

Lower Kootenai River Watershed Proposal Overview

Idaho Panhandle National Forests and the Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative

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Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program

- Created under Title IV of the Omnibus Public Land Management Act of 2009
- The program is designed to encourage science-based restoration on high priority landscapes
- The Secretary of Agriculture can request up to \$40 million annually for fiscal years 2009-2019
- Up to \$4 million can be awarded to any one project on an annual basis. The funding can be used for up to 50% of the costs associated with restoration treatments and monitoring.
- Up to two projects per region and ten projects nationally can be funded on an annual basis.

A Collaborative Approach to Restoration

Building on ten years of collaborative work, the Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative (KVRI) and the Idaho Panhandle National Forests have developed a comprehensive restoration proposal with broad benefits across the lower Kootenai River watershed. The proposal has been submitted for funding through the Collaborative Forest Landscape Restoration Program (CFLRP).

The proposal benefits from the best available science and active participation from a broad spectrum of local communities, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, state and federal agencies, industry representatives, and conservation groups. This strong foundation has created a proposal that will restore and maintain ecological health within the 800,000 acre lower Kootenai River watershed.

The lower Kootenai River watershed has been the focus of successful “all lands” restoration efforts for more than 10 years. Partners with KVRI and the Forest Service have collaboratively developed and implemented projects ranging from lower order watershed restoration, to community wildfire protection, to fisheries and water quality improvement.

The lower Kootenai River watershed was chosen for the CFLRP proposal because the restoration needs are evident, and because there is broad support for the needed work. The Kootenai Tribe, federal and state assessments have identified the area as a high priority for restoration and the track record of successful collaboration on natural resource issues bolsters the likelihood of future success.

If funded, restoration activities are ready to implement immediately. Road decommissioning, mechanical fuels reduction, stream improvements, invasive plant treatments, and biomass utilization opportunities are already planned and approved in accordance with National Environmental Policy Act procedures.



The diversity of the lower Kootenai River Valley ranges from high alpine peaks to riparian and peat lands below.

Proposal Goals

1. Ensure landscapes are diverse and resilient to climactic changes and other natural and unique stresses.
2. Ecosystem benefits are identified, maintained and enhanced.
3. Forest lands with the highest benefits are identified, protected and enhanced.
4. Forest ecosystems are resilient to human activities.
5. Forest-based wood products markets are economically vibrant and sustainable.

The Lower Kootenai River Watershed Restoration Proposal builds on KVRI's ten years of collaborative success across all jurisdictions in the Kootenai Valley.

The Landscape

The lower Kootenai River watershed encompasses 800,000 acres in Boundary County, including more than 400,000 acres of the Idaho Panhandle National Forests. This unique area extends from the high crest of the rugged Selkirk Mountains to the Cabinet and Purcell Mountains that straddle Idaho and Montana. It is renowned for its remote forest settings and its steep, high relief watersheds that drain out of the Selkirks into the low elevation Kootenai River Valley, and then flow north toward Kootenay Lake in Canada. Visitors from around the world come to this area to enjoy the rugged beauty and the diversity of wildlife including many threatened and endangered species such as caribou, grizzly bear, burbot, bull trout and lynx. This is one of the very few landscapes in the contiguous United States where virtually all of the

wildlife species that were present at the time of Columbus are still present.

Despite the beauty and unique nature of the landscape decades of fire suppression, insects, disease and past timber management practices have contributed to reduced forest health and greater vulnerability to natural and human disturbances. Throughout the landscape there are ample opportunities to improve forest ecosystem function through improved forest composition, restored watershed function, and increased quality wildlife habitat.

The Lower Kootenai River Watershed Restoration Proposal recognizes the



Following a wildfire in the Bonners Ferry municipal watershed, KVRI and the Forest Service are working closely on a number of forest and watershed restoration efforts.

current forest conditions and the restoration opportunities that exist. Based on the past ten years of collaborative success in restoration across all jurisdictions in the Kootenai Valley, this proposal involves a strategy to accomplish widespread improvements to ecosystem health and function throughout the lower Kootenai River Valley next ten years.

