

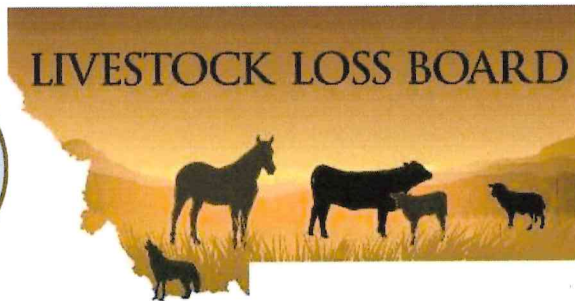
MONTANA LIVESTOCK LOSS BOARD

Meeting Minutes

(This Meeting was Open to the Public & By ZOOM)

July 28, 2025

MT Department of Livestock Board Room #319/Helena, MT



Board Members Present

John Sampsel (Stanford)
Raina Blackman (Wolf Creek)

Jordan Mannix (Helmville)

(Doreen Gillespie and Joe Kipp attended the meeting by ZOOM. Doreen Gillespie departed from the meeting at 3:19 PM)

Staff Present

Mike Honeycutt, EO
Lindsey Simon, Centralized Services
Rick Corder

Brian Simonson, Deputy EO
Donna Wilham
Brendan Boots

Public Present

Peter Bradley, Bradley Ranch
Trina Jo Bradley, Rocky Mountain Front Ranchlands Group
Dalin Tidwell, USDA-APHIS Wildlife Services
Ian Kane, MSGA
Ron Van Dyke, Pipestone Grazing
Cory Fitzgerald, Pipestone Grazing
Tracy Roeder
Kara Maplethorpe
Tanya Lynch, Big Hole Watershed Committee

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

(:07) 1:00 PM

Chairman John Sampsel called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS

(0:12) 1:00 PM

Chairman John Sampsel called the meeting to order and requested introductions:

- John Sampsel, Stanford, Livestock Producer
- Jordan Mannix, Livestock Producer, Helmville
- Raina Blackman, Board Member, Sheep Producer/Corn Maze Co-Owner, Craig
- Doreen Gillespie, Board Member, Ethridge
- Ian Kane, Montana Stockgrowers Association
- Trina Jo Bradley, Rocky Mountain Front Ranchlands Group, Cattle Ranch Owner/Valier
- Pete Bradley
- Dalin Tidwell, USDA Wildlife Services
- Lindsey Simon, Legal Counsel for the DOL and the LLB
- Mike Honeycutt, Executive Officer, Montana DOL
- Brian Simonson, Deputy Executive Officer for the DOL

BOARD ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

(2:13) 1:02 PM

(2:13) 1:02 PM – BOARD APPROVAL OF PAST MEETING MINUTES

John Sampsel requested approval of the LLB April 30, 2025 meeting minutes

MOTION/VOTE

(2:30) 1:02 PM

Doreen Gillespie moved to approve the minutes from the Montana Livestock Loss Board April 30, 2025 meeting. Jordan Mannix seconded. The motion passed.

(2:54) 1:03 PM – CLAIMS AND BUDGET STATUS UPDATES

Brian Simonson reviewed the claims numbers, as of July 24, 2025, and the current budget status report:

- Mr. Simonson reported that the first Black Bear claim arrived in July, this one from Lewis & Clark County. He explained that the report form would be revised to include the recently added Black Bear and Bison
 - He added that there had been a total of 69 claims total made for year, totaling nearly \$108,000, which was comparable to spending in the past couple years
- The budget status report showed that the Personal Expenses had started out with \$100,000, with half of it spent when there was an employee in the Director position, then one-quarter of it was spent for his payout
- The Operations budget, Mr. Simonson said, started out at \$42,000 and \$33,000 of it had been spent. He said currently, the LLB office was being used as an

“expensive” storage facility for LLB items and that should be addressed in the future

- There was \$175,000 left in the claims money account
- Mr. Simonson explained that if \$95,103 was given to Wildlife Services this year, there would still be nearly \$400,000 available to go out in prevention dollars. There was also \$86,892 available in the LLB license plate donation fund, which had gained about \$7,000 to \$10,000 per year since it's inception

(9:48) 1:10 PM – USDA Wildlife Services Funding

Brian Simonson requested action from the LLB on what amount of the LLB's Loss Reduction Funds they wanted to award to Wildlife Services this year:

MOTION/VOTE

(10:24) 1:10 PM

Raina Blackman moved to award Wildlife Services with the Livestock Loss Board's Loss Reduction Funds of \$95,103, as presented by Brian Simonson. Doreen Gillespie seconded. The motion passed.

