



## Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board

October 23, 2009  
State Capitol, Room 152  
Helena MT

### Meeting Minutes

#### **Livestock Loss Reduction & Mitigation Board Members Present:**

Elaine Allestad – Chairperson  
Larry Trexler  
Whitney Wankel  
John Herman  
Brad Radtke  
Michael Leahy  
James Cross

#### **Staff:**

George Edwards – Livestock Loss Mitigation Coordinator  
Christian Mackay – DOL- Executive Officer  
George Harris – DOL – Centralized Services Administrator

#### **Guests:**

Kraig Glazier – USDA, WS  
Jacqueline Hud – Keystone Conservation  
Linda Singer  
Ron Skinner  
Sandy Sallee  
Maren Olsen – Congressman Rehberg’s Office  
Michelle Sides - Congressman Rehberg’s Office  
Jennifer Madgic – Senator Tester’s Office  
Tim Tew – Skunk Creek Company  
Dan Conn – Sitz Angus Ranch  
Peggy Trexler  
Joe Maurier - FWP Director  
Quentin Kujala FWP  
Carolyn Sime – FWP

#### **Call to Order and Administrative Items:**

Chairperson Elaine Allestad called the meeting to order.

## **Introductions:**

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

## **Board Minutes:**

Board members reviewed the May 11, 2009 minutes. **Motion:** Larry Trexler made a motion to approve the minutes. Whitney Wankel seconded the motion. **Discussion:** None. **Vote:** All in favor none opposed. Motion carried.

## **Budget Status:**

George Harris— administrator centralized services handed out a budget status sheet. Mr. Harris explained that the budget sheet reflects 31% of the fiscal year has occurred. The bottom of the sheet has a paragraph about the claims fund. Figures on the sheet show a 7% reduction of personal services because of actions taken by the 61<sup>st</sup> legislature and this amounted to \$4,219 dollars. Only \$256 dollars have been spent in operations which is amazing for the effort George Edwards has made. Operations are only 2% expended and this is where the \$4,000 will be made up. \$17,000 has been spent out of the \$63,000 total budget which is 27% of the total.

George Harris stated his appreciation of Defenders of Wildlife for agreeing to allow \$9,500 of their \$100,000 donation to be used for operations in FY 2009. The agreement states that \$4,750 will be spent on loss claims and \$4,750 will be spent on non-lethal activities once federal funding is available.

HB364 created a \$5,000,000 trust fund and Mr. Harris encouraged everyone to help put some money into this trust fund. The law allows the board to use the interest off of the trust fund in perpetuity.

Brad Radtke asked Mr. Harris if the federal money from Senator Tester's bill will match expenditures. Mr. Harris it appears that it will match expenditures but we need to wait for federal rules to be written. Mike Leahy asked for some clarification from George Edwards on the match. Edwards explained it is not a match, it is a cost share of expenditures. Harris said it appears to be half of what we expend. Edwards read the section on the cost share to the board and audience. Whitney Wankel asked who was eligible for funds. Edwards stated all states and tribes would be eligible but Montana is one of the few states using private donations and state funds for claims. A total of \$101,331 has been spent on claims this year and a portion of the Defenders of Wildlife donation earlier in the year was used to pay claims from 2008. Over half of the available funds have already been spent.

Mike Leahy asked Harris to refresh everyone on the trust fund and asked what kind of budget the board would expect to get from that. Harris stated we would invest via the Board of Investments in the investment pool. Larry Trexler asked what kind of term would it be and does it have to be all \$5,000,000? Harris said we could have someone from the Board of Investments come to a board meeting when funding is obtained and any amount could be put in the trust fund.

## **Reports:**

- **George Edwards – DOL Livestock Loss Mitigation Coordinator**

Since the new budget year has started as of July 1<sup>st</sup>, Edwards has met with numerous individuals and groups. They included Skinner Ranch, USDA Wildlife Services Training, Lonestone ranchers, Senator Baucus's staff, Choteau Sheep Expo and the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation.