The People

Successful ecological restoration on the landscape must also improve social and economic conditions for the people and communities within the lower Kootenai River watershed. The rich human history of the area includes the ancient presence of the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, pioneers, boom towns and vast natural resources. In the early 1800s the area was referred to by locals as the "Nile of the North" due to the wealth of natural resources, transportation and economic opportunities that existed there. Times have changed

however, and today the unemployment rate in Boundary County is 16.2%, one of the highest in the nation. This situation did not develop overnight, although it has been exacerbated by the recent financial downturn.

The proud citizens of the region have strong cultural ties to the landscape. But due to failing economies and a decline in resource management on federal land, traditional timber, mining and agricultural job markets have declined. Opportunities exist, however, to create resource-based jobs and stimulate economic

growth and community stability through restoration work. Providing necessary infrastructure, several manufacturing facilities exist in and near the proposal area that can process the material created through forest management. Additional economic growth will result from the new workforce created to implement ecological restoration activities. Finally, improved ecological conditions will benefit local economies as new recreation opportunities are discovered and wildfire protection costs are reduced.

The Benefits

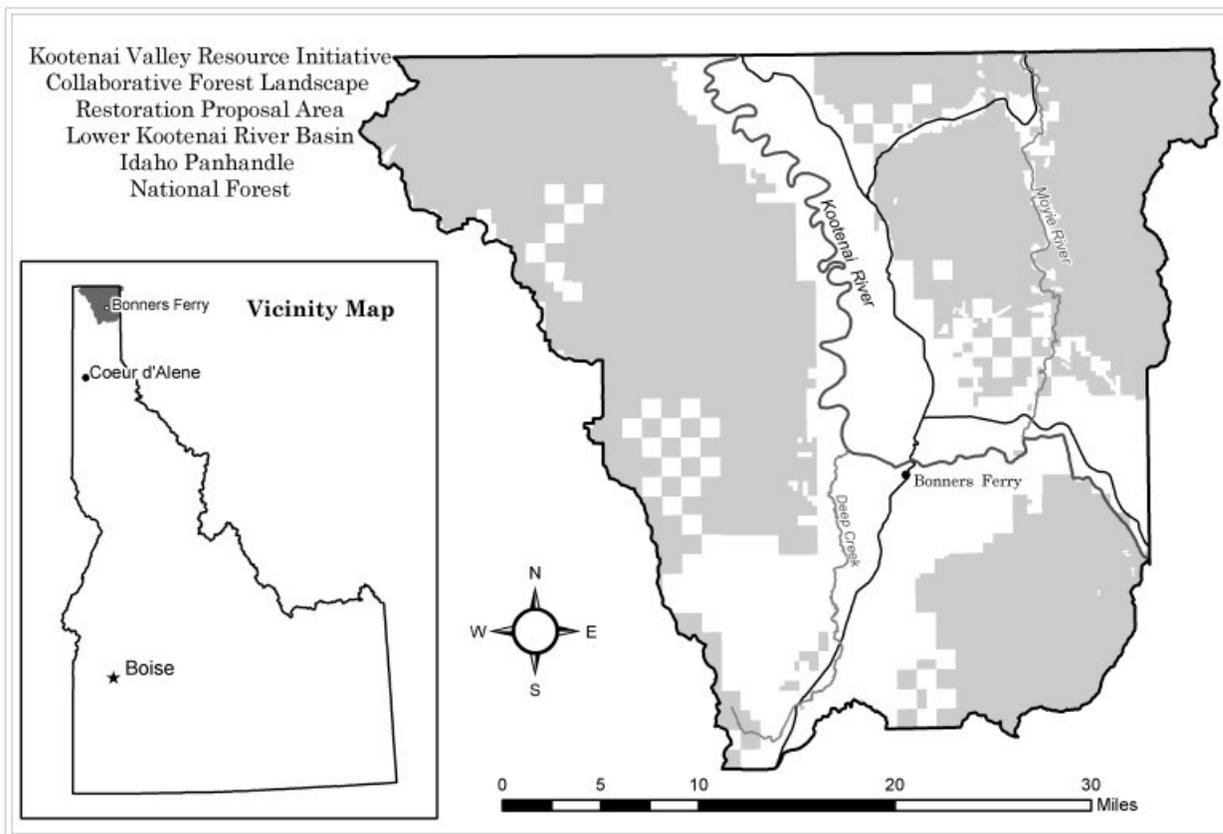
Implementation of the proposal will:

