

Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative
October 25, 2017 10:00 a.m.
KVRI CFLR Review-Site Visit-Washington Office
Kootenai Tribal Office

Board Members in Attendance:

David Sims, Mayor, City of Bonners Ferry & KVRI Co-chair
Dan Dinning, Boundary County Commissioner & KVRI Co-chair
Gary Aitken Jr., Kootenai Tribe of Idaho & KVRI Co-chair
Sandy Ashworth, Social/Cultural/Historical Interests
Mary Farnsworth, US Forest Service-Idaho Panhandle National Forest (IPNF), Forest Supervisor
Dave Wattenbarger, Boundary Soil Conservation District/Ag Landowner
Patty Perry, KVRI Facilitator & KTOI
Sherrie Cossairt, KVRI Recording Secretary & KTOI
Kevin Knauth, (Alt.) US Forest Service (USFS), Bonners Ferry Ranger District
Angela Cooper, (Alt.) Kootenai Tribe of Idaho & KVRI Co-chair
Tim Dougherty, (Alt. Business/Industry) Idaho Forest Group (field trip only)

Agency/Others in Attendance:

Karen Roetter, Senator Mike Crapo's office
Sid Smith, Senator Jim Risch's office
Judy Morbeck, Congressman Raul Labrador's office
Doug Nishek, US Forest Service (USFS), Bonners Ferry Ranger District
Meghan Oswald, US Forest Service, Region 1, CFLR Coordinator
Jody Pliley, US Forest Service, Idaho Panhandle National Forest (IPNF)
Ed Koberstein, US Forest Service, Bonners Ferry Ranger District
Eric Nave, Idaho Forest Group (IFG)
Allen Rowley, US Forest Service, Washington Office
Matt Staudacher, US Forest Service, Idaho Panhandle National Forest (IPNF)
Harvey Hergett, US Forest Service, Regional Office, Region 1
Erin Swiader, US Forest Service, Regional Office, Region 1
Brooke Bowman, US Forest Service, Idaho Panhandle National Forest (IPNF)
Jackie Berenyi, US Forest Service, Idaho Panhandle National Forest (IPNF)
Anita Hanson, US Forest Service, Bonners Ferry Ranger District
Glen Casamassa, US Forest Service, Washington Office
Jessica Robertson, US Forest Service, Washington Office, CFLR Coordinator
Linda Hoglan, US Forest Service, Regional Office, Region 1, Budget Director
Brandon Glaza, US Forest Service, Bonners Ferry Ranger District

Opening:

Patty Perry opened and welcomed everyone to the meeting; introductions followed.

Patty invited each of the KVRI Co-chairs, Gary Aitken Jr., David Sims and Dan Dinning, to explain their interest in KVRI and why they have taken on the challenge and how it fits with what they do in their regular day jobs.

Gary Aitken, Jr., Kootenai Tribal Chairman, Co-Chair of KVRI

Gary welcomed the group in his native language and stated that he was very pleased to represent our territory. The Kootenai, Ktunaxa, have been in this valley since time immemorial. The territory stretches from Lake Pend Oreille, to Washington, Montana and into British Columbia. We are proud of our covenant with the Creator. We were told when we were placed here, as long as we took care of this land it would take care of us. It is something we hold dear and take very seriously. This covenant with the Creator has always been a part of us and a part of our mission. We are the southern band of Ktunaxa, 5 in Canada, 1 in Montana and 1 here. We are the stubborn ones who wouldn't leave. The land is very dear to us. It means so much to take part in the restoration.

As natives we have a very holistic mindset. It's a ridgetop to ridgetop approach. We are doing extensive restoration work with the Kootenai River White Sturgeon and Burbot and various species from the river. But ultimately we realize we can't just focus on one species and make it work. We need to include everything. It is said "When you touch one single strand of a web it effects the entire web." and that is how we look at the whole world. We have a small version of it here, from the forest to the river. This is our community and it always has been our community. We are grateful and happy to help nurture it.

