



Livestock Loss Board
October 19, 2012
Polson City Commission Room
Polson MT

Meeting Minutes

Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board Members Present:

Whitney Klasna – Chairperson
Michael Leahy
James Cross
John Herman
Elaine Allestad via telephone for a portion of the meeting.

Board Members Not Present:

Brad Radtke
Larry Trexler

Staff:

George Edwards – Executive Secretary

Guests:

Kraig Glazier – USDA, WS
George Pauley - FWP
Kent Laudon - FWP
Keith Kubista - SFW
Randy Bock – Rancher
Will Vincent - Rancher
Dan A Happel – Madison County Commissioner

Call to Order and Administrative Items:

Vice Chair Whitney Klasna called the meeting to order.

Introductions:

- Each board member and board staff introduced themselves.
- Vice Chair Whitney Klasna asked the audience members to introduce themselves and encouraged public comment.

Board Minutes:

Board members reviewed the May 18, 2012 minutes. **Motion:** Jim Cross made a motion to approve the minutes. John Herman seconded the motion. **Discussion:** None **Vote:** All in favor none opposed. Motion carried.

Budget Status:

Mr. Edwards stated that the last budget report he received from Mr. Harris shows we are at 28% of the budget year and we have expended 21%. The board's finances are in good shape. The remaining budget is \$55,514 out of a total budget of \$70,100. Since July 1st approximately \$28,000 has been spent on claims leaving \$172,000 for claims until June 30, 2013. These funds are restricted to pay confirmed and probable death loss claims only. Mr. Edwards reminded the board of their prior May 18th board meeting where a motion was passed that if grizzly bear losses were added by the legislature to our claim process, the board would support that effort.

Mike Leahy asked if the board could ask for a modification of the board's statutory appropriation. Mr. Edwards cautioned the board stating this could cause changes to the law that may not be beneficial to the board. Legislative proposals at this late date cannot be requested via the Department of Livestock. A livestock organization could ask a legislator to carry legislation. An example of this was in the last session a livestock group sought out a legislator to carry a bill to allow this board to receive and sell wolf hides.

Keith Kubista asked the board if they or the Department of Livestock could use funds from other agencies as Wildlife Services could use leftover funds for predator control. Mr. Edwards said the legislature dictates how the money is spent. As an example HB622 restricts the board to pay for death loss claims only.

Reports:

- **George Edwards – LLB Executive Secretary**

Mr. Edwards said all of the board members were sent the board's annual report. This report is also on the Economic Affairs Committee website's archives for September 11th. He said he gave a report to the committee and at the time of the report losses for 2012 were on par with a three year average. This year's losses are greater than they were in 2011. Losses are listed on the board's website as claims are received.

As of this board meeting, no claims have been received from Eastern Montana. Prior to this board meeting the board office received the first claim from Gallatin County since the board began accepting claims. Mr. Edwards said the counties around Yellowstone Park appear to have very few livestock losses. Counties further away have more losses than near the park.

USFWS is still working on requirements for federal funds. These funds should be available early next year.

- **Kraig Glazier – USDA Wildlife Services**

Mr. Glazier said investigations for federal fiscal year 2012 are up 32% over the prior year. In general investigations are up 10% on a six year average. Typically 50% of the investigations are confirmed losses. This year only 44% of their investigations resulted in a confirmed loss.

Wildlife Services confirmed 109 cattle in fiscal year 2011. This year they have confirmed 110 cattle. Losses of adult cattle are down compared to the prior year but the number of calves has increased. 85% of their control actions occur from April to September.

Currently Wildlife Services is down 20% on their staff. They are doing the best they can with limited resources. They now prioritize use of staff where damage is the greatest. Whitney Klasna stated that the board appreciates Wildlife Services work and went on to say our success is because of the work Wildlife Services does.

- **George Pauley – FWP**

Mr. Pauley said FWP has a new draft protocol on wolf predation. It is still a work in progress and staff will take one more look at it internally. It will then go to the department's director and should be in place by the first of the year. One of the changes in the protocol is to allow Wildlife Services to use aerial removal as part of the initial response.

