

**Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Coalition
Quarterly Board Meeting
Thursday, October 7, 2021
6-8pm MT
Zoom Meeting**



Participants

Board Members

Doug Ferrell, Co-Chair
Allie Maloney, Executive Committee At-Large
Paul McKenzie, Executive Committee At-Large
Jerry Wandler, R Place
Tye Sundt, Weyerhaeuser
Angelo Alderete,
Juli Thurston, MSU Sanders County Extension
Bob Castaneda, Retired KNF Supervisor
Cameron Wohlschlegel, Stoltze Land and Lumber
Mark Peck, Lincoln Co Port Authority

Board Members Not Present

Tim Dougherty, Co-Chair
Chas Vincent, Environomics
Aaron Peterson, Yaak Valley Forest Council
Dawain Burgess
Shawn Morgan, Thompson River Lumber
Ed Levert
Mike Petersen

Guests, Advisors and Collaborative Support

Hannah Anderson, Facilitator, The Langdon Group
Amy Pearson, Friends of Scotchman's Peak Wilderness
Phil Hough, Friends of Scotchman's Peak
Chad Benson, Kootenai National Forest, Forest Supervisor
Steve Kimball, Montana DNRC
Tim Love, Montana Forest Collaborative Network
Tom Partin, American Forest Resource Council
Sara Ghafouri, American Forest Resource Council
Jeff Babik, Yaak Valley Forest Council
Seth Carbonari, Eureka District Attorney

Meeting Objectives:

- For the Board and New Coordinator to become acquainted.
- To learn about and demystify the Forest Service's 5-year process.
- To discuss how stakeholder involvement with Forest Service projects could look
- To share subcommittee updates and progress at the project-level.

Meeting Summary

Welcome and Introductions

The meeting was called to order, and Co-Chair Doug Ferrell welcomed the Board and guests to the meeting, thanking them for their time. Hannah Anderson with The Langdon Group was introduced as

the new KFSC Facilitator. Attendees introduced themselves, stating the agency, organization or interest they represented, as well as their position within subcommittees, if any.

Kootenai National Forest Updates

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

- Over the next few months there will be a lot of action associated with the Great American Outdoors Act. Specifically, spending will occur in late 2021 and 2022 to move facilities projects ahead, including the Ross Creek Cedars Boardwalk Project.
- How Congress will use money through the Joint Chiefs program, and in turn how that will trickle down through programs and actions, is yet to be determined. However, they have promised funding toward the WUI and forest management programs. The FS has gathered a leveraging group to monitor and ensure that spending, and to help the region decide where money is allocated.
- Regarding the KNF 5-year process, several projects will be of special interest, including: Knotty Pine, Black Ram, McKay Engle and Peak Meadows in Eureka. Projects in Eureka will need to be further solidified in the next few years.
- KNF will be reviewing the 5-year process in more detail at a scheduled meeting in 3 weeks. Following that meeting, the next annual Board Meeting would be opportune for discussing findings and plans in closer detail.

Discussion:

Board Question: Do you see the focus of projects changing in the next 5 years? KF responded that yes, there has been a lot of discussion around moving towards more outcomes-based projects rather than quantity-based work.

A board member remarked on the worsening conditions of the forest, namely dryness and fire risks. KNF agreed that management will be an increasing balancing act. The Board discussed that fire management may be less about how much is treated, but rather the methods (how) the forest is treated.

KNF and the Board discussed financial opportunities and efforts to level the KNF workforce.

Ripley Project Update

Co-Chair Doug Ferrell gave a brief overview of the Ripley project, including summarized points and perspectives given from absent members Ed Levert and Co-Chair Tim Dougherty: Ripley is a large project, south of Libby, most of which is in the WUI or very close to it, with substantial roadways already constructed throughout. The KFSC submitted a written statement of support for the project in 2020 which pointed out potential concerns. The project is supported by several members of the public who participated in field trips and reviews of the project. Litigation has been brought against project implementation on the grounds of alleged NEPA violations and that the area should have a BORZ (Bears Outside Recovery Zone) classification due to grizzly bear activity within the area.

Discussion:

Information on the KFSC can be found at Kootenaifuture.org

The Board expressed surprise over the focus of the litigation on grizzly bear habitat issues. due to much of the project being within the WUI, and therefore close to town, with commercial, residential and recreational uses. The Forest Service noted that grizzly bear activity had been researched for the area, and the resulting data indicated the area was not suitable for a special focus on grizzly bear habitat.

