



Livestock Loss Board Members Present:

Seth Wilson – Chairperson
Jim Cross
Doreen Gillespie
Karli Johnson

Staff: George Edwards – Executive Director

Guests: Yvonne Martinell
David McEwen
Gary Burnett
Linda Owens
Kim Johnson
Tana Nulph
Kyran Kunkel

Chair Seth Wilson called the meeting to order.

Introductions:

- Each board member, board staff and guests introduced themselves.

Reports:

George Edwards, Executive Director – Mr. Edwards gave an overview of his activities since coming back to work in December. He is a member of the NCDE grizzly bear subcommittee and attended their meeting in Missoula, he then spoke to the Board of Livestock in Helena. He also spoke with the Woolgrowers board as well as at their annual convention in Billings. His second week back he spoke at the Land Use and Environment Committee during the Stockgrowers convention in Billings. His third week back he spoke at the North Central Montana Sheep Seminar in Conrad and the fourth week he had taken a couple of

vacation days during Christmas. The week before the board meeting was mostly spent testing a new teleconference system for this meeting.

The board has paid out \$247,800 for loss claims in 2019. This is close to a quarter of a million mark and that's just claims through a portion of November. The board will still be receiving 2019 claims for another couple months. We will easily surpass the quarter of a million mark for the first time.

Mr. Edwards has been requested to speak at a Ranching with Grizzlies meeting in Choteau on January 8th. The following week, he will be going to Polson for the governor's Grizzly Bear Advisory Council. Mr. Edwards is on their agenda for January 15th.

A big topic of discussion that he has been hearing repeatedly has been a multiplier for grizzly bears. If the board used the current claim numbers as of today and applied the 3.5 Wyoming multiplier to it, the board would need to have \$619,000 dollars just for grizzly bear lost claims.

He said if it wouldn't have been for Woolgrowers going to the legislature to get money for the board and getting our budget increased to \$300,000, we would have been in the big trouble this year. They have been the board's number one supporter in the legislature.

Grants:

Mr. Edwards said the board has \$20,708 in excess federal grant money. The Big Hole Watershed Committee has asked for an increase of \$7,000 although \$1,000 of that might be a duplication with People and Carnivores proposal for developing a toolkit. He asked Tana or Kim to address this topic as he was not sure if it's a duplication or not.

Kim Johnson said they are submitted one proposal for a rancher toolkit that they are developing for a loaner program and have been working the Big Hole Watershed Committee to develop a similar rancher toolkit. The Big Hole Watershed toolkit is going to be a loaner program so it will have some similarities. She thinks there will be enough differences that it won't be a complete duplication because ranchers can go directly to the Big Hole Watershed Committee. Ranchers don't necessarily need to come through People and Carnivores for a toolkit. She thinks by going to the Big Hole Watershed Committee, it might bring in more ranchers to try some of these tools. There are some similarities but also some differences in the toolkits. What we are developing is a rancher toolkit that has various temporary conflict prevention tools. It is mostly scare devices like Fox Lights, Critter Getters and some other temporary tools along with resources for more developed tools like electric fencing, fladry, livestock guard dogs. It's the toolkit that ranchers can check out for 30-day period. Ranchers need to put some temporary tools out there until they can find some better long-term solutions.

Ms. Nulph said she would like to mention we are excited about the opportunity to put toolkits together, but if it comes down to prioritizing funding, we really need the funding for our Range Rider program more than for this kit.

Mr. Cross pointed out an email the board received January 3rd does not agree with the conversation we're just having. It's talking about money for ranchers to attend meetings. The Big Hole Watershed Committee asked for 12,000 and we provided 10,000 during the September board meeting.

Ms. Nulph said the board held back \$2,000 because of the rancher attending meetings portion. She said that they never intended for LLB funds to pay for ranchers to attend meetings. That was supposed to be in the form of a match. They have used that match for another grant, so we won't use that for match.

Mr. Edwards said the other request for clarification was Mr. Kunkel's. The board had him hold back a portion of his grant because of wolf callers for FWP. The board approved a portion of the \$6,700 request. Yesterday Mr. Kunkel resent a modified grant proposal which he forwarded on to the board, but board members may not have had time to look at it.

Mr. Kunkel explained the first proposal submitted last fall had included a match for some GPS collars that were provided for FWP to use in the area they are working on. He had met with Mr. Wilson to discuss this topic. He said he believes the board had met and decided that FWP should be providing collars. Seth Wilson, Tye Smucker and I discussed range riders. We swapped that out with some funding that was paid that we didn't use in the first round for another range rider. The range rider was riding for a grazing association. We hadn't put that in because we didn't need to put that in with the GPS collars. Since the GPS collars didn't count, we swapped that out for the association range riding time. We are using this match to get us up back up to that \$6,700. Mr. Edwards asked Mr. Kunkel the question, did that money from the grazing association to pay him go through you or was that independent of you? Mr. Kunkel responded it was independent of me. Mr. Edwards said it wouldn't be a match for your program. It would be a match of the grazing association if they would have applied. Mr. Kunkel said the grazing association paid for it on their own. Mr. Edwards said he asked the question for clarification purposes. Mrs. Gillespie said I am a board member and I think that what Mr. Edwards said was spot on and agrees this would not qualify as a match. Mr. Cross said, so this is a request with amendments. It appears Mr. Kunkel was attempting to restore \$1,500 portion of his grant.

