

Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Coalition



Board Meeting
September 24, 2020
6:00 – 8:00 p.m.
Zoom Online Meeting

Participants

Doug Ferrell
Ed Levert
Allie Maloney
Tim Dougherty
Mike Petersen
Shawn Morgan
Angelo Alderete
Robyn King
Aaron Peterson
Steve Kimball, Montana DNRC

Tye Sundt, Weyerhaeuser
Tim Love, Montana Forest Collaborative
Network
Chad Bensen, Kootenai National Forest
Supervisor
Jacob
Julie Thurston
Lawson Fite
Caroline Mellor, KFSC Coordinator

Meeting Objectives:

- To learn from and share information with the Kootenai National Forest.
- To provide information and research to KFSC members on wildfire.
- To discuss project-level work and upcoming opportunities for KFSC involvement.
- To share KFSC Committee updates and collaborate between committees.

Meeting Summary

Welcome and Introductions

Caroline Mellor, KFSC Coordinator, provided an overview of the agenda. Allie Maloney shared a photo of the gift given to previous Chair Robyn King.

Kootenai National Forest Updates

Chad Benson, Forest Supervisor, Kootenai National Forest (KNF), provided the following updates from the KNF:

- Benson shared on the experience of the KNF in pivoting workflow with COVID-19 and highlighted.
- Throughout the meeting, Benson emphasized his support for the work of the KFSC and expressed his pride and optimism for the continued relationship between the KNF and the KFSC.

Community Wildfire Protection Plan

Board member Ed Levert shared on the on-going work in the Libby area regarding the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP). Levert shared on the relationship between the CWPP, the KNF's Joint-Chiefs application and Shared Stewardship.

Levert and Benson discussed with the Coalition the use of the Forest Service's Shared Stewardship approach related to the CWPP. Shared Stewardship is a newer Forest Service approach to doing work that enables the forests to better work with different landowners and managers, including State agencies, County and local governments, and private landowners. Shared Stewardship functions under the idea that projects can be best accomplished by working across land management boundaries. This approach is valuable for wildfire protection and resilience projects as the issues don't stop at land boundaries. This increased coordination between federal, state and local landowners encourages the necessary structured partnership and coordination.

Note: The December KFSC meeting will have an informative presentation on Shared Stewardship from the Idaho Department of Lands.

Wildfire Guest Speaker

Mark Finney, Missoula Fire Science Laboratory, USDA Forest Service, gave a guest presentation on "The Essential Role of Fire in Fire Management." Finney's Presentation provided detailed scientific explanations for the importance of prescribe fire as a vital tool to increase forest and community resilience to wildfires. Finney emphasized the significance of understanding indigenous fire practices and relationships to fire and forest management. The presentation also noted that logging is part of the solution, but that logging is not the only solution to address fuels accumulation. He highlighted the need for a landscape-scale lens to understand the magnitude of the problem and the magnitude of the solution, stating that solutions go beyond treating only around communities. Finney encouraged communities to think more about the nature of fire and less about the perimeter of their community. He concluded with questions for communities, of "How much fire do we want?" and "What kind of fire do we want?" Finney's work was recommended to the Coalition by a variety of different people involved in community and fire management. The presentation is available on the KFSC website for public viewing.

Discussion:

- Board members asked about distinctions with different forest types, especially areas with narrow burning windows and potential high-risk areas. Finney stressed the use of keeping low elevation areas in good condition, to increase flexibility for other areas and decrease the likelihood of fires getting to higher elevation areas.
- Board members asked about Finney's thoughts on how communities can address the significant fuel build up from previous years of fuel suppression in many forests. Finney shared that there is significant work to be done but there are examples to learn from. He highlighted the use of active management approaches and large landscape burns that can break up areas with fuel

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accumulation, with examples from the Idaho Panhandle and Clearwater National Forests. Finney recommended fire managers from those areas as potential future guest speakers.