A meeting with Liz Ching and David Cobb from Senator Baucus's office was productive in that they will work with Senator Tester's staff to help speed up federal rules for this board to receive federal funding. Currently the claims fund is around \$90,000 dollars and we will need the federal funds to pay future claims.

The Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation was approached for a donation. Jory Dellinger and Steve Decker stated they will need to approach their CEO about a donation. They both said they would be willing to work with this board on fundraising efforts. RMEF will be running stories about ranchers in future Bugle Magazine articles.

A tribal agreement with CSKT tribal officials was signed on August 14<sup>th</sup>. This means we no longer have to exclude losses that occurred on tribal lands within the Flathead Reservation. Last year a similar agreement was signed with Blackfeet tribal officials. No other tribal governments have sought out an agreement with this board.

Currently no claims for llamas or guard animals have been submitted. Edwards was contacted by the owner of a herding dog that was killed in the Hall area. The owner is getting a statement from the dog breeder and from auctions for herding dogs. When the claim is submitted, Edwards will scan the documents and email them to the board for review.

A yellow handout was provided to all in attendance with a sample claim, claim procedure steps and recent statistics. Elaine Allestad asked to have appeals added to the claim procedures for future handouts.

#### CLAIM STATISTICS:

- 232 animals were paid for losses during 2008 (\$87,317.68)
- 284 animals have been paid for since January 2009
- 2009 – 55 cattle, 1 horse, 225 sheep and 3 goats

- **Kraig Glaizer – USDA WS West District Supervisor**

Mr. Glazier stated he is filling in for their state director, John Steuber who was unavailable. He added that some recent additional losses not reflected in the claims handout are 5 calves in the Avon area, 1 ewe from the Eureka area and 23 lambs in Southwest Montana.

USDA Wildlife Services has had 168 investigations since the beginning of the federal fiscal year beginning October 1, 2008. This is a 40% increase from the prior year. About 90% of the investigations occur in Glazier's district.

Larry Trexler commended the work done by Wildlife Services. He has had good reports from ranchers in his area and acknowledged the difficulty of the work they do.

Mike Leahy asked if Mr. Glazier has a sense of what happened with the large sheep loss in Southwest Montana. Mr. Glazier explained that when wolves get into sheep there is a tendency for surplus killing and went on to explain a timeline of events. On June 18<sup>th</sup> 12 yearlings were killed. Wildlife Services saw three wolves in the area. On July 22<sup>nd</sup> 10 bucks were killed and the same three wolves were spotted in the area over a period of days. FWP said to collar the wolves. On July 25<sup>th</sup>, 16 more bucks were killed and FWP authorized removal of all three wolves. Two were shot and the WS was unable to locate the third. In August 122 bucks were found killed. The WS specialist spotted the Centennial pack about ¼ to 3/8 of a mile away. FWP authorized the specialist to remove one un-collared wolf from this pack. On October 18<sup>th</sup> the Centennial pack killed 10 lambs and injured 13 more. The 13 injured lambs died as the result of their injuries. FWP authorized the removal of the pack. Since the depredation the pack was observed in the Gravelly Mountains. A cattle producer in that area is said to be 26 calves short. The last observations of the pack were that they were moving back towards the area of the sheep.

Brad Radtke asked if there was any way to get better media coverage of events like this. Mr. Glazier stated the producer would need to talk to the media.

- **Carolyn Sime – FWP Gray Wolf Coordinator**

Ms. Sime began her presentation by mentioning the “Wolf Weekly” she prepares and is sent via a distribution list that includes reporters. She said she received media inquiries on the incident Kraig Glazier had spoken about. Larry Trexler stated the media coverage portrays the wolves as cute and cuddly. Coverage also needs to include some of the gruesome pictures as well. Sime asked what for suggestions of where that information should come from, FWP, this board or board staff George Edwards? Trexler restated that the true picture is not getting out and that is what he is hearing from his area. Mike Leahy said from the conservation group perspective it is the exact opposite and livestock losses become front page news. Sime responded that wolves effect a lot of people including livestock owners and hunters. FWP tries to balance everything to conserve and manage a species. Leahy asked a question about the money brought in by the wolf hunt. Sime said the Montana plan is clear and the wolf advisory council stated any money whether from federal sources or license fees would not be used for compensation.

