



## Minutes

### Montana State Parks & Recreation Board Meeting

Helena Headquarters

December 19, 2018 – 9:30 a.m.

Parks & Recreation Board Members Present: Angie Grove, Chair; Jeff Welch, Vice-Chairman; Scott Brown; Mary Sheehy Moe and Betty Stone (via video).

Staff Present: Director Williams, Pat Doyle, Coleen Furthmyre, Betsy Kirkeby, Tom Reilly, Beth Shumate, Ken Soderberg, and Zach Zipfel.

Guests: Bob Walker and Coby Gierke.

#### Topics:

1. **Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance**
2. **Approval of Board Minutes**
3. **Approval of Board Expenses**
4. **Board Member Reports**
5. **Director's Report**
6. **Administrator Report**
7. **Recognition of Vice-Chair Welch**
8. **2019 Board Meeting Dates - Final**
9. **East Gallatin (Affiliated Land) 50-Year Management Agreement - Final**
10. **Land Transfer Policy Revisions - Final**
11. **Smith River State Park Biennial Fee Rule Extension - Final**
12. **Revised Classification Policy - Proposed**
13. **Montana Trails Coalition Proposed Legislation – Informational**
14. **Parks in Focus Recommendations – Endorsement**
15. **Milltown State Park and Bonner Development Group Property Donation – Final**
16. **Public Comment ~ For Issues Not On This Agenda**
17. **Adjournment**

#### 1. **Call to Order – Pledge of Allegiance**

Chair Grove called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m.

Chair Grove stated it's been a year in October since the first Board meeting for new members (with the exception of Vice-Chair Welch); it was cool that we had our first Board meeting at First Peoples Buffalo Jump State Park (SP) and concluded with the Parks In Focus (PIF) Commission meeting at First Peoples Buffalo Jump. Wants to thank staff and Board Members for the first year; the Board has done a good job at continuing with the original strategic direction the original Board designed; have clarified and strengthen some Board policies; herself and Vice-Chair Welch were members on the PIF Commission and Members Brown and Sheehy Moe attended most of the PIF meetings and travelled quite extensively

for that to happen, which shows their commitment to state parks; the Board has started to work with other outdoor recreational groups and expand above state parks; Members have done a pretty good job at visiting the diverse and fantastic parks, personally and for meetings. Attended the Bannack SP Ghost walk; if it isn't on your bucket list, it should be; it exceeded her expectations.

Chair Grove led the Pledge of Allegiance.

## **2. Approval of Board Minutes**

**Member Sheehy stated she would like to have her comment in the minutes to just say "warming".**

*Action: Member Sheehy Moe moved, and Member Brown seconded to approve the October 16, 2018 minutes. Motion passed. 5-0*

## **3. Approval of Board Expenses**

*Action: Vice-Chair Welch moved, and Member Sheehy Moe seconded to approve the Parks & Recreation Board expenses. Motion passed. 5-0*

## **4. Board Member Reports**

Member Sheehy Moe reported she attended the last Parks In Focus (PIF) meeting; very informative. Attended the Citizen Advisory Council (CAC) meeting in Great Falls; very informative, very engaged group of citizens and helpful to hear their concerns and interests.

Member Brown reported he attended the PIF meeting in Great Falls; very informative; working on a project in Billings called TrailNet and the project is in the process of building trails throughout Billings; the synergy and overlap that is going on in Billings, PIF, state parks and public lands is very exciting.

Vice-Chair Welch stated this is his last meeting; bitter sweet moment, have enjoyed the serving on the Board last five years, learned a lot and hopefully improved state parks; there no bad actors, everyone's heart is in the right place; parks are higher on the radar than they have ever been; future looks good; encourages to keep up the hard work and don't be afraid to get out of your comfort zone.

Member Stone reported she visited Lake Elmo and Chief Plenty Coups SP. Trying to take every opportunity to talk to people about the need for funding in state parks and to ask for legislative support; made some good contacts.

## **5. Director's Report**

Director Williams stated she agrees with Chair Grove's comments that we really are making good headway; appreciates the Boards commitment and efforts made; it is a group effort. Thanked the PIF Commission and staffers for their dedication; last week's meeting was encouraging and inspiring; Parks staff is firing on all cylinders and doing their best which is exciting to see. Have been attending CAC and legislative open house meetings across the state; meetings showed a great level of engagement which we area incredibly lucky to have; discussions have been about Fish, Wildlife and Parks and how integral the three are. Have been gearing up for the legislative session; trying to rebuild financial credibility. Have been implementing the legislative performance audit and some of the PIF recommendations. Trying to compile and demonstrate the progress the Department has made.

Chair Grove stated she thinks the Board can start promoting parks advocacy and local level partnerships at CAC meetings; would like the Board to try and attend the meetings in the regions.

## **6. Administrator Report**

Beth Shumate, Parks Administrator, handed out, explained and discussed the 2019 State Parks Division Annual Report and report of the outdoor recreation grant programs. (See copy of the report in the December 19, 2018 Parks and Recreation Board meeting file.) The report lines out the bread of what we do as well as the current state of affairs of where the state parks are at with visitation, a fiscal standpoint, reservation program, capitol program and all other programs we manage within the Division. The main purpose of the Annual Report is to provide information on the health of the State Parks Division to interested parties (legislators, partners, the media and residents of Montana). At the bottom of each page, there are visitor comments; this gives an anecdotal statement of how people feel about the overall state parks system. The report highlights the volunteer program; an annual total of 1,413 volunteers provided 43,074 service hours for state parks in 2018, an equivalent of about 20 fulltime employees. Annual grants programs (Recreational Trails Program, Land and Water Conservation Fund, Snowmobile Program, Off-Highway Vehicle Program and Accessible Playground Grants) provide over \$3 million which touches every county in the state of Montana; in 2018, 107 projects were funded. The Department is hopeful that the Annual Report will connect every day activities that the Division handles and manages across the system, and how it ties into the overall mission and vision of Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP), Parks Strategic Plan and the PIF recommendations. Ideally, this report will provide a good baseline of our current system and offerings which will in turn aid us in developing the desired state park system and will give the communities of supporters the sense that we absolutely embrace them as partners.