He spoke about the current wolf season. This year there are no quotas and a longer season. This year there is a trapping season. FWP had 2,475 slots open for trapping classes for those interested in trapping wolves.

Tye Smucker has been hired as a new wolf specialist based out of Great Falls.

FWP is working on legislation to allow issuance of multiple tags, use of electronic calls and removing the hunter orange requirement outside of the general hunting season for deer and elk.

Dan Happel asked Mr. Pauley to look into providing receivers to livestock owners as this would be a good use of FWP funds.

Old Business:

- **Federal Funding**

Mr. Edwards asked the board for guidance from the board on the board's fundraising coalition. Elaine Allestad requested to participate in this discussion via telephone.

Mr. Edwards stated when the coalition began, it was to seek money from any source, including federal funding for the board and USDA Wildlife Services because of the work Wildlife Services does for the board. During the prior day's ranch tour, at each site visited ranchers spoke about the need to keep Wildlife Services funded.

Earlier this summer coalition members worked on federal funding via the farm bill. Some of the coalition members balked at the inclusion for funding of Wildlife Services in the request. Demands were made to drop the Wildlife Services portion which was done in order to keep the request active in Washington D.C. The bill was introduced into the Farm Bill but ultimately our portion was dropped. Efforts will resume again when the Farm Bill comes up again in 2013. Mr. Edwards said he took a lot of heat from the livestock organizations because the intent of the original fundraising coalition included helping out Wildlife Services. He said one coalition member, MACO passed a resolution that included funding for the board and Wildlife Services. Because of the discrepancies with the Wildlife Services portion, Mr. Edwards asked the board to let him know how he was supposed to proceed.

Motion: John Herman made a motion that all coalition members must fully support Wildlife Services. Jim Cross seconded the motion. **Discussion:** Mike Leahy stated he thinks the coalition stands a better chance to get federal funding if we had support from other states. George Edwards said we had support from Michigan Senator Stabenow and some of the coalition members contacted Stabenow. Mike Leahy said our broadest and strongest coalition is to focus on prevention. Focusing on prevention could bring us support from the Humane Society. Everyone acknowledges lethal control but prevention only was in Senator Tester's bill. Whitney Klasna said producers were adamant that their success and loss prevention is attributed to Wildlife Services. Elaine Allestad said members of the coalition have a huge voice and without Wildlife Services, the coalition will fall apart. Whitney Klasna stated we have heard from livestock groups that support us and they will remove their support unless we include Wildlife Services. Mike Leahy offered a friendly amendment that the board supports the Farm Bill request that includes a full suite of wolf management tools. Whitney Klasna asked if there is a second for the amendment. No one seconded the amendment. Mike Leahy said the motion would preclude some groups from participating in the coalition. Whitney Klasna asked the board again if there is a second on the amendment. No second was made and the board went back to

the main motion. John Herman spoke about the current state law that includes Wildlife Services. Mike Leahy said this is cutting out groups that don't support lethal control. Elaine Allestad said these are the same groups that hold their support when they should be supporting what the board brings to the table. Mike Leahy said this means we don't want to work with groups that don't support Wildlife Services. Whitney Klasna asked if there is any further discussion. Mike Leahy said he is concerned because the farm bill didn't include compensation. George Edwards read the section of the farm bill containing compensation for states and tribes. Whitney Klasna asked again if there is any further discussion. The question was called **Vote:** Whitney Klasna, John Herman, James Cross and Elaine Allestad voted in favor of the motion, Mike Leahy opposed the motion. Motion carried.

George Edwards said he will inform our senators and congressman of the board's actions. Elaine Allestad said this will let everyone know our standards which include Wildlife Services. Dan Happel said most folks are ready for straight talk. Keith Kubista stated SFW was part of the coalition. With Wildlife Services back in they will remain part of the coalition.