Board members asked how much money is left after approving \$7,000 for the Big Hole Watershed Committee. Mr. Edwards said that leaves \$13,708. He was asked if Mountain Thinking Conservation Science Collaborative was awarded any grant funds. He said they were awarded \$4,292. Mr. Edwards went on to say

that was the portion of the grant was removed during the September board meeting. This was taking out money for wolf callers as part of the match because the wolf callers are FWP's responsibility. He cautioned the board to be very careful because FWP receives a lot of federal money through the Pittman Robertson Act and we can't match federal dollars with federal dollars.

Ms. Owens said they have three projects related to depredation. The first one is the carcass pickup and compost program it came in at \$50,440 dollars. Overall their projects are at \$80,440. She created a saddlebag kit which came in at \$10,796. Currently there is two hundred printed and handed out already and 756 are being printed. The kit comes in a PVC zippered waterproof bag and it costs quite a bit. She puts in a guide on what to do when coming across a carcass on tear off proof waterproof paper, a quick drying marker and yellow caution flag. This kit explains what a rancher should do when they find a carcass out there regardless of depredation or scavenging. They can flag it and put the date on it so people know that there's a carcass there. She also bought ten trail cameras to loan out. This would be the best way to show proof of what's out there. The cameras came to \$2,249.50. She bought a test electric fence kit to see if that would work for protecting a carcass which came to \$349. The total of for these three programs was \$63,835 recognizing the Livestock Loss Board provided a \$15,000 grant. Madison Valley Ranchlands has quite a bit more match beyond the board's initial grant.

Mr. Edwards said it sounds like Ms. Owens can match pretty much what we have left over but we still have Kim Johnson's proposal for Dooling Livestock. That is a new proposal for \$1,500 as they have purchased guard dogs for use with cattle. This ranch in Beaverhead County had a lot of wolf predation earlier in 2019. Ms. Johnson's second proposal is for the toolkit that they spoke briefly about earlier. That could use some of the money other than figuring out what Ms. Owens needs.

Mr. Cross said it was his understanding that we were going to be awarding existing contracts or to existing contractor and not accepting new proposals at this time. Mr. Edwards said he is correct. He told Ms. Johnson it would be totally up to the board whether they'd be willing to accept a late submission. Board members would make that determination at this board meeting. He went on to say it is the board's decision and he did tell Ms. Johnson this up front so she's aware of that. Mr. Cross suggested that we look at the needs and additional needs for people that have already been awarded a grant and if there's funds left over then we could consider this new request. Mrs. Gillespie said she agrees completely.

Ms. Martinell said they would have five thousand dollars additional match if it was acceptable that the money was from August of 2019 to August of 2020. Mr. Edwards stated all the money must be used for projects in 2019.

Mr. Wilson said he would just like to echo what other folks have said. His understanding on this call is to help existing 2019 grantees and hopefully we've clarified who might need a little additional support. He suggested that the board should consider Madison Valley Ranchlands additional requests today. He would like the board to expand all remaining dollars if possible. He said we should start at the top and just go down with what money we have additional requests. That be the \$7,000 for the Big Hole Watershed Committee and the remainder to Madison Valley Ranchlands. Mr. Edwards that would be \$13,708. If they can match that it would use the remainder of the money. Ms. Owens said there wouldn't be any problem with providing a match.

Mr. Wilson wanted to make sure we're doing what we talked about to clarify what Mr. Cross and Mrs. Gillespie were both saying that grants are for existing people who applied on timely manner like they were supposed to do. Mr. Wilson said it would be just existing people, the five existing entities that applied. Both the Big Hole and Madison Valley both have enough additional match to use up the remainder of the funding.

Motion: Doreen Gillespie made a motion that we stick with the deadlines because she believes deadlines are deadlines. Jim Cross seconded the motion.

Discussion: Seth Wilson said I would just also say I appreciate the efforts of folks to get additional submissions. Doreen Gillespie called for the question. Mr. Edwards said this means you state your name and your vote. **Vote:** Seth Wilson, yes, Jim Cross, yes, Doreen Gillespie, yes, Karli Johnson, no. Vote is three to one. Motion carried.

Motion: Karli Johnson made a motion that we award the Big Hole Watershed Committee \$7,000 and use the remaining balance of the money that we have available to the Madison Valley Ranch Land Group. Seth Wilson seconded the motion. **Discussion:** Jim Cross questioned if Mr. Wilson can make or second a motion. Mr. Edwards said there is a section of a state law that allows the chair to do that. Mr. Wilson suggested that the groups with late submissions to apply in August when the board may have rollover money from the compensation account. Doreen Gillespie call for the question. **Vote:** All in favor. Motion carried.

