

Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Coalition



Quarterly Board Meeting
Thursday, March 25, 2021
6:00 – 8:00 P.M. MT
Zoom Video Conference

Participants

Board Members Present

Tim Dougherty, Co-Chair
Doug Ferrell, Co-Chair
Allie Maloney, Executive Committee At-Large
Paul McKenzie, Executive Committee At-Large
Mark Peck, Lincoln County Commissioner
Ed Levert
Shawn Morgan, Thompson River Lumber
Angelo Alderete
Tye Sundt, Weyerhaeuser
Juli Thurston, MSU Sanders County Extension
Dawain Burgess
Aaron Peterson, Yaak Valley Forest Council

Guests, Advisors and Collaborative Support

Steve Kimball, Montana DNRC
Tim Love, Montana Forest Collaborative Network
Chad Benson, Kootenai National Forest Supervisor
Phil Hough, Friends of Scotchman's Peak
Caroline Mellor, KFSC Coordinator/Facilitator

Board Members Not Present

Jerry Wandler
Chas Vincent

Meeting Objectives:

- To learn from and share information with the Kootenai National Forest.
- To discuss project-level work and upcoming opportunities for KFSC involvement.
- To share Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Coalition (KFSC) Committee updates and collaborate between committees.

Meeting Summary

Overview

The March 2021 Board meeting served as productive venue for Board members and KNF Chad Benson to discuss upcoming projects and opportunities for the rest for 2021. Board members discussed plans for community outreach, education, and relationship-building with the communities of the KNF.

Welcome and Introductions

Facilitator Caroline Mellor reviewed the meeting purpose and agenda. Co-Chairs Doug Ferrell and Tim Dougherty welcomed the Board and guests to the meeting and expressed appreciation for their time. Doug shared that the group hopes to be face-to-face in June with a hybrid in-person / virtual meeting.

Kootenai National Forest Updates

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

Great Americas Outdoor Act (GAOA) - KNF is preparing for potentially more funding resources to do work from GAOA. Proposals were submitted with the assistance of the Resource Advisory Committee (RAC) due to the limited timeframe for submittals. Chad shared there will be upcoming involvement and opportunities for KFSC in coming months. Chad will follow-up with Co-Chairs as options arise. KNF is looking for ways to spread dollars further and may possibly hire four new people.

Project Updates – Chad shared that the majority of KNF projects are in a consultation stage. He added that he expects projects to progress again in coming months, with opportunities for involvement before or near the June KFSC Quarterly Board meeting.

Shared Stewardship – Chad highlighted recent meetings between State, County, industry, and congressional representatives have been productive. The discussions have involved the next steps to bring projects into the queue, specifically to address the large backlog of acreage related to WUI work (Wildland Urban Interface). Chad communicated that the KNF is looking at both projects that do not pay for themselves and those with opportunities for revenue and income. He indicated that that these conversations are still conceptual and once dialed-in, he will reach out to KFSC for involvement.

Joint Chiefs – Chad noted that some funding requests are in from the KNF and he is hopeful to move more on WUI related projects (focal area of a mile and a half radius). Last year's Joint Chiefs proposal was marked down due to ties to incomplete NEPA (environmental analysis), including some tied to the Ripley project. Chad stated he is hopeful for opportunities for the KNF within the new funding proposal. For the upcoming year, KNF looks to build upon and amend last year's proposal. Board member Ed Levert continues to serve on a Joint Chiefs Committee.

Questions and Discussion:

Grizzly Bear Consultation – Question regarding any sense of time for Biological Opinions (BO) for grizzly bear consultations on projects on the KNF. Chad shared that the federal Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has a backlog of projects for other agencies. KNF is looking for ways to leverage the needle on large acre restoration projects as current work targets 500 million acres across the region. KNF expects the BO for Ripley to come out in the next few weeks, with Black Ram to follow.

Consultation Process – Chad provided an overview of the consultation that the FWS provides as a federal agency for other federal agencies. He explained that the Forest Service is one of many federal agencies supported by the FWS and that this process is part of the environmental review required for all project under the National Environmental Policy ACT, referred to as NEPA.

RAC Funds (Resource Advisory Committee) – Board members inquired about the structure of RAC funds and ways to get involved with the RAC process. Chad explained that RAC funding comes from retained receipt funding. RAC funding is used for capital investment and deferred maintenance projects. RAC funds are parsed into two buckets, one for moving the needle on roads and watershed runoff from roads, and the other for infrastructure such as restrooms. He clarified that the percentage is weighed heavily towards road and watershed runoff needs. Chad and Co-Chair Doug emphasized the importance of finding out the names of local RAC members and communicating priorities.

Information on the KFSC can be found at Kootenaifuture.org

Montana Forest Action Plan – The KNF has put in two to three projects for action plan grants and received positive feedback on one.

Graves Creek Project – Chad updated that this project is in motion with FWS consultation. He also indicated that they are pleased with this type of work and using it as a model.

Communication – Chad emphasized that he would coordinate with Co-Chairs Doug and Tim as opportunities for KFSC Board involvement arise between the March and June Board meetings.

Strategic Planning: Review January Session

In January 2020, the Board held a special session for strategic planning. During this session, the Board discussion several questions related to planning KFSC work for 2021. Facilitator Caroline reviewed the Goals and Action that came out of this discussion (Strategic Planning 2021 Summary is included as an appendix to these Minutes and can be found on the KFSC website).

