

Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative  
May 20, 2019 – 7:00 p.m.  
Board Meeting – University of Idaho Extension Office

**Board Members in Attendance:**

David Sims, Mayor, City of Bonners Ferry & KVRI Co-chair  
Dan Dinning, Boundary County Commissioner & KVRI Co-chair  
Ed Atkins Jr., Corporate Agriculture/Landowner  
Dave Wattenbarger, Soil Conservation/Landowner  
Bob Blanford, Business/Industry  
Norm Merz, Idaho Dept. of Fish & Game (Alt.)  
Doug Nishek, Bonners Ferry Ranger District (Alt.), US Forest Service (USFS)  
Jim Cadnum, Industrial/Forest  
Rhonda Vogl, KVRI Facilitator & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho (KTOI)

**Agency/Others in Attendance:**

Wally Cossairt, Boundary County Commissioner & (Alt.) KVRI Co-chair  
Carol Kriebs, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho, Environmental Director  
Chris Hughes, Citizen  
Tim Dougherty (Alt.) Business/Industry  
Kent Rotchy, Boundary BackCountry Access  
Brad Navarro, Boundary BackCountry Access  
Tim Kastning, Congressman Russ Fulcher's office  
Scott Soult, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho  
Christy Johnson-Hughes, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services  
Jonathan Luhnnow, Idaho Dept. of Lands  
Evan DeHamer, Idaho Fish & Game  
Greg Hoffman, Corps of Engineers, Libby Dam

**Opening:**

Co-Chair, Dan Dinning, opened and welcomed everyone to the meeting; introductions followed.

The April 15, 2019 KVRI Board Meeting Draft Notes were approved by consensus.

**2019 Sturgeon Operations Review; Presented by Greg Hoffman, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers – Libby Dam**

Greg Hoffman begins slide presentation regarding the Kootenai River Operations for Spring and Summer 2019, using various graphs, maps and photos.

- The first graph shows a typical water year. There is really no typical water year but this generally shows how the Corp plans to operate.
- October 1st is first day of water year. Required by Columbia River Treaty to get down to certain elevations. Greg further describes graphs and discusses required elevations, the lowest and the highest, and how the Corp meets flood risk management.

- Purple lines on graph show what target elevations are. Typically see low pool at end of April and then begin refill period.
- We go through Spring with flows fluctuating depending on what is available. Bonneville has ability to shape flows on weekly or daily basis within USFWS Biological Opinion ramping rates. Then each year we have a Sturgeon Flow.
- Minimum flow for Bull Trout between Sturgeon flow and end of September. This year is 7,000 cfs, which is a Tier II – ranges between six to nine thousand, depending on final May water supply forecast.
- This year, we were low all winter. That's why there were low flows on the Libby Dam and they ran minimum flow. Two or three thousand cfs flowing in and 4,000 flowing out so we lose elevation. In general, final May forecast was 4.9 million acre feet, and we average 6.0.
- For a long time, we thought we were looking at Tier I year.
- Least volume for Sturgeon is 4.8 MAF so we have Sturgeon flows. We are at 18,000 cfs right now.
- The plan for Sturgeon operation is to go to 20,000 cfs.

The plan from this point forward, prior to 18,000, the Sturgeon pulse is scheduled to occur on May 29<sup>th</sup>.

- Going up to 20,000 cfs. It will last for 22 days. Flow planning team discussed what to do with this miniscule amount of water this year.
- We want fish to go to improved habitat, upstream, spawning habitat,. It is going on a decade now, that the Tribe has been working on improving habitat.
- The flow and habitat are starting to finally mesh together.
- The plan is not to go to 30,000. Then will ramp down rapidly to 7,000. We are not spilling water yet. Spill is only done at Libby for flood risk management purposes and the Corps never PLANS to spill.
- Current conditions – elevation at 2414. Full pool is 2459 so we have storage space left.
- Inflow up to 30,000. Projected peak close to 50,000 at end of month.
- Current discharge is at 18,000 coming out.

Projected elevation at Lake Koocanusa.