Chair Grove commended and asked for a round of applause for Pat Doyle, Parks Marketing and Communications Manager, and Betsy Kirkeby, Parks Public Relations Specialist, for putting together the report.

Shumate stated the marketing department did most of the heavy lifting, however it did take a team effort to put the report together.

Vice-Chair Welch stated the legislature wants to know that there are people out there that support parks (i.e. Friends Groups) and that there are funding possibilities; would like this highlighted a little bit more graphically in the report. Is there just less demand for grants in the eastern part of the state?

Shumate explained it depends on the year and the requests received; the grant program report is just for 2018. Havre, Glasgow, Malta and Broadus communities have been allocated monies in the past. The Division is always trying to conduct outreach to the entire state.

Vice-Chair Welch stated we need more parks and trails in the eastern part of the state; it's a good policy. Shumate explained another challenge that smaller communities have is they lack the ability to secure matching contributions.

Member Stone stated the grant application is very complicated and difficult to fill-out and understand; the communities need someone with expertise to help with it.

Shumate stated the Division does provide training sessions across the state; Michelle McNamee, Parks Recreation Trails Program Manager, just completed statewide travel sessions to provide technical assistance and support.

Chair Grove asked for an update of where the Department is at for staff support in the eastern part of the state. There are some significant parks in the eastern part of the state.

Shumate said the Division is really trying to work towards getting additional support especially in the central and eastern part of the state; the current organizational structure only allows one regional park manager for the entire eastern part of the state; currently, the Department is looking at removing parks districts to realign with their FWP boundaries.

Member Sheehy Moe stated she agrees with Vice-Chair Welch's comments; if we have to do lopsided things in order to make sure Parks will have more, that will be a conversation we will need to have.

#### **7. Recognition of Vice-Chair Welch**

Chair Grove stated Vice-Chair Welch has been amazing for state parks; not only was he a founding member of initial Parks and Recreation Board in 2013; the amount of work and exhausting support that he has provided has been remarkable; he has laid the vision and ground work that the current Board is still work on. He is also one of the founding members of the Montana State Park Foundation. As we look back, establishing the Board and the Foundation are going to be the two most important things that have happened to state parks and the State of Montana; it is overwhelming to her what his role has been in establishing these two things. The people of Montana owe you a "Big Sky" thank you. If all of this was not enough, he agreed to be on the PIF Commission, and once again, had to roll-up his sleeves and do some heavy lifting for state parks. At last week's PIF meeting, the Governor specifically acknowledged the contributions that Vice-Chair Welch has provided for state parks. As Board Chair, she will miss him deeply, but he has volunteered to stay on the line for questions and support.

The Department showed a video featuring the opening of Milltown State Park.

#### **8. 2019 Board Meeting Dates – Final**

Beth Shumate, Parks Administrator, stated the following dates and locations are being proposed for the 2019 Parks and Recreation Board meetings:

- April 24 (Wednesday) – Bozeman (Tour Lewis and Clark Caverns lighting project)  
Possible work session with Fish and Wildlife Commissioners
- June 26 (Wednesday) – Helena (if needed) (Tour Black Sandy State Park and/or Spring Meadow State Park)
- September 18 (Wednesday) – Great Falls (Tour Giant Springs State Park and/or Sluice Boxes State Park)
- December 11 (Wednesday) – Helena

Chair Grove stated April 24 may be a bit early to meet with the Fish and Wildlife Commission; maybe move to a later date just because it is right after the session and there will probably be a change in the

Commission. Need to make sure we work tours into the meeting date timeframe. Maybe coordinate a meeting around Buzzard Days or Bannack Days?

Betsy LaBroad, Region 2 Regional Park Manager, stated Bannack Days is a lot of pre-work 7-10 days prior to the event and then there is massive clean-up after. Heritage Days might be a little easier, still busy but easier.

Chair Grove stated she would like to have a meeting specifically for state parks business practices; focusing on concessioners, commercial use permits, camping reservation system etc.; would like the Board members to think about that.

Member Sheehy Moe stated she would like to use the most travelable time (summer) to have the meetings, particularly eastern Montana if possible.

Chair Grove recommends approving the proposed dates and reexamine the June meeting location at a later date.

Vice-Chair Welch stated the Board did have a joint meeting with the Fish and Wildlife Commissioners a couple years ago; it was more of an informational meeting; strongly encourages a strong agenda and purpose for when the meeting does occur.

Director Williams stated there are more and more examples of where the Commission and the Board is addressing social conflicts and pressures recreational use; coordinating and learning from each other would be beneficial, specifically the Madison River; thinks the Department would have an easy time putting together a tight agenda.

Vice-Chair Welch asked how the legislation to remove Headwaters State Park from the Primitive Parks list come about?

Shumate stated it is a direct tie into our transformation of the classification efforts; there is a PIF recommendations that allude to the need to provide additional private-public partnerships, new revenue generating opportunities; with the Primitive Parks Act we are extremely limited in providing and meeting Americans with Disability Act (ADA) compliance; there is also an extensive visitor demand for additional camping opportunities; Headwaters SP is the center between Yellowstone and Glacier National Park.

Vice-Chair Welch stated he encourages the Department to have the argument tight when presenting to the legislature; there will be forces aligned against this bill; laying out a strong vision of why it is benefiting the park and the community, who should back this, and explain that the Department will not ruin the park. This was tried on Madison Buffalo Jump a few years ago and it got defeated; one of the reasons why is we got in front of the tribes; hopefully the tribes are involved from the beginning for Headwaters.