It wasn't always as smooth as it is today. We have come a long way. There used to be the need for security guards whenever agencies met together. And anything the Tribe wanted to do there was backlash. But somewhere along the line we decided it was a lot easier to go around or over the brick wall then try to go through it. The way to do that was to work with people, confront the ideas; the notions people had and get everything out on the table. To figure out that we had more in common than we had differences. That was the beginning of realizing how to work together. The City and the County came to the same conclusion around the same time. They reached out to us and we started working together.

In 2001 the Tribe began to work on the Collaborative. It seemed so innovative at the time. Although it's been a long road it's been a beautiful struggle. We are not always going to agree and we know that, but we are going to find what we can agree on and get things done. That has been the spirit of this collaboration from the beginning. The best part about it is it is not just with forestry but we incorporate every aspect of the community. Everyone has a say, get their needs heard and needs met.

We are not the first collaborative. We have learned from those before us, created our own path and forged our way ahead. We are proud to offer that blueprint as best we can, although we caution and let people know that it doesn't happen overnight; you have to put in the work, communicate, and let everyone be involved to get those things on the table to move forward.

When you get the community involved and everyone has their say you realize the differences aren't there as much as the similarities. You are able to find what to work on to move forward. KVRI has been tremendous and it's something the Tribe is really proud to be a part of. It helps every aspect of what we do from fisheries to economics. It helps us keep the covenant which is the utmost importance to us.

David Sims Mayor of the City of Bonners Ferry & KVRI Co-Chair

The City of Bonners Ferry is very proud to be involved in the KVRI Collaborative. I, too, remember those times when natural resources issues were really contentious and they were non-productive. KVRI really

gives us a platform to move things ahead in a productive way. Natural resources are really important to all the citizens of this community; the National Forest and State Forest, Forest access, wildlife habitat, water quality, and economic benefits of the forest. And they are all addressed by the KVRI collaborative.

Water quality is an important issue for the City of Bonners Ferry as well. Our primary source of water is the Myrtle Creek drainage. The work KVRI does on water quality and the Kootenai River is very important to us. The work the Tribe does on the Kootenai River is amazing. The Kootenai River is also an alternate water source for the City of Bonners Ferry for drinking water. We also have an EPA discharge permit and we discharge our waste water into the river. We are really pleased to be able to be involved in KVRI and we appreciate the work that the Forest Service does with KVRI as well.

Dan Dinning, County Commissioner Chairman and KVRI Co-chair

David, Gary, and I have a genuine care for this community. Gary touched on it; timber wars, the fighting, and armed security had to come here whenever a managing agency, state or federal, came to our community to have a public meeting. It was extremely contentious. Nothing got done because of the feuding. The Governments got caught up in it. The managing agencies would come and meet with the City, the County and the Tribe separately and each of us would hear something different. We would then make decisions without communicating with each other and that would put us at odds.

The benefit of KVRI is that we all hear the same thing, at the same time in the same place. Other than agency staff transfers, we have all but one or two of the original members of the Collaborative still sitting at the table. That is unheard of. We have become the sounding board for the community and that was a big step. We hold public meetings on behalf of agencies. The community trusts us.

We are not a one interest collaborative. It's much more than that. For us to deal with anything in the forest or the waters is dealing with one species or another every time. Along with Forestry issues we are also involved in Grizzly Bear, Burbot, and Sturgeon etc. All of them have an impact on what we do.

We have a Tribe that is totally committed to this community. No other collaborative has a Native American tribe that engages as this one does. Their staff, the facilitator, biologists, etc., are all available to help this Collaborative help this community. They will go to court on behalf of this community and have done it many times. When we get to the point that the City, County and Tribe all agree...that is powerful.

With the funding we have received from CFLR we have done wonderful work. It shows we have met targets and exceeded them. We are the best investment the Forest Service can make. We are a unique community and a unique collaborative.

Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative Presentation -Patty Perry

Patty's presentation included the Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative (KVRI) PowerPoint that is available on the KVRI website at kootenai.org.

Patty explained the mission and purpose of the Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative (KVRI). What gives our Collaborative that staying power as a group is our set of elected officials as Co-chairs. There will always be the opportunity to have a collaborative by having it founded in that type of setting; having the government leaders as the Co-chairs and an appointed board.

