

Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative
March 21, 2016 – 7:00 p.m.
Board Meeting – University of Idaho Extension Office

Board Members in Attendance:

Dan Dinning, Boundary County Commissioner & KVRI Co-chair
Gary Aitken Jr., Kootenai Tribe of Idaho & KVRI Co-chair
David Sims, Mayor, City of Bonners Ferry & KVRI Co-chair
Jim Cadnum, Landowner (Industrial)
Bob Blanford, Business/Industry
Dave Wattenbarger, Soil Conservation District/Ag Landowner
Kennon McClintock, (Alt.) Conservationist/Environmentalist
Kevin Knauth, (Alt.) Bonners Ferry Ranger District, U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
Ed Atkins Jr., Corporate Agriculture/Landowner
Chip Corsi, (Alt.) Idaho Department of Fish & Game
Sandy Ashworth, Social/Cultural/Historical Interests
Patty Perry, KVRI Facilitator & KTOI
Denise Winey, KVRI Recording Secretary & KTOI

Agency/Others in Attendance:

Kurt Pavlat, Bureau of Land Management
Russ Hegedus, Idaho Forest Group
Karen Roetter, Senator Mike Crapo
Judy Morbeck, Congressman Raul Labrador
Dave Wenk, Boundary County Weed Dept.
Greg Hoffman, USACE
Bob Graham, Boundary County Emergency Mgmt.
Tom Flear, Idaho Department of Lands
Scott Lawrence, USACE
Logan Osgood-Jacobs, USACE
Katherine Rowden, National Weather Service
Joel Fenolio, USACE
Sid Smith, Senator Jim Risch
Scott Grunder, USFWS
J.J. Teare, IDFG
Ree Brannon, USDA-NCRS
Norm Merz, KTOI
Jonathan Luhnnow, Idaho Dept. of Lands

Opening:

Gary Aitken Jr. Opened and welcomed everyone to the monthly meeting and began with introductions; Tom Flear introduced and welcomed Jonathan Luhnnow, the IDL new Forester in Bonners Ferry. Next, everyone enjoyed a “Thank You” cake for Denise Winey who is moving away; and then the board approved the last month’s meeting minutes.

Presentations

Joel Fenolio with the USACE (United States Army Corps of Engineers) gave a presentation/update on the Kootenai Basin Operations for 2016 – Joel began with current Hydrologic Conditions and said they issue a forecast at the beginning of every month of how much water is going to come into the Libby Dam and their current forecast of water volume is 6.5 million- acre-feet (110% of average) a lot of which is driven by higher elevation snowpack and a lot of rain this winter. “We are seeing an average snowpack but down low we have already seen a lot of snowpack melt off. We are starting to see a trend last year and this year with the warmer temperatures in February and March. It’s been a pretty wet winter; we’ve had an average of 126% precipitation throughout the basin”.

Joel presented a map of the Columbia River and Pacific Coastal Basins Mountain Snowpack as of March 1, 2016 and 4 maps which showed much more lower elevation snowpack in in the last 10 years.

Joel doesn’t anticipate any major flood threats until possibly later May to June. Current operations we are at 2404 ft. in reservoirs and will continue to draft down to 2397

We can only release 15,000 CFS for the balance of this week due to limitation by generation strength.

In terms of the Sturgeon Operations: No Spill, we may start peak releases of operating the powerhouse sometime in May, maybe as early as mid-May, depending on how the temperatures are; we just started discussions with the Sturgeon team in terms of how were actually going to shape close this year . Were still working with the Tribe on getting the summer operations set up so for the summer we will be seeing similar conditions where were at 6000CFS for the summer for the Habitat Restoration Project. With this being the last year for that we will get back to more evening out flows July through September.

Operations for Libby: Looking like were going to have 18,000 CFS coming out of Libby so we might seeing 28,000-30,000 CFS down here during that time frame. Will be starting the Sturgeon pulse mid-May to June and then starting to taper out the rest of the Sturgeon volume and then getting to our summer operations at the end of August and will probably reach peak refill sometime in July for a perfect scenario.

Right now were looking at maybe a little more than 10% chance of going over flood stage in Bonners Ferry but were calling it a moderate year in terms of potential flood threats.

Joel’s complete presentation is available on Kootenai.org

Committee Updates:

Forestry Sub-committee

Patty Perry and Kevin Knauth went over the CFLRP 2014, 2015 Planned vs Accomplishment Targets and Opportunities. Patty offered to send it out again to anyone that didn’t get a copy.

Patty asked where we were with the Deer Creek Project and Kevin said that overall, the comments on the draft EA were pretty straight forward; in general, everyone supported the foundational work they are doing in all the alternatives. Since there were just a few alternative suggestions, they plan on responding to each one of those comments.