(12:11) 1:12 PM – USDA WILDLIFE SERVICES UPDATE

Dalin Tidwell updated the LLB on the latest activities for USDA Wildlife Services:

- Regarding Investigative Reports (IRs) from October 1, 2024 to current, Mr. Tidwell reported the following: Black Bears – 15 IRs, with 13 confirmed; Grizzly Bear - 89 IRs, 75 confirmed; Mountain Lion – 16 IRs, 14 confirmed; Wolf – 55 IRs, 44 confirmed
- Mr. Tidwell instructed the LLB on how to use Wildlife Services Form 37 to report migratory bird damage explaining the special measures to follow regarding Golden Eagles
- The last two months, Mr. Tidwell said, had been spent recruiting and hiring positions in Wildlife Services that had been recently lost due to the Deferred Resignation Program in the Federal Government
- The blades had been replaced, Mr. Tidwell reported, on the 95 Tango helicopter and they had been able to continue use of the ATOC spare helicopter that was brought in for use during that repair

OLD BUSINESS

(24:38) 1:24 PM

(24:41) 1:25 PM – EAGLE DEPREDATION UPDATE

Joe Kipp reported that much was being done for awareness of eagle depredations in Montana:

- Mr. Kipp said that Northern Ag Network had put up a Facebook page that had received a lot of comments from producers regarding eagle depredations. He explained that the hope was to build up a database of producers who had eagle depredations and hopefully move forward with it from there. He requested that Dalin Tidwell submit a statement for Colter Brown of Northern Ag Network, to add to their Facebook page regarding eagle depredations

- Dalin Tidwell said that USDA Wildlife Services would do investigations on possible eagle depredations with that Form 37, which went to US Fish and Wildlife and was used as part of the application for their depredation permit process

(35:55) 1:36 PM RULEMAKING – PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Lindsey Simon requested approval from the LLB to move forward with the rulemaking process on proposed language for an LLB Public Participation rule:

- Ms. Simon reminded the LLB that at their April meeting, they had elected to choose the same structure that the BOL had chosen for their Public Participation rule and so she brought language for the LLB to review for their own Public Participation rule, adding that if they approved it, she could move forward with the rulemaking process without having to come back before the Board

MOTION/VOTE

(38:37) 1:38 PM

Raina Blackman moved to approve that Lindsey Simon, Agency Legal Counsel, move forward with the rulemaking process for the proposed ARM 32.29.101- Public Participation for the LLB, as presented by Lindsey Simon. Jordan Mannix seconded. The motion passed.

(39:27) 1:39 PM – STAFFING PROPOSAL

Brian Simonson reviewed the new job description written for the person that would be filling the vacant position in the LLB. He would need approval from the BOL to move forward with the hiring:

- Mr. Simonson explained that the new job description was written for the Helena Program Specialist 1 to work 20 to 30 hours per week, some of which might be utilized for “other duties, as assigned” in the DOL. Pay scale would be around \$28.85 to \$29.31 per hour
- Mike Honeycutt that this would be a DOL position, but the work they would do for the LLB, the policy and strategy direction and things they would need to work on would come from the LLB. During the LLB’s slow time of year for claims, the intent was to keep their duties similar to predator control activity, such as possibly helping with the Aerial hunting program or with the grant program

MOTION/VOTE

(1:12:36) 2:12 PM

Raina Blackman moved to approve the hire of an LLB Program Specialist 1, as written in the Job Description and presented by Brian Simonson. Jordan Mannix seconded. The motion passed.

NEW BUSINESS

(1:13:35) 2:13 PM

(1:13:35) 2:13 PM – BLACK BEAR LANGUAGE CHANGES

Brian Simonson requested that the LLB approve the language changes needed on the

website that would incorporate the addition of Black Bear on the predator list and Bison on the claim list, as approved by the Legislature:

- Mr. Simonson explained that the addition of those two animals had already been made in statute, but the LLB area of the website, including the Mission Statement and Objectives, should be changed as well to match those made in statute by the Legislature. The LLB agreed that Mr. Simonson could make those website changes without having to vote on it

(1:17:07) 2:17 PM RECESS

(1:17:09) 2:31 PM RECONVENE

NEW BUSINESS (Continued)

(1:17:25) 2:31 PM

(1:17:25) 2:31 PM – SET DATE FOR NEXT AWARD CYCLE

The LLB decided to discuss setting the date for the next grant award cycle:

- Both Trina Jo Bradley and Tracy Roeder felt that having the grant applications due in December and then awarded at the end of January or beginning of February made it more possible to utilize the funding by the time the bears were awake. Trina Jo Bradley said that having the grant period that day, the summer was already half over, and Range Riders should have already been starting at the end of May. Tracy Roeder commented that the grant process should be more efficient
- Mike Honeycutt suggested having multiple cycles, possibly twice/year. John Sampsel and Jordan Mannix suggested having December and May grant cycles

MOTION/VOTE

(1:24:59) 2:39 PM

Jordan Mannix moved to approve the offering of two grant cycles, one in December and one in May. Raina Blackman seconded. The motion passed.

GRANT APPLICATIONS

(1:26:21) 2:40 PM

(1:29:29) 2:44 PM – CENTENNIAL VALLEY ASSOCIATION

Brian Simonson reported that Centennial Valley Association, Inc. grant request was for \$10,000 for two Range Riders

MOTION/VOTE

(1:33:07) 2:47 PM

Raina Blackman moved to approve the Centennial Valley Association grant request as presented by Brian Simonson. Doreen Gillespie seconded. The motion passed.

