

Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative
May 16, 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
Sandy Ashworth, Social/Cultural/Historical Interests
Kennon McClintock -Conservationist/Environmentalist (alt.)
Jim Cadnum- Landowner (Industrial)

Patty Perry, KVRI Facilitator & KTOI
Sherrie Cossairt, KVRI Recording Secretary & KTOI

Agency/Others in Attendance:

Russ Hegedus, Idaho Forest Group
Karen Roetter, Senator Mike Crapo
Judy Morbeck, Congressman Raul Labrador
Greg Hoffman, USACE
Jonathan Luhnnow, Idaho Dept. of Lands
Wayne Nishek, Selkirk Valley Back Country Horseman
Dave Wenk. Bo Co Weed Dept.
Bob Graham, Emergency Services
Dave Gray- Social/Cultural/Historical Interests (alt.)

Opening:

Co-Chair, Dan Dinning opened and welcomed everyone to the meeting; introductions followed. Last month's meeting draft notes were approved.

Presentations

Bob Steed, Idaho DEQ-eDNA Discussion

Patty stated that Bob would not be calling in with any new information. He was not successful in reaching the Research station on an update of the eDNA process. Bob did present the concept at the Panhandle Basin Advisory Group Meeting. It's as simple as while they are out doing the BURP monitoring they want to try this collection gathering to add to the data base to determine the present/absence of Bull Trout.

Patty also shared Chip Corsi's email in regards to the possibility of eDNA being brought into streams by vectors, like otters or herons, and creating the potential of a false positive reading. He received a reply from a colleague of his, that they mostly likely would not accept a small quantity as definitive evidence that bull trout are present without more samples being done.

Patty continued that at our last meeting, the TMDL committee's recommendation, to the KVRI board, was to add the eDNA collection as a standard part of the BURP testing this year. Tonight we need a decision so that Bob can move ahead with the quality assurance plan and make it so. After discussion, it was decided by the board to go ahead with the recommendation as it stands.

Libby Dam Operations Update

Greg Hoffman, USACE, presented the Libby Dam update with Greg discussing the annual sturgeon operation and what goes into the planning for it, the water management update, and temperature information for the Kootenai River.

Libby Dam changed the water flow of the Kootenai River. The main purpose of the dam is to reduce flooding which they have accomplished. The dam also effects water temperature. The intent of the sturgeon operation is to get the temperatures as close to normative as they can. Warmer spring temperatures are important for sturgeon spawning.

Sturgeon operation and water management scenarios start each year in December. The beginning of the months inflow forecast, based on snow pack and long range weather forecast, this year was pretty normal until the May forecast dropped to about 98% of normal.

The forecast for April-Aug inflow volume targets the refill of the reservoir to provide water downstream for the Columbia River dams and their target elevations during the spring for salmon.

Reservoir elevation normally begins on January 1st at 2411, with the overall goal to have the reservoir at elevation of 2449 at the end of September (full pool is 2459). This year the target is 2449 at the end of August to accommodate the low flow request for September for the Tribe's river habitat work. The reservoir will likely reach 2448 in late July and will fail to refill by 11 feet as the result of normal to above average inflow forecasts through the winter and then a significant drop for May.

The sturgeon flow plan is based on that May inflow forecast. A volume of water is dedicated for the sturgeon operation. The runoff forecast in April-Aug is 5.831 MAF. The May forecast also sets the sturgeon augmentation volume to 0.930 MAF, and the July-August minimum flow for Bull Trout to 7000cfs.

On May 16th they went to full power house capacity, 26,500 cfs, which they will hold for 7 days, as part of the peak for the sturgeon pulse. Starting in early June that will go down to 7000 cfs, summer flat flow, and remain there through August.

The Kootenai River at Bonners Ferry is predicted to peak this weekend and should not hit 1760.

When the dam was built they were concerned with the water quality from the BC mines, but that actually evolved into a temperature regime specifically for fish even before the listings. There are thermometers on the face of the dam at different elevations and 256 gates for temperature management.

What they have been experiencing at the dam, in the last several years, is the inability to deliver warmer water temperatures due to turbine cooling issues. To target that issue they have been operating the selective withdrawal system of which 50 degree water is passed through the units during the summer months. They have also added cleaning the turbine cooling units to their maintenance routine.

Questions prompted discussion on contaminants coming into the river. The coal mines in the Elk River watershed in B.C. are putting in a lot of selenium and nitrates. There is a working group that's looking at developing biological and human use standards for selenium in Kootenai and Canada. But it hasn't been elevated to the State Department level yet. The IJC requires both the US and Canada to agree to address the issue. Canada has not yet elevated this issue.