We wanted to act locally, coordinate with the agencies, and get involved in implementation, to integrate what they were doing so everybody could look at ridgetop to ridgetop not just their little piece of the puzzle. We wanted partnerships so everyone could come to the table to talk and build connectivity with the community and with what was going on.

KVRI is the nucleus. There is an eleven (11) member board and co-chairs and the committees were formed that oversee the following issues: Forestry, Burbot Recovery, Grizzly Bear Conservation, Wildlife Auto-collision, TMDL, Wetland/Riparian, and Community Issue Forum. They are come one come all type of committees with anywhere from 10-30 members. The Forestry is one of the largest attended committees.

Patty gave a brief description of each of the KVRI Sub-Committees as outlined in the slide presentation.

Gary added that the Burbot Recovery has been an amazing journey. We started developing the aquaculture at the hatchery a few eggs at a time. We worked with the University of Idaho who took what we had up to that point and continued to develop the aquaculture. From an estimated 50 fish in the river system, we have put over a half a million Burbot back into the river since 2014. Harvest and sport fishing is now on the discussion table.

Sandy stated that the Burbot Recovery is the perfect example of how the collaborative works. There was engagement with not only the local community and the agencies involved but also British Columbia. It was a three year process to work through these issues. A highlight in the process was being able to gather old timer's accounts of the river health. The big conservation issue at the time was the Libby Dam and how it had affected the river. We were able to find old timers that went back to 1910 that were interviewed, and those interviews were transcribed and analyzed and that gave a decade by decade picture of what the river had been like prior to the dam installation. The key point showed it was building the dikes to be able to develop and farm back in the 1920's that had altered the health of the river considerably...that was when the Burbot started to decline.

Patty stated that the Forestry Committee is the most focused approach recently with about 30 people involved. It became important early on and the community realized that there was a need to work with the Forest Service and to get on a different playing field than what we had been on. We talked through projects in a less formal atmosphere which provided the FS with a community perspective, recognizing their responsibility to get through the NEPA process. That helped us get ready for CLFR. Then we had a Forest Fire in the Myrtle Creek Drainage, the community's drinking water source was extremely affected. We needed to come together to get a project off the ground to do the restoration work needed, so the District worked with us on a HFRA project. From there we kept building on that. The Forest Supervisor told us of an opportunity to do something bigger and we did. That was the CFLRP.

The CFLR proposal, goals and treatment objectives are all outlined in the presentation slides.

Our group is very hands on; we do a "flyover" (via Google Earth) with the Forest Service staff to see what we are facing and where we are going. We have discussion about project priorities on the District, then work together on the Purpose and Need to get the wording just right. We provide our thoughts so as the Forest Service does their work they have the Collaborative support behind them. Once the scoping is done, we host special meetings for roads and community concerns. We bring the social license to get their work done. Mary has taught us to be a good investment.

Patty described KVRI's engagement of the Five Year Action Plan per Mary's request. Mary has 3 Collaboratives on the Forest that are active across the Idaho Panhandle. Mary pulls KVRI together periodically, along with the other Collaboratives, County Commissioners from each area, and Conservation groups to work together to develop the screens to use in reviewing projects and prioritize those across the Panhandle. We talk with her about what will be the "go to" for the Forest and she helps us understand what the Forest is asked to deliver. We have since met a second time to revise and renew those screens/filters and talk about the projects coming on board. So there are no surprises. We do recognize that CFLR (on every Forest) creates winners and losers and that is not a good thing. Through the 5 year action plan Mary has done an amazing job of bringing in those other areas that didn't have a CFLR designation and making sure that they get projects in the Five Year Action Plan as well.

Mary added that KVRI was one of the first folks at that first set of meetings. We are one of the only Forests that actually invite other people to determine where we will go in the landscape. That used to be done in a vacuum and no one knew why the Forest Service went where they went or knew anything about the process. We appreciate KVRI's participation in this process. It has totally turned around how we do business on the Panhandle.

Karen R. stated the counties that lagged behind in the collaborative model have spent time working to establish their own Collaboratives. Sid S. added that the Five Year Action Plan sort of pulled the curtain back and helped them understand how the process worked and why others were getting funding. Dan praised the Congressional staff for their commitment to the Collaborative and this process. Gary also echoed the sentiments of appreciation for the involvement of the Congressional Representatives and their commitment. And added that he would be remiss if didn't mention the relationship they have cultivated with Mary throughout the time she has been here. That relationship has remained strong. We are able to get things done and we really appreciate that.