Project Work – Updates and Discussion

Trail Proposal to Sanders County RAC – Co-Chair Doug Ferrell discussed recent KFSC support for a joint request by Recreation specialists on the Cabinet Ranger District (RD) of the KNF and Plains/TF RD of the Lolo National Forest. The RDs joined to request RAC funding for trail maintenance in the Vermilion Pass/7 Point/Cataract area. This work would improve, and tie together trails #847, 845, 842, and 845. The proposal includes maintaining low standard roads NFSRs #2237 and 2237A for access to the tops of these trails. This area was considered premier hiking country by members and the proposal is supported by a local advocacy group, the Cube Iron - Cataract Coalition.

Swamped Project Area – Board member Ed Levert and Co-Chair Tim Dougherty shared that internal discussions are occurring to decide the level of KFSC involvement for pre-scoping comments on the project. The project is on the Libby District of the KNF. This project area is just outside of Libby and currently involves planning to treat a portion of the 13,600-acre landscape.

Board members and KNF Supervisor Chad Benson discussed a future flow of communication that could help the internal KFSC process on future projects. Benson offered that District Rangers could come to future Board meetings to discuss upcoming projects relevant to the KFSC and with upcoming involvement opportunities. Ferrell commented that in the past KNF staff had come Board meetings and shared information on all projects; while Board members appreciated the time of KNF staff, Ferrell reported that those meetings did not feel productive. Board members expressed interest in Benson's offer to have KNF staff report on relevant projects at Board members. Coordinator Mellor encouraged Benson to reach out to her with any ideas; Co-Chairs and Mellor will also coordinate with Benson during agenda planning for future meetings.

Future Planning – Co-Chair Doug Ferrell brought forth the idea of doing a basic Strategic Planning processes with the whole Board. This idea was presented as not a full examination of opportunities and challenges, in an effort to not repeat work done over the last year; but as a way to discuss and set forth priorities, goals and actions for the next year for the Coalition. Board members expressed interest in a clear, structured process that could help build consensus on the types of projects the Coalition engages on. Members expressed caution for the group to not get burned out on planning and stressed the importance of a work session that would be focused on actions. Ferrell agreed with these concerns.

Committee Updates

Committee Coordination – Co-Chair Doug Ferrell and Coordinator Mellor discussed upcoming efforts for increased coordination between the different KFSC committees. Mellor shared on upcoming suggested systems to help all Board members track committee efforts.

Education and Outreach Committee – Committee Chair Allie Maloney provided an update on the in-progress focus groups hosted by the Coalition. The focus groups, also called Kootenai Community Conversations, are intended as a venue for community members in Troy, Thompson Falls, Eureka and Libby to share their perspectives and vision on public lands and to learn about different ideas in their communities. A report and virtual "StoryMap" will be created out of the themes, similarities and

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differences that emerge from the discussions. Maloney stated that she will stay Chair of the Committee until KFSC brings in more volunteers with interests in taking on the committee, hopefully next year.

Funding Committee – Board members Ed Levert and Mike Petersen informed the group of their work over the last few months to create an on-going funding source for Coalition work. One of the goals of this work is to use retained receipts from specific forest service projects to go towards community projects, including KFSC work. This is a financial relationship that has been used in some other communities with their neighboring National Forest, including on the Colville National Forest.

Legislative Committee – Committee Chair Allie Maloney updated on efforts to solidify areas of agreement and find new areas to explore for consensus in the Agreement, including recreation and economic development. Coordinator Mellor recently sent out schedule polls to set up October meetings.

Next Steps

Action items before next meeting:

Action item	Responsible Party
Legislative Committee members to meet and discuss next steps to continue forward movement	Legislative Committee Chair Allie Maloney and Coordinator Caroline Mellor
Continue internal discussion on the Swamped Project Area	Board member Ed Levert and Co-Chair Tim Dougherty

Topics for the next meeting agenda:

Action item	Responsible Party
Strategic Planning	Co-Chair Doug Ferrell and Coordinator Caroline Mellor
Shared Stewardship	Co-Chair Tim Dougherty and Coordinator Caroline Mellor
All Committees – To be prepared to share an update	Committee Chairs
Discuss any opportunities for project briefings on projects with relevant upcoming comment opportunities	Co-Chairs Ferrell, Dougherty and Coordinator Mellor