The Corp also does monthly water analysis from April through October and they are working with the USGS to do more thorough monitoring on selenium in particular. They are seeing changes. Genny Hoyle with the Tribe has also picked up selenium downstream of the dam that is above the detection limit which had been rare in the past. More discussion revealed that the white sturgeon is the most sensitive species to selenium. It damages reproductive success and that is a definite concern for all of us.

The graphs for Greg's presentation are available on Kootenai.org.

Committee Updates:

Forestry Sub-Committee Update:

Kevin Knauth shared his update from the Forestry Committee meeting of 5-12-16, beginning with the Deer Creek project which is planned for 2 separate sales.

Deer Creek

- FY-17-1st sale- (Inside BMU) Approx. 10 MMBF
- FY-18-2nd sale-(Outside BMU) Approx. 10 MMBF

Boulder

- FY-18- Approx. 10 MMBF , could be 14-15 MMBF

Camp Dawson

- FY-19- Approx. 5 MMBF

Trout Ball

- FY-20- Trout Ball –Approx. 7 MMBF, looking at the value of enlarging that area, subject to change

Grouse BMU

- Projects to effect road density and bring us into Grizzly Bear access amendment compliance -no vegetation treated in those, simply roads analysis

Blue-Grass BMU

- Working with Border Patrol, EIS on Bog Creek road, roads analysis

Dan Dinning asked if the analysis for Blue Grass/Bog Creek is out for public comment yet. Patty believes it is or at least part of it is. Patty will look into it for us. (It was later determined the notice was a Notice of Intent to do an EIS.)

Kevin explained that the Forest has a 5 year action plan working group working on the out-year projects coming out in 2021-2025, building the next 5 year action plan. Kevin's staff and Supervisor Office staff met with the Forestry Committee group to brainstorm where they are likely to go next in Bonners Ferry. They had good feed-back from the sub-committee and that will then carry forward to the 5 year action plan.

Some of those ideas were:

- What can we do in Myrtle Creek
- What opportunities are in Caribou/Snow Creek
- Look at doing logging/fuels treatments on the Selkirk's East face, to better fireproof that area
- Canuck Pass area –Extensive road system already there but could be improved

The group asked how the projected volumes compared to the last 5 years. Kevin answered that the target for the Forest will be 55-60 MMBF. And Patty added that while this District has contributed 19-21 MMBF/Yr., it is unlikely that it would continue at that level. The CFLR average is 11-13 MMBF per year to meet targets under that project.

Patty also shared other concerns they discussed at the Forestry Committee Meeting:

- The bug infestation on the Selkirk crest and the need for possible burning
- The 30-40 year old plantations that need thinning treatment done. Barry Wynsma was concerned we are missing good opportunity and leaving a lot of fire hazard out there by not addressing that. He proposed treating a 1000acres a year on that kind of setting and Dan & Patty will be presenting that proposal to the committee on Friday.
- Field trip to Boulder, scoping for Boulder late summer/early fall. They have 2 road-less areas and BMU unit in that project
- Road work needs to be done in Boulder. Estimated fix \$485,000. CFLRP could help with that restoration work there if monies are available
- Tower Fire will be 4 staggered sales, June-July, of the 47,000 acres burned 18% of that is proposed salvage, with a total volume of 25 MMBF.

Kevin also shared with the Commissioners today that there is a fire on Twenty Mile Creek due to lightening- a 30-acre harvest unit, logging/slash in it, burned the whole unit, good pre-season exercise, perfect prescribed burn site prep to plant trees. The Forest Service will continue to monitor for hot spots.

Comments/Meeting Announcements/Correspondence

May 20th –Kootenai Tribe of Idaho ----Public Sturgeon Release- 9am-noon

At the Search & Rescue Boat Ramp-- staff available. 9am

This event coordinates with the Farm Tour beginning at the Boundary County Extension Office at 8 am.

May 26th --Libby Dam Public Information Meeting

Libby Dam operations meeting

Bo Co Extension Office 6:00 – 7:00 pm

September 19th

Michael Lucid is coming to KVRI for a presentation on the Multi-species baseline project.

Dan inquired about the reservation of the KVRI Fair Booth. Sherrie will look into that first thing tomorrow morning. (Later noted-it has been reserved.)

The next meeting will be June 20, 2016

Meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Sherrie Cossairt

KTOI/KVRI Admin. Assistant