Shumate explained staff has been discussing public outreach, what the vision is and why we are answering to the visitor demands that we are receiving.

***Motion: Member Stone moved, and Member Brown seconded that the Parks and Recreation Board approve the 2019 Parks and Recreation Board meeting dates and locations as discussed.***

Vice-Chair Welch abstained from voting since he will not be on the Board for the said meeting dates.

***Action on Motion: Motion passed. 4-0***

#### **9. East Gallatin (Affiliated Land) 50-Year Management Agreement - Final**

This agenda item was approved as a proposed action at the October 2018 Board meeting. The 29-acre site was acquired in 1985 and designated a Parks 'Affiliated Land'. A subsequent 6-acre parcel was donated soon afterward. The site has been managed and developed by the City of Bozeman and the local Sunrise Rotary Club and known locally as Glen Lake Rotary Park. Since 1991 a management agreement has been in-place with the City, with a 5-year automatic renewal clause. Due to the constitutional requirement that a state agency receive fair market value for land disposed of it is not possible to simply transfer the parcel to another governmental entity, nor is it realistic for the City to purchase the property. Following Board approval of proceeding with the proposed 50-year management agreement, a 30-day public comment period occurred. Two public comments were received, both in favor of the proposed action. Alternative #1: Proceed with finalizing the 50-year management agreement with the City of Bozeman as proposed; Alternative #2 Continue with the existing 1991 lease arrangement; the 5-year automatic renewal clause will remain in effect to keep the lease current; Alternative #3 Discontinue the arrangement with the City of Bozeman, with the possibility of FWP assuming duties for day-to-day management. Enter into and finalize the new 50-year management agreement with the City of Bozeman for management of the site. The 50-year term will provide the needed assurance for continued investments to be made by the local Sunrise Rotary Club, via their long-established relationship with the City of Bozeman.

Chair Grove asked for public comment.

Bob Harrington, conceptual plan, agreement will help implement several projects; city of Bozeman needs these improvements;

***Motion: Member Brown moved, and Member Moe seconded that the Parks and Recreation Board approve the Department's proposed 50-year management agreement with the City of Bozeman for their continued management of the East Gallatin site.***

***Action on Motion: Motion passed. 5-0***

#### **10. Land Transfer Policy Revisions - Final**

Zach Zipfel, FWP Legal Counsel, explained in 2015, the Parks and Recreation Board adopted its first Lands Policy setting forth "criteria and conditions" before the Board would consider a state park lands project. The Policy applied to four categories of acquisitions: 1) Acquisition of Interests in New Park Lands; 2) Acquisition of In-holdings and Adjacent Park Lands; 3) Easements; and 4) Transfer of Lands or Interests in Lands. Consideration of new acquisitions was tied to the Strategic Plan criteria of Significance, Relevance, and Accessibility. The Policy was updated in 2017 to add language indicating that "it shall be the policy and intent of the Board not to close any existing state parks or recreational and historic areas." The Legislative Performance Audit concluded the 2017 Policy conflicted with itself; the Audit identified the most recent version of the policy, appeared to conflict with itself. This update

to the policy addresses the audit recommendation by eliminating the conflicting language, while also providing general updates and revisions for the sake of clarity and consistency. The Department accepted public comment for 30 days following the Board's proposal at the October Board meeting; one comment was received expressing general support for the changes while also raising other issues beyond the scope of the policy. If the Board declines to adopt the updated Policy, the previous version of the Policy adopted in 2017 will remain in effect.

Chair Grove asked for public comment.

*Motion: Member Sheehy Moe moved, and Member Brown seconded that the Parks and Recreation Board approve the proposed Land Transfer Policy Revisions as proposed.*

*Action on Motion: Motion passed. 5-0*

#### **11. Smith River State Park Biennial Fee Rule Extension – Final**

Ken Soderberg, Parks Chief of Operations, explained the current rule was last adopted by the Board in February 2017 and is scheduled to expire in December 2018. Upon approval by the Board, the fee rule will be in effect for the next biennium, until December 2020. The proposed changes from the existing Biennial Fee Rule are: 1) Remove Big Sky Expeditions from the table on page 13 of the Biennial Rule; 2) Change the number of allocated float trip launches from 4 to 11 for Montana Angler Fly Fishing on page 13 of the Biennial Rule.

Member Brown asked if this has to go back to the Board, including outfitter days to the new outfitter. What happens if something like this happens in between the biennium.

Soderberg explained by statute, the Board has the authority to set the fees for the Smith River and all information is included as part of the biennial fee rule.

Colin Maas, Smith River State Park Manger, stated nothing in the past has occurred where the policy would need to be looked at during the biennium; very unlikely this would ever happen. When an outfitter decides to sell their business on the Smith River, another existing allocated outfitter can purchase that business; when the purchase is complete, and the outfitter is in good standing with the State Board of Outfitters and with the Department, the launches would be reallocated with the new owner/business.

Chair Grove asked for public comment.

*Motion: Vice-Chair Welch moved, and Member Stone and Member Sheehy Moe seconded that the Parks and Recreation Board approve the Biennial Fee Rule for the Smith River State Park.*

*Action on Motion: Motion passed. 5-0*

\*Chair Grove stated the next agenda item will be the Parks in Focus Recommendations – Endorsement (see agenda item #14); will come back to the Revised Classification Policy afterwards.

