



Livestock Loss Board
April 28 & 29, 2016
Board Meeting
Helena MT

Meeting Minutes

Livestock Loss Board Members Present:

Elaine Allestad - Chairperson
Jim Cross
Whitney Klasna
Seth Wilson via telephone April 29th only

Staff: George Edwards – Executive Director

Guests: Kraig Glazier – USDA Wildlife Services
Bob Inman – FWP
Mike Honeycutt – DoL Executive Officer

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.

Grant Application Review:

- **LLB Executive Director Overview**

Mr. Edwards provided an overview of the grant applications. Some of the grants looked like they used federal funds for a portion of their match requirement. After taking a closer look and reducing the numbers by taking out federal funds, the applicants still had more than enough to cover the match. Mr. Edwards said he had received a phone call from board member Larry Trexler. Mr. Trexler said he had three priorities had there not been enough money. He wanted to express that he fully supports the Big Hole Watershed Committee, Centennial Valley Association and the Blackfoot Challenge as the top applicants.

- **Grant Applications and Awarding of Grants**

Board members, USDA Wildlife Services and FWP reviewed grant applications from Big Hole Watershed Committee, Blackfoot Challenge, Centennial Valley Association, Donna Cole, Meuli Ranch and Tom Miner Basin Association.

Ms. Allestad questioned the Donna Cole application. She appears to be requesting the entire amount. Mr. Edwards said she wrote the total amount instead of the 50% portion so the grant should have been \$660. He said he had spoken with her on the phone and she understands the board only provides half of the total funds. It looks like she made a mistake on the form and wrote the proper amount on the next line.

Mr. Edwards advised the board that the Meuli Ranch has had loss claims in the past. This round of grant applications are a good fit across the board. Ms. Allestad noticed that range rider pay varies on the different applications. Mr. Edwards said that Seth Wilson had supplied a labor report with wages substantially greater than those within the applications.

Mr. Edwards asked the board to consider using the remaining funds for supplies Wildlife Services could use on small projects. John Steuber, Wildlife Services state director had asked is there was a way to get more fladry. This year Wildlife Services had worked with others to install fladry in North West Montana around a high depredation area. This resulted in success as no losses occurred in an area that had losses every year.

Mr. Inman said from the FWP perspective the Cole and Meuli applications are at the top of their list because they are in new areas. Ms. Allestad the board in general has the same position. She said watershed groups should be asking for money as well. Watershed groups will be contacted during future grant cycles when possible.

Ms. Allestad asked if there was any public comment. No public comments were offered.

Motion: Whitney Klasna made a motion to approve all grant applications submitted to LLB with the adjusted amount of \$660 for the Cole grant. Jim Cross seconded the motion. **Discussion:** None. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

Mr. Edwards asked about the remaining funds for Wildlife Services fladry. Whitney Klasna asked if it should be limited to just fladry or other supplies. Ms. Allestad said to keep the funds for non-lethal supplies. Mr. Glazier said supplies are ok but no animals such as guard dogs. Mr. Edwards said the board will need to supply the match requirement using board funds.

Motion: Whitney Klasna made a motion to use the remaining funds to purchase non-lethal supplies. Jim Cross seconded the motion. **Discussion:** None. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

- **Federal Fund – Payments for injured livestock**

Mr. Edwards asked the board if they would use federal funds for claims on injured animals. He said as part of the board's federal grant application injured animals were listed. This provides an opportunity for the board to pay for veterinary bills on animals injured by wolves. Elaine Allestad asked how the value would be determined. Mr. Edwards said it would be by reimbursing for veterinary bills up to the value of the animal. The board authorized a similar payment with the prior year's grant. Ms. Allestad said ok pay the vet bill then in the animal survives pay just the vet bill if it dies pay up to the value of the animal.

Motion: Whitney Klasna made a motion to use federal funds when available to pay for confirmed or probable injured livestock that are verified by USDA Wildlife Services not exceeding the value of the animal. Jim Cross seconded the motion. **Discussion:** Seth Wilson via telephone asked if this applied to guard dogs or just livestock. George Edwards said the definition of livestock in board statutes includes guard animals. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

Board Minutes:

Board members reviewed the July 10, 2015 minutes. Ms. Allestad asked in there were any corrections or additions. None offered.

