

Final Meeting Minutes  
Kootenai Valley Resource Initiative

September 20, 2021  
7:00 p.m.  
Board Meeting via Zoom

**Board Members in Attendance:**

Gary Aitken Jr., Kootenai Tribe of Idaho Chair, KVRI Co-Chair  
Chip Corsi, Idaho Fish & Game  
Carl Petrick, U.S. Forest Service  
Bob Blanford, Business/Industry  
Ed Atkins Jr., Corporate Agriculture/Landowner  
Adam Arthur, City of Bonners Ferry, (Alt) KVRI Co-Chair  
Dan Dinning, Boundary County Commissioner, KVRI Co-Chair

**Agency/Others in Attendance:**

Wally Cossairt, Boundary County Commissioner, (Alt.) KVRI Board  
Darren Parker, Office of Senator Risch  
Gregory Hoffman, U.S. Corp of Army Engineers  
Jake Garringer, Office of Governor Little  
Jeremy Gaffield, Idaho Fish & Game  
Karen Roetter, Office of Senator Mike Crapo  
Kim Pierson, U.S. Forest Service  
Leon Basdekas, U.S. Corp of Army Engineers  
Mark Hurley, Idaho Fish & Game  
Matt Pieron, Idaho Fish & Game  
Mitch Silvers, Office of Senator Crapo  
Mike Ward, U.S. Forest Service  
Tim Dougherty, Idaho Forest Group, (Alt)Business/Industry  
Tim Bertling, Boundary County Commissioner  
Carol Kriebs, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho  
Brad Smith, Idaho Conservation League  
Frank Edelman, Idaho Fish & Game  
Robert Akins, Idaho Fish & Game  
Norm Merz, Idaho Fish & Game  
Scott Soult, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho  
Sarah Hendricks, Office of Species Conservation  
Kevin Knauth, Bonners Ferry Ranger District, U.S. Forest Service, (Alt.) KVRI Board  
Christy Johnson-Hughes, U.S. Fish & Wildlife  
Marc Kilmer, Office of Representative Russ Fulcher  
Angela Cooper, Kootenai Tribe of Idaho Vice -Chair, KVRI, (Alt.) Co-Chair  
Hilary Whitcomb, U. S. Fish & Wildlife  
Rhonda Vogl, KVRI Facilitator & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho  
Karen Schumacher, Recording Secretary KVRI & Kootenai Tribe of Idaho

Meeting called at 7:04 pm by Rhonda Vogl.

Dan Dinning welcomed all and Rhonda Vogl read through the list of registered attendees admitted to the zoom meeting confirming that all had been introduced. Dan shared the proposal for a new location for KVRI meetings at the old Armory building on Main Street. These meetings will include new technology allowing for hybrid (in person and/or zoom) attendance. There were no concerns or questions from the board and the new location was agreed upon by consensus. Dan asked for corrections or edits to the draft meeting minutes from July and none were had. Minutes passed by consensus.

*Presenter Dr. Mark Hurley of Idaho Fish & Game was introduced.* Mark is the principal research biologist for IDFG. His work on this project included many other research biologists as well as students. Mark's presentation was on the research done on North Idaho predator & prey noting that is better known as "The Ecology of Everything". The overall question driving the research is how are predator and prey populations altered by other competing predator or prey populations. The project looks at the dynamics across the entire suite of species of prey; white-tail deer, mule deer, elk and moose but also includes predator species so that they can better understand the extent of impact nutrition affects population performance and its tie to what extent that predation affects population and the interactions between the two. By using trail cameras as a new technique to allow them to "see" wildlife across space and time in combination with aerial survey, they now have information on the populations and have been able to answer some of the research questions posed.

Mark's presentation and the data they have available can be seen by going to the KVRI website at: [KVRI | KVRIID \(kvricollaborative.com\)](http://kvriid.kvricollaborative.com) and scrolling to the September 2021 meeting block.

Q: Rhonda Vogl asked if there were any big surprises from the study.

A: Mark answered that it was all very interesting but they were a bit surprised to see higher numbers of Moose and Elk than they had anticipated, also noting it is a bit early in the processing of information.

Q: Carl Petrick asked if random attractants were used to get camera images of animals.

A: Mark answered that No, none were used and using attractants would have negatively influenced the objectivity of the natural movements.

Q: Darren Parker asked if they had to deal with camera sites at which nothing was happening.

A: Mark answered that this is the majority of the cases but that those "zero" sightings are very important to the overall estimations made.

Q: Brad Smith asked about the location of cameras in relationship to roads and trails.

A: Mark discussed the two styles of cameras (1. Random and 2. Predator) and the reasoning for the location of predator cameras near roads and trails related to use.