Ms. Sime explained that wolves within tribal boundaries are managed by tribal wildlife programs. They develop their own management plans. FWP manages wolves similar to black bears and mountain lions. She stated that this board is referenced in the Montana Wolf Management Plan and the board is to work on reducing risk and the economics of wolves in our state. A slide was shown listing some of the indirect effects of wolves on livestock. They included missing, performance, husbandry, disease, stress on owners, forage management, fences and labor.

Responses to depredation are tailored to each pack and setting, the same as black bears and mountain lions. An attempt is made to target the right wolf by connecting the response to the place and time. Livestock predation is a learned behavior. Many of the packs around livestock do not predate on them. FWP can issue kill permits to livestock owners. Lethal control is incremental and is often a combination of things like collaring or removal. Joe Maurier expressed concern over losing the delisting status. He said the process is not simple and a delicate balance is needed. Maurier urged everyone to have patience while they try to find the balance. An incremental approach could change and FWP is an open book on wolf management. Larry Trexler asked Sime who is paying for the fladry, extra riders, etc... Sime responded that is was private entities in combination with FWP. John Herman asked if FWP has proven that the flagging works. Sime responded that there is no magic bullet except lethal control. Wolves have jumped it but in captive trials the addition of electricity has helped. Sime went on to say that in a 3,000 acre pasture, fladry probably wouldn't be the right tool and riders would be better in that setting.

Elaine Allestad said this board struggles with committees and a prevention program. Allestad requested board staff to formalize a request to FWP to make a working group similar to what has already been done to help formalize criteria for a prevention program. The board would retain final approval of a working group. Joe Maurier tentatively agreed and Sime asked that USDA WS be included. Allestad envisions this group to be like the wolf advisory council's process. Larry Trexler asked if FWP could help pressure our congressional delegation to provide more funding including the trust fund. Maurier said he has spoken with Senator Tester who told Maurier to tell him what is needed and he will attempt to do it.

**Motion:** Mike Leahy made a motion to have George Edwards prepare an additional million dollar appropriation request similar to HR2996 as congress is beginning to work on 2011 budget requests. Whitney Wankel seconded the motion. **Discussion:** None. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

#### **Old Business:**

- **Fundraising Committee**

George Edwards asked the committee members to set dates for future committee meetings. Mike Leahy said everybody had a busy summer and they are ready to meet this winter. He has found some interesting models and will email them to those interested. Leahy will follow up with Edwards on a date when committee members can meet in person.

- **Administrative Rules Committee**

Larry Trexler said they will work on setting meeting dates. Edwards advised them the meeting does not have to be in Helena. All committee members live west of the divide and said meeting closer to home will help.

Elaine Allestad asked that both committee chairmen report back to Edwards with meeting dates by December 18<sup>th</sup>.

- **Future Legislation**

George Edwards reminded board members that suggested changes to Montana laws for the 2011 legislative session will need to be done by early next year.

- **Federal Funding**

Legislation to provide a 50% cost share for loss and prevention efforts has been approved. Rules to apply for the federal funds have not been written. George Edwards will continue to stay in contact with federal officials to ensure the funds become available as soon as possible.

- **Poll of the Board**

George Edwards stated because the large dollar amount for the claim on 148 buck sheep, he polled the board members before paying the claim. One board member was reached by email, five board members by telephone on one was unavailable. Mike Leahy suggested that the rules committee may want to look into rules to help board members judge a claim. Larry Trexler agreed and stated paying the fast payment was needed for the producer to obtain replacement bucks. He also stated that the phone method worked fine. The rules committee will look at processes.

**New Business:**

- **Injured Animals**

Board members requested this topic as livestock owners are suffering losses where the value of an animal is reduced by wolf caused injuries. Last year a bull was castrated in Park County and this year similar situations have occurred. Larry Trexler said the biggest thing is getting enough funding. There is some salvage value and the rules committee will take this into consideration.