- **Fund Raising**

George Edwards said the license plates are not selling well. Funds will go back out to livestock producers. Sales were good at the beginning. Right now it is not pulling in enough funds to do much of anything. Current revenues for plate sales is \$2,075. During the 2011 legislative session a bill was passed to allow the board to obtain wolf hides. While the hides would have been in a good condition there were not any authorized control actions. He will start again if Wildlife Services can easily retrieve any carcasses. Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation has agreed to auction a hide during their annual meeting in Las Vegas if a hide is available. A public audience attendee asked about the cost to process a hide. Mr. Edwards said skinning was donated on the only hide the board has and it cost \$100 to tan a hide.

- **Loss Prevention**

Whitney Klasna, Mike Leahy, Brad Radtke, George Edwards, members of Woolgrowers, Stockgrowers, NRDC staff and Defenders of Wildlife staff met with members of the Blackfoot Challenge to see different prevention methods. The first site demonstrated fladry. The second site was a five wire electric fence around a large calving pasture. Costs were estimated to be \$4.50 per linear foot and it was very labor intensive to maintain. The rancher said it did reduce predation but when the bottom wire grounded out, he did lose a calf. The third site was a composting site operated by the Highway Department. This site has an electric fence around it to keep out scavenging animals. It contained two separate piles, one for wildlife and one for domestic stock. Compost from the domestic pile is used on roadside projects. The Blackfoot Challenge buys wood

chips and hires an independent contractor to pick up carcasses. This is primarily done from spring to fall and it costs approximately \$22 dollars per head to pickup the dead animals. Blackfoot Challenge said this method has greatly reduced grizzly caused losses and to some degree wolf caused losses.

George Edwards said the next round of available federal funding will require half the funds to be spent on prevention. He reminded the board that at their last meeting they authorized him to buy five receivers when the funds become available. He said the composting site seemed to be the most effective from the prior days tour. Whitney Klasna said she thought it was the most effective too. She added that it was good to see methods in use and the area they were applied.

New Business:

- **Legislation**

Whitney Klasna asked if the board should seek bill placeholders and if it was possible to amend HB622 for a multiplier. George Edwards advised against seeking an amendment as the board could potentially lose some of their funding. He said he will go to livestock groups with suggestions from the board and fundraising coalition. Mrs. Klasna asked the audience if they had any ideas or to at least keep the board in mind. Mr. Edwards said he will pass on the board and coalition ideas at annual livestock organization meetings.

Mr. Edwards explained to the board that deadlines have already passed for any board bills in the 2013 session but other organizations can seek out legislation. He said Christian Mackay will inform the board if they can support any bills.

- **Board Meeting Date**

George Edwards asked the board to hold their next meeting in Helena as the legislature will be meeting from January to April. Mike Leahy said he would like to have the meeting while the legislature is in session. Jim Cross suggested February. Board members tentatively will look at a February date. If this does not work out, Mr. Edwards will consult with Board Chair, Elaine Allestad and the rest of the board to set a date.

Public Comment

- Randy Bock said he has had depredation. Wolves are competing for a food source and one pack set up on his place. He would like to see more wolves collared.

- Dan Happel is giving information to George Edwards and asked that he scan the information to pass on to the board. The document is from the NRDC. While attending a fundraising coalition meeting local NRDC staff acknowledged the work of ranchers. This document is from 2/9/12 by NRDC asking to reform Wildlife Services and denounces ranchers wanting control by Wildlife Services. This appears to be in conflict with local NRDC vs. national NRDC. He stated they are talking out of both sides of their mouths.

- Public comment occurred throughout the board meeting. Keith Kubista said he has attended some of the coalition meetings and encouraged the board to try to keep funding for lethal control in any funding legislation.

Motion: John Herman made a motion to adjourn. James Cross seconded the motion. **Adjourned 4:00 pm**

DATED this 6 day of May, 2013

Elaine K. Allestad

Elaine Allestad, Chairman
Montana Livestock Loss Board