

Draft Meeting Notes

Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative

July 16, 2012 – 7:00 p.m., University of Idaho – Boundary County Extension Office

Bonnars Ferry, Idaho

Committee Members in Attendance:

Dan Dinning, Boundary County Commissioner & KVRI Co-Chair

Jennifer Porter, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho & KVRI Co-Chair

Dave Anderson, City of Bonners Ferry & KVRI Co-Chair

Bob Blanford, Business/Industry

Jim Cadnum, (alt.) Industrial Forest

Don Allenberg, (alt.) Corporate Ag

Sandy Ashworth, Social/Cultural/Historical

Linda McFaddan, (alt.) U.S. Forest Service – Idaho Panhandle National Forest

Chip Corsi, (alt.) Idaho Department of Fish & Game

Patty Perry, KVRI Facilitator, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho

Tracy Shottanana, (alt.) KVRI Recording Secretary, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho

Agency/Others in Attendance:

Sue Ireland, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho

Aaron Calkins, U.S. Congressman Raul Labrador

Sid Smith, Senator Jim Risch

Kurt Pavlat, BLM

Alan Flory, Community Member

Dave Gray, (alt.) Social/Cultural/Historical

Colet Allen, Private Citizen

Greg Hoffman, USACE

Opening:

Dave Anderson welcomed everyone to the meeting; introductions followed.

The group approved draft minutes of June 18th, 2012 meeting by consensus.

Presentations:

Kootenai River Habitat Project Update --- Sue Ireland, KTOI

Over the last 100 years there have been a lot of changes to the Kootenai Basin and those changes have affected the fish and wildlife resources that historically were used by the Tribe and local community.

Although Libby Dam provides great benefits to the community for flood control and power, it also affects fish and wildlife habitat which is the purpose of this component of the Tribe's Kootenai River Habitat Restoration Project (KRHRP). We also implement in collaboration with many agency community partners, an aquaculture program, a nutrient restoration program, but we will focus on the KRHRP component. The project has been set up based on the physical characteristics of the Kootenai Valley and the different reaches. Starting in what is referred to as the Braided Reach which is downstream of the Canyon Reach near the Moyie River. Downstream of the Moyie is the Braided Reach, the Straight Reach is located here in town that has all the infrastructure and is the part of the river that is straight then takes the bend to head north back to Canada where the Meander Reaches are located. The Tribe has completed the 2009 KRHRP Master Plan based on technical analysis of a large amount of data gathered and work that we have done with USGS and others to provide us with basic information needed to develop these habitat restoration strategies. It has the frame work and identifies different restoration treatments in each of these reaches that could address things that are limiting the species that we are trying to help like sturgeon, burbot, kokanee, bull trout, westslope cutthroat, and redband rainbow. The Tribe has a website < restoringthekootenai.org > which has a good deal of information on the project. Last year began phase 1A of the project to address the river banks that are eroding, crumbling in, contributing sediment, and no real habitat. What the Tribe did was isolate that side channel, rebuild it and restore it so it could start creating a floodplain and create fish habitat. Sue provided a picture of the project site this spring before the high flow, currently the site is under water. Moving forward to the Phase 1B slightly downstream near Crossport, where we did a "lasagna" willow type planting, the restoration treatment here was to build the bank out using large wood and do layered plantings, sod mats that have willows in between each of them and then rock at the bottom of the levee structure, and then wood structures which will create flood plain. We have projects planned for the next 5 or so years, Straight Reach, Bonners Ferry Islands (area just upstream of the Hwy 95 bridge) where we are looking to create habitat and install large wood to create roughness elements out in the channel. The North Side Channels and the Upper Meander projects are the two projects that we are doing this year.

Sue briefly described the 2012 projects.

The North Side Channels (three channels) may be seen to the right while driving up the north hill with an approximately 80 year old (pre Libby Dam) cottonwood stand. Basically, the only vegetation on the stream bank of the islands is reed canarygrass. We want to create some more aquatic habitat complexity using the large wood for some structures, address the invasive weeds and the grazing management. Currently it is just a sedimented channel with reed canarygrass on the side which does not create habitat for fish or aquatic insects that feed the fish. The project will create a flood plain and diversity by adding large wood, grading some surfaces, and adding some plantings. This project would improve fish habitat and the food chain.

