

**Bonner County Natural Resources Committee
Meeting Minutes**

March 28, 2024 – 10:30 A.M.

**Bonner County Administration Building
1500 Hwy 2, Ste. 338, Sandpoint, ID 83864**

Members Present: Cornel Rasor, Jim McReynolds, Clay Nichols, Robert Clark, & Alton Howell

Members Absent: Wayne Martin, Luke Hixson

Others Present:

Commissioners Present: Commissioner Luke Omodt & Regan Plume, Kaniksu Land Trust

- 1) Call Meeting to Order @ 10:30 a.m.
- 2) Pledge of Allegiance
- 3) Approval of Minutes – The 1/25/24 minutes were approved with corrections.
- 4) New Business

A. Land Designation on USPF lands in Bonner & Boundary Counties – Presentation – Brad Smith, Idaho Conservation League (ICL) Director. Mr. Smith gave an overview of the ICL and their involvement in trying to get Scotchman Peak designated as Wilderness. He spoke about their new goals and updated ‘collaborative’ approach to have Scotchman Peak in Bonner County and Selkirk Crest, Long Canyon and the Salmo-Priest Wilderness area in Boundary County designated as Wilderness. Mr. Smith has been reaching out to stakeholders from all walks of life to be part of the process. Mr. Smith also touched on the Upper Pack River area which is an area that has been identified as a primitive management area. The Forest Service’s management plan regarding that area states that summer motorized and mechanized use is off limits, but in the wintertime, winter over snow vehicles use is allowed. He gave a brief overview of the history of that area. Their new approach includes ‘land exchanges’ to assist the public in having access to public lands. Other ideas may come forward as the process moves forward. This will be an open process with the purpose of crafting legislation that benefits conservation, recreation and local economies. Mr. Smith has reached out to recreation groups, tribes, forest groups, state agencies, farm & ranch groups, local governments, and other conservation groups. ICL is hoping to move the conversation forward over the next year and then have legislation ready by 2026. Mr. Smith took questions from the BCNRC. Cornel asked about the listed endangered species. Mr. Smith stated that it is Grizzly Bears, Wolverines, Canada Lynx, Caribou (no longer here, but still listed). The board asked if ICL would compromise on the designation. Mr. Smith answered that their preferred designation is Wilderness, but just like Upper Pack (primitive management area), there are alternatives that can be considered. A lengthy discussion occurred regarding the presentation. The BCNRC appreciated that ICL had a new approach and was looking to include all stakeholders in the process. They are cautious about the end result; however, they are willing to go to meetings and be part of the discussion in order to research this matter further. Several members asked to be on the email list to receive information. Cornel stated that this was a helpful presentation.

B. County Position on Conservation Easements – Cornel would like to assign different components of conservation easements to BCNRC members to study and write a draft opinion for. Several handouts were given to members.

C. Review of Natural Resources Plan – Cornel asked the board if they had time to review the plan. One member stated that his focus was on Solar Wind Farms and if there is any nexus in our policy. It was stated that there are a few, but that the BCNRC should clean that up. The future of water as a resource is also a critical issue. A lengthy discussion occurred regarding water adjudication. There have been legislative bills introduced to regulate the way water is drawn in community wells. There was also discussion regarding the Rathdrum/Spokane Aquifer, fish & wildlife, wells, farmland, and urban services.

5) Agency/Group Updates

A. USFS – This update did not take place due to Mr. Hixson's absence.

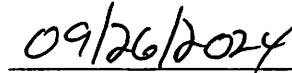
B. Panhandle Forest Collaborative – Jim McReynolds stated that everything had been covered in the presentation. Commissioner Omodt spoke about a robust conversation regarding salvaged timber sales, primarily the timeliness and the frustration about the amount of fiber that is out there and the lack or willingness to harvest. Millions of board feet are being lost. There have been some sales that were tied up in litigation. However, there was a fire over in Lakeview and it appears that a salvage sale will be moving forward this season. 'They' are going to try and put together a field trip to past salvage areas in Kootenai and Benewah Counties.

6) Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:27 a.m.



Approval



Date