

Draft Meeting Notes
Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative
November 18, 2013 – 7 p.m.
Board Meeting – University of Idaho Extension Office

Board Members in Attendance:

David Anderson, Mayor, City of Bonners Ferry & KVRI Co-chair
Dan Dinning, Boundary County Commissioner & KVRI Co-chair
Ron Abraham, (Alt.) Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (KTOI) & KVRI Co-chair
Sandy Ashworth, Boundary County Library, Social/Cultural/Historical Interests
Kevin Knauth, (Alt.) Bonners Ferry Ranger District, U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
Ed Atkins, Corporate Agriculture/Landowner
Brad Corkill, Idaho Fish & Game Commission
Bob Blanford, Business/Industry
Jim Cadnum, Landowner/Industrial

Patty Perry, KVRI Facilitator & KTOI
Janet Satchwell, KVRI Recording Secretary & KTOI

Agency/Others in Attendance:

Ed Robinson, Idaho Dept. of Lands
Laura Roady, Bonners Ferry Herald
Russ Hegedus, Idaho Forest Group
Brad Smith, Idaho Conservation League
Kurt Pavlat, Bureau of Land Management
Dianna Ellis, USFWS, Kootenai NWR
Aaron Calkins, U.S. Congressmen R. Labrador
Colleen Trese, Idaho Dept. of Fish and Game (IDFG)
Karen Roetter, U.S. Sen. Mike Crapo
Mitch Silvers, U.S. Sen. Mike Crapo
LeAlan Pinkerton, Boundary County Commissioner
Christian Fioravanti, Citizen
Lynda Fioravanti, Citizen
Nancy Kertis, USFS
Lydia Allen, USFS
Dan Scaife, USFS
Shanda Dekome, USFS
Sharon Kiefer, IDFG
Jim Michaud, Selkirk Valley Backcountry Horseman (SVBH)
Arleen MacKinnon, SVBH
Kevin Greenleaf, KTOI
Jason Kirchner, USFS
Wayne Nishek, SVBC
Chip Corsi, IDFG
Ron Sukenik, Citizen

Opening:

David Anderson opened and welcomed everyone to the monthly meeting; introductions followed.

The group approved the draft meeting notes from the October 21 meeting, by consensus.

Presentation:

Shanda Dekome, USFS, Idaho Panhandle National Forests' Ecosystem Staff Officer

Shanda explained what forest planning is about and what it means for the Idaho Panhandle National Forests. The PowerPoint presentation will be made available on the Kootenai Tribe website www.kootenai.org at KVRI – Documents, or by contacting Patty Perry at 208-267-3519, ext. 551, or patty@kootenai.org.

Shanda reviewed what a forest plan does, and what decisions are and are not made through the planning process. The elements of the plan include: goals, desired conditions, objectives, guidelines and standards. The plan provides direction on a forest-wide basis, on management areas, and in geographic areas. Key differences from the 1987 plans were identified, along with changes between the draft and the revised forest plan.

See the Idaho Panhandle forest planning webpage for copies of the documents and information on the forest plan revision.

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/ipnf/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5436518>.

Board member and guest questions were answered by FS staff. Topics included: Non-conforming use, recommended wilderness, timber production, and the objection process.

In some of the previous forest plans there were uses allowed in the “proposed wilderness” (term used in the 1987 plan) areas that are not ordinarily allowed in wilderness areas. For instance, some areas allowed snowmobiling within proposed wilderness areas, but in this new plan that activity would be considered a non-conforming use because it is a motorized use, which is not allowed in wilderness.

A national and regional movement has evolved as forest plans are revised to eliminate the non-conforming uses. The idea behind it is that if you have too many of these uses then it impacts the area's wilderness character and reduces the possibility of becoming wilderness at a future date. It is not just a concern about resource damage on the ground, but the activities that conflict with wilderness characteristics. The terminology used in the new plan is “recommended wilderness”.

A concern was that “recommended wilderness” areas are managed as actual wilderness. FS said management of “recommended wilderness” is very similar to wilderness, and it is the USFS policy that the Forests must manage these areas to retain the wilderness qualities by eliminating non-conforming uses in “recommended wilderness” areas.

“Congressionally designated wilderness” allows Congress to include any uses they choose, however, when the forest plan has “recommended wilderness” the FS does not have that flexibility and must continue to manage the lands to retain the wilderness character. A definition of wilderness may be found in the Wilderness Act which FS staff offered to provide the information to interested parties. A copy of the Wilderness Act, including the definition, can be viewed at

<http://www.wilderness.net/NWPS/legisact>

The FS is required to recommend areas that have wilderness characteristics, and could become wilderness to Congress. To keep the recommendation valid, the land has to retain its wilderness characteristics until either the forest plan is changed or Congress chooses to designate wilderness.

The FS recognizes the issue that in some cases there are some activities in areas of “recommended wilderness” in the new Forest Plan that will now be a non-conforming use. For example, snowmobiling in parts of Scotchman’s, and mountain bike use in Long Canyon are currently allowed, but will be prohibited as a non-conforming use under areas managed as “recommended wilderness”.

In the Forest there are 9,900 acres of Congressionally designated Wilderness in the Salmo-Priest. There are approximately 161,000 acres of “recommended wilderness” forest wide of the total 2.5 million acres. During the analysis 331,000 acres were eligible for “recommended wilderness” and less than half was recommended in the current plan. Approximately 149,000 acres were recommended in the 1987 plan.

