



MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

CAC MEETING MINUTES

May 11, 2023

In Attendance

Members: Tim Aldrich, Lea Bossler, Louie Bouma, Marc Cook, Peggy Cordell, Kit Fischer (Zoom), Matt Graveley, Everett Headley, Laurie Johnston, Denley Loge, Tracy Manley, Kylie Paul, Greg Price, Ron Skinner, Pat Sweeney, Susan Thraen & Parks and Recreation Board Member, Jody Loomis (Zoom)

R2 Staff: Randy Arnold, Vivaca Crowser, Morgan Dollinger, Mike Ebinger, Loren Flynn, Kyle Miller, Pat Saffel, Dori Schiele & Desiree Cozad.

Welcome, Overview & Introductions

Vivaca Crowser welcomed all in attendance and Zoom worked well for those joining online. Well done on the refreshed [Wildlife Quarterly](#)—available online and handouts for the room tonight.

Randy welcomed new faces at the CAC meeting and thanked those who helped set up and provide food for this meeting. He gave a brief legislative summary and let members know that a more in-depth recap would be coming from the department fairly soon. Stay tuned.

Denley Loge-R St. Regis:

- ❖ House Bill 521 (Rep. Loge sponsored) was approved.
 - Will combine conservation licenses issued by FWP and state land permit licenses issued by DNRC.
 - The licenses will become a single \$8 conservation license sold by FWP that would be required for any user of a Fishing Access Site and also allow recreation on DNRC state trust lands.
 - Goes into effect July 1, 2023.
 - This year will be focused on education about the new requirement.

Loren Flynn: Parks & Outdoor Recreation

- ❖ Phase 2 of preservation work at Fort Owen State Park is beginning this month. A lot of work on adobe brick structures.
- ❖ Draft [Fish Creek recreation strategy](#) will be out for review/30-day public comment period this summer. FWP has worked with UM on this planning process.
- ❖ 3rd year of having a river ambassador program (seasonal employees providing presence and education at local river access sites) in Missoula to address parking and behavioral issues, especially during the busy tuber season.
 - Made possible by many local partners—County, City, Clark Fork Coalition, FWP.
 - Social Media is helping spread the messages and University of Montana Shuttle has been a

tremendous help too.

- Milltown State Park has cracking on the bluff area of the Overlook, making the area unsafe.
 - Geotechnical company gave a report of what is happening.
 - Signs are in place to warn public of dangers and barricades indicate closed areas.
 - The bluff area of the overlook is closed, as well as the tunnel and surrounding area underneath.
 - Will work towards a long-term strategy to relocate/provide a different public overlook area.

Morgan Dollinger: Maintenance

- ❖ Have been busy hiring seasonal positions. There are still a few open positions to fill.
- ❖ Learning how to use the “New Maintenance Facility Management System.”
- ❖ Placid Lake is the only dock left to put out. Waiting for the water levels to go down first.
- ❖ Submitted capital projects requests to Helena
- ❖ Replacing comfort station at Beavertail State Park

Kyle Miller: Captain Warden

- ❖ Enforcement has been short-staffed in the region for quite a while.
 