#### **12. Revised Classification Policy - Proposed**

Beth Shumate, Parks Administrator, stated the FWP Parks Division sees classification framework as our foundational building block for both internal and external components of how we manage state parks

and what the visitors can expect. We know our parks are already broad in their diversity, but we want to make sure the visitor better understands what those experiences are at the particular parks, so hence the need to group them by those experience levels or classes. The 2015 Montana State Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan adopted by the previous Board directed staff to manage parks and programs in a manner that considers: the allocation of resources; fiscal sustainability; visitor services and experiences; partnerships and engagement; and awareness and outreach. In 2018, an audit conducted by the Legislative Audit Division included an analysis of steps we as a Division, have taken to develop systems and processes to strategically prioritize and allocate resources. The report includes the recommendation to “Develop and implement a system wide plan for regularly ranking, reviewing and documenting resource allocations for capital projects, and for maintenance and operations.” Also, in 2018 a separate analysis from the PIF Commission was conducted; the Commission identified the need to revise the Montana State Parks Classification and Prioritization of Parks Resources policy. These efforts have led to the development of a revised draft Board policy for the classification of state parks. The underlying question most of us have is *why classification?* Classification was done with existing methodology that staff completed a very thorough analysis throughout a two-year process in 2015-2016. This analysis took a deep dive into each individual park based on overall significance, relevance and accessibility. However, in the previous classification policy, both in-state and out-of-state visitation and revenue were ever factored into the matrix of that analysis. The Department feels these are critical matrix's to considered in the revised framework; this will help us lead to the economic impact at the community and regional level; this matrix is also key to grouping the parks based on service levels and experiences. The key pivot that PIF and Parks staff desires to make is that we have a classification framework that is not based on a scarcity driven resource allocation. We want to have a more forward-looking investment strategy with a goal of building a more diverse, robust and thriving park system. Classification is what will guide resource allocation and how we communicate the experience at each park. We want the visitors to continue to come back for multiple experiences. Lewis and Clark Caverns is a great example; the primary purpose and existence of the park is more natural based with the caverns, however, there are ample recreational opportunities that are continuing to expand. Breaking the parks out by experience level recognizes the uniqueness of our natural heritage and recreation parks, all of which are managed differently; visitors can expect different experiences and typically multiple types of experiences. We see classification as a way to manage the resources and the park system more effectively. All government agencies have different methods of managing resources and prioritizing investments. This is something we have attempted to do in our parks system, but we want to build in a little more objectivity while still allowing for some flexibility. Grouping parks by experience puts parks in an apples-to-apples comparison that offers a similar experience. Parks is a forever experience, where memories are made with those unique experiences. These groupings will allow us to see how our budgets are distributed across the groups and how the revenue streams into the system are utilized based on these groupings. The Department wants the Board to understand that this is not a static framework; we want to make sure we can add in fluidity and a park could potentially move from one grouping to another or a different service level class. Internally we have been discussing the need to badge our parks or as we are now referring to as groupings. An investments strategy approach is guided by the idea of experience and service-class groupings. This is the vision of what we want the Montana State Parks system to look like when it's built out? what does the system look like in the future? what is the gap between the current condition and the future desired condition and how much is necessary from an investment standpoint to fill that gap? We want the classification system to make a compelling case for management decisions, partnership opportunities and investment to realize this vision based on experiences that the visitors desire. Implementation is key; we will be working on an implementation strategy over the course of 2019; we have every intent to establish performance measurements as well as evaluation tools. This is



a draft classification policy; there has been no formal public involvement to date. If the Board approves the draft policy, then we will undertake public comment process after this Board meeting. Any final adoption will take place at the Board meeting in the spring.

Member Sheehy Moe stated it is very helpful if you have two categories to see exactly where you fit in; the level of service is amorphous because it includes a lot of language that has to do with the experience groups; it may communicate that the way to become a destination park is to develop each one of those experiences; there's no way to develop history and there is an endangerment of history at the historic nature of a park (i.e. Fort Owen State Park, it is neat the way it is). Worried about the word "destination" and how it will create losers and winners in the minds of local people. Worried about using the language that describes the experience to define the service level. Would rather see the service level be beyond what history or nature has provided.

Chair Grove stated the way Member Sheehy Moe described to her is that we will have some parks with rustic amenities, some with core amenities and some with enhanced amenities.

Vice-Chair Welch stated he agrees with what Chair Grove and Member Sheehy Moe said; the Division of Natural Heritage and Recreation is pretty intuitive; the best parks are sort of all three of those amenities. This process is really hard and complicated and supportive of this policy being revisited. The meaning of "destination" to him means worth driving for. The last classification policy looked at if we had no more money, where would we put the money, which did create a set of winners and losers. If he understands this correctly, this draft policy is saying if we had the money to invest, where would we put the money. He is concerned this policy is not achieving that. The statement "The following principals will be applied to aid in investment decision making" seems muddy to him. Can the Division look at this statement and if the Division did receive \$1 million, where would you put the money?

Shumate stated as far as this investment priority in determining how we would allocate additional funding if received, the implementation strategy is where the rubber hits the road as far as developing evaluation criteria to determine how we would prioritize those investments with additional funding. It could be everything from public health and safety needs, resource protection needs, condition of needed repairs. What we are working on is the implementation piece, which is what we are building towards, is to determine how we would actually allocate resources. This is more of an internal management piece and it is important to remember there is also an external component of classification as well; staff has discussed that perhaps this is an experience guide to our visitors, so they can better understand what type of experiences they can expect at the diverse parks. There are a whole lot of service levels considered within the levels, it's not just staffing or having a visitor center, there are a lot of details that went into that process.

Chair Grove stated this process is just to start the initial discussion on classification; today's conversation is just a general discussion about getting feedback and decide if we are ready to put out for public comment.

Director Williams stated this is the beginning of the process, will work with the Board more to discuss more in depth issues; this is how FWP has traditionally done business; will direct staff to continue communication with Board members interested in the policy.

Member Stone stated staff did an excellent job on defining the experiences both in terms of service and type of experience the visitor can expect. Not in favor of creating destination parks; this would create winners and losers.