We want to provide information as to the purpose of the projects so that people will understand it when they see the construction activities taking place. We will need to de-water the side channels so they will be isolated from the river by a temporary dam. There will be some sediment created in the river that will be visible.

The Upper Meander project is upstream of the North Side Channels Project. Riprap was installed in the 70's to protect the banks, but now the river has eroded behind the riprap, there is no good habitat in this area and the riprap in the river has caused the river to flow up against the bank. The concept is to use the "fin shaped structures" to direct the flow and create habitat. This will help protect the bank along with creating fish habitat in river, and we will be meeting some of the conditions called for in the Sturgeon Biological Opinion for depth, velocity, and substrate. We will also be able to create habitat for trout. We will be grading the banks back to about a 4:1 slope and the landowner has agreed to do a setback so he will not be grazing or farming up to the river bank so as to protect this area as a riparian buffer.

The "fin-shaped" structure will have wooden piles driven into the river, creating a pool, hydraulic complexity, an eddy recirculation zone, and rock and soil incorporated into the structure. After a while it is designed to be part of the flood plain and sediment will deposit as a natural process. The piles will be from 75 to 30 and 20 feet long. You may hear the pile driving and see the long poles being brought through town. The riprap will be recovered and used in other areas of the project, and the types of vegetation to be used will be native. There will be three structures used in this Upper Meander Bend project. These two projects will occur at the same time and the general contractor is Goodfellow Bros, Inc.

We are attempting to use this pool/ladder concept in the Braided Reach because it is so shallow, and the depth is not needed in the whole entire reach. This will also create habitat that other species would benefit from too.

In 2013, we are evaluating some smaller projects in the Braided Reach doing some extensions to the projects that we did last year, as well potentially building more "fin-shaped" structures, and along with that working in coordination with our agency partners to implement a substrate improvement project for sturgeon spawning in the existing spawning area at Shorty's Island downstream of Bonners Ferry. There were some project concerns among sturgeon managers about the scale and sustainability of the a Corps proposed substrate enhancement project, so a pilot test project in the river will take place where the sturgeons spawn, to help answer some feasibility questions. If the test area is successful, the project will proceed as a scaled down version from the original plan. The Corps had done some outreach with the City and County talking about the impact to the roads concerning all the truck loads of rock that would be hauled through, so this project has been scaled down a lot due to some of the feasibility concerns. It will be a lot less rock and less impact on the local roads than initially discussed.

In 2014 in the Straight Reach we are looking at some of the pool forming structures. We will see how the pools work that will be built this year on the Upper Meander project. We're hypothesizing how the first pools are going to work so by testing the 2012 pools we can refine the design if necessary. We have more work sessions planned with our biologists, design team, and advisors in the next couple months to discuss projects for 2013 and beyond and based on those discussions we will be coordinating with the city, county and private landowners. Greg Hoffman inquired about flow requests for 2013 and 2014. To

do these structures we cannot isolate the work area as far as de-watering, this project has to be worked in-the-wet so the lower the flow the better it is. We're going to learn a lot this year on what it will take.

For projects like this it takes coordination and the help and assistance of so many different entities and agencies and Sue wanted to emphasize how the Tribe appreciates the support and assistance. This completes the power point presentation.

Sue showed a YouTube video, Putting Fish Back in the Rivers, made by the BPA during last year's construction season. The Kootenai River White Sturgeon Recovery video may be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvolyngpFgc> A Goodfellow Brothers presentation of photos taken during last year's project construction was also shown.