- We are sitting roughly at 2410 right now – for a long time. Starting to fill up.
- Max elevation will be ~2445. We are ramping up now.
- Some years, we come down to 6 in August to accommodate the Kootenai Tribe's habitat restoration. Not requesting that this year. This is what it will look like through end of water year.

For Bonners Ferry, the peak may be a little higher than right now, but then will come down fairly rapidly after that. This is an easy year – little chance of flood stage. Questions answered as to snow pack and conditions this year.

Since 2002 the **Libby Dam Ecosystem Flow and Temperature Operations** is what we've been working on. (continues to show graphs).

- Focusing on what we can do with Libby Dam.
- We can influence temperature and we can influence how the volume comes out. Focus is for Sturgeon. This is how this started -- trying to recover Sturgeon and figure out the best environmental conditions for migrating and spawning.

- Sturgeon reproduce on the receding line of the hydrograph. Graph shows pre-dam and post-dam flows. We are trying to manipulate the temperature and rate of flow.
- At Libby Dam, we have selective withdrawal system. Not originally a component of the dam. So, we added gates, depicted in pictures, so water temperatures can be manipulated. It is quite an undertaking.
- Elevations at reservoir, are 2222 at the bottom, all the way up to 2400, close to surface – you see winter temperatures at close to 60 on surface and at the bottom are about 38.
- Reservoir elevation is depicted on graph. Shows elevation on gates. This past week, we are trying to get warmer water. Also track inflow and outflow.
- We are getting water warmed up for Sturgeon.
- In March, the Tribe did not have enough flow at the Twin Rivers Hatchery. Cold and dry Spring. Intakes were frozen. Called for help and we coordinated with them and saved some fish. Good working relationship the Corps has with locals and we can be responsive to their needs.
- Gates enabled me to manipulate temps but there are limitations in how warm water can be. As to limits on discharge temperatures.
- Try to keep river warm enough to make it ecologically productive.

Discussion had on year-round temperatures of Kootenai River. Questions as to temperature of main stem of Kootenai River and its tributaries, where the spawning occurs. Main stem is warmer than the Tributaries. Showing pre-Dam and post-Dam lines on graph.

Libby Dam was built for a reason. After built, moved water from one season to another – to produce power, agriculture and flood risk protection. Fish and Wildlife Service wrote a Bio Opinion after Sturgeon were listed and focused on as much flow as possible through Bonners Ferry. Turned dam back off and saved water again and then ran it out for salmon. Greg continues to use graphs to display flows before and after Dam.

Discussed temps and flow and what it means to the Sturgeon. Graph prepared by IDFG is displayed.

- Prior to 2018, numbers based on sonic tags implanted in adult Sturgeon so we are able to track their movements in the Spring.
- The fish that migrate upstream of town, that is where we want them, in the good habitat. So, we at least have them going to the right spot.
- In 2018, greater average than past years, of fish migration to Braided Reach. In 2018, based on this info by IDFG, we ran 30,000 cfs for 32 days and found a wild spawned Sturgeon egg for first time ever. We don't have water to run flows to 30,000 cfs this year. In the future we will continue to use that target. That is our benchmark.
- Two main variables in this graph. Existence of habitat is the other difference. Main stem Kootenai, you see a lot of wood. Libby Dam, nothing gets by it.
- Habitat project by the Kootenai Tribe – large scale habitat manipulation and using wood structures creates better habitat. You can have all the habitat you want but you need water.
- Other benefits we have observed is riparian habitat generation (shows pictures taken by Norm Merz). Really nice habitat and definitely beneficial. Fits into our operations in working more closely with Kootenai Tribe.

- If we achieve a certain elevation in the river, we can inundate places and side channels for connectivity for habitat. And benefit other species including Burbot. These photos are at Nimz Ranch property across river from Ball Creek Ranch. Benefits for all species.

Speaking about “we” this whole time. “We” are the **Flow Plan Implementation Protocol team** (FPIP)– lots of agencies, two action agencies, F&WS, Kootenai Tribe, State agencies and BC folks across the border. This team was put together in 2004.

