



Livestock Loss Board

August 24, 2016

Board Meeting

Red Lodge MT

Meeting Minutes

Livestock Loss Board Members Present:

Elaine Allestad - Chairperson
Jim Cross
Whitney Klasna
Seth Wilson

Staff: George Edwards – Executive Director

Guests: Maureen Davey – Stillwater County Commissioner
Jami Howell
Kyren Kunkel

Chair Elaine Allestad called the meeting to order.

Introductions:

- Each board member and board staff introduced themselves.
- Chair Elaine Allestad asked the audience members to introduce themselves and encouraged public comment.

Board Minutes:

Board members reviewed the April 29, 2016 minutes. Ms. Allestad asked if there were any corrections or additions. Jim Cross noted two grammatical errors.

Motion: Jim Cross made a motion to approve the minutes as amended. Whitney Klasna seconded the motion. **Discussion:** None. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

Budget Status:

Mr. Edwards stated the board ended the state fiscal year with \$5,700 remaining in their account. Department of Livestock's accounting division had projected the board would have been over budget by ten dollars.

\$300,000 was carried over for death loss claims and an additional \$200,000 will be added during state fiscal year 2017. At the end of FY 2017 the board should have funding available for loss prevention grants again. The current appropriation of \$200,000 expires on June 30, 2017.

During fiscal year 2016 the board paid about \$220,000 in death loss claims which exceeded the yearly appropriation. The budget has been corrected for FY 2017 to reflect actual office rent expenses. Network charges for internet access have increased and indirect charges also increased due to more payments made in FY 16. Evan Waters, accounting supervisor is making corrections to the board's license plate account so a balance will be easier to determine.

Reports:

George Edwards, Executive Director – Mr. Edwards provided a year to date comparison for 2015 vs 2016. Last year the board had paid for 17 animals while that number has doubled for 2016. Calendar year 2015 was the all-time high for the amount of money paid out in claims. Cattle losses due to grizzly bears are substantially greater in 2016 at 44 head compared to 11 head in 2015. He cautioned that a true comparison cannot be made from these numbers because a ranch in Carbon County turned in their entire year's claims late in December 2015. This year the same ranch has been sending claims in closer to the time of loss.

Mr. Edwards stated he will be attending meetings with Montana Association of Counties, Farm Bureau, Woolgrowers, Stockgrowers and the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee (IGBC) in the upcoming months.

USDA Wildlife Services – Wildlife Services personnel were unable to attend due to annual training occurring the same week as the board meeting.

Bob Inman – FWP – Due to timing issues, FWP was unable to have a staff person attend this meeting.

Old Business:

IGBC Meeting: Mr. Edwards attended the mid-year IGBC meeting along with Maggie Nutter, President of Marias River Stockgrowers in an attempt to get a seat at the table to discuss livestock issues. This meeting was semi successful in

that IGBC will have a major discussion of livestock issues during their annual meeting in December. IGBC members suggested attending the regional meetings which Mr. Edwards has already been attending. He will have a seat at the table for the NCDE November meeting

New Business:

Sporleder Loss Claim - Mr. Sporleder had a loss claim from 2015 that he had not turned in due to confusion with processes. He had been speaking with FWP and did not realize he needed to contact our board's office. Because the claim was over a year old Mr. Edwards brought it before the board for review. Board members asked if there was adequate funding to cover the claim. Mr. Edwards said there is adequate funding because of prior year roll over funds. He said the lambs will be paid on 2015 USDA market report averages at the time of the loss and ewe values will be from the 2015 ram and ewe annual sale in Miles City.

Motion: Jim Cross made a motion to approve the claim. Seth Wilson seconded the motion. **Discussion:** None. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

Economic Affairs Committee Meeting - Mr. Edwards provided a biennial report to this legislative committee. He spoke about the board's current statutory appropriation expiring on June 30, 2017. He also spoke about the board's license plate account which currently contains approximately \$26,000. This fund is available at the board's discretion. Ms. Allestad said to leave the account alone until it is really needed. Mr. Cross suggested possibly setting it aside for a special purpose. Mr. Wilson said it would be nice to put it into two accounts, one for existing projects and one for new projects. No action was taken at this time.