Kevin visited with Mary Farnsworth (USFS) and she identified Alternative #2 as the alternative that she has elected to move forward. With that in mind, Brett Lyndaker and the US Wildlife Service will work on the Biological Opinion which is there “thumbs up” to move forward. Then we can issue the final EA

and the draft decision – the draft decision will open the objection period which is a 30 day objection period and the Forest Service has 60 days to respond.

TMDL Sub-committee

The committee met on March 18, 2016 and discussed the 5 year review that is coming up and how that might look, and DEQ shared with the group that most of the data collection and monitoring that they do every year is going to happen up here this year. They want 40 sites chosen to do what they call BURP (Beneficial Use Reconnaissance Program) and they look at the stream segments they think are important based on the TMDL needs. The committee will meet again on the 15th of April to discuss sites. Patty said that they are also providing more temperature monitors for our citizen monitoring group. Kevin Greenleaf is tracking all of our data, Brandon Glaza, Bonners Ferry Ranger District, also provided an interesting presentation on Boulder Creek.

IDFG Program Update

Chip Corsi introduced J.J. Teare who is the IDFG Fish & Wildlife Habitat Manager, and J.J. announced that the Department will be looking for a Technical Service Provider for the Northern Palouse Farm Bill project. They are looking at a 3 year position that will work in Kootenai County, Benewah County (the west side -more of the farmland area), and the Kootenai River Valley area. They are still working on getting the funding for the position.

Caribou Recovery

Norm Merz –We conducted the annual caribou census last week of February; we had 14 last year and we are down to 12 (includes 2 calves). We're investigating, thorough the technical committee, ways we can try and bolster the herd. The technical committee that's working on the recovery plan update met last week and are scheduled to meet again on April 27th. There has been four caribou fatalities, one was hit by a vehicle on Hwy 3, and in May one adult female with a full term fetus, which was likely taken by a mountain lion but they are investigating that; the other 2 caribou weren't radio collared so they don't know what happened to them.

Correspondence:

February 29th was the first 5 year action planning meeting and KVRI has been asked to participate in that process. The next meeting will be on Friday the 25th of March; Dan Dinning and Patty Perry will be attending. (This meeting was canceled & rescheduled for April 22nd)

Patty received a request from Donald Ulrich who is working with Dr. Emily Jane Davis and they are working in Idaho and Washington on a project with the US Forest Service Pacific Northwest Research Station. The Project is "Evaluating Collaborative's as a Model for a Natural Resource Governance", and they want to use KVRI as one of their case studies. They will have 2 groups in Idaho and Washington as a part of their study. They anticipate that they would want to interview 10 or so individuals who are familiar/active with the forest collaborative representing a range of interests within with the group and will need our help identifying those individuals. They would also want access to our meeting notes and other documents which are available on our website.

They want to conduct the work over a week long period in May and possibly come out and visit with the 10 individuals. Patty asked if anyone thought we "should not" be involved -- and there were no objections.

Patty also received a phone call from a Marla Harvey from Whitman College who is doing a thesis on collaborative's and how collaborative's participate in the political process. Patty explained that we are not a "political group" and that we don't take a stand on political issues, we take a stand on managing resources and that we try to use the best available science that we have and that we base participation of the broad group and the information that the experts bring to the table for us and try to make good decisions or try to support the Forest Service as they make decisions. After a lot of discussion the Board has decided to decline participation.

Old/New Business

Dan Dinning informed everyone that the rating on Myrtle Creek Bridge has changed to "will not be useable to haul logs". We (the County) wish we would of known that prior to choosing to fix the road to the Refuge but they (Clint) think there is going to be an easy temporary fix .

The Interagency Grizzly Bear Selkirk Cabinet Yaak sub-committee met the first week in March, and the IGBC Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (they oversee all the Grizzly Bear Recovery) will be meeting in Bonners Ferry June 21st and 22nd. We will have the opportunity to show them our area and our concerns. The committee made comment regarding the recovery & delisting to the NCDE which is the Glacier area subcommittee. Chip mentioned that the upside is that we actually share members with the NCDE subcommittee and there is a desire try to understand where delisting would go with the NCDE and how it might or might not affect our ability to move forward with getting to a place where we could delist the Selkirk Cabinet Yaak.

Just found out today that the program manager of IGBC is retiring at the end of April and Wayne Kasworm is going to be taking his place interim, and that should not affect what's going on in the Selkirk's.

Patty and Kevin Knauth discussed the possibility of a committee tour of Bear Management Unit areas and Chip said there is one planned but it is still in preliminary stages but will be a great opportunity.

Comments/Meeting Announcements:

The next meeting will be April 18th 2016

Meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Denise Winey

KTOI/KVRI Admin. Assistant