- We developed an **Ecosystem Function Restoration Flow Plan** and we were directed to develop flows to recover Sturgeon. The 2000 Biological Opinion came out and was very much volume-centric and called for installation of two more turbines at the dam. Lawsuit filed and we formed this team and we developed plan in 2005.
- We stressed that the objective overall, with flow, was to improve habitat and restore ecosystem function. So, that fed into the 2006 Biological Opinion. The Corps is onboard with the Tribe on this. Implement adaptive experimental flow plan, provide deep pools.
- Our work with the Kootenai Tribe is building habitat and the Corps supports that. This is a good thing we are doing – habitat restoration.

KVRI is very familiar with these issues, Sturgeon and Burbot Recovery. The results of this plan and this group putting together a Conservation Strategy and an MOU were many agencies and people signing on. Burbot was not listed but KVRI decide to tackle it and recover the species here in the Kootenai Valley in conjunction with all the players that we got onboard. Part of plan included hydro operations component. Corps signed on and I got to be a part of that. Research shows that really low flow is beneficial in winter months so we researched that and managing temperatures to get water as cold as possible in winter months for Burbot migration and spawning.

Greg thanks KVRI for the progress, involvement and support. KVRI and Bonners Ferry is well known out there. Map shown where Libby Dam is located and how it is the only dam in the U.S. that can do anything about Sturgeon recovery. Discusses Columbia River Treaty. Local issues and upstream issues – lots of things going on.

Everything done possible, to prevent a spill. As to what happens when a spill occurs – when the turbines aren’t enough. This adds dissolved atmospheric nitrogen in to the water which is lethal to fish. There is a tremendous Bull Trout population downstream of the dam that Montana is concerned about. Gas dissipates within seven miles and aerates itself but it is damaging and we try never to spill.

Discussions as to Sturgeon recovery with flow and temperature. How much relies upon Tribe’s efforts? Fish from early 90s just getting to spawning age. We are no longer in the dark. It is not all about flow. It is about habitat too. Discussion of lifespan of Sturgeon - one hundred plus. Sturgeon only spawn every four years. Hatchery fish are making spawning movements.

**Greg’s full slide presentation is available on the KVRI website at [www.kootenai.org](http://www.kootenai.org)**

Dan comments as to Greg’s presentation and the value of getting good information from people, working with other agencies and Canada. Dan thanks Greg for his work.

## **Committee Updates**

### **Forestry Committee Update-Doug Nishek**

Doug has spreadsheet on all updates in detail, which can be viewed on the KVRI website at [www.kootenai.org](http://www.kootenai.org)

#### **Deer Creek**

- EA signed
- Three sales coming

#### **Boulder Creek**

- EA signed
- Three sales coming

#### **Camp Robin Project**

- EA Signed
- Two sales coming

#### **Trout Ball**

- EA – Fiscal year 24

#### **Westside Restoration (formerly Caribou/Snow) Project**

- Will discuss on Thursday at Forestry meeting. Previously called Caribou Snow, and includes Myrtle now.

#### **Grouse BMU**

- Getting ready to sign
- Shared with Sandpoint – Grizzly Bear – Access Amendments.
- Expect to sign next week or two.

#### **Bog Creek**

- In Objection process at this point
- Involves Blue Grass BMU
- Objection meetings coming up – Open houses

Dan gives dates and times of meetings for all Bog Creek Objection meetings coming up in May and June.

#### **Winter Travel Planning on North Zone**

- Priest, Sandpoint and Bonners Ferry
- Focus group still meeting
- Will be public meetings
- Decision will be FY20
- Details of winter travel plan – The Colville and Kootenai are talking and have Plan A getting solidified this summer as a proposal to put out for comments. Will go through scoping and normal process.

#### **Oncoming :**

- Buckskin Saddle. South of Hope. FY20.
- Chloride Gold Creek – FY23

- EA in Priest Lake – FY22. This will be basically from town to Land Creek and nearly to Ranger Station and airport. Probably be an EIS.
- Strong Hope – Probable CE - scattered lands with private and Forest Service.
- Dan asked about volumes on projects: next FY, 33 mmbf. This year, 17mmbf.
- Questions as to Westside project are answered. This is the priority. Drainages. Fuels reductions.
- Questions as to Winter Travel Plan are answered. Look at all possibilities, anything recreation based.
- Dan - Forestry meeting on Thursday and will address this issue. Preliminary look at Snow/Caribou/Myrtle and input regarding recreational use.