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

Budget Status:

Mr. Edwards explained to the board that he placed the pages directly from the state accounting system in their board book. He also included handouts provided by George Harris to the Board of Livestock for their April meeting. Mr. Edwards said the first page is the \$200,000 appropriated to the board. \$113,585 has been spent leaving \$86,414. Since this report was run the balance as of this board meeting has lowered to \$71,000. The next pages show the board's everyday office expenses and the last page shows a condensed version of the same information. Mr. Edwards pointed out that the report shows office rent at 117% expended. This is charged by the Department of Administration for state buildings. When the next budget is submitted to the legislature the increased rent rate will be factored into the budget. Elaine Allestad asked what the "other" expense that is over budget is. Mr. Edwards said he had attended a grants class

last fall and he tries to attend a grant class every four to five years to see if any new opportunities arise. Mr. Edwards went on to explain that the board has \$4,934 remaining in their budget according to Mr. Harris's handout. He said the budget will be really tight with the upcoming IGBC meeting expense. Department of Livestock's accounting division projects us within our budget to finish the year.

Reports:

George Edwards, Executive Director – Mr. Edwards reported that he has emailed the board as information became available so this report is a recap of some of his activities. He handed out a page listing loss statistics for calendar year 2015. The dollar total for loss claims in 2015 was \$192,000 leaving \$8,000 from the \$200,000 per year appropriation. He said this shows justification in legislative hearings for budget requests. One ranch did not appear to have submitted all of their losses due to grizzly bears. If they had the board would have exceeded the \$200,000.

He participated in a Wildlife Services workshop in Conrad last November. Participation was largely environmental groups but many ranchers did attend. The workshops have been received positively and have helped to educate attendees in Wildlife Services non-lethal activities.

Mr. Edwards attended a grants class to see if any new opportunities for funding could be found. The class offered a few new leads which did not work out due to most NGO's limitations on providing funds to a governmental entity. Ms. Allestad asked if there was any way to attract NGO's. Mr. Edwards said he has asked many times over the years. It has been the agricultural organizations such as Woolgrowers who have approached the legislature for bills to maintain our funding. Thankfully the other agricultural groups continue to support us during legislative hearings.

During the Woolgrowers annual convention Mr. Edwards was able to meet with Senator Duane Ankney. At that time he was willing to submit a bill to renew LLB's statutory appropriation for Woolgrowers. Since then Senator Ankney has had to change his focus to Colstrip. Woolgrowers approached Senator Pat Connell to run a renewal bill for \$300,000 per year. Mr. Edwards said he cannot contact Senator Connell because it may be construed as lobbying. Senator Llew Jones indicated he may help last year but again Mr. Edwards has not contacted him to avoid lobbying.

Kraig Glazier – USDA Wildlife Services – Mr. Glazier said they are busier this spring than in the past. The first grizzly depredation was reported on April 1st near Augusta Montana. Multiple bears have depredated but have not been seen coming back to the kill sites. Currently there are a lot of wolf problems with seven new investigations within just the past week. Overall investigations have increased this year.

The big thing at the NCDE this year was learning Chris Serveen is retiring. When Wildlife Services investigates grizzly bear losses they would call Mr. Serveen to make determinations on how the bear would be handled. Wayne Kasworm is taking over Mr. Serveen's duties.

New this year Wildlife Services cost shared on fladry projects. They put up fladry on a ranch that had chronic depredation every year. Wolves have been patrolling the fence but no livestock losses have occurred yet. In the same are they put up three additional fences, each about a mile long.

Bob Inman – FWP – Mr. Inman stated FWP has hired two new wolf specialists to replace Liz Bradley and Kent Laudon. Tyler Parks is based out of Missoula and Diane Boyd is in Kalispell. Wolf numbers continue to slightly go down. This is the last year that FWP has to report to USFWS as the five year monitoring period is now over. Montana has met obligations and current numbers exceed the state plan minimums of 150 wolves and 15 breeding pairs. If the number ever drops below these numbers wolves could be relisted. Verifying wolf numbers takes a lot of work to verify breeding pairs. FWP is going to a patch modeling program to estimate counts. University of Montana students are working on improving the program. Students are working to develop a more efficient counting method. Ms. Allestad asked about collars on every pack near livestock. Mr. Inman said it is a legislative mandate and the collars help on the annual wolf count.

Mr. Inman said the Yellowstone are delisting process is going forward. Currently the delisting proposal is in the federal register and public comment is accepted right now. FWP is required to come up with a proposed grizzly bear hunting season structure. FWP commissioners will review the proposal during their May meeting.

At the next FWP commission meeting they will be reviewing a petition from the NRDC to stop M-44's, neck snares and a 24 hour trap check. This is not an issue in grizzly bear areas and the agency is not supporting the petition. There is also a ballot measure I177 against trapping on all public lands.

Old Business:

Mountain Lion / Black Bears: Mr. Edwards had asked the board if they had a position on adding mountain lions to board programs during the July 2015 meeting. No decision was made at that time so it is back on this agenda. Mr. Edwards expects another legislative bill during the next legislature. Mr. Glazier said they are receiving twice as many lion calls this year. Mr. Edwards said no decision needs to be made today and he will put this on the board's next agenda when all of the board members are present. He said Farm Bureau has a resolution to have mountain lion and black bear losses added to our board. Mr.

