

Montana Fish & Wildlife Conservation Trust
Minutes from Joint State Federal Board
Meeting – June 19, 2019

Attendees:

John Hagengruber (Chair) (FS) jhagengruber@usda.gov
David Allen, (USFWS) david_allen@fws.gov
Tom Sawatzke (Co-Chair)(BOR) tsawatzke@usbr.gov
Kim Prill (BLM) kprill@blm.gov
Rick Northrup (MFWP) rnorthrup@mt.gov
Bill Orsello (CAB member) williamorsello@gmail.com
Jeff Hagener, Montana's Outdoor Legacy Foundation (Board Mbr) jdhagener@icloud.com
Mitch King, Montana's Outdoor Legacy Foundation (ED) mitch@mtoutdoorlegacy.org
Dan Stremcha (Canyon Ferry Dam)
Dick Dolan, Trust for Public Land
Deb Lane, Recorder deb@mtoutdoorlegacy.org

John convened the meeting at 9:08 am.

Introductions

It was noted that a field trip to the Sleeping Giant interim project area would be available after the JB meeting ends if anyone was interested in attending.

Minutes:

The 02/08/2019 minutes were presented. Motion by Kim to approve; Second by Tom; Vote to approve 5 – 0.

Project updates:

The YT Timber (aka Garrity Mtn) project with the Wild Sheep Foundation closed without the request for Trust funding from the Foundation. This was due to the new process enacted by FWP on all closings. FWP had the Wild Sheep Foundation write a letter transferring their Trust grant award for \$100,000 to FWP. The only problem with that is it did not include the deed restrictions that are included with every FWP project transaction. The Trust will work with FWP to do a deed amendment in order to add the deed restrictions and allow the Trust to fund the project.

Pheasants Forever will be requesting a grant extension for their 2017 Teton River project. PF is pursuing purchasing a conservation servitude with the Trust for the \$50,000 awarded for this project. Complications arose when the landowner transferred all properties to PF upon their first of two payments (grant awarded for the second payment cycle). A new appraisal has been completed and working on issues with the title commitment which should be cleared up this year.

Financials:

Summary figures thru 3/31/2019 were presented along with an account overview:

Ending balance of the Trust was \$24,753,308 as of 5/18/19;

The TM is reviewing the investment policies with DA Davidson. Their next board meeting will be on 8/12/19 after which they will present to the JB at their next meeting recommendations for any updates/changes to the policy.

Updates would include: Types of investments (adding real estate assets); percentages in each of the major investment categories; and establishing a buffer or base figure to ensure the corpus of the Trust is safe even thru major downturns.

The JB considers the TMs fiduciary role in the Trust is to help determine the prudent way to invest the funds and protect the corpus however establishing a buffer should be determined by both the JB and TM in order to deter the perception of a conflict of interest due to the TM's ability to earn more in fees due to a higher buffer level. Input from DA Davidson will be useful however there would be the same ability to earn higher fees due to a higher buffer level also.

CAB Vacancy Update:

The resumes and CAB recommendation for the Hunter position were sent to the Secretary for review. A new level of review by the White House liaison was added in June. The review process will also include any vacancies on the JB by DOI agencies. This may delay any replacement of JB members. It was recommended the JB gather all appointment letters from each of their members in order help describe to Margaret Triebisch the multiple level governance of the Trust.

Monitoring:

The State has gone to a 5 year reporting process on their projects and the other federal agencies have also stated they would like to do that also rather than the annual phone call. The TM will be establishing the process for the onsite visits including a form to complete including pictures of each project area. Mitch and Deb will work on developing more formal procedures for the phone monitoring and on-site visits. Thru the use of more efficient legal documents, the Trust has the ability to assure the projects and the attributes funded by the Trust are being protected in perpetuity.

2019 CAB project recommendations:

The 30 day public comment period for 2019 project recommendations ended on 6/10/19. No negative remarks were received from the 68 total comments. Six of nine projects received comments. The JB requested that the new Trust Manager project summary form be used for their review also. A few modifications will be made to accommodate both levels of review. Deb will also summarize the CAB's review process which reflects the criteria that is used for making decisions on which projects to fund and at what funding level.

No projects were received for inside the area during the current funding cycle. Inside funding will remain available for future projects as they become viable. All projects recommended at this time are from outside the target area. In addition, returned funds of \$26,000 from outside the target area make a total of \$457,814 available for outside the area projects. A total of \$457,000 has been recommended to fund 9 projects. \$814 will be considered carryover available for interim project referrals.

WW White Memorial FAS: CAB recommends funding in the amount of \$100,000 for the FWP project. This project scored the highest at 18 out of 20. It will provide easier access to the area, is floatable, and will allow access to Forest Service land.

Big Arm State Park: CAB recommends funding in the amount of \$50,000 for the Montana State Parks Association. This well developed and heavily used state park is facing a tremendous price jump in their lease with DNRC. The Association is proposing a perpetual conservation easement purchase on the property which would be managed by FWP.

Stumptown – addition to Garrity Mountain WMA: CAB recommends funding in the amount of \$75,000 for the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation project. This will protect an additional 620 acres for elk and wild sheep protection in the Garrity Mountain WMA.

Lost Trail CE: CAB recommends funding in the amount of \$50,000 for this project from the Trust for Public Land. This CE will protect over 7,000 acres of land and will prevent future development. FWP will hold and monitor the Conservation Easement.

Frenchtown: CAB recommends funding in the amount of \$40,000 for this project from Five Valleys Land Trust. This CE will protect 160 acres of land from development, provide open space, and recreational activities for the public on private land including an all abilities access point and trail system.

Ash Coulee CE: CAB recommends funding in the amount of \$50,000 for this project from MFWP. This will provide free public hunting, access viewing and habitat improvements on public Land. FWP will manage the CE.

West Bridger: CAB recommends funding in the amount of \$50,000 for this project from Gallatin Valley Land Trust. This is fee title purchase of 160 acres in the Middle Cottonwood area. Once purchased this will be transferred to the USFS.

Upper Smith Legacy: CAB recommends funding in the amount of \$22,000 for this project from the Whitefish Legacy Partners. This will include fee title purchase of 160 acres which will then be encumbered with a conservation easement on it and an adjacent 160 acres.

Dillon High Trails: CAB recommends funding in the amount of \$20,000 for this project from the Beaverhead Trails Coalition. This is the final section in a 4 year plan to acquire fee title to approximately 1100 acres of land close to the city of Dillon. It has been made into a recreational area and opened to public access. This section will complete the project.

Great Falls Last Best Open Space: This project from Missouri River Open Lands Preservation was not recommended for funding. Scored poorly due to a lack of conserving new areas and no new public access would be created.

No motions were made. The new JB/TM approval forms will be completed and emailed to all JB members. At that time they will vote on the 2019 proposals.

Next meeting date:

The next Joint Board meeting may be held on September 26, 2019 at the Townsend Ranger District. An on-site visit to the newly acquired BLM Toston project will be planned.

Public Comment:

Dick Dolan (Trust for Public Land) wanted to thank the Trust for using their best judgement making the tough decisions as to who to fund and at what level, not an easy task.

Adjourned: 12:10