Dan Conn, a rider for Sitz Angus Ranch spoke to the board about two bulls they had this year that had to be castrated because of severe injuries. Dan also stated concerns about values, veterinary bills, AI costs and time tending to injured animals.

Ron Skinner spoke about a paper he has written and was sent to board members earlier in the year. Mr. Skinner stated his objective was to voice his concerns to Montana FWP and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services so they could understand what is happening on the ground. Range management is effected by wolves. He thanked FWP Director, Joe Maurier for FWP's position on litigation about wolves. In closing he said more information needs to get out to the public because of misperceptions. Larry Trexler thanked Mr. Skinner for the valuable information and this will help the rules committee. Mike Leahy also thanked Mr. Skinner as said although the information is not fun to read, this information makes it easier for the board to make decisions. He encouraged everyone to send in information.

- **Prevention Efforts**

A discussion during reports by FWP staff included a possibility of a work group. Elaine Allestad spoke about a concept for a program outline on a prevention framework with other agencies. This framework would be looked at by the board before any implementation of a group. The intention is not to re-invent the wheel and FWP could bring the framework back to this board similar to what was done with the Wolf Advisory Council. The new group would be in place to advise this board.

**Motion:** Mike Leahy made a motion to have the board draft a letter to FWP and USDA WS requesting them to develop a plan for a working group to advise the board on mitigation projects. Larry Trexler seconded the motion. **Discussion:** None. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

**Motion:** Larry Trexler made a motion for the chairperson to appoint a subcommittee to work on a mitigation advisory council as discussed in the previous motion. Mike Leahy seconded the motion. **Discussion:** None. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

Elaine Allestad appointed John Herman, Mike Leahy and herself to the council when it is established.

- **Environmental/Conservation/Livestock Groups:**

The board's fundraising committee will be looking at all groups for potential fundraising. Everyone is encouraged to talk to their elected officials about funding this program.

- **Livestock Values:**

George Edwards spoke about the current rate paid by the board for lambs \$100.00, ewes \$145.00 and rams \$350.00. Board members reviewed a current USDA Market Report and results of the Choteau Sheep Expo sale. Larry Trexler said the projections are pretty close.

**Motion:** John Herman made a motion to continue to pay the sheep values the board has been using since the last board meeting. Whitney Wankel seconded the motion. **Discussion:** None. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

- **LLRMB/LLRMP Facebook Page**

George Edwards showed a Facebook page he created for the board's program. As claims come in the page is updated for public information. Facebook has a causes program for donation purposes that is still being looked into as a way to mass market donations for the program. Whitney Wankel said the page is a great for educational purposes and a source of current information she uses for her job as a radio announcer. Edwards said the page is set up as a fan page so comments cannot be placed on it as this is an information page. This was done to keep the page from being a blog site. He thanked Christian Mackay for authorizing this site.

- **2010 Meeting Dates**

Board members chose April 9, 2010 for the next board meeting.



**Agency Directors:**

- Joe Maurier, FWP Director thanked Ron Skinner and his family for taking the time to conduct a ranch tour for his staff. They learned a lot on indirect factors. Mr. Maurier also thanked the board and stated this board is critical to the process.
- Christian Mackay, DOL Executive Officer stated his comments dovetail in with Joe's comments earlier in the day. This board is working in a very prescribed and patient manner. The board is to be commended for taking this on and to the work George Edwards has put into this.

**Public Comment**

- Jacqueline Hud, Keystone Conservation Executive Director wanted to share their experience this summer with their range rider program. Keystone initiated a range rider program six years ago along with Madison Valley Ranchlands. They invited tourists this summer and had eight speakers. They included biologists, journalists and a film maker. Keystone Conservation is excited about the help they are providing livestock owners.
- Mike Leahy passed out a Defenders of Wildlife guide to non-lethal tools. He said this guide lays out some options, issues and challenges livestock owners face.

**Adjournment 4:34 pm**

**Motion:** Larry Trexler made a motion to adjourn. Whitney Wankel seconded the motion. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

DATED this 26 day of January, 2010

Elaine K. Allestad  
Elaine K. Allestad, Chair  
Montana Livestock Loss Reduction and Mitigation Board