Glazier added that a mountain lion killed a steer and seven to eight colts in the town of Shelby this month.

New Business:

2017 EPP - Budget - Mr. Edwards explained that the EPP budget is for requests in addition to the standard budget for the board. He identified three items for the board. The first one was to increase the budget to allow for more board meetings. Included in this topic is it would provide enough funds so that the board and staff would be able to get motel rooms when meetings end late or in the event of bad weather. He saw this as a major safety point. Ms. Allestad added there are a few other things that should be attended including others meetings and tours. Mr. Edwards said he has had to turn down requests for his attendance due to a lack of funding. Mr. Wilson said Mr. Edwards is the face of our board and interfaces well with NGO's. Mr. Edwards advised that \$7,000 may be enough for board and staff time. Ms. Allestad said it needs to be more and we should start meeting with watershed groups.

The second item Mr. Edwards spoke about was that the current \$200,000 statutory appropriation for death loss claims expires the end of June 2017. He said the board should not solely rely on a legislator bringing a bill forward to renew the appropriation. In calendar year 2015 payments were around \$193,000 and with the addition of grizzly bears the EPP request should be \$300,000 to cover catastrophic events. Ms. Klasna said this would be a good step. Ms. Allestad agreed we do need to ask for more and would like to see the trust fund have funds added each year. Mr. Cross said the legislature may not like to give authority to place funds in the trust fund. Mr. Edwards said association would need to find a legislator to run a bill for the trust fund. Ms. Klasna asked what is the course if the budget office rejects the EPP request. Mr. Edwards said the board would need to find a legislator to carry a bill but cautioned it may not be supported by the governor.

The next item is to request funds for loss prevention. Ms. Allestad said the justification for this item is that it helps to achieve a match for federal funds when they are available. Mr. Wilson said demand for loss prevention funds exceeds what is available. Mr. Wilson suggested asking for a range of \$100,000 to 150,000. Mr. Cross said we should look to the future needs and aim for that. Mr. Edwards said the 2015 grant requests were \$165,000. If the grant application process was widely advertised it would have been much more.

Ms. Klasna asked if Mr. Edwards could obtain a Wi-Fi hotspot for meetings. He said it would be helpful and Mr. Wilson said it is really needed.

Motion: Seth Wilson made a motion to request \$300,000 for claims, \$200,000 for loss prevention, and \$8,000 for increased board operations. Jim Cross

seconded the motion. **Discussion:** None. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed.
Motion carried.

2017 Legislation - Mr. Edwards said he has submitted a legislative bill request per the board's July meeting to clean up 2-15-3111, MCA.

2017 July State Funding - Mr. Edwards stated that a law change during the 2015 session capped the board's death loss fund at \$300,000. Anything in excess of \$300,000 will be transferred into a new account. Up to half of these funds can be sent to USDA Wildlife Services for the grizzly and wolf work they do for the board. This section of the new law was widely supported by all of the agricultural groups. Mr. Edwards handed out an email from board member Larry Trexler stating he would like to provide half of the funds to Wildlife Services. Mr. Edwards added that the Department of Livestock and Fish, Wildlife & Parks do not provide any funding to Wildlife Services for the grizzly bear work they do. He added they do a lot of non-lethal work such as installing fladry and non-lethal workshops. Mr. Wilson said particularly with the current grizzly situation this is a good use of funds. Mr. Cross agreed.

Motion: Seth Wilson made a motion to provide half of the funds to USDA Wildlife Services and the other half for loss prevention. Jim Cross seconded the motion. **Discussion:** Elaine Allestad said we can run a new round of grants at the next full board meeting. Mr. Wilson asked if the funds could be used in 2017. All board members agreed they can be used for grants including 2017 **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

IGBC Meeting - Mr. Edwards stated that Maggie Nutter has requested our board and the Board of Livestock seek a seat at the table for the multi-state grizzly bear committee. Mr. Edwards asked for approval to represent the board and attend the meeting in Bonners Ferry Idaho. The Board of Livestock is sending Nina Baucus and requested that Elaine Allestad and Mr. Edwards all attend. Ms. Allestad said she has a previous commitment the week of the meeting.

Motion: Jim Cross made a motion to participate and seek a seat at the table for the IGBC. Whitney Klasna seconded the motion. **Discussion:** None **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

Board Meeting Date – Ms. Allestad advised Mr. Edwards to find out when USDA Wildlife Services is completing their annual training near Red Lodge. The board meeting will be held during the same week in August.

Public Comment: No public comments were made.

Motion: Seth Wilson made a motion to adjourn. Jim Cross seconded the motion.
Adjourned

DATED this 24 day of August, 2016

Elaine K. Allestad

Elaine Allestad, Chairman
Montana Livestock Loss Board