Patty responding to a comment from the Washington Office staff stated that Mary had the wisdom in recognizing that we were never going to agree that one size fits all on the Forest, and secondly, we have a lot more in common across the 5 counties than disagreements. Also she helped the other Districts realize there was a commitment to CFLR and they could also get on board and move projects forward and they weren't excluded from the 5 year plan.

Patty also explained that KVRI's focus right now is about 60-75% on the Forestry Committee although there are other committees that are very active. It just depends on timing. Sandy A. added that there are Forestry Committee updates at our monthly Board Meetings that helps evaluate our progress. Dan D. stated Mary was the first to invite the County Commissioners from the 5 northern counties to get involved and that helped develop a close relationship in the Five Year Action Plan process.

A comment from the Washington Office staff member expressed the fact that KVRI has very strong attributes of what it takes to be successful; shared leadership, always looking for some level of opportunity to work in, strong sense of community and continuing to build upon that, and stewarding more of a whole instead of a slice of something. And it was asked if Patty could talk a little about how KVRI goes about making decisions and keeping the trust along the way.

Patty explained that KVRI has By-laws and that the Board is the approving entity. We try to come up with a consensus in our committee work (which means everybody in the room will agree to allow something to move forward and not sabotage a project). That makes the role of the Board smoother.

If someone disagrees, a white paper is provided to the group outlining and listing why they disagree and what those points are. Also that person can abstain and still allow the project to go forward. Sometimes we table things for months until we can figure out how we all are going to get there. That is the feedback circle that we utilize and it's served us well; if you take a vote or any other approach somebody still doesn't like what you are doing and hasn't agreed to allow that to take place.

The other staying power is you communicate always and you communicate often. The Tribe has always provided someone to set up meetings, provide the agenda, refreshments, facilitate and take notes of the meetings.

In response to a question about the Idaho Roadless rules' influence on forward movement in the Collaborative, Patty replied that for KVRI the Roadless Rule came along after we were up and running. We facilitated local meetings for the County. KVRI hosted meetings and brought people together in the Community to talk about the Rule and what it might be able to do. The County Commissioners then forwarded the County's perspective to then Governor Risch to move the Rule forward. So once the Rule was in place it has provided some other management opportunities for the Forests in Idaho. It is just one Rule now that we know we operate in.

Dave W. and Karen R. agreed that great leadership is not only the glue that holds the Collaborative together, but it also results in the trust between groups. Between the three Co-chairs and their facilitator the Collaborative has tremendous leadership so they can work through problems and continue to maintain trust between the community and the agencies. They come to the KVRI board meeting because they know they are going to get accurate information and they're going to get the pulse of the community there. Sandy A. added that the holistic view Gary A. mentioned before is also the view of the Board members.

Patty added her appreciation for Mary and her Forest Staff that worked on a complete review of our CFLR program. It helped us find out where we did or did not meet our targets. We have been nervous about where the money is coming from and where it is going, who is spending it and what is happening on the ground. She helped us see that.

KVRI also paid for an economic impact report from the University of Idaho out of a meager budget to not only take a look at what the impact was on the community but also just understanding what could be accomplished.

Forest Service Presentation – Kevin Knauth, Doug Nishek, Ed Koberstein, Matt Staudacher

Ed K. explained that it takes an entire community to make this work. KVRI represents the community ownership the Forest Service needs and the social license latitude that has allowed them to be very effective at reaching their goals of the KVRI-CFLR projects.

Ed K. discussed the 400,000 acres boundaries of managed forest land in Boundary County and displayed those areas on the map. He explained the driving force and momentum to develop the CFLRP project was the 2003 fire event in Myrtle Creek Drainage, which is the community watershed for Bonners Ferry.

The project and goals were developed on the NEPA pipeline based on what they had at the time and what they expected to have in the future during the duration of the CFLR authority.