Grant Applications – A general discussion preceded reviewing individual applications. Board members learned of applicant Don Sporleder having a personal accident prior to the board meeting. A telephone call was placed to Mr. Sporleder and he asked to have his application withdrawn at this time due to his inability to complete his requested project. Mr. Wilson said that would leave about \$70,000 for requests by the remaining applicants.

Motion: Jim Cross made a motion to retain Mr. Sporleder's grant application for reconsideration when he has recovered. Whitney Klasna seconded the motion. **Discussion:** None. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

Mr. Edwards provided the board with a list of grant awards from the April board meeting in case the board wanted to consider them for a total value of grant requests. Ms. Allestad said she does not want to see the use of federal funds for a match of state grant funds.

Big Hole Watershed Committee - Mr. Edwards said in his review of this application he noticed an individual's salary was listed twice and the applicant was asking for funds for Centennial Valley Association carcass pickup coordination. Mr. Wilson said it appears to be a positive by extending service to a larger area. Mr. Wilson did voice concerns over a portion of their request for \$3,000 to produce a composting brochure. Mr. Cross suggested adding a notation in an award letter stating not to use federal funds for a match in the future and to focus on their individual project rather than cumulatively.

Blackfoot Fish & Wildlife - Mr. Edwards said this particular area has suffered the most losses in the state. Ms. Allestad said it looks like they are using federal funds for a match. Mr. Cross said we can be sure of that and Mr. Wilson pointed out they are a sovereign nation. Mr. Edwards stated this cycle is using state funds so the federal restriction on matching funds would not apply. Ms. Allestad said to inform applicants for future grants to not use federal funds as a match for state grants.

Blackfoot Challenge - Mr. Edwards said the Challenge has federal funds listed but they still show more than enough matching funds from other sources that exceeds their grant request.

Centennial Valley Association - Mr. Edwards noted that CVA listed grazing fees as part of their match

Granite Conservation District - Mr. Wilson said it is nice to see them stepping up to the plate by asking for operating funds. The Blackfoot Challenge has helped them in the past with their carcass program.

Mountain Thinking Conservation Science Collaborative (MTCSC) - Mr. Kunkle was present to discuss MTCSC's application. Mr. Edwards noted the application contained FWP specialist time and did not know if the board would allow a match of a state funded position as a match for state grant funds. Mr. Kunkle said he would not count that towards a match. All grant funds are for three range riders. Mr. Wilson said he had spoken with the FWP specialist who was excited about the project and hopes to see it expand.

Montana Wildlife Federation (MWF) - Mr. Edwards he had been in talks with MWF almost daily for the past two months. MWF is attempting to obtain funds from several sources to start a carcass removal/composting project on the Rocky Mountain Front. Mr. Edwards said he had met with MWF, Stockgrowers and Farm Bureau in a joint meeting about the proposal. Stockgrowers board member Wayne Slaughter suggested getting rid of the dead pits first and Stockgrowers president, Gene Curry offered his own truck temporarily to start the program. Mr. Wilson said they will encounter a large number of dead pits and they will be difficult to clean up. Mr. Edwards said MWF told him they do not want to get into the carcass business. They want to jumpstart a program then step back to allow

another organization to take over. Mr. Edwards suggested they contact Marias River Stockgrowers to see if they have an interest in taking on the program. Ms. Klasna said she would like to see the full circle. Ms. Allestad said it would be nice to see letters of support showing an interest in the program from the area. They need to work with a group for buy in. Mr. Wilson said it would be nice if MWF partnered with someone like Marias River Stockgrowers. Ms. Allestad added or support letters. Mr. Cross suggested they ask the Marias River Stockgrowers as a viable solution to assume the lead with some help.

Don Sporleder – Application withdrawn.

Grant Applications – Upon review of each individual grant applications board members began a discussion of all grant applications to determine awards. Mr. Wilson recused himself from discussions involving the Blackfoot Challenge and the Wildlife Federation. Mr. Cross asked fellow board members how do we adjust for those that already had received federally funded grants. He suggested maybe holding back some of the state funds in reserve. USDA Wildlife Services and Fish, Wildlife and Parks were asked to weigh in on the grant applications. FWP had not responded and Wildlife Services State Director, John Steuber had submitted a written analysis. Board members reviewed Mr. Steuber's comments. Ms. Allestad stated she has a hard time allowing the use of federal funds even though this grant cycle is using state funds.