KFSC Board members discussed implementation of the Strategic Plan actions for 2021 for categories of:

- Relationships with the Larger Community of the KNF
- Recruitment and Member Outreach
- Priorities for Project related work
- Use of Different Tools to Meet Priority Areas
- Relationships with Agency Staff

In particular, the Board further discussed additional local organizations to target for outreach and to build relationships. These include:

- Type – Chamber of Commerce
 - Use to stay connected and to have someone give an update from KFSC
 - Thompson Falls – Angelo prepared to talk to Chamber
- County Commissioners
 - Emphasized importance of coordination with both County's
 - Appreciate involvement from Mark Peck
 - Interest to reach out to Sanders County as well (Tim volunteered)

For the next steps for Strategic Plan implementation, Angelo, Tim, Dwain, Juli, Doug and Shawn volunteered to reach out to the listed organizations.

Angelo added that he spoke with folks that are interested in additional groomed cross country ski trails and would look for ways to involve them in upcoming KFSC work.

Committee Updates

Education and Outreach – Allie Maloney, Committee Chair, reported on recent Committee discussions for the 2021 Committee work plan. The Committee currently consists of Allie, Doug, Juli, Angelo and Bob. Allie shared that the Committee decided that obtainable goals would be six articles in the paper, and to continue to propose pitches to reporters. The group emphasized the use of linking the mission and collaborative concepts to examples and project work in newspaper articles. She shared on the plan

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to balance technical articles explain NEPA with “feel-good” pieces on about the Forest, all while discussing collaboration.

Allie also discussed Community Conversations and Field Trips for this summer. The Community Conversations are to be a continuation of last Falls’ outdoor community conversations but be structured to be a part of other organizations’ meetings. The goal is to continue to build relationships and look for trends and patterns on how others use and see value in the KNF.

Separately, the field trips will serve to connect community members and other organizations to project work and help provide an avenue for public education on forest serve work and nuances.

Allie and Juli shared on the idea to engage with a high school class on forestry work. This idea involves walking students through the process of creating official comments, taking them on a field trip to the proposed project site. Board members were in support of this idea.

District Subcommittees – Board members reviewed recent project work and discussed upcoming opportunities. Tim shared that the Rabbit Tracks project is indicated for the WUI area NE of Troy and that Stimpson engaged and proposed to do a lot of work. Tim emphasized the collaborative working relationship from Stimpson on this project. Doug shared that there is a small project on the Cabinet District called Lego that is included in an application through the MT Forest Action Plan.

Committee Coordination – Coordinator/Facilitator Caroline continued the discussion on committees sharing meeting notes the google drive and sharing out with the larger Board in a monthly newsletter.

Vote on Board Members and Officers

Vote on new members – One new member was voted in as a Board member.

- Bob Castaneda

Bob’s nomination was read by Board member Ed Levert. His biography read as “Bob was a 30-year Forest Service employee having worked in Idaho, Montana and Oregon. Retired as the Kootenai Forest Supervisor. Community activities include past member of the Lincoln County Chamber of Commerce (Chair), past member of Libby Rotary International, past member of Libby Area Economic Committee. Present member of Cabinet View Golf Course (vice chair), present member of Cabinet Peaks Medical Center (Chair). Bob also volunteers at the Heritage Museum, with Habitat for Humanity and for Society of American Foresters and Ducks Unlimited.”

Vote on Executive Committee Members – As indicated in the By-Laws, Executive Committee members are voted on at the annual March meeting. Facilitator Caroline highlighted the move last June from a Chair and Vice-Chair to two equal Co-Chairs, with the intention for each Co-Chair to represent different interests on the KNF. KFSC Board members vote to keep the current Executive Committee members. Executive Committee members shared on their appreciation for the Officer position, with reference to the honor or serving and the opportunity to use their skills well. No other Board members were nominated for the Executive Committee. Newer Board members were encouraged to think about leadership opportunities for 2022.

- Co-Chairs (2): Tim Dougherty and Doug Ferrell
- At-Large Executive Committee Members (2): Paul McKenzie and Allie Maloney

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Next Steps and Wrap-Up

Tim Love, Montana Forest Collaborative Network reminded the Board that collaborative member reports will be need for the network by the end of June.

Steve Kimball, Montana DNRC, noted his observation that the KFSC is clearly committed to the efforts exemplified in the Montana Forest Action Plan. He shared that there will be upcoming funding options for collaboratives in the form of local assistance grants.

Phil Hough, Friends of Scotchman Peaks, shared that is working on a trails system plan. He noted that this not a comprehensive planning process and that they are holding for future funding options.

Facilitator Caroline reviewed the action items decided upon for the June meeting. Co-Chairs thanked Board members for an engaging meeting.

Action items before June 2021 Quarterly Board Meeting:

Action items	Responsible Party
Before June Meeting – Executive Committee to coordinate with KNF Chad Benson on opportunities for comments; Co-Chairs to bring opportunities to the whole Board	Executive Committee
June Meeting – Exec Comm will set logistics for a hybrid (in-person and virtual) meeting; Follow-up with Board on e-mail	Executive Committee and Coordinator
KFSC Website <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Update with Strategic Plan document• Meeting Summary	Coordinator and Exec Comm’s Allie Maloney (as current website point person)
Newsletters <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Meeting Summary to KFSC larger email list• Committee Updates to Board list	Coordinator to create; with approval and coordination from Executive Committee
Write Collaborative Update for Montana Forest Collaborative Network	Executive Committee & Coordinator
Strategic Plan Implementation – Outreach to targeted organizations identified.	Co-Chairs and Coordinator work with those that volunteered to do organizational outreach Angelo, Dwain, Juli and Shawn