The Board and USFS discussed concern for how long the litigation process could take and the potential for it to affect other project timelines, There was agreement that the project deserves a strong defense.

Mark Peck noted the County's support for KFSC taking action in support of the project.

AFRC Approaches to Ripley Response

Sara Ghafouri and Tom Partin were introduced with the American Forest Resource Council (AFRC), a non-profit trade association which represents timber interests throughout the west. Sara explained the AFRC has a monitoring arm as well as an in-house legal team to aid defense of forest projects. The AFRC uses factors to assess projects, and whether defending them is worthwhile. The AFRC expressed a strong desire to defend the Ripley project, noting a precedential nature in terms of allegations being made, and a direct impact to AFRC members.

Sara Ghafouri explained the KFSC can participate at one of two levels:

- 1) Intervener – A full party defendant that participates fully in all levels of litigation. Includes delegating one representative as the Declarant and working with the Council to provide a written declaration (statement) which outlines priorities and concerns in the project.
- 2) Amicus – Provide a one-time written statement/report to inform the court of the Stakeholders' perspective.

Discussion:

The Board discussed the potential impact their unique identity/perspective could have as a participant - representing the Kootenai Forest's many stakeholders, a local perspective, and community impact. Many members spoke in open support for participating at an intervener level, expressing the sentiment "This is why we have collaboratives and commissions – to pull together for change," and the idea of a precedent being set if the defense of this project was not upheld.

Vote:

The Board voted to participate at an Intervener level. The vote passed with 12/17 votes in favor, All members in attendance voted in favor plus proxy votes from Ed Levert and Shawn Morgan.

Committee Updates

Executive Committee: Doug Ferrell, Co-Chair, noted that the Executive Committee is meeting monthly to keep things on track, as well as to identify issues and topics of interest and relevance to the Board.

Information on the KFSC can be found at Kootenaifuture.org

Timber: Tracking a few upcoming projects including Mckay Engle, Knotty Pine and Eureka.

Funding: none

Education and Outreach: Allie Maloney, Executive Committee member at-large and Education and Outreach subcommittee member, gave a report of glowing success for the recent Forest Fair event. Roughly 200 people attended the event, creative solutions were used to comply with COVID regulations, attendees enjoyed speaking with each of the booths/agencies, and the free beer was a hit. There was a good showing and mix of agency representation. When asked, most attendees said they heard about the event from word of mouth. Overall, the success of the event justifies doing it again.

Discussion:

- Members expressed appreciation and admiration for Allie Maloney and Angelo Alderete and their key roles in orchestrating the success of the Forest Fair event.

Recommendation of Expanding Board Membership

Co-chair Doug Ferrell presented the EC's recommendation of expanding Board membership (and adjusting the bylaws) from 15-20 members.

Discussion:

Paul suggested expanding to 21 instead of 20 to prevent potential tied votes.

It was clarified that membership is open to general membership, so long as they adhere to proper nomination procedures which state nominations must be officially submitted a minimum of 15 days prior to the Spring Annual Meeting, when elections take place.

Allie Maloney advocated that the nomination and voting process remain as is, stating that the process keeps the Board balanced and in check. However, she proposed that the Board consider how best to correct an imbalance towards timber-representation, suggesting addition of a member from Friends of Scotchman's Peak as a solution. Mark Peck agreed, stating that there needs to be more representation from conservation interests, and suggesting formation of a wilderness committee.

Vote:

The board voted to increase board membership from 15 to 21 seats. With 10 members in attendance, the vote passed with 8/10 votes in favor.

Action items before next meeting:

Action item	Responsible Party
Update Meeting Summary to KFSC Website	Coordinator and EC Website Admin
Newsletter <ul style="list-style-type: none">Meeting Summary to KFSC larger email list	Coordinator to create; with approval and coordination from Executive Committee
Ripley Project <ul style="list-style-type: none">Op-edDelegate a Declarant to connect with AFRC	Co-Chairs

Topics for the next meeting agenda:

Action item	Responsible Party
Kootenai Nation Forest 5-Year Plan	Chad Benson, KNF Supervisor
Ripley Project Updates	Executive Committee
Planning for Board Elections at Spring Annual Meeting	Coordinator and Executive Committee