Ms. Allestad noted the Blackfoot Challenge lists more than enough matching funds without using any listed federal match. She stated the Blackfeet Fish and Wildlife application would have been better if they would have been more direct in where they intended to install electric fencing. She directed Mr. Edwards to ask them where they will be installing the fence within the reservation.

Mr. Wilson suggested that board members begin at the top of the list of applicants for discussion purposes. He said his is comfortable with a \$16K to \$18K range for the Big Hole application. Mr. Cross said the \$3K for a brochure is questionable. Ms. Allestad questioned the use of Montana Transportation funds because federal funds are part of their funding. Both Mr. Wilson and Mr. Cross suggested awarding \$17K for the Big Hole Watershed Committee.

Mr. Cross suggested stipulating a location for the Blackfeet Fish and Wildlife grant. Mr. Edwards reminded the board of their sovereign nation status. Ms. Allestad said to let them know they will need to show a map of where the activity is taking place, not just a map of the entire reservation for future applications. Ms. Klasna said the board should fully fund their request. Mr. Cross agreed.

Ms. Klasna said the Blackfoot Challenge should be fully funded as they have shown continued success. Mr. Cross said he is in favor of full support. Mr. Wilson recused himself from this discussion.

Mr. Wilson said he would like to see the Centennial Valley Association should receive full support.

Mr. Cross and Ms. Klasna support full funding of the Granite Conservation District application.

Mr. Cross, Mr. Wilson and Ms. Klasna all agree with full support of Mountain Thinking Conservation Science Collaborative range rider program.

Ms. Allestad questioned the Wildlife Federation's application. She would have liked to see them come in with a partner to take over their carcass program as they have indicated they are not looking at long term management. Mr. Wilson suggested sending a letter strongly encouraging a partnership with local entities. Mr. Edwards said in his prior meetings in the Rocky Mountain Front area he was told by county commissioners they do not want to fund or add county staff for a carcass project. Ms. Allestad voiced concerns about the willingness of area producers to use the project because of Wildlife Federation involvement. Mr. Cross asked a question about the timeline sought in the proposal. Mr. Wilson said cleaning out the dead pits this fall won't work if there is not a service established to pick up carcasses in the spring. He believes the producers would just start using the dead pits again. He said they would be ahead if they would look at a pilot project on a smaller scale. Mr. Wilson said it may be possible to clean out the dead pits at the same time they begin a pickup program but this fall is unrealistic. He wants letters from groups looking at a start in the fall of 2017. Ms. Allestad wants letter from area ranchers supporting the program.

Motion: Whitney Klasna made a motion to award \$17,000 for the Big Hole Watershed Committee, \$5,000 for the Blackfeet Fish and Wildlife, \$14,400 for the Blackfoot Challenge, \$4,000 for the Centennial Valley Association, \$4,000 for the Granite Conservation District and \$18,000 for the Mountain Thinking Conservation Science Collaborative for a total of \$62,400. The motion includes board discussion points in the award letters. Jim Cross seconded the motion.

Discussion: Seth Wilson recused himself from the vote. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

Motion: Whitney Klasna made a motion to support the Wildlife Federation proposal for \$10,131 with the caveat that they will need to have letters of support from livestock producers, livestock organizations and other entities from the area of the project. Elaine Allestad offered a friendly amendment to the motion that if they don't obtain the letters they will not receive funding. Jim Cross seconded the motion. **Discussion:** Jim Cross said letters should be from livestock producers and livestock organizations in all three counties. Whitney Klasna said approval will be based upon a conference call of the board after board members have reviewed the letters and to place a timeline of the end of the year to obtain the support letters. Mr. Wilson recused himself for the vote on this motion. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

Listening Session Actions – No actions

Board Meeting Date – Ms. Allestad said the next meeting may be needed during the upcoming legislative session. An email will be sent out and then a date will be decided at a future time.

Public Comment: Jami Howell said she was saddened because this was the second time she was aware of that Mr. Sporleder has had to turn down funding. She said FWP had offered to provide support after his losses in the prior year.

Motion: Whitney Klasna made a motion to adjourn. Seth Wilson seconded the motion. **Adjourned**

DATED this 1 day of August, 2017

Elaine K. Allestad

Elaine Allestad, Chairman
Montana Livestock Loss Board