acres WUI), because it was already accomplished for FY13. The table makes it appear that the 110 acres of burning costs \$108,750. However, that value is for ALL WUI burning for FY2013 (435 acres of the 535 acre total target). The non-WUI portion of the 535 acre target is 100 acres @ \$100/acre. The break down for FY2013 for all habitat improvement prescribed burning is:

535 Total Acre Target for Prescribed Burn – Habitat Improvement/fuels reduction:
435 acres/WUI @ \$250/acre = \$108,750
100 acres/non-WUI @ \$100/acre = \$10,000

Bethlehem (110 acres) is part of the 435 acre WUI target @ \$250/acre.

The KVRI CFLRP Accomplishments FY2012 spreadsheet will be edited to more clearly articulate the target and associated unit and total costs.

Buckhorn Burn Project – Jennifer Anderson, USFS

Jennifer presented the Proposed Buckhorn Burn Project; the PowerPoint presentation will be made available on the Kootenai Tribe website www.kootenai.org at KVRI – Documents.

Draft General Description of the Resource Area

- Deer Creek Watershed.
- 11,000 acres of resource area.
- 4,000 acres of prescribed burn areas.
- Primarily south and west aspects, at altitudes of 3,400 - 6,000 ft.
- Additional information for the Management Areas 2 (grizzly bear habitat and timber production) & 9 (land mainly not suitable for timber production – rocky ridges. It is also within a bear management area and critical habitat for lynx).
- 1931 was the last fire occurrence in this area. It was a high severity fire of about 15,000 acres, so lodge pole has regenerated in the area.

Draft Purpose and Need Objectives

- Improved wildlife habitat by increasing and improving forage for big game species and grizzly bears.
- Reduce natural fuel accumulations.
- Provide restoration opportunities for whitebark pine. The only known reproducing population of whitebark pine in the Purcell Mountains occurs in this resource area from about Buckhorn Mountain down to Keno Mountain at upper elevations and ridge lines. There are opportunities to expand the whitebark pine population in this area.

A Categorical Exclusion (CE) is a category of action excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement. A CE can be used if the action fits the specific category and it would not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the human environment (no extraordinary circumstances). The preliminary assessment of this project suggests Categorical Exclusion (6) could be used to implement the NEPA process:

- Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities that do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than 1 mile of low standard road construction. This includes but is not limited to: (iv) Prescribed burning to reduce natural fuel build-up and improve plant vigor. Scoping will guide the decision if the categorical exclusion will be used or if it goes to an environmental assessment (EA).

Draft Proposed Action

- 10 units totaling approximately 4,000 acres (within the State of Idaho it is less than 4,000 ac.).
- Prescribed fire: consume surface fuels, reduce ladder fuels, provide openings, maintain and improve big-game browse, and reduce competition for whitebark pine. The FS anticipates mixed severity fire effects with some areas of high-severity (patches of mortality to the overstory where fuels are heavier) and other areas of low-severity. Percent black within the units should be 50-80% of the total unit area.
- No road construction or changes to the existing roads.
- Snags would be felled for safety reasons only.
- The burn areas are in Idaho and Montana, but all areas are in the Bonners Ferry Ranger District. The Kootenai Forest is making plans for burning and commercial harvesting in a resource area nearby.

Burn Area Considerations

- Public safety outreach ideas.
- About 75% of the area proposed for burning is in an inventoried roadless area. Explore opportunities for utilization of wood products where there is road access – personal use wood permits prior to burning.
- Recreation use – hunting, camping, berry picking, outdoor user groups.
- Whitebark pine.
- Riparian habitat, cultural resources, old growth.
- Short-term reduction in huckleberry production – stagger burns for regeneration of berry bushes.
- Grizzly bear habitat.
- Potential smoke impacts.

Proposed Timing and Implementation

- Aerial ignition with helicopter – primary method.
- A fire line is not being proposed to contain burns – containment methods, design criteria, and monitoring by fire personnel would be used.
- Preferred burn season would be fall, spring if conducive to meeting objectives.
- Flexibility in acres burned, multiple burn seasons and years, approved burn plan, achieve project objectives.

Jennifer showed slides of other District's burns and local burns which have had successful mosaic burns.

Discussion and Comments

Will we have sufficient staffing considering the need for firefighters in other areas that have wildfire? We can't prescribe burn without adequate staff based on our burn plan. The FS is interagency so we may draw folks from the state, other districts, and rural firefighters. In order to burn, the FS must operate within the parameters defined in a Line Officer approved burn plan.

How many years do you anticipate this project taking? It depends on the burn windows, but it could be 5 - 10 years.

The regeneration of huckleberries could be 10 - 15 years - have you analyzed the effect on the animals? The FS will analyze this and burns will be staggered so that fruit-bearing huckleberry populations will be maintained on the landscape.

Asking the State Fish & Game folks - How can we best notify hunters and users of the areas to be burned? Possibly an email list they have of permit holders, notices where licenses are sold or at the State office, media, and web sites. There are only 3 major access routes in to this area so posting would be possible.

The process going ahead during the scoping is to send out letters to interest groups, receive comments, refine proposals according to comments, and go forth with our analysis. We hope to scope to the public by the end of January – comment period is for 30 days. FS specialists will analyze the proposed plan and we hope to have a decision late May – June.

The forestry sub-committee recommendation was for the KVRI Board to approve this CFLRP habitat burn project. A presentation will also be given to the Idaho Roadless Commission. The KVRI Board concurs with the FS moving ahead with this CFLRP projects.

Committee Updates:

Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) Committee – Patty Perry

Bob Steed, DEQ, pulled together the citizen monitoring statistics for the past 5 years. He feels Long Canyon will be recognized as a reference stream in the next TMDL document and is moving ahead with potential national vegetation TMDL's. DEQ is looking at how they can make their TMDL's more efficient from beginning to end, so the committee will go back and look at prior plans.

We will be developing a monitoring strategy for our local streams to confirm the data is complete.

Correspondence:

Idaho Restoration Partnership Collaborative group will host a meeting in Boise which involves reports, learning opportunities, and sharing of projects in Idaho. Dave, Patty, and Ron will attend.

The Libby Dam Operation 2012 fact sheet with the information from the meeting held in Bonners Ferry.

The USFWS Caribou Decision which Patty sent out by email.

Beth Reinhart, Corps of Engineers, will be in the area for information concerning 404 permitting, and to assist with "after an incident process permits".

Closing Comments/Meeting Announcements:

The next KVRI meeting will be held February 11, 2013, (early due to the holiday) at the Boundary County Extension Office at 7:00 p.m.

Other upcoming meetings are:

Forestry Sub-committee, January 30th, 9 a.m. at the Extension Office (Kreist)

Wildlife-Auto Collision (WAC) committee, January 30th, 1 p.m. at the Extension Office

Forestry Sub-committee, February 15th, 8:30 a.m. at the KTOI (Hell Roaring)

Word was sent from Ben Conard, USFWS, that a wolverine listing proposal should come out for public comment at the end of this month. Discussion was held concerning Michael Lucid's, IDFG wolverine study that is pending. Any questions may be addressed to Ben.

Tony McDermott advised he attended the Western Association of Wildlife Agency meeting. He met with the Regional Supervisors and their staff out of Denver and Portland. The Deputy Supervisor from Portland offered to send someone from the Portland office, or Brian Kelly the state representative from Boise, to discuss the process that was used in making the Caribou decision and lowering the acreage to 30,000 acres. They could give a presentation if KVRI is interested.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:40 p.m.

Janet Satchwell, Secretary