### **TMDL Sub-committee Update- Rhonda Vogl**

- TMDL Sub-committee meeting was held on May 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Kootenai Tribe had Informal discussion with EPA about the Temperature TMDL for Lower Kootenai & Moyie River Subbasin. Discussed new shade curves and PNV. Sounds like it will be approved by EPA in the very near future.
- DEQ submitted the TMDL but it has not yet been received by EPA
- Temperature monitor cables and laptop were provided by DEQ for the KVRI citizens monitor team and monitors will go back into the streams soon.
- Our Citizens Monitoring team is very much appreciated.
- Dave Wattenbarger thinks monitors will go in by last week of May.
- Team consists of Kevin Greenleaf, Jerry Garten and Dave Wattenbarger

### **Idaho Forest Restoration Partnership (IFRP)**

- Dan speaks about the conference held in Boise last month. Attended by Dan, Rhonda and Ron Abraham (Tribal Council). Collaboratives were all invited. Subject matter was Shared Stewardship. Dan describes Shared Stewardship and gives example. Cross boundary projects, on a larger scale. State and USFS will pick two priority areas – one north and one south. Concerns about where funding will come from. Shared Stewardship is exactly what we do with KVRI. We've done this with the private side. We are already doing this. And interesting statistic is that for these projects to be effective – we analyze a big project but only treat a small area – so to be effective, we want to treat 35-40,000 acres. We've been averaging 5-10. We are looking at a new concept at some point.
- Doug states that on the Westside Restoration, it is three entire watersheds. We usually stick to a single watershed.
- IFRP is held every year, to bring Collaboratives together.

### **Correspondence:**

- Rhonda explains that KVRI has received an invitation from USF&WS to present at the Project Leader's meeting in Bonners Ferry in early June. State Supervisors, Regional Management and Headquarters Representatives will be there. They would like an informal presentation which will

be given by Dan and Rhonda. Christy Johnson-Hughes, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, gives more information on meetings. Focus on Sturgeon, Bull Trout and Burbot. Will give more information on date and times soon. And once we have an approved Agenda, will send out to Rhonda.

- Rhonda reads a thank-you card from Sherrie Cossairt and expresses appreciation and gratitude for Sherrie.

#### **Idaho Fish and Game, Norm Merz**

- Will begin McArthur Lake drawdown in June. Cattail treatments and noxious weed treatments will be done. Start refilling in the Fall and expect full pool, following next Spring's runoff. Questions can go to Evan DeHamer.

#### **Congressman Russ Fulcher's office, Tim Kastning**

- Congressman Fulcher held meetings, met with local officials in four rural counties and included State legislators, in round table settings. Listened to concerns. Congressman Fulcher appreciated everyone's time and hopes to make this a regular event.
- Tim will be working on flood mapping with FEMA and hopes to address problems for small counties.
- Congressman Fulcher sent support letter to BNSF for new Sandpoint railroad bridge. Congressman Fulcher is co-sponsor of Resilient Federal Forest Act 2019 with Congressman Westerman.
- Tomorrow night at 5:30, (website is provided to group), Congressman Fulcher will hold telephonic Town Hall meeting.

#### **Idaho Department of Lands – Jonathan Luhnnow**

- Preparing for fire season and bringing on seasonal staff.
- Discussed Shared Stewardship this morning. We are learning this process. Want to keep finger on the pulse on this and GNA.
- Our ten-year sales plan has lots of projects.

#### **City of Bonners Ferry, Dave Sims**

- Governor Little will be in Bonners Ferry on May 30<sup>th</sup> for the Capital for The Day
- Held at Fairgrounds, 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM.
- Anyone can attend and ask questions.
- Interact directly with Governor and his Directors.
- I encourage everyone to attend. I don't know of other states that do this sort of thing.

#### **Next KVRI Meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for June 17, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. at the Boundary County Extension Office. Will have ITD there to talk about the McArthur Lake highway realignment.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Rhonda Vogl

KTOI Administrative Director/KVRI Facilitator