

Montana Fish & Wildlife Conservation Trust
Minutes from Joint State Federal Board
Meeting – June 20, 2016

Attendees:

John Hagengruber, Chair (USFS) (jhagengruber@fs.fed.us)
Roxanne Peterson (Bureau of Reclamation) (repeterson@usbr.gov)
Sam Sheppard, (Mt Fish, Wildlife & Parks) ssheppard@mt.gov
Bill Orsello, Chair, CAB (williamorsello@gmail.com)
Jane Ratzlaff, Montana's Outdoor Legacy Foundation (jratzlaff@gmail.com)
Deb Lane, Recorder (fwctrust@mtwf.org)

John convened the meeting at 11:15 am. David was unable to attend the meeting but would be available if necessary via cell phone.

Review Agenda Items and Minutes from Last Meeting

Minutes from the April 13, 2016 meeting were presented. **Motion to approve the minutes by Sam; Seconded by Roxanne. VOTE: 4-0 to approve.**

Triple 8 Update:

The JB reviewed the Triple 8 stipulations recommended at the April 13 JB meeting. The Ortenberg Foundation is waiving the interest on the sale. They also agreed that if at the end of the Contract for Deed period there is default by MtOLF the Trust would be able to purchase the property. The Contract for Deed extends until December 31, 2017. FWP is fully supportive, anticipating the addition of the land to their WMA in the future. The project will now be presented in court to determine if there is any conflict of interest due to MtOLF's position as Trust manager for the Trust. MtOLF will need to apply for the 2nd \$500,000 grant in 2017. The Triple 8 project for 2016 in the amount of \$500,000 has been recommended by the CAB for approval with the attached stipulations – this motion is to approve the stipulations for the agreement. **Motion by Rick to approve; Second by Roxanne. VOTE: 4 – 0 to approve.**

2016 Projects:

Specimen Creek Update: RMEF applied and received an Open Space Bond from Lewis & Clark County for the remaining funds needed to complete the purchase of the Specimen Creek project. They are awaiting FWP approval to move ahead with closing and transfer to FWP.

Inside the Target Area:

There are no projects recommended by the CAB for inside the target area funding from the 2016 funding cycle applicants. Two projects were received both from PPLT. The Peaks to Creeks project did not meet the project criteria as it has already been purchased by PPLT. The Welsh Conservation Easement project also presented by PPLT was not funded. The project is for a Conservation Easement on a ranch with Trout Creek (Near Helena); approximately 129 acres of agriculture land and wetlands. The project did not score well with very limited public access and a high appraisal value. There is public access to the public land surrounding the property just a mile down the road so it would not be creating new access to an area.

An interim project – Triple 8 (see above) for \$500,000 has already been approved for inside the target area funding in 2016.

Outside the Target Area:

Eight projects were received and all eight were funded at various levels of request.

Grossweiller Conservation Easement: In Kalispell, this is an attempt to create a conservation easement on a section of wetlands near the city. It would help save the wetlands and create a bird viewing area to be used for educational purposes. The CAB recommends funding this project in the amount of \$45,000.

Dillon High Trails Phase II: Phase I was funded by the Trust in 2015. There is full support of the county and local recreationists. This project received the most comments (all in favor of the acquisition) in this funding period. The comments came from a diverse group including county officials, local groups, individuals, etc. The CAB recommends funding this project in the amount of \$75,000.

Weber Gulch: This is an inholding in a roadless area. Great grizzly bear habitat. There is a high potential for development but the cost of creating a road for access has limited the interest in developing the area at this time. The CAB recommends funding this project in the amount of \$20,000 with the stipulation that this funding amount reduces the cost to the Forest Service (or other NGO) when the property is transferred.

Bitterroot Trails: The bank holds title to this property at this time; RMEF is working with the bank, landowner and forest service to acquire this 120 acres in Ravalli County. This is Phase I which would be transferred directly to the Bitterroot National Forest at closing. The CAB is recommending \$75,000 for this project.

Wilson Park: This is another inholding with a high risk of development. This project is to purchase 262 acres as a phased acquisition of land located in the Little Belt Mountains with the Lewis & Clark National Forest. Once complete, the property will be transferred to the FS. The CAB recommends funding in the amount of \$75,000 for this project.

Trumbull Conservation Easement: This is a large project presented by The Trust for Public Land. It would place a conservation easement on property owned by Stoltz Lumber Co. Very high potential for development if it were to be sold. There are concerns from the CAB regarding Stoltz's request to have some protection if the law (Recreational access liability law) changes in order to keep the public out of the area. This will need more clarification. FWP will review the easement language. The CAB recommends funding this project in the amount of \$200,000 with the stipulation that the Joint Board reviews, approves, and is signatory on the conservation easement.

NOTE: there are two PF projects (below) each with recommended funding of \$50,000. The CAB has suggested that PF be allowed to use the \$100,000 on either of the properties or split as it best suits the acquisitions.

Teton River: This is a part of a long term project by Pheasants Forever to connect several pieces of property to a section that a landowner has bequeathed to them. The CAB recommends funding this project in the amount of \$50,000.

Mission Valley: This project includes 80 acres in Lake County Montana. It is an inholding in the Nine Pipes area. The CAB recommends funding in the amount of \$50,000.

The Joint Board appreciates the CAB's well rounded perspective from all members in bringing forward great projects for the Trust to fund. **A motion by Sam to approve all projects and stipulations recommended by the CAB for funding at the levels presented. Second by Rick. Vote: 4 - 0 to approve.**

Oyler Conservation Easement Update:

Sam stated they had started a hunter access protocol with the new landowner. FWP's role will be to administer this program. The new owner had previously closed down and offered limited access to the property during hunting season. The property is now divided into 3 sections and up to 4 persons are allowed in each group given access to hunt a section. FWP and the landowner will pick the original person who has signed up but the person given the opportunity to hunt will determine their hunting partners. Early still but there are a few on the list to select from at this time. Bird watching and hunting is fully allowed. This is becoming a more populated area and it has been a wise decision to have archery only hunting in the area – no rifle hunting allowed. There have been some concerns expressed by the public regarding the orange “no trespassing” paint and signage on the property. This will be clarified with the landowner. The only access to the adjacent state land is due to the Stream Access law which allows access via the creek up to the high water mark. It was suggested that the landowner meet with John and Bill to discuss the issues.

Monitoring:

Monitoring is up to date with the exception of FWP projects. We have been unable to find a contact person in order to review the older projects. Sam stated he would send out the names and contact information for the regional managers as he thought they would be the best starting point for the reviews.

No public comments.

Future Meetings: The next JB meeting will be on September 14th at the Triple 8. In the morning the JB will take a tour of Specimen Creek – the meeting will be held after the tour.

Adjourned.