

**Bonner County Natural Resources Committee
Meeting Minutes**

August 29, 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, Luke Hixson & Alton Howell

Members Absent:

Others Present:

- 1) Call Meeting to Order @ 10:34 a.m.
- 2) Pledge of Allegiance
- 3) Approval of Minutes – The 3/28/24 and the 4/25/24 minutes will be approved at the next meeting.
- 4) New Business

A. Expansion of Solar Energy – Cornel will contact Commissioner Omodt to get up to speed regarding this matter for the next meeting.

B. Conservation Easements – Cornel presented a report regarding conservation easements and funding. He listed various programs and funding mechanisms, specifically mentioning Chesapeake Bay Watershed who will receive a total of \$8.9 million to restore and conserve habitats. The concern was that hefty funding is coming from government agencies and it has been shown that the least effective manager of lands is the government. A lengthy discussion occurred regarding the Chevron Decision. The board looked at different ways for landowners not to put their land in a conservation easement. Cornel asked if any members would write a statement for the resources plan of what Bonner County considers a proper approach to conservation easements. It would not be proscriptive or prohibitive. It will simply be a statement of a direction that people should think about when they are considering using conservation easements to protect their land. Cornel will write a first draft.

C. Idaho Transportation Department/HWY 95 – Previous proposed bypass in Sagle has been put on the back burner, but the BCNRC will keep it on the radar. A brief discussion occurred regarding the history of the bypass.

5) Agency/Group Updates

A. USFS – Luke Hixson - Nothing much has changed, however, to Jim's point we are beginning the planning stages of treatment along HWY 57 for set distances off the highway beyond the easement that exists. This is in the planning stages, and they are beginning to collect data. This is largely based around hazardous fuels reduction. The potential is for this to start in about 2 years. Fiscal year 27. Cornel asked about the fiber optic program and if it was possible to fit it in at the same time. Luke stated that it probably would not.

B. Panhandle Forest Collaborative – Jim McReynolds stated that there is not a lot of new stuff going on. Cornel suspects that Stan Meyer has not been getting the emails and will look into the matter. Stan is our liaison for the IPPLI. Cornel will contact him to get more information.

Cornel had the opportunity to attend a legislative trip to Green Acres Irrigation District with the Idaho Water College. It won't have severe impact on Bonner County although the southern end of Bonner County is on the northern edge of the Rathdrum aquifer. Everybody wants this aquifer. This was an opportunity to hear from different irrigation districts and canals districts from around the state regarding the recent water fiasco –

the supposed 500,000 acres that were going to go dry. That wasn't quite the truth, there's a lot of fearmongering. Some had to do with water seniority, and it is a complicated issue. There was a 12-million-gallon shortage that has been made up. There was a lot of misinformation regarding this issue.

Questions came up about the state taking water rights from North Idaho and allocating them to the Boise area. Cornel stated that it would be difficult for that to happen due to the Idaho constitution. Cornel will look further into this matter.

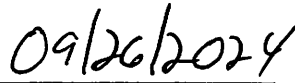
Luke spoke about his field trip to the Ridge Creek Fire. Brad was there and he gave a quick rundown of what they were trying to accomplish. Cornel will reach out to Stan to give the board an update. There has been a flurry of emails from IPPLI. Cornel will forward them to the board. This is an approach to place more land into wilderness. It has to do with Scotchman Peak and others. Luke stated that it was Scotchman Peak and Long Canyon in Boundary County. He added that it is also Selkirk Crest.

6) Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 am.



Approval



Date