

Kootenai Forest Stakeholders Coalition

Board Meeting

September 15, 2022

6:30-8pm MT

Flathead Valley Community College, Lincoln County Campus

Optional Zoom Participation Provided



Participants

Board Members

Aubrey Bertram
Brooke Bolin
Dawain Burgess
Bob Castaneda
Erin Clark
Tim Dougherty
Doug Ferrell
John Gubel
Phil Hough
Josh Letcher
Ed Levert
Shawn Morgan
Mark Peck
Tony Petrusa
Juli Thurston

Board Members Not Present

Chuck Ekstedt
Tye Sundt
Jerry Wandler
Cameron Wohlschlegel

Guests, Advisors, and Collaborative Support

Hannah Anderson, Facilitator
Ray Stout, Kootenai Valley Record
Chad Benson, FS, Kootenai NF
Tim Love, Montana Forest Collaboration
Chris Bachman, YVFC
Ken Vanden Heuvel, YVFC
Jodi Turk, Good Neighbor Authority

Meeting Objectives:

- Hear updates from the Kootenai National Forest.
- Review the draft 2023 work plan and gather board input on goals and objectives.
- Present the new board member orientation process.
- Vote on new board members.

Meeting Summary

Welcome and Introductions

Facilitator Hannah Anderson called the meeting to order and thanked participants for joining both in person as well as virtually via Zoom. Hannah prompted the Board members to introduce themselves. Non-board members were asked to introduce themselves as well, including the organization, agency, or interest they represented. Co-chairs Tim and Doug announced that the Board held an executive session prior to the public Board Meeting. Amongst other items, the Board voted on the election of new board members. Co-Chairs welcomed the following new Board members:

- Aubrey Bertram, Wild Montana
- Brooke Bolin, Friends of Scotchman's Peak Wilderness

- John Gubel, Retired Forest Service, Cabinet District Ranger
- Tony Petrusha, Libby Outdoor Recreation Association

The Facilitator reviewed the agenda for the evening, which proceeded as follows.

Forest Fair

Board members Bob Castaneda and Brooke Bolin gave an update on the Forest Fair on behalf of the Education and Outreach subcommittee. The Forest Fair will be held on Saturday, October 1st from 2-5pm in Libby, Montana. 30 agencies and organizations have signed up to host booths. Highlights in planning for the Fair include: family friendly activities, KFSC branded SWAG items, a keg of beer generously donated by Cabinet Mountain Brewing, door prizes, and raffles.

The Education and Outreach Committee produced fliers to promote the Fair and has been inviting key community members to participate. Fliers were provided for meeting attendees to take and pass out. Volunteers are still needed to support the event day of.

Kootenai National Forest Updates

Chad Benson, Kootenai National Forest (KNF), provided a brief update on KNF items:

- All of Montana has seen a rise in recreational use of forest lands since the pandemic. The KNF continues to observe and record data surrounding forest use.
- Board Member Dawain Buress asked about whether slash and burn activities will occur this year. KNF confirmed that yes, permission has been given for later in the fall season.
- Board Member Phil Hough commented on the great public involvement and public relations that KNF has been doing.
- KNF is excited that a new hire, Jason Bray from Yellowstone, will be joining the Forest Service. Jason will serve as Deputy Forest Supervisor.
- KNF is hiring for many positions.

Guest Speaker - FireWise Council

Jacob Jeresek and Mark Peck provided a presentation overview on key items related to the mission, accomplishments, and goals of the FireWise Council. A press release was submitted in the last month that covered many of these items, which Jacob reviewed as follows:

- MOU for cross-boundary management, including 4 agencies and groups, identifying 7 action items.
- Lincoln County WUI shared stewardship initiative sets goals to treat 10k acres on agency lands.
- The Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) is undergoing an update. It is minorly adjusted every couple of years, but has not been fully updated since 2013. Comparable plans were reviewed to model the update after. The CWPP will be finalized and open for public comment

this fall, at which time the KFSC can provide feedback. The CWPP will be finalized and signed by the end of the year.