Public Comment: Dave McEwen with Montana Woolgrowers was past president and a member for a great number of years. He said there is growing concerns with the grant situation. Center for Biological Diversity, 30 million dollars' worth of assets. Defenders a Wildlife, 44 million dollars' worth of assets. These are tax-free assets and Western Watershed took in in 2018, \$886,000. Greater Yellowstone Coalition in 2018 took in five million. I'm asking this board to be very careful on NGO requests. The money is intended for livestock producers to help them out with a growing carnivore problem. When I hear of money trying to be spent for GPS callers, that's the state's problem. They have money for that. I hear things like livestock guard dogs for wolf scenarios. Guys need to do a little research. That doesn't work, all you do is kill dogs. Fladry looks good at best. I think there's a lot of things that we need to take a little more critical look at.

Maybe we should look into making the state fund wildlife services to get out there and look at carcasses before something else packs it off so that they can determine a cause. I'm asking this board to be critical of dollars being spent to NGOs for the sake of the producer. It's going to be very difficult for Woolgrowers to spend much political capital asking for more money for this board in the form of multipliers or grant funds from the state legislature and you might be out there on your own.

Mr. Wilson thanked Mr. McEwen for his comment. He then stated I'm looking at our last three years of grantees and I and I guess my message would be I absolutely agree that we want to have precious dollars go to work on the ground for producers and their partners to get prevention into the landscape. I share that and when I look at our grantee list, we've got folks like the Big Hole Watershed Committee, the Blackfoot Challenge, Centennial Valley Association, individuals like Donna Cole, the Meuli Ranch, Tom Miner Basin Association, the Granite Conservation District, and Swan Valley connections. I'm just reading a few off and I am quite confident in many of those groups ability to build partnerships with landowners and producers. I feel like our board is thoughtful about who we try to support and so I would just let you know and be happy to visit if you want to ever look at all of the all of the groups we're supporting so I appreciate your comment, thank you.

Mrs. Gillespie said thank you and I would like to say that Seth has a good point, but I also believe Dave has a really good point. The Livestock Loss Board is supposed to be for the loss of livestock, and I think we do need to be diligent in who we're awarding money to because this is getting to be a bigger problem and it's going to do nothing but get larger. We've got to be very careful to support our ag businesses such as Woolgrowers because without them we may not have anything as a board. I think we really need to put our heads together and visit about this. I'm very sympathetic with Dave. I totally understand where he's coming from and we need be very diligent.

Mr. Cross said I would support everything that's been said so far and I appreciate Dave's sharing with us. I would suggest that we make that an item for our next meeting. Hopefully we can be across the table and just clarify. I don't think we are guilty of that at this point in time, but I have to agree with others who say it could become a problem. We could be funding organizations that are not using on the ground activities.

Ms. Martinell said I just wanted to say that CVA is totally rancher oriented as far as where the money is going with our range rider program and one of the big problems that we have is not being able to find the carcasses in time to have anything to show. The program is very beneficial to our area and every landscape is different. What takes place and what's beneficial is different in every landscape. We appreciate you.

Mr. Edwards said he understands what Ms. Martinell is talking about. He said the Stockgrowers spoke about a need for a multiplier He asked board members to keep that in mind. We may have a rough legislative session because I think they're going to be requests asking for multiplier where we don't have the money.

Mr. Cross said that the idea of the multiplier has been around for 20 some years. Maybe not necessarily related to grizzly bear, but we did discuss it in depth in the wolf program. Probably the biggest part is a funding source. Programs can get very expensive. It could come to the point where we just have no more funding to address our basic needs.

Mr. Edwards said Mr. McEwen has been doing a great service in terms of attempting to get more federal money for our board. He has been in talks directly with the Secretary of Interior about adding a dollar fee to Glacier National Park which would be approximately three million dollars. Part of the caveat on that is he would like to see a good portion of that money passed through our board onto wildlife services for all the work they're doing on behalf of our board.

Mr. Cross said I think that we need to remember that the numbers that we're dealing with can be handled by another agency of state government and we're far from reaching any population level that will require de-listing or relisting. There is some room for management by another agency that could help reduce our loss problem.

Mr. McEwen has been in those talks with Martha Williams, FWP Director as well. He said he is hanging up as he has a meeting with Ms. Williams.

Kim Johnson thanks the board for the opportunity to present her proposals, even if they weren't at presented in time. She said she appreciated the board's time with this and hopefully maybe next year she can get proposals in on time for consideration.

Tana Nulph thanked the board for supporting the Big Hole Watershed Committee programs.

Motion: Jim Cross made a motion to adjourn. Doreen Gillespie seconded the motion. **Adjourned**

DATED this 16 day of April, 2020

Seth Wilson, Chairman
Montana Livestock Loss Board

Approved via Zoom Meeting