(1:33:34) 2:47 PM – BILL MARTINELL

Brian Simonson reported that Bill Martinell's grant request was for \$861 for a guard dog and some support

MOTION/VOTE

(1:34:53) 2:49 PM

Jordan Mannix moved to approve the Bill Martinell grant request for \$861, as presented by Brian Simonson. Raina Blackman seconded. The motion passed.

(1:35:19) 2:49 PM – PIPESTONE GRAZING ASSOCIATION

Brian Simonson reported that Pipestone Grazing Association grant request was for a Range Rider

MOTION/VOTE

(1:39:15) 2:53 PM

Raina Blackman moved to approve the Pipestone Grazing Association grant request, as presented by Brian Simonson. Jordan Mannix seconded. The motion passed.

(1:39:43) 2:54 PM – BRADLEY RANCH

Brian Simonson reported that the Bradley Ranch new grant request was for \$19,000 for a Range Rider

MOTION/VOTE

(1:42:15) 2:56 PM

Jordan Mannix moved to approve the Bradley Ranch grant request for \$19,000, as presented by Brian Simonson. Joe Kipp seconded. The motion passed.

(1:42:43) 2:57 PM – BLACKFEET NATION STOCKGROWERS ASSOCIATION

Brian Simonson reported that the Blackfeet Nation Stockgrowers Association grant request was for \$30,800 for a Range Rider for two years

MOTION/VOTE

(1:45:50) 3:00 PM

Joe Kipp moved to approve the Blackfeet Nation Stockgrowers Association grant request for two years, as presented by Brian Simonson. Raina Blackman seconded. The motion passed.

**(1:45:50) 3:00 PM – BLACKFOOT CHALLENGE – CARCASS
COMPOSTING/RANGE RIDERS/FENCING**

Brian Simonson reported that the Blackfoot Challenge was requesting three different grants for \$32,000 for Carcass Composting, \$32,000 for Ranger Riders and \$11,000 for Bear Exclusion Fencing

MOTION/VOTE

(1:48:39) 3:02 PM

Doreen Gillespie moved to approve all three of the Blackfeet Challenge grant requests, including \$32,000 for Carcass Composting, \$32,000 for Range Riders and \$11,000 for Bear Exclusion Fencing, as presented by Brian Simonson.

Jordan Mannix seconded. The motion passed.

(1:49:11) 3:08 PM – RUBY VALLEY CONSERVATION DISTRICT

Brian Simonson reported that the Ruby Valley Conservation District was requesting grant funding to use for composting for \$35,000

MOTION/VOTE

(1:51:23) 3:05 PM

Raina Blackman moved to approve the Ruby Valley Conservation District grant request, as presented by Brian Simonson. Jordan Mannix seconded. The motion passed.

(1:51:55) 3:06 PM – BIG HOLE WATERSHED COMMITTEE – RANGE RIDER/CARCASS COMPOSTING

Brian Simonson reported that the Big Hole Watershed Committee two grant requests were \$6,500 for a Range Rider and \$2,000 for carcass composting

MOTION/VOTE

(1:53:07) 3:07 PM

Doreen Gillespie moved to approve the two grant requests from the Big Hole Watershed Committee, for a Range Rider and Carcass Composting, as presented by Brian Simonson. Raina Blackman seconded. The motion passed.

(1:53:33) 3:07 PM – REBISH/KONEN LIVESTOCK

Brian Simonson reported that the Rebish/Konen Livestock grant requests were for three guard dogs plus support and two seasonal Range Riders for a total of \$18,000

MOTION/VOTE

(1:58:00) 3:12 PM

Jordan Mannix moved to approve the grant request from Rebish/Konen Livestock, for three guard dogs plus support and two seasonal Range Riders, as presented by Brian Simonson. Joe Kipp seconded. The motion passed.

(2:00:02) 3:14 PM – MONTANA SHEEP COMPANY, LLC

Brian Simonson reported that the Montana Sheep Company, LLC grant request was for dog food and support for \$2,415

MOTION/VOTE

(2:02:42) 3:16 PM

Raina Blackman moved to approve the grant request from Montana Sheep Company for Guard Dog Support, as presented by Brian Simonson. Jordan Mannix seconded. The motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

(2:03:07) 3:17 PM

John Sampsel called for any public comment:

- Trina Jo Bradley reported that no one on the LLB seemed very excited about participating in the Montana Conflict Reduction Consortium that had been offered to them a while ago. She reported that there was also a Montana Grizzly Bear Conflict Reduction Coordinating Committee that had been organized and she invited LLB members to participate in that group as well
- Doreen Gillespie left the meeting at 3:19 PM **(2:05:05)**
- Tracy Roeder offered her grant submission be able to be used as a sample to explain the grant process to people, such as at the Montana Woolgrowers meeting
- Tanya Lynch thanked the LLB for approving Big Hole's grant request

MEETING ADJOURNED

(2:09:36) 3:24 PM



John Sampsel, Chairman