Chair Grove stated we need to be careful when we say we have 55 state parks; the count only comes to 51 (page 4 of the Classification and Investment Strategy) and that's when she includes the 6 of Flathead; there does need to be an explanation of why, she assumes this is because of the affiliated land sites. Also, echoes Member Moe's and Member Stone's comments; likes the word "enhanced" more than the word "destination"; helps with the sense of ranking that we have noted. Would like everyone to examine what to call this policy; all along she has been pushing hard to renaming this policy from classification; the term classification creates a sense of ranking; maybe this could be an investment guide? Might be useful to have three types of parks plans to look at in the spring; she was thinking of Fort Owen (rustic), they have a new friends group and are interested in being involved in the planning process; Sluice Boxes (core), the park presents a planning challenge, there is extremely high visitation growth but users are saying they want the nature of these types of parks potentially protected (this park has an interesting blend of visitor experience versus investment class that she would like to see flushed out; Headwaters (destination/enhanced amenities park potential), this park has been identified there needs to have some changes done, on the travel corridor between the two National Parks.

Vice-Chair Welch asked for clarification on his question; if you had more money at the end of the day, how do you know where to put it; the answer is not going to be in this policy, will it be in the next step which decides the number of parks plans we will have?

Shumate referenced the policy language, which is just guidance for the actual implementation of the classification framework and policy is to provide a more strategic investment of additional resources and to provide staff with guidance on how to invest the time and fiscal resources. Where she sees the Division trying to get to the allocation resource piece is on the performance indicators and the greater transparency in decision making; currently working on evaluation criteria internally which will help determine the allocation of resources based on priority; not defined as of yet to present to the Board; will structure actual scoring criteria to determine the priorities in how we allocated those resources; this is how she sees making the resource allocation decisions and then to establish performance indicators to know that we have actually made progress

Vice-Chair Welch stated if he understands correctly, the six points at the end of page 5 as the criteria and then will turn that information into some sort of scoring document.

Shumate stated she equates it to a grant program where you decide what projects are funded and which projects are not; a lot of the time it is based on project readiness, a legal matter or a public health and safety need. We also want to make sure that in these groupings that we are leveraging additional funding sources that are external funding sources.

Vice-Chair Welch stated he it interesting that we had East Gallatin Recreation Area at the meeting today; it is relevant to about 10 parks that we should be doing this with; this agreement does not cost us anything but minimal monies; need to be open to these types of agreements; we have too many parks to manage with the amount of money we are ever going to get; the old classification process did encourage looking at this and he feels it still needs to be on the table.

Chair Grove stated at last weeks PIF meeting it was discussed that there are three parks that are embedded in communities, but also in communities where there is a strong health care provider presence; this is happening in Great Falls at Giant Springs SP, the River's Edge trail and Benefis Hospital; they are creating informal partnerships; providers are making appointments to meet outside, on a trail instead of in their office; Spring Meadow, Lake Elmo and Giant Springs are perfect for this type of partnership; this idea aligns with the PIF recommendations that we are trying to come up with more diversified partners and work with them to come up with an agreement to possibly sponsor parks and provide additional support in one way or another.

Director Williams stated how the Board highlighted what one of the concerns of the previous classification system was that we need to get rid of parks, rather than now rewording and recognizing how critical certain parks are to those communities. So, as we are looking for those partnerships, it's not to get rid of the parks but its to recognize that critical engagement with the community.

Shumate explained from the staff perspective, what we feel is really necessary is to provide diverse experiences across the state park system, and by no means are we implying that rustic means it will be a low quality experience, it's just different; all parks fill a niche within the overall system, it doesn't necessarily mean we are trying to get them all to a destination/enhanced level park; we are trying to group the parks based on their differences and diversity we have within the system.

Vice-Chair Welch stated by no means is he trying to shut down any park; he is in favor for more parks, but how do we deliver better for some of the communities is what it is all about; there is no county park system. It is daunting to think about the Spring Meadows, the Frenchtowns, the Lake Elmos because they are already so developed and heavily used that he thinks it would be hard to figure out some co-management, but what about Pirogue Island, Prairie Dog Town, Clark's Lookout or the Stack; Fort Owen is a perfect example because there is a friends group in place.

Member Sheehy Moe stated it's not just the word enhanced versus destination, what people get sensitive to is if they feel like you are cheating; because you got visitor usage compiled into each one of these levels of service area when really it should be level of visitation.

Chair Grove asked for public comment.

Chair Grove explained what the Division is asking the Board to do is to approve this draft policy to go out for public comment and then at the next Board meeting it would be discussed to make it final based on the input and decisions that is received during that process.

Member Sheehy Moe stated she is torn about not wanting to hold things up and wanting to have a good policy to move forward; in her view this policy is not quite ready; thinks it could be ready by spring if we deal with these particular issues; if we say there are things that are missed, the policy isn't ready to go out for public comment.

Chair Grove asked Member Sheehy Moe if she is asking the Board to make changes to the policy now before it goes out for public comment. Asked Zach Zipfel, FWP Attorney, to clarify how this process works.

Zipfel stated this is the Board's draft policy; you could propose it as modified based on the discussion, there is a period of time for staff to implement the Board's suggestions made at today's meeting, put out for public comment and make any changes before it comes back to the Board at their next meeting.

Member Sheehy Moe stated the policy will look substantially different than what we are looking at today, her concern is that we give the public adequate time to review and comment.

Chair Grove asked Zipfel if based on today's discussion, could the Division put together a draft revised policy and then have a teleconference meeting sometime in the next month.

Zipfel stated if the nature of the changes is going to be so dramatic, it would be the extra effort to have a conference call and propose a revised policy at that time, understanding that the public comment period is still a separate process once the draft is officially proposed by the Board.

