

Meeting Minutes
Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative
March 16, 2015 – 7 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 (KTOI) & KVRI Co- chair
David Anderson, Mayor, City of Bonners Ferry & KVRI Co-chair
Sandy Ashworth, Boundary County Library, Social/Cultural/Historical Interests
Kevin Knauth, (Alt.) Bonners Ferry Ranger District, U.S. Forest Service (USFS)
Dave Wattenbarger, Boundary County Soil Conservation District
Bob Blanford, Business/Industry
Kennon McClintock, (Alt.) Conservation
Ed Atkins, Corporate Agriculture
Brad Corkill, Idaho Fish & Game Commission

Patty Perry, KVRI Facilitator & KTOI
Shandee Alexander, KVRI Recording Secretary & KTOI

Agency/Others in Attendance:

Wayne Wakkinen, Idaho Fish & Game
Chip Corsi, Idaho Fish & Game
Kurt Pavlat, Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
Greg Hoffman, USACE- Libby Dam
Laura Roady, Bonners Ferry Herald
Scott Lawrence- USACE
Joel Fenolio- USACE
Katherine Rowden- National Weather Service
Dave Gray, Social/Cultural/Historical Interests

Opening:

Dan Dinning opened and welcomed everyone to the monthly meeting; introductions followed.

The group approved the draft meeting notes from the February 23rd meeting, by consensus.

Dan introduced Joel Fenolio, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Presentation: Kootenai Basin Operations for 2015- Joel Fenolio-USACE

Joel gave a presentation on the Kootenai Basin Operations for 2015.

The flood risk is low based on the snowpack being below average. June precipitation is the “wild card”.

Columbia River and Pacific Coastal Basins Mountain Snowpack as of March 1, 2015:

- Below average snowpack
- About 85% average above Libby
- About 25-50% average in Boundary County

Winter 2015 Hydrologic Conditions:

- Anticipating 97% of average inflow into Libby between Apr-Aug.
 - Forecast may be high.
 - One of the variables is precipitation totals from October to current.

March to May:

- Temperature Probability: Above Average
- Precipitation Probability: Normal

June to July:

- Temperature Probability: Above Average
- Precipitation Probability: Normal

Operations:

- Current Elevation: 2412 ft. (~2 MAF of Space)
- Currently releasing 4 kcfs
- Upcoming Operations:
 - Sturgeon Pulse
 - Possibly see Sturgeon Pulse mid-May
 - With the current precipitation, sturgeon operations will be at half the volume. Instead of a 14 day peak release, a 7 day peak release will take place in Late May or early June.
 - Summer operations
 - Coordinating with Tribe & TMT
 - Anticipating a low flow request in September

Lake Kootenay Operations from Mar 11th:

- Been storing water this winter
- Expecting more releases throughout the summer

As long as there is June precipitation, the reservoir should fill.

There will be an annual Libby meeting May 28th, in Bonners Ferry.

B.C. notified Greg Hoffman about lowering Kootenay Lake 2 feet, 2 weeks earlier than normal.

There is a potential for Libby to be drafted an extra 10 feet for salmon.

Committee Updates:

Forestry Sub-committee:

Patty updated the group on the March Forestry meeting. The scoping for the Deer Creek project closed; however, the U.S. Forest Service is still taking comments.

The Placer #2540 road piece will be analyzed.

Patty mentioned that Kevin Knauth did a good job of reminding everyone that the Eastern part of the Deer Creek Project is within a Bear Management Unit (BMU). The Access Amendment and Core Habitat are both currently being met. The trade-off with the project, if you want to open roads in order to get to the project sites, you have to store roads to offset the core loss and road density gain. There were questions, at the sub-committee meeting, about roads inside the BMU, outside the BMU and about the unclassified roads. The FS is analyzing the roads, and what should be done with each one, while meeting the BMU requirements.

Individuals were present at the Forestry meeting, representing the Kootenai Valley Sportsman club. They shared their view of what is important to sportsman. The Deer Creek area is important to people for recreation; the project is generating more interest.

Kevin added, the Forest Service team will meet and review all the comments and concerns from scoping and from the forestry sub-committee meeting. Another Forestry meeting will be scheduled.

Bob Blanford mentioned there were individuals, from the Forestry meeting, that was against the idea of pulling out the culverts. Because of the Forest Service budget, there was an idea of forming a partnership or have volunteers that would essentially, "adopt," a stored road and maintain it.

Patty announced that there is another CFLR report that is an outreach piece for Congress. A colored brochure is put together featuring every collaborative. Patty was asked to update the Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative page. The updated page was passed around for review. The "partners" on the page were based on the partners that were asked to join when the collaborative applied for the CFLR funding.

WAC Committee:

The radar unit has not been working correctly; the warning lights aren't operating. The Nature Conservancy is in the process of turning the unit over the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD). ITD doesn't have it yet and the Nature Conservancy is relinquishing ownership, so it is in the middle of ownership. The Tribe agreed to pay up to \$750 to fund part of Bryce's trip to Bonners Ferry to look at the system, so he can determine why it is not working correctly.

Bob inquired on if the group was still monitoring the wildlife underpasses. Bob's question was answered by Wayne Wakkinen; there are no cameras in the underpasses. Taking on the project of putting in new game cameras and having them monitored, was discussed by the group. Chip Corsi agreed to investigate opportunities.

Old Business:

Board reappointment letters were handed out for signatures.

New Business:

Dianna Ellis, of the Kootenai National Wildlife Refuge requested letters of support from KVRI: one for Boundary County Road Improvement Project, and one for the Myrtle Creek bridge replacement. Patty read both letters of support to the collaborative; they were approved for signatures. Both Ed Atkins and Bob requested a copy of the full proposals.

Wayne Wakkinen updated the group on the Caribou. Wayne stressed that the information is just preliminary. Norm flew with Dave Parker in order to do the winter Caribou survey. They flew over with the fixed wing aircraft and also coordinated with B.C. to fly over with the helicopter. The Caribou count was 14. Last year the count was 18.

During last year's survey, the B.C. team noticed a dead Caribou, with 3 wolves nearby. As part of the Caribou recovery efforts, collaring some of the wolves has been implemented. There are known packs around Boundary Lake, Bluebird Mountain, and a suspected pack on the west side near Wymer. The wolf-pack around Boundary Lake was removed by lethal control.

Brad Corkill- annually, there is a bill that comes before the House and the Senate, to authorize expenditures (for the most part 1-time expenditures) within the Department of Fish and Game. There's no general fund money. This was the Senate Bill 1115 of this year. The Senate voted and passed it on March 6th. Last week the House voted on the Bill and defeated it. The Rock Creek purchase is the main project that will be cancelled. This southern Idaho piece contains 10,000 acres of prime Mule Deer habitat.

Dave Gray- presented a flyer for the movie, "Fish between the Falls." This documentary, was produced by George Sibley, and is about the white sturgeon of the Kootenai. The movie will be showing at the Boundary County Museum March 20, 2015 at 7 p.m.

Gary Aitken Jr. - The Tribe is talking about possible open houses at the new hatchery.

Patty received a postcard from the "Kootenai River Network," providing meeting dates.

Closing Comments/Meeting Announcements:

At the next KVRI meeting, Norm Merz would like to give a presentation on the Tribe's Operational Loss Project, and in May, Norm would like to provide a presentation on Loons.

The next meeting will be April 20th, 2015.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

Shandee Alexander

KTOI/KVRI Admin. Assistant