Q: Gary Aitken, Jr. asked for confirmation that all the cameras were programmed to take a picture at the same time

A: Mark confirmed this was the case.

Q: Dan Dinning wondered about the ability to pull out information from the efforts for

a specific area such as the Kootenai River Basin.

A: It was answered that because they have an overabundance of cameras for where they are accessing that would be a possibility but would require more randomization. He noted that in the future the number of cameras would be more limited due to funding.

Mark finished up his presentation reviewing the number and kind of collared animals and the primary cause of mortality for the following:

- 352 White Tail and Mule Deer were collared
- Over 200 Female Moose were collared and calves with monitoring for survival infrared and ground observations
- Elk mortality was analyzed and factors for survival considered

*Norm Merz of Idaho Fish & Game* gave an update on the monitoring done on the Copeland Underpass comparing 2016 to 2021. The graph for this is available on [KVRI | KVRIID \(kvrilaborative.com\)](https://www.kvriid.com) by scrolling to the September, 2021 meeting block. It is believed that fencing may help funnel more animals to the underpass and reduce the numbers using the road. Idaho Fish & Game and Y2Y are applying for a grant for extending the fencing. They are asking KVRI for a letter of support to submit with the grant.

Dan Dinning asked about the grant amount and it was thought they would be requesting around 300,000.00.

Rhonda Vogl shared the Letter of Support drafted and Dan asked the board if there were any concerns or opposition. None were had and the request was granted.

Norm Merz shared information about the upcoming Pheasant release. Details can be seen on the KVRI Community Information page at: [Community Information | KVRIID \(kvrilaborative.com\)](https://www.kvriid.com). Norm noted that 60 pheasant would be released at each of the locations prior to the youth hunt season beginning October 2 and then 50 per week will be released up until December 30<sup>th</sup>.

*Robert Akins, of Idaho Fish & Game*, shared that although rains have been helpful, our water levels at Boundary/Smith Creek are pretty much dry. He updated the group on the completion of the gravel boat ramp and path there as well as the bird hunting blind for AMA.

### **Subcommittee Updates:**

*Forestry - Kevin Knauth – USDA Forest Service* updated the group on the current Westside Restoration Project. The project is involved in NEPA process and it is very close to a decision.

They are waiting to get a letter signed from the regional office allowing them to create openings on the landscape that exceed 40 acres in size. They estimate they have 15 of them throughout the project area and are required to explain the need for such openings on the landscape. They expect to see that letter this week and then will sign a decision right after.

The first sale offering coming out of that project will be in the fall of fiscal year 2022. They will also begin the associated recreation work and road work as well as some other items included in that project.

Fall prescribed burning will be limited this year due to recent moisture and predictions of more moisture and lower temps in the coming weeks. They anticipate still being in a good place to burn slash piles that have been created by machines within our timber sales. Typically, these burns are done after the first snow is on the ground. The estimated time then would be late October into early November.

The over snow vehicle planning has been kickstarted this fall. The main point of contact leading that will be the Sandpoint district Ranger Jesse Berner. Kevin will be involved in this process and noted that the main points include:

- snowmobile uses on the north zone
  - Bonner and Boundary County
- other motorized winter uses
- not analyzing for
  - cross country skiing
  - snowshoeing
  - Backcountry skiing

This analysis will be identification of those areas where motorized winter recreation can occur and will rely on very heavy public buy in which makes it important to get the word spread to various stakeholders and the public.

The decision is hoped to be reached early in FY23.

USFS offices remained closed to the public and, in general, are very low capacity even with Forest Service employees per the U S Department of Agriculture. They are hoping to move back into offices sometime in the new calendar year. They are answering the telephones and providing firewood cutting permits.

Q: Darren Parker asked if the 40 acre plus openings were holding up the signing of the decision and wondered if those were just a small component of the whole project.

A: Kevin Stated that there are 14 or 15 total openings with three or four that are over 300 acres. They are driven by a desire to mimic natural fire on the landscape and how that would create openings and also to respond to existing insect and disease problems. Kevin also explained that the total acreage itself is a 60,000 plus acre project area.

Q Darren also asked how to get fire permits if the offices are closed?

A: Kevin answered that a phone number is provided and those in the office can answer questions and arrange to meet the public at the door with the permit and wearing a mask.

Q: Brad Smith asked about projects that are in the pipeline outside of the Westside Restoration Project.

A: Kevin summarized the projects.