Chair Grove stated this policy is the foundation for where we are moving forward with our state parks; the more mindful and thoughtful we are about this, the better the product will be down the road. She recommends asking the staff to revise a draft that the Board could review and agree to have a conference call revisiting the new language by the end of January or mid-February; wants to make sure there is enough time before the next Board meeting.

Shumate asked to have better clarification on what the Board is looking at on the planning effort; is the Board wanting a more conceptual plan?

Chair Grove stated we are not ready to have that kind of conversation; much more important to get this policy and the criteria nailed down first.

Member Brown asked if the evaluation criteria would be included in this policy or is that another step down the road.

Shumate stated she sees that as part of the implementation strategy and process; still need to work on that internally to define the evaluation criteria.

Chair Grove stated she is comfortable in saying some parks may stay as they are; just because we are redoing this policy doesn't mean we are changing everything across the board; important to say we are creating this to frame the visitor experience in our investment perspective but, we will also recognize that the park visitors have been quite clear that they do not want significant changes in some of the state parks. Recommends not making a motion and ask the department to recraft this policy.

Shumate stated with the start of the holidays and the legislative session, she suggests having a meeting the first/mid part of February, so staff have enough time to revamp the policy.

Chair Grove stated the middle of February seems like ample time. Thanked the Board for a great conversation and staff for their hard work; at a great starting point.

### **13. Montana Trails Coalition Proposed Legislation – Informational**

Chair Grove stated she is Senate Bill 24 that the Board discussed with Becky Dockter this morning during the work session. Bob Walker from the Montana Trails Coalition is in attendance if there are any

questions; he spoke at the last meeting about the Trail Coalition moving forward on their efforts to get funding for a separate trails program; this is an exciting bill; supports outdoor recreation in three different ways; under the current language it will supply additional funding support to fishing access sites (FAS), state parks and create a made in Montana trail program. The bill is advocating increasing the light motor vehicle (LMV) registration fee the from \$6 to \$9. The Board has no control of what this bill could morph into; it could change significantly. Recommends a motion in general support of the bill specifically, not endorse the bill.

Member Sheehy Moe stated she is very supportive of the bill; particularly increase and mandatory nature; both are key to the welfare off the parks.

Member Brown stated the numbers are dramatic when you look at the opt-out versus opt-in option; feels the Board is ready to support this bill.

Chair Grove stated she doesn't believe this bill does anything to the opt-in or opt-out option.

Bob Walker, Montana Trails Coalition, stated there is no effect to the opt-in or opt-out option; will stay as opt-out option; the money will go towards state parks and trails.

Chair Grove stated she met with quite a few legislators in various communities and they were impressed the we were spreading support around and that we recognize the need for outdoor recreation also.

***Motion: Member Sheehy Moe moved, and Member Brown seconded that the Parks and Recreation Board support the effort in regard to Senate Bill 24***

***Action on Motion: Motion passed. 5-0***

Chair Grove thanked Walker and the Montana Trails Coalition for all their time and effort.

**\*14. Parks in Focus Recommendations – Endorsement**

Ben Alexander, Resource Legacy Foundation, explained he is one of the three PIF staff members; the PIF twelve-member Commission was established by the Governor to meet 4 times over the course of 2018, to deliberate on challenges facing the park system and recommendations to build and sustain a strong state park system. Chair Grove and Vice-Chair Welch were participants on the Commission; had close interaction between the Commission and park staff members throughout the year, tell help educate the Commission about the issues facing parks and the nuances of managing 55 state parks. PIF received 150 public comments and 14 single-spaced pages of unique and extensive comments from FWP staff; almost all comments were constructive and supportive on how to build the park system for a promising future. The core of the work focused on trying to figure out how to get out of the funding problems that state parks is in; PIF know the park system that is sprawling, diverse, impressive and has increasing visitation and yet knowing there is not the funds in place on a dedicated basis, to sustain to a level of staffing to provide the services needed and keep up with maintenance and capital projects obligations. At the start of this process the Commission wanted to know why the Commission wasn't talking more about money; at the final meeting the Commission decided the most important work they can do is set the foundation level for the park system. PIF focused on trying to understand why, when reviewing these ongoing challenges decade after decade, parks always ends up in the same place. PIF developed a fairly unique change which tries to lay the ground work for practical realism in the short-term, rebuilding parks

in the mid-term, and building a campaign to build the best park system for Montana in the long-term. PIF came up with four principle recommendations that build on one another and focuses on the foundation:

1. **Accelerate Fish, Wildlife and Parks Transformation:** The Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks is a unified agency, with aligned vision, mission and programming, and a bench of strong leaders.
  - Create an internal FWP implementation.
  - Team and scope of work focused on aligning.
  - Programs and vision across divisions (including employees of all ranks, divisions, and locations) and build support for change.
  - Establish clear roles and responsibilities and a timeline for the implementation team.
  - Realign FWP and Parks administrative regional boundaries to minimize unnecessary duplication.
  - Create efficiencies.
  - Engage and seek guidance from the Fish & Wildlife Commission, Parks and Recreation Board, staff, and major stakeholders.
  - Refresh the FWP website and other communications collateral and related outreach to express a unified vision and brand for all divisions.
  - Develop cross-functional management approaches and on-the-ground teams that allow for centralization of services.
  - Align FWP and Parks communications teams to ensure consistency while recognizing the critical importance of communications to Parks' services and offerings.
  - Integrate oversight and execution of law.
  - Enforcement and maintenance responsibilities.
  - Secure training for leadership, including members of the implementation team and the FWP senior management team.
  - Pilot a staff rotation (work detail) regimen to foster a common mission and culture and provide professional growth opportunities.
  - Design and implement a staff survey to solicit feedback on departmental changes.
  