The following projects show where they've been and where they are going on the landscape:

- East Fork Meadow-WUI, community watershed, fuels reduction priority area for treatment
- Leonia-Fuels reduction project, forest health using CE authority
- Twenty Mile Creek- Community watershed, fuels reduction priority area for treatment. Project driven by KVRI
- Buckhorn Fuels-Wildlife habitat improvement project, huckleberry restoration, Grizzly Bear Habitat, fuels reduction
- Kreist Creek-WUI Project and forest health
- Hellroaring Project-WUI Project, forest health
- Deer Creek-WUI Project, forest health, just signed the decision this spring
- Boulder Creek Project-In the process of answering public comments, signing a decision next spring
- Camp Dawson-Additional treatment areas
- Robin Hood-Additional treatment areas

Ed K. stated that since inception of CFLR each project has changed in scope and scale becoming better defined and comprehensive. He attributes that to the collaborative efforts and social license KVRI has given them. The Forest Service has worked around the district identifying the priority areas and identifying a comprehensive approach as described in the handout distributed. That handout shows examples of the projects and outlines the opportunities to invest the funding stream that CFLR has granted them. There are numerous opportunities described in the handout and that speaks volumes to the standpoint of the community ownership and the direction that KVRI has provided them as an agency as they develop these projects.

Matt S. added that in 2015 there was an historic fire event in the Idaho Panhandle. They had to pause on the Deer Creek and the Boulder Creek projects and focus their NEPA Team on the time sensitive fire salvage on the Tower Salvage Project. As a result of that lost year in CFLR, they made the decision to accelerate and make up for that loss by using the NEPA strike team on the Camp Dawson and Robin Hood projects.

Matt also stated that the amicus brief that the Tribe provided in support of Tower Salvage project was one of the best he had ever read. He has heard that it was pivotal for the judge when he denied the preliminary injunction and now they have sold the salvage timber sales and are 80% done with everything on that project. He expressed his thanks to the Tribe.

Patty explained that it may look easy but there are always challenges with the projects; unexpected delays, new ID teams to become familiar with, changes in the projects discussions, changing time frames and many more. There is a lot of discussion along the way to complete each project.

Patty and Dan both expressed the type of relationship KVRI has with the Forest Service staff is built upon trust and understanding. The Forest Service staff knows how to communicate in the KVRI setting and is

familiar with the topics that may cause more discussion. Kevin also explained in order to keep up with the accelerated pace on Camp Dawson and Robin Hood projects, they brought in a number of new faces from across the North Zone (NEPA Strike Team) . The Collaborative has greatly accepted the tools and authorities that are available. Kudos to the Collaborative that we move at the pace the folks are comfortable with and get work done.

Ed K. explained that the stewardship receipts are applied directly back into the ground within the project area as much as possible. The hope is that the sale generates enough proceeds to cover a lot of the restoration work identified, if not all. And if there are excess funds generated it goes into the next project identified with a prior NEPA document and then it goes to the Forest level as retained receipts to accomplish objectives across the Forest.

Ed K. displayed the complexity they have in Boundary County by overlaying the Bonners Ferry Ranger District / Kootenai Valley on the map along with the Grizzly Bear Management areas, the Bears Outside of the Recovery Zone designation, Back Country Roadless areas and lynx analysis units. That leaves a very small spot to manage without any designations. It shows that it is very complex and challenging and without KVRI helping facilitate and pave the way for us it would be nearly impossible to manage this Forest.

Patty explained that early on, those designations Ed K. listed had produced a lot of anger in the community because it had changed how the Forest Service had to manage the Forest. It was a challenge to help the community embrace what was going on. The reality is that we have had to deal with living in various habitats. The community for the most part understands the fact of the matter and they know that in order to actively manage a National Forest, to protect our livelihood, and to work together, there are some things that we have to do differently and we do. Helping the community make that critical turn is part of what has provided the social license for the Forest Service to do what they need to do. Kevin K. and Mary both agreed that the same understanding of how the Forest now has to carefully manage in habitat areas has improved the Forest Service's working relationship with the US Fish & Wildlife Service as well.

The handouts described within are available on the KVRI website at kootenai.org.

The meeting was adjourned, lunch served and a YouTube video presentation by the District Forest Service Staff was viewed.

Meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.
Sherrie Cossairt,
KTOI/KVRI Admin. Assistant