



www.idahoconservation.org

Idaho Conservation League

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208.345.6933



Leslie Weldon, Regional Forester
Northern Region Office
USDA Forest Service
P.O. Box 7669
Missoula, MT 59807

Steven Ellis, Idaho State Director
Bureau of Land Mgmt.
1387 S. Vinnell Way
Boise, Idaho 83709

January 21, 2011

RE: The Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative

Dear Ms. Weldon and Mr. Ellis,

We are writing with regards to the Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative (KVRI), a local collaborative group in Bonners Ferry, ID. As you may know, the KVRI meets regularly and works to improve coordination of local, state, federal and Tribal programs in Boundary County. Recognizing that KVRI has improved dialogue around resource management issues in the region, an important element of the community and affected interests are not represented by KVRI.

KVRI can, and has been described as being inclusive of a broad range of interests, yet it does not include any conservation group representatives who work on public lands issues. Conservationists committed to public lands are well represented in the region and fully engaged in many issues of interest to KVRI. It is that concern that leads to this letter.

Our organizations represent thousands of members and supporters in the region, as well as many more outside the region who have a sincere and vested interest in the management of public lands and resources. In particular, our organizations have demonstrated a long-established dedication to the protection of habitat, forests, streams and rivers within Boundary County and the region. For decades, we have participated in public processes with your respective agencies and have shown a sincere willingness to work toward common-sense solutions that protect the environment.

Until 2007, the Idaho Conservation League did serve on the KVRI. In 2007, amendments to the bylaws were enacted without the benefit of consensus

support that relegated committee members to an advisory role. These changes removed the decision-making authority from the KVRI membership, placing this authority solely in the hands of the KVRI permanent leadership (Kootenai Tribe, Boundary County and City of Bonners Ferry). As a result of these changes, the Idaho Conservation League resigned from the collaborative.

We recognize the value of collaborative decision-making processes and are no strangers to these types of forums. We participate in efforts where we have a role in the decision-making procedure. Because KVRI members only serve in an advisory capacity to the permanent chairs of the committee, who can accept or dismiss any recommendations, we continue to have concerns with the group's representation of collaborative decision-making.

We recognize that KVRI has a constructive role to play with issues of concern to the region and that as you gather public input on proposals or issues under your purview, their input is valued. Our concern is that KVRI has been represented as including a broad conservation perspective and we want to make clear that to the extent it does, it is insufficient to represent many groups and individuals with valid interests.

For many reasons, we believe local voices need to be heard as we craft enduring policies that impact our natural resources, quality of life, and the landscapes we all care deeply about. We hope you will consider our concerns when you are presented with recommendations, guidance or suggestions from the KVRI.

Please feel free to contact any of us to discuss questions or concerns you may have.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Rick Johnson', with a large, stylized initial 'R' and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rick Johnson, Executive Director
Idaho Conservation League
Boise, ID
(208) 345-6933 ext. 19

Isl Mike Petersen

Mike Petersen, Executive Director
The Lands Council
Spokane, WA
(509) 838-4912

Isl Terry Harris

Terry Harris, Executive Director
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(208) 667-9093

Isl Jerry Pavia

Jerry Pavia, Board Member
Boundary Backpackers
Bonners Ferry, ID
(208) 267-7374

cc: Boundary County Commissioners, Kootenai Tribal Council Chair Jennifer Porter, Mayor Dave Anderson, Senators Mike Crapo and Jim Risch, Representative Raul Labrador, Ranotta McNair (IPNF), Cal Groen (IDFG), Brian Kelly (USFWS)