2. **Strengthen the Internal Capability of Parks:** The Parks Division has clear strategic priorities, efficient management systems, sufficient staffing, and strong internal capability.
  - Revise and adopt a new classification policy.
  - Establish clear experience and service class guidelines.
  - Assign all parks within the classification framework.
  - Develop budget priority criteria to guide future investment.
  - Secure State Parks and Recreation Board adoption of revised policy.
  - Implement the classification framework.
  - Seek clarification on any needed legislative changes or approvals (e.g., Primitive Parks Act).
  - Create more detailed guidance on specific park service class and experience standards.
  - Develop three pilot park management plans and business strategies to engage the public and partners and create a management and investment plan.
  - Design and implement a park user survey to assess visitor satisfaction and align park offerings with visitor desires and expectations.

- Deploy asset management software across the parks system, including prioritization and tracking of routine maintenance and capital expenditure needs.
  - Improve fee collection at parks, such as better signage, fee stations, and mobile apps.
  - Determine information technology needs at parks to allow for more efficient management, communications, bookings, and revenue capture.
  - Determine necessary staffing levels based on classification exercise and peer analysis of other state parks systems.
  - Request more full-time positions and spending authority from the Legislature to expand capacity based on staffing assessment.
  - Request legislative authority to allow for greater flexibility in the use of part-time and seasonal staff to accommodate peak season demands.
  - Seek legislative staffing authority and funding to expand FWP intern and existing volunteer programs.
3. **Develop Strong Partnerships and Constituency:** The Parks Division has a strong partnership culture, with partners significantly leveraging division capacity to improve the state park experience, and a broad set of advocates promoting and championing the benefits of parks and recreation.
- Institutionalize the use of partnerships.
  - Develop partnership guidelines that outline rules, roles and responsibilities, and benefits to both Parks and partners. Universities and national congressionally-chartered foundations, such as National Parks Foundation and National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, offer models for managing governance issues.
  - Centralize oversight of partnership negotiations and agreement terms and streamline partnership agreements, MOUs, and contracts.
  - Explore greater flexibility to award sole-source contracts that recognize partnership values that extend beyond low-cost considerations.
  - Create a communications framework to promote partnership collaboration and mutual recognition.
  - Determine highest-priority partnerships and invest in these relationships.
  - Deepen existing strategic relationships with Montana State Parks Foundation, AmeriCorps, and Montana Conservation Corps to expand capacity and revenue, and increase the engagement and participation of younger generations as park volunteers and professionals.
  - Conduct a cost-benefit analysis for all potential new partnerships and prioritize budget allocations to stimulate partnerships that increase capacity and resources.
  - Focus on developing significant new statewide partnerships to implement existing park priorities.
  - Explore park co-management options with local communities and other partners that keep parks public yet fill critical management and maintenance needs.
  - Working with the Montana State Parks Foundation, Parks should: Create a public awareness campaign to elevate the value of parks and recreation to Montanans. Develop an engagement strategy (digital, media, and outreach) to cultivate park champions who will advocate for parks and recreation. Develop three tangible pilot projects to expand state park access and relevance, such as more diverse overnight accommodations (e.g., bike campsites and yurts), public transportation options, new trail systems (including motorized and non-motorized),

and health connections to hospitals and healthcare providers (i.e., Parks Rx programs that prescribe parks and trails activities).

4. **Increase Funding for the Future:** The Parks Division utilizes short, medium, and long-term funding strategies to stabilize and then build for the future state parks system Montanans deserve.
  - Make the case for funding and develop strategies for different time zone horizons.
  - Develop a parks investment pro forma and establish clear funding needs.
  - Create a state-of-the-state report that articulates the value of parks for Montanans.
  - Keep an up-to-date catalogue of improvements at Parks and known issues that have been addressed successfully.
  - Conduct a parks and trails economic impact analysis to measure and demonstrate the economic role and significance of parks and recreation.
  - Determine priority funding needs for short, medium, and long-term horizons, using staffing and facilities condition data, park visitor survey findings, and established classification framework priorities and standards.
  - Create progressive funding strategies that build from today's needs to long-term success.
  - Stabilize the Situation: for the next year, seek \$3 million in new revenue to address the highest priority staffing, operations, maintenance, and capital project needs.
  - Lay the Foundation: for the next five years, seek \$20 million in new revenue to expand staffing levels to meet growing demands, address the long-term maintenance and capital backlog, and begin to implement classification standards.
  - Build the Campaign: for the next 20 years, seek the funds necessary (the exact amount is unknown today) to steward the parks system in light of changing demographics, relevance, and access.
  - Implement tailored strategies for three main sources of funding (Government, philanthropic and earned).
  - Craft a specific legislative strategy and activate state park champions at the Legislature.
  - Educate lawmakers and influencers.
  - Pursue revenue sharing where a rational nexus exists between current state funding streams and unfunded Parks management responsibilities.
  - Seek dedicated state funding that is commensurate with growing visitor demands.
  - Work with the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, Montana Office of Tourism and Business Development, and Governor's Office of Outdoor Recreation to identify planning, promotion, and funding resources that would benefit state parks, land stewardship, and Montana's recreation economy.
  - Work closely with Montana State Parks Foundation to increase philanthropic funding, with a focus on creating a pyramid of engagement for donors and developing sponsorships of statewide significance.
  - Explore opportunities through ties to park offerings, such as in the areas of health care, community development, and outdoor recreation and tourism.
  - Develop business partnerships to improve park amenities, visitor services, and generate new revenue.
  - Improve fee collection at state parks and expand opportunities for the public to pay for park access and services.



- Study the current user fee structure and rates, including premium or oversubscribed park services, and explore potential rate increases and variable pricing options.

Alexander stated all parties involved are extremely excited about working in concert to put wheels on these recommendations; there is broad support. PIF staff is meeting with the Parks Division leadership team in January to talk about implementation priorities, responsible parties, outcomes we seek and how to build on the short-term work that creates momentum for the long-term.