A handout of project descriptions was made available along with a handout about the new hatchery plans and hatchery upgrades for the Native Fish Conservation Aquaculture Program. Shawn Young, KTOI biologist, will give KVRI an update on the Tribe's burbot releases. The visitor's center would like to link the YouTube presentation and requested brochures for their use. Linda suggested a field trip be planned to the site. Chip commended the Tribe's KRHRP and aquaculture program and the ecosystem restoration activities along with the staff and partner agencies for all their work in the programs. Sue was asked about how many other projects like this have been tried with endangered species. She said that a variety of projects are done on a small scale to help restore habitat but the Tribe's KRHRP is large-scale and is multifaceted in coordination efforts and work. The Kootenai River is a huge system, there is a lot that has changed, and there is a whole different way that physical processes work now in the river based on the fact that there are dikes and dams. The process has required large amounts of data and information just to get started and to understand the system. Our science advisers have commented on how unique and large scale the KRHRP is.

Dan advised from the County's perspective they appreciate the community outreach, it is not a small task. Alan mentioned that understanding the objectives and keeping an open mind allows you see that this is a cool project. Patty inquired about the best practices in outreach that will disseminate factual information and not lead to a lot of surmising. She was thinking a four page booklet distributed with the Ad Pak would get more information in to the community before the work starts so that people are aware of this year's efforts; what the project is about, what's at the end and all the details in the middle that will explain this year's work. Sediment in the river will draw attention so 'things to expect' during the construction would be helpful information, and that the negative short term impacts outweigh the long term benefits. It was questioned if handouts and viewing of the dvd would be feasible for the fair. Patty and Sue had looked in to it but it requires a lot of hands on time, there will be a handout available. A lot of local folks use the visitor's center and displays could be set up in the library so information could be made available at those locations. Greg Hoffman mentioned that USFWS has provided funding to produce a documentary about sturgeon recovery efforts. Facebook posts and interviews with JoJo Baker on the radio would be good sources of media to use. Patty thanked the group for the ideas.

Libby Dam Update --- Greg Hoffman, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Greg's presentation covered spring and summer flows, what we saw and why we saw it, and what will occur into the rest of the summer and fall. The final June inflow forecast called for 114% of average inflow into the reservoir between April and August; the actual April through August inflow is now projected to be 151% of average. The map of precipitation in the northwest shows some areas receiving 400% of normal precipitation in the month of June, but generally it was between 200-400%. This year's record rain fall of 5.25 inches broke the previous record set in 1985. The records were not just set in Bonners Ferry but the entire basin.

This is the third year of the planned three years of spill testing in response to requirements in the USFWS Biological Opinion for Kootenai River white sturgeon. The spill test ended June 16th, but spill for flood control purposes started again on June 20th. Agricultural damages have occurred due to the high water table (Greg was showing a picture from the District 2 area).

The Canadian entities allowed the Corps to surcharge the reservoir up to an additional 2 feet above full pool, which allowed the Corps to not have to pass inflow, which at the time would have been 65,000 cfs (causing even higher stages at Bonners Ferry). Kootenay Lake saw its highest elevation since 1974 at 1753.5; Kootenay Lake backwater extends upriver to Bonners Ferry and beyond.

The normal minimum flow from Libby Dam in September is 6,000 cfs (bull trout minimum), and the normal target reservoir elevation for the end of September is 2,449'. However, given the 151% of normal water supply, the regional water management forum (TMT) agreed to allow Libby Dam to not target 2,449' (which would have meant higher flows through August); essentially what will occur through the remainder of July and August is a gradual decrease in flows towards 8,000 cfs at the end of August, and then holding 8,000 cfs through September.

Greg displayed graphs that showed what the flow would have been if the dam was not in place and it would have peaked out at 99,000 cfs. Flood stage is 1764 and it would have peaked today at 1775.5.

Discussion was held on the benefit of Libby Dam and the possibility of publishing the graphs and history of the floods in the paper. Some of the levees are in good shape while others are not, as seen from a boat trip on the river this past week.

Current conditions:

Koocanusa is over full - Bonners Ferry is above flood stage - Kootenay Lake is still over full.

The dam is still spilling.