- Decision notice signed on the Buckskin Saddle project late spring
  - It is in the Sandpoint District
  - It is a very big project
- Coming up is a small area around Katka
  - It is approximately one year or so out
- A decision notice was just signed for the Scattered Lands project
  - This will reduce fuels on some of the checkerboarded private/Forest service lands
- Coming up is the Chloride Gold project
  - This area butts right up against the central zone/Coeur D'Alene ranger district
- Following those will be projects in the Priest Lake area
  - Two projects will come from there

*TMDL – Rhonda Vogl* shared that they will be meeting via Zoom on Wednesday, October 13<sup>th</sup> at 8:30 a.m. It is expected that they will go the full 2 hours due to the large amount of subject matter. Updates include information on selenium issues, the BC mines, stream work done this summer and the harmful algae bloom. In addition, there is new staff to introduce. There is a lot going on and it is important to get caught up. Rhonda expressed her hope that all could join on October 13<sup>th</sup>. Zoom information and the meeting notice went out early to help those with busy calendars but there will be some reminder notices as well.

Dan reminded the group that the next meeting for KVRI would be October 18 and Rhonda confirmed that it would be a Hybrid meeting and held at the new location of 6566 Main Street for those able to come. Rhonda shared with the group the 2022 meeting dates for KVRI. These dates can be seen on our website and we will be sending them out to the board.

### **Federal and State Partner Updates:**

*Darren Parker of Senator Risch's office* gave an update saying last month the Senate passed the bipartisan infrastructure bill supported by both Senators Risch and Crapo. This bill includes money for roads bridges and airports and there's a section of the bill that provides about \$3.3 billion for forest management activities which is split between the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. The \$3.3 billion can be used for many things such as hazardous fuel reduction, prescribed fire and community wildfire grants. Additionally, a section of that is \$100 million each year for five years for the community forest landscape restoration program. (CFLRP) which is something this group participates in. Currently KVRI receives 80 million a year meaning this would be a \$20 million per year increase for the next five years.

The bipartisan infrastructure bill also includes a regional advisory council member (RAC) streamlining provision meaning when a new RAC member is appointed, the language says that the appointments go to the secretary or the designee which could be a regional forester and if they're not appointed within 30 days, they will automatically have a RAC.

Darren added that there are a lot of other forests and fire management bills that were introduced in the Senate during the month of July. The fires experienced had a big

impact and there's a very high likelihood that there could be a substantial amount of funding headed to the West to reduce the hazardous fuels that create these uncontrollable wildfires.

Q: Dan Dinning asked Darren about the cuts on the SRS (Secure Rural Schools) money even though it's been funded.

A: Darren replied that it's funded at the FY17 level and then maintained and we removed the funding ramp down provision that we have seen in years prior. Darren added that secure rural schools funding was added during the committee process and the energy and natural resources committee. Darren extended credit for that to Senator Crapo for the original document that provided the wording they needed.

*Jake Garringer of Governor Little's office* shared that the governor had the opportunity to meet with President Biden at the national interagency fire center last week. In his statement afterwards he did call out having spent his time with the President focusing on the progress the states made with collaborative initiatives.

*Carl Petrick, U.S. Forest Service* shared that they are pretty excited about the funding opportunities but concerned because they are not going to be able to hire a lot of government employees. He stated that it does provide them with an opportunity to work a lot more with partners in a collaborative way but added that our contracting and grants and agreements are really desperately low in people right now and overwhelmed just trying to process the normal programs. Carl shared that they are working with NGOs (Non-Government Offices) to see who wants to work with them to treat more acres. They are looking at trying to do more stewardship agreement work and looking at the possibility of developing a new Master Stewardship Agreement with the National Deer Association in region one.

*Kim Pierson, U.S. Forest Service* added that they are really lucky to have Mike Ward helping out as he is filling in behind Michelle Caviness and has a lot of experience with CFLRP. They are hoping to use his time to help with the initiative efforts of the three collaboratives in Idaho and where those opportunities might be implemented. Kim also shared that they are going to be filling a ranger position over at Priest Lake. Felipe Cano took another job on the Plumas National Forest. They have an acting that's coming in and will announce that name once it has been verified. Kim noted that great progress has been made this summer on the Bog Creek Road project. Border Patrol continues to provide the funding opportunities and Christy Johnson-Hughes and Chip Corsi are still looking at a conservation officer and that Border Patrol will be reaching out very soon.

*Carl Petrick* added that they are having some discussions with Rhett Turner, who owns Red Sky Productions, and produced some documentaries related to fire and wildlife and ecology in the South that aired on national public broadcasting. They are looking at trying to do something similar here to help the public better understand some of the issues with forests, disease and insects and why they need to treat more acres and why active management is important.

*Chip Corsi, Idaho Fish & Game* shared that the commissioner position had been filled by appointment by Governor Little. Dave Bobbitt out of Coeur D'Alene will fill that role. Chip also offered a shout out of support to the Forest Service for minimizing the closures needed due to fires.

No further updates were had and the meeting closed at 8:41. Minutes prepared by Karen Schumacher