Chair Grove asked Alexander to discuss a little more in detail of what the Commission and the Parks Division in envisioning the Boards ownership and role in the implementation phase.

Alexander stated the Commission did not want to step on the toes of the Parks Division in what is their proper role in making this work actionable on a day-to-day basis with their existing work priorities. Appendix C in the final recommendation report outlines the implementing party and other parties that should likely be involved. Hopefully there can be an open-line of communication between the Division and the Board.

Chair Grove stated there a couple recommendations that she would like to consider a high priority: *Conduct a parks and trails economic impact analysis to measure and demonstrate the economic role and significance of parks and recreation.* Would like action taken earlier rather than later; Would like to prioritize a couple of early wins; important to see some success stories relatively quickly.

Member Sheehy Moe stated she has a concern about the description of the “level of service” in the classification policy; has a particular panache about it. Has the Classification Policy been seen prior to the meeting? Did PIF receive any comments that addressed any of the specific classifications?

Alexander stated the draft Classification Policy is something the Parks staff has been working on for months; Parks staff and PIF talked about the need to explore revisiting the policy and look at what it did and not do well. Comments were received; the most relevant comment were from Montanans stating they don’t want the parks overdeveloped.

Chair Grove stated comments are still receiving comments on the classification policy; the policy is still a work in progress.

Chair Grove asked how frequently should the Board get updates on implementation status on these recommendations?

Shumate stated the Division should give consistent updates during the 2019 Board meetings as a start and also provide additional status via email etc...

Chair Grove asked Zach Zipfel if it is appropriate for the Board to add the implementation status update to the motion?

Zipfel stated that is only an informational item; no formal action is necessary.

Member Brown thanked the PIF staff and Commission for the outstanding work that they did and accomplished; glad to hear PIF is still going to be engaged.

Chair Grove asked for public comment.

*Motion: Member Sheehy Moe moved, and Member Brown seconded that the Parks and Recreation Board approve the Parks In Focus recommendations.*

*Action on Motion: Motion passed. 5-0*

**15. Milltown State Park and Bonner Development Group Property Donation – Final**

Tom Reilly, Assistant Administrator, explained the Bonner Development Group (BDG) property is a 34-acre site is contiguous to Milltown SP on the north side of the Clark Fork River. The proposed acquisition/donation of this parcel has been presented to the Board in June 2015, followed by a second presentation in February 2018. Site access for the public will be walk-in only; administrative access will be likely for maintenance, weed spraying, latrine pumping, etc. Efforts to be concluded are to secure the necessary access agreements into the site under the Montana Rail Link (MRL) railroad trestle and I-90 bridge structures; will work with MRL and the Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) for access into the site. Conditions of the railroad access will be the construction of a fall-protection structure and fencing of the railroad right-of-way; BDG has agreed to provide \$75,000 to be used for these design efforts. The Department is asking for Board approval as a final, to proceed with approval of the donation on the condition that all public access issues, railroad requirements, and similar issues are met prior to the parcel being transferred to the Department. The Department would not formally accept the donation until this work is complete. An Environmental Assessment (EA) was issued for the proposed donation in November, with the public comment ending December 2, 2018; a total of 10 comments were received, all supportive of the project.

Member Sheehy Moe asked if this donation will impact the Departments ability to manage a larger scope.

Reilly stated there will be an impact; weed control, litter pick-up, latrine pumping etc.; the Department is willing to take this on because of the importance of this donation.

Chair Grove asked if there is a tentative time-frame for the remaining conditions; the BDG community has been extremely supportive and patient with us.

Reilly stated hopefully within six months the remaining conditions will be finalized; all the paper work is in and need to work with a consultant and contractor to build a structure.

Chair Grove asked for public comment.

Coby Gierke, Montana State Parks Foundation (MSPF), are there any plans to develop a revenue stream from the use of the pavilion and other facilities on site and is there any opportunity for cost sharing in the fall-structure construction with the Polo club who also uses that same access point.

Reilly explained when the shelter comes under the control of the Department, it would be subject to the fees just like any other park structure; the Department has not investigated the share-cost with the local rodeo club as of yet.



***Motion: Member Sheehy Moe moved, and Member Stone seconded that the Parks and Recreation Board approve the Department's proposed action to accept the donation of the 33.5-acre parcel, conditioned that the public access issues and related requirements are completed prior to the Department completing the land transaction.***

***Action on Motion: Motion passed. 5-0***

**16. Public Comment ~ For Issues Not On This Agenda**

Sue Miller, Helena, website is difficult to use; map is great but is impossible to use; suggested hints of how to make the website more user friendly; has issues with the reservation system for camping opportunities in state parks, great potential for fraud; reservation phone system is not customer oriented; should stop senior discounts.

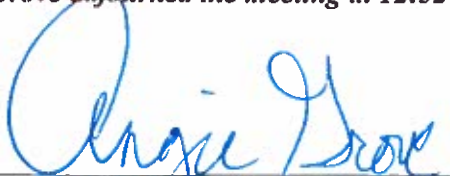
Coby Gierke, MSPF, recognized Vice-Chair Welch for his hard work and efforts, especially the classification policy, while on the Board. The classification plan enables a cohesive plan for all parks; the plan is something the agency can get behind and also enables other partners to say there is a bigger, more meaningful vision for parks.

Chair Grove stated this has been a good meeting; great discussions; fun to watch the Board getting engaged. Her resolutions for the next year include having more fun as a Board (important to attend Parks celebrations), the Board focusing on the business processes within the Division (concessionaires, commercial use etc.) and building more partnerships externally and internally.

**17. Adjournment**

***Motion: Member Sheehy Moe moved, and Member Brown motioned to adjourn the meeting. Motion Passed. 5-0***

***Chair Grove adjourned the meeting at 12:52 PM.***

  
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Angie Grove, Chair

  
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Martha Williams, Director