Committee Updates:

CFLRP Projects – Linda McFadden

Linda has a handout in the packet showing how they are progressing on the projects to be accomplished. The Meadowcreek timber sale was purchased by Foust, a local contractor. East Fork stewardship sale closes September 5 with the award shortly after that. See the handout for specific descriptions of reforestation, pre-commercial thinning, prescribed burn, invasive weed management, culvert upgrades, and road work. Local contractors are given point preference.

At the end of July another forestry meeting will be set to go over the monitoring strategy that Shannon is developing.

TMDL – Patty Perry and Dan Dinning

The temporary monitors from DQ are placed and gathering temperature data. Dan advised that the WAK committee met with Marcel from Western Transportation Institute. The institute has looked at all the crash data from the south county line by Elmira to Bonners Ferry, and from Bonners Ferry north to the Canadian border and from Bonners Ferry via Hwy 2 east to the Montana line. They have identified hot spots (white tail deer are the most common interaction) and he can make recommendations for technology that is available and which may help in mitigating wildlife/auto interactions. Marcel does not tell us what we should implement. The discussion is what we can do to help reduce those interactions and not create a bigger barrier that the highway would cause for the linkage of critters moving back and forth. Marcel will return possibly in September to give a presentation and then submit the information to the committee. Wildlife overpasses are more effective (than underpasses) and are available in plastic, metal or concrete.

New Business:

Renee, Sandy, and Patty will meet to plan the fair booth. KVRI is again partnering with the Soil Conservation District to share a booth. If okay with the group our August meeting will be held on the 13th to put up the booth and then have dinner together as planned.

Correspondence:

Patty advised that Tony sent a note to Dan and Chip asking them to thank all the folks who were involved with making the Idaho Fish and Game Commission meeting a positive experience. A field trip at the tank farm (the nutrient site) and the float trip down the Moyie was another first class event. He is off to Hawaii to attend the annual meeting of the Western Association Conference to discuss caribou and the Selkirk situation and the grizzly bear delistings in the Continental Divide with the Fish and Wildlife Leadership Group.

As a follow up to our last meeting Chip mentioned that the Idaho Fish and Game Commission was coming to Bonners Ferry for the first time in many years in early July and that it would be an opportunity for KVRI and the Sportsman's Club to host them and visit with them about who we are and what we do. Patty called the Sportsman's Club and John Meadows and along with his partners they were more than helpful to help put together a bbq out at the refuge on Thursday night. It was fun and we welcomed the group to the area. The Commission said great things about the visit and the folks attending were a different slate than who had attended a meeting here in '03. The commissioner had never been north of Sandpoint in spite of the fact that he was born and raised in Idaho. We had a nice visit with the commission and it was good to have the interaction of the local groups, plus it allowed the commission members to see parts of the state that not everyone sees. They sent an email asking for our joint powers agreement, how we were formed, what we do, and why it works. Tony has talked KVRI up quite a bit with his fellow commissioners and that we are a model of collaboration.

Chip advised that on August 24-26 the Wildlife Summit will be held with Idaho folks of different stripes coming together to get different points of view on where do we go with wildlife management conservation activities across the state. What we know from survey work is that 90% of Idahoans say that they have some interest in wildlife and we also know that those interests do not always line up with each other. We hope this to be the kick off to engage the public on where the common ground is, where our agency as the wildlife management agency in the state can take it, and depending on where it goes how can we make it work. We are facing funding issues that all state agencies are facing. As we traditionally relied on hunting and fishing revenues to fund us, and that the funding source is drying up relative to the demands that the non-hunting and fishing publics is seeking. We will hold this event at NIC and hopefully we'll have a decent turnout (it will be streamed on the internet). We are taking reservations if you'd like to be involved. The NIC meeting conflicts with the North Idaho Fair. In the past there was one central gathering that was held in Boise (five years ago) and it was very successful. This will be a different approach so we'll see how it goes. Scheduling is always a problem during the summer with vacations and fairs, hunt seasons during the fall, and winter poses travel problems. Patty requested an agenda for the group so they could better decide how to participate.

Please submit any fair booth ideas to Patty.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting will be held on August 13, 2012 at the Boundary County Fairgrounds slab at 5:30 p.m. with dinner to follow; the meeting was adjourned.