- A tool to help analyze and show the collective work of the forest industry is being developed, called The WUI Road Map. It will be an interactive story map that shows visual models of the future.
- Funding has been received to treat acres in the Joint Chiefs Project surrounding Libby.
- Jennifer Nelson has reported on the KFRAI Grant committed to treating acres.
- A proposal has been submitted for the Kootenai Complex Project. The Bipartisan Infrastructure Bill awarded money for “pace and scale” to help with fire prevention. \$19.3 million was awarded, the bulk of which will be used to increase the task force.
- The Rabbit Tracks project has received a grant awarded through the Montana Forest Action Plan.
- RFPs for grants are coming out soon. FireWise is looking at submitting a request for funding related to the area on Heron.

Mark Peck provided the following information in addition:

- The goal is to come up with manufacturing capacity to handle the amount of wood. Most wood products harvested in fire risk reduction projects right now are too small for conventional sawmills, so the majority are currently piled and burned.
- The Commissioners’ Declaration acknowledges that Lincoln County has the highest combined acreage of forest at fire risk. It declared a state of emergency as the County’s way of recognizing the risk to public health.

Proposed 2023 Work Plan

EC member Erin Clark gave an overview of the proposed 2023 Work Plan. She explained the intention of the Work Plan is to serve as a guiding document for the Board in making decisions and actions towards accomplishment of the KFSC’s goals. The Work Plan also demonstrates a plan for satisfying the commitments made in the pursuit of grant applications.

The proposed 2023 Work Plan will be distributed to the Board. Members were asked to provide feedback and suggestions to the Executive Committee in the coming months. The EC will send an availability poll to board members in order to host a Zoom Q&A session to further review the Work Plan, answer questions, and collect feedback. The 2023 Work Plan will be revised to incorporate feedback following the Q&A session, and the final draft will be presented for adoption by Board vote at the quarter 4 Board meeting in December 2022.

Committee Updates

Subcommittees reported out as follows:

- *Executive Committee:* Co-Chairs Tim and Doug explained that the EC’s function is to act in representation of the full Board’s wishes and goals. They requested that Board members provide feedback on how the EC has been performing in fulfilling this duty, in particular relating

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to communication structures, op-ed drafting and submission, and other related processes. Doug referenced the recently submitted Falls Creek Acquisition Vital Ground support letter as an example of how the EC fulfills these duties, and the procedural challenges involved with often short turn around times for submitting such letters. Board members should reach out the EC directly with any questions or suggestions, or can submit feedback to the facilitator.

- *Education and Outreach:* A field tour of a Forest Service project is being planned for October, dependent on smoke levels. The Education and Outreach committee recently gave a presentation to the Lincoln County Sno-Cat Club. The Committee continues to prepare for the 2022 Forest Fair. A brochure presenting an overview of the KFSC has been prepared and will be available for distribution.
- *Grants and Funding:* KFSC Treasurer Bob Castaneda gave a report of the KFSC’s financial condition. Total KFSC expenses average around \$18-19k. \$15k is provisioned for retention of the KFSC Facilitator through The Langdon Group, and the remaining \$3-4K is used for outreach efforts, administrative costs associated with printing and preparation of documents, and hosting the annual Forest Fair event. The current funding condition is satisfactory, and new income sources have been identified, pending further investigation.
- *District Subcommittees:* Co-Chair Tim Dougherty provided an overview of the purpose of district subcommittees, noting that their goal is to support district rangers. It is highly important that the KFSC maintains dialogue with the district rangers, and that subcommittees should pay special attention to reinforcing those relationships and keeping those lines of communication alive. District Subcommittees representatives should rely on the EC in the event of issues or challenges as needed.
- *Conservation Committee:* Co-Chair Doug Ferrell discussed the role and importance of the KFSC’s Work Plan in setting forth the goals, accomplishments, and vision for achieving the intentions of the conservation committee. The committee is working with a variety of groups including the Troy Mountain to Town Group in support of their goals.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

Hannah reviewed follow up items identified during the meeting as follows:

Action Items Before Next Meeting	Responsible Party
Promote and Attend 2022 Forest Fair	
Review Proposed 2023 Work Plan and provide feedback to the Executive Committee	
Collect photos and media for KFSC marketing	

Topics Identified for Next Meeting Agenda	Responsible Party
Vote and Adoption of 2023 Work Plan	

The KFSC Board took a group photo.

Meeting Adjourned