- Reduce the risk of unwanted wildland fire on the landscape.
- Increase the resilience of the landscape to the effects of unwanted wildland fire in the event that such a fire occurs.
- Increase the resilience of the forested landscape to insect and disease epidemics.
- Protect and enhance fish and wildlife habitat.
- Increase the number of watersheds that are in fully functional hydrologic condition.
- Provide high-quality outdoor recreational opportunities.
- Reduce the impacts from invasive species.
- Provide the opportunity for the utilization of a variety of wood products; including but not limited to lumber, biomass and alternative energy sources.



Road decommissioning, prescribed fire and vegetative treatments all combine to ensure broad benefits for the watershed, forest health and wildlife including threatened and endangered species.

Lower Kootenai River Watershed Restoration Proposal Area



CONTACTS



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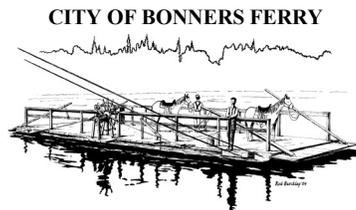
The Collaborative

The Kootenai Valley was built by independent people who forged a living from the vast natural resources they found in the area. However, in the recent past, local industry began to fail as did ecological and forest health. To respond to these challenges, in 2001 the Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative (KVRI) was formed under a joint powers agreement between the Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, Boundary County, ID and the City of Bonners Ferry, ID. KVRI's mission is to help improve coordination, integration and implementation of existing local, state and federal programs that can effectively maintain, enhance and restore the social, cultural and natural resource bases in the broader community.

While KVRI is continuously reaching out to expand its partnership and collaborative base, currently the group is comprised of 11 members and more than 20 partner organizations representing tribal government, local government, private citizens, federal and state agencies, conservation and

environmental groups, local business and industry and research entities. KVRI is guided by three co-chairs; one from The Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, one from Boundary County and one from the City of Bonners Ferry. KVRI serves as the primary forum for a broad range of issue and utilizes a number of subcommittees (range of 10-30 members). The Initiative's core members function as a Board which meets monthly and makes decisions by consensus. The subcommittees coordinate projects and multi-party monitoring and do the bulk of the group's technical work.

Together with its partners, KVRI has worked for over ten years on landscape strategy development addressing grizzly bear conservation, fisheries recovery, water quality, wetlands and riparian conservation, wildfire protection and forest restoration. This broad view of ecological health makes KVRI one of the first collaborative groups in the nation to embrace an "all lands" approach.



The Members

Conservation Interests

- The Nature Conservancy
- Vital Ground Foundation
- Pheasants Forever
- Kootenai Valley Sportsman
- Panhandle Lakes RC&D
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation

Quality

- Boundary Soil Conservation District
- Governor's Office of Species Conservation

Tribal Government

- Kootenai Tribe of Idaho

Federal

Government

- USDA Forest Service
- US Environmental Protection Agency
- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- US Bureau of Land Management
- US Army Corps of Engineers
- Office of US Senator Mike Crapo
- Office of US Senator Jim Risch

State and Local Government

- City of Bonners Ferry
- Boundary County
- Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game
- Idaho Fish and Game Commission
- Idaho Dept. of Lands
- Idaho Dept. of Environmental

- Office of US Representative Raul Labrador

Local and Private Interests

- Idaho Forest Group
- Elk Mountain Farms
- Jim Cadnum (Industrial land owner)