In Boundary County the “recommended wilderness” in the 1987 plan was 26,658 acres and the new plan has 36,700 acres. Adjacent to the Salmo-Priest Wilderness are 18,000 acres of recommended wilderness.

A board member inquired about the other designations such as special management areas that will not put things in “recommended wilderness” but will still protect and allow for motorized and mechanized uses. FS advised that special management areas have different uses allowed and they are not considered non-conforming as they would not be in a “recommended wilderness”. In wilderness there are mechanized use concerns related to maintaining wilderness characteristics. Concern for retaining wilderness characteristics is not based on whether or not an activity causes more or less resource damage. The forest plan map shows that the FS tried to create a balance across the forest.

Timber production means having a scheduled rotation of timber harvest. Timber production is used to produce logs; timber harvest can be used beyond the 38% of the forest suitable for timber production when it is used for other goals such as restoration and that type of work. The 38% refers to the forest land base of the entire 2.5 million acres of the Forest.

In 2012, the FS released the draft environmental impact statement (EIS) and draft plan. There was a comment period and the comment period was extended. Based on comments there were some changes made to some boundary areas – making them more identifiable on the ground, clarified direction on the Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRA) which are under the 2008 Idaho Roadless Rule supersedes any forest plans. Some direction was added for wildlife connectivity, added some direction on three retained decisions (amendments to the 1987 plan) – the Grizzly Bear Access Amendment, Northern Rockies Lynx Management direction, and the innate fish strategy. More direction was provided for the required monitoring program, more information was added to the EIS on wildlife, and changes were made to the modeling program.

The planning rules changed several times in the past 12 years so this plan has incorporated some of those changes. The plan was developed under the 1982 planning regulations and uses the updated objection process from the 2012 rule. The plan is now in the objection process so the FS released the final plan with the draft record of decision. Everyone had the opportunity to comment when the draft plan came out in January of 2012.

The FS had an appeal process in the past, but now they are operating under the objection process. Objections and discussions come before the final decision is signed. This is a new process; we are in the 60 day objection period which means anyone who had commented in prior comment periods (4 of them) can study the plan and can file an objection by November 26, 2013. In order to have standing to file an objection you had to have commented prior. To file an objection it must be on the subject that you commented on prior. The only way to bring up a different subject is if there is new science on the topic.

The FS has 10 days to establish the objectors' standing, publish the objectors' names and the objection(s) by December 6. There will be a news release, a notice on the FS web site, and publication in the legal newspaper of record (*Coeur d'Alene Press* and the *Missoulian*).

If you didn't comment or if you do not have standing you may review the objections published and file to be an interested party on another person's objection. If discussions are held on the objections the objector and interested parties will be the ones able to speak. When the FS has the list of interested parties and the objections they have a 90 day review process for all objections.

The objection process was discussed and information on how to participate in the process was available. The information is available on the FS web site <http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/ipnf/landmanagement/planning/?cid=stelprdb5436783>, if you have a copy of the plan the process, or stop in at the FS office to talk with a staff member. The handout that was available at the KVRI meeting will be posted on the Kootenai Tribe website www.kootenai.org at KVRI – Documents, or available by contacting Patty Perry at 208-267-3519, ext. 551, or patty@kootenai.org. To file as an interested party the deadline is Dec. 16. Interested parties may agree or disagree with the objection.

The Regional Forester, Faye Krueger, is the Deciding Official. The Chief of the FS (or the Chief's representative), out of the Washington D.C. office, is the Reviewing Official and will bring together the objectors and the interested parties to discuss their objection to determine 1). if the FS met the science and standards that are required in the plan and 2). is there some middle ground between the objectors, interested parties, and the plan that meets the science and law that can be done to resolve the objection before the decision is made. There is the possibility that the Chief could extend the discussion beyond 90 days if they are making ground on working out the objections. At the end of the review the decision will be signed by the Deciding Official to implement the forest plan as is or with the negotiated objections.

The draft Record of Decision, revised Forest Plan, and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) are now available. The forest is following a pre-decisional administrative review process (objection process) prior to making a final decision. Go to the Idaho Panhandle forest planning webpage for copies of the documents and information on the forest plan revision.

The FS staff was available to discuss the maps that were displayed.

Committee Updates:

Forestry Committee - Patty Perry

Status updates were given during the committee meeting November 7. The FS is waiting on several consultations to proceed with some projects. Patty will email the project timelines that were discussed.

A copy of the meeting notes is available by contacting Patty at 208-267-3519, ext. 551 or patty@kootenai.org.

Kevin Knauth, FS, advised they are compiling the annual CFLRP report which is due in December. Patty requested an update of the accomplishments for 2012, 2013, the targets for 2014 and the out-year be presented at the January 2014 meeting.

Wildlife-Auto Collision (WAC) - Patty Perry

Sloan Security Group is tentatively scheduled to be here December 3-4 to set up and test the wildlife detection system. Additional information will be made when dates and times are finalized.

(Additional information: A tour will be held December 4, at 1:45 p.m. Please contact Patty at 267-3519 or patty@kootenai.org for more information on transportation to the site.)

Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) – Patty Perry

The committee reviewed the final recommendations to the TMDL plan with Bob Steed.

New Business:

Mitch Silvers, Sen. Crapo's Office, Natural Resource, visited with Faye Kruger and they both acknowledged the importance of KVRI and the CFLRP projects and opportunities.

Closing Comments/Meeting Announcements: No board meeting is scheduled in December. The usual meeting date in January is a holiday so it was decided to move the meeting to January 27.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Janet Satchwell
KTOI/KVRI Admin. Assistant