

Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative
April 18, 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
Bob Blanford, Business/Industry
Dave Wattenbarger, Soil Conservation District/Ag Landowner
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
Sherrie Cossairt, 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
Greg Hoffman, USACE
Sid Smith, Senator Jim Risch
Jonathan Luhnnow, Idaho Dept. of Lands
Dianna Ellis, Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge
Billy Barquin, KTOI
Pamela Rentz, KTOI

Opening:

Mayor David Sims opened and welcomed everyone to the meeting; introductions followed. Last month's meeting draft notes were approved.

Committee Updates:

TMDL Sub-committee

While waiting for Bob Steed to join us via telephone (due to technical difficulties), Patty Perry gave an update on the April 15th TMDL meeting at the Kootenai Tribal Office. We discussed the 5 year review and looked over the BURP monitoring map which has a list of stream segments the DEQ will look at this year. As we went through the list, we talked about accessibility, where they would have issues and which ones make sense to review in late July.

Bob Steed will be talking about an opportunity to be involved in a project called "Climate Shield". There is a new process that is called eDNA. It can be used to take a water sample to determine presence or absence of fish species and will only look for those species that you have set in your target or key indicators for that specific DNA.

At our TMDL meeting last week, Sue Ireland said she was going to find out whether or not the key indicators for the DNA have been developed by the tribe through the process with the hatchery and could be used for Burbot.

It would give us the information and the DEQ is anxious to gather that information. They want concurrence from the group so that when they do the BURP studies this summer, the water samples they gather could also be used to participate in the Climate Shield Project.

The committee after discussion did not find any downside to participating. The TMDL committee's recommendation to the board was that we would participate.

Patty shared that the Citizen Monitoring committee with the TMDL is still working as well. The ten (10) streams we monitor in different segments every year are: Boulder Creek, Boundary Creek, Copper Creek, Hell Roaring Creek, Long Canyon Creek, Upper Mission Creek, Myrtle Creek, Skin Creek, Snow Creek, Trail Creek and we do an ambient air temperature monitor as well. We are collecting that data and Kevin Greenleaf is actually keeping track of those monitors and downloading the data and putting together the graphs for us.

Presentations

Bob Steed, Surface Water Ecologist, Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, joined us via phone conference for his PowerPoint presentation.

Bob began by explaining the 5 year statute in Idaho and the rules about reevaluation of TMDLs. The end product is a report to give to our legislatures to keep track of where we are at in our TMDL programs.

Products Reviewed:

- The "2006 Subbasin Assessment" where we characterize the subbasin of Kootenai and Moyie watersheds.
- The 2006 TMDLs for Boundary Creek had a temperature TMDL, Deep Creek had a temperature & sediment and Cow Creek had a sediment TMDL.
- In 2014 we completed 27 streams for temperature. (A diagram was shown of those that we had written for TMDL's 2014)

Bob also explained that one thing they noticed in the 2006 TMDL is the process that they used in 2006, and all those in the state that were before 2009, were built around shade targets that were based on simulated plant communities. And in 2009 they were actually able to develop shade targets based on Idaho plant communities. Bob doesn't believe we're going to get any real difference in this but we are required by EPA to rewrite the 2006 temperature TMDL for Boundary Creek and Deep Creek. So that is something that he has begun working on and will be part of the 5-yr Review.

Bob met with the TMDL group to talk about those requirements to complete the 5 year review. We are going to push forward and include the projects that have made a difference.

In 2016 our field season, we're going to have our Beneficial Use Reconnaissance Project (BURP) crew focusing on the Kootenai and Moyie Subbasin. That's a 3 person crew managed by Craig Nelson here in our office (DEQ). We are targeting 30 sites in the Kootenai/Moyie Subbasin.

Next Bob discussed the 2006 Subbasin Assessment charts showing the different fish species that are present in the lower Kootenai River & the Moyie River Subbasin. He thought one of the things he would bring up to the WAG was if it would be wise for them to pursue updating each fish distribution map as part of the 5-yr review.

About a month ago Bob listened to an online presentation by Michael Young with the Rocky Mountain Research Station and Michael was talking about working on a climate shield model that looks at temperatures and fish distribution. The key word in this presentation for Bob was that RMRS is crowd-sourcing the work to be done on this. By crowd-sourcing he means that they are looking for other ongoing projects that they could potentially piggy-back the sample collection component with. RMRS is looking at the occupancy model that they have developed and validating with on the ground sampling, using eDNA.

eDNA is the process where you filter some water out of the stream, the sample gets preserved and a lab analysis is performed on it to find out what fish are present in that stream. The DNA that comes off the fish that live in the water determine if that fish is present in that stream.

Bob went over the list of "Project Coordinators" (which is available on his full presentation on Kootenai.org)

Their request at the end of this presentation was, if you saw opportunities for additional eDNA sampling especially for Bull Trout, that they were looking to have help in collection of water samples for eDNA analysis.

So Bob brought that concept forward to the TMDL group and they wanted him to bring this concept/idea to the board tonight to see if he should pursue it any further.

Bob said that if we participate in this project, the Rocky Mountain Research Station would pay for the equipment that would be needed. Bob asked the board if this is something he should pursue.

Patty clarified that unless there were some other interest, we would pursue it. It would be a process that would go along with the BURP crew, they would gather the samples and the testing would be for Bull Trout.

Bob stated that he would participate at that level unless we wanted to use some of the EPA stimulus money to gather more information for this project from the additional 10 streams that our volunteers may want to get for us.

Diana Ellis asked if there had been any coordination with the Fish & Wildlife Fisheries Resource Office as they have done some surveys in Myrtle Creek and in Cascade Creek.

Bob wasn't aware of any coordination but he did mention that Fish & Wildlife is listed as a collaborator on this project. He would leave it up to Michael Young and Kevin McKelvey to help with a monitoring plan and make sure it doesn't overlap.

Patty confirmed that we will be using the 30 BURP assessment sites unless we get the extra money in the citizen based group.

Patty stated that she thinks they are saying, let's investigate it, and maybe try it with BURP and see if it looks like a tool that might be helpful; and in the meantime, they will gain the data from it.

Patty asked, "What is the benefit to the DEQ for us to participate?" and Bob explained, it is to improve the 5 year review so that the fish distribution maps are updated and that fits into the 5 year review of statute language that looking at assumption and analysis for which that subbasin assessment is made would be improved.

Bob has one other thing that he hopes to achieve out of all of this. He stated that they have been collecting temperature data through the TMDL group for about 9 years now and he is getting limited on what he can handle in a data base. It would be nice to get Dan Isaak's help to perhaps draw some conclusions from the data they have collected. What Bob hoped to negotiate was that if they do the crowd sourcing for them that they would help with the temperature data as well.

The board asked several questions, and since a decision was not needed tonight, it was decided to wait until after the May 16th meeting. Bob will have more information to share. Bob's full presentation is available on Kootenai.org

Libby Dam Update

Next, Greg Hoffman with USACE at Libby Dam gave a brief presentation on the Libby Dam's inflow and outflow as well as the projected elevations of Lake Kootenay. He explained the inflow forecast and the target elevations change monthly. If the inflow forecast for April seems a little high to us, it's because the snow densities we see around the middle and low elevations here are gone but the Corps' models use SNOWTEL sites from higher elevations in the U.S. and Canada, which had been showing normal to above normal snow levels through the early spring; there is an absence of low-to-mid elevation SNOWTEL sites, so the April forecast is slightly inflated. The Seattle District requested a VARQ deviation to allow for lower flows in order to reduce the reservoir draft and also to reduce local flood risk on the Kootenay River in Boundary County; the Division Reservoir Control Center approved a compromise, so flows have been between what was requested and what was modeled.

What Joel Fenolio (Seattle District Senior Water Manager) wanted Greg to relate to us is that he is concerned about the local community and the possibility of flooding during this time of year. Because Kootenay Lake is starting to fill up now, thus increasing the backwater and stage in the lower river, he was able to secure the "compromise" from the Division Reservoir Control Center.

So that is why you see the river going up and down from the uncertainty in the forecast and "deviation" request from division - until the "deviation" was approved Seattle District was targeting the modeled VARQ reservoir elevation, and was shaping flows to accommodate power production.

The team of sturgeon biologists will try to time the sturgeon flow so that it occurs while there is peak inflow into Lake Kootenay (Greg will be discussing what that looks like at the next meeting, including graphs...).

Bonnerville Stage will likely peak in late May or early June. Inflow forecast and projections are really going to dry up after this month. The graphs for Greg's presentation are available on Kootenai.org

Caribou Recovery

Patty reminded everyone of the Caribou comment period and offered the handout to anyone that didn't get her emailed copy.

Billy Barquin suggested that, due to lost litigation, he urged everyone to comment again even if they commented before.

Comment Notice is available on Kootenai.org

Correspondence:

Patty updated everyone about our participation with the Oregon Forest Service Northwest Research Station project and announced the 10 selected Board members that were chosen to participate on May 9-13 and will set up individual interviews. The 10 Board members that Patty selected – based on the subject -- are: 1) Dan Dinning 2) Bob Blanford 3) Ron Abraham 4) Kevin Knauth 5) Mary Farnsworth 6) Dave Wattenbarger 7) Tim Dougherty 8) Kennon 9) Brad Smith 10) Sandy Ashworth

Comments/Meeting Announcements:

The next meeting will be May 16th, 2016

Meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Sherrie Cossairt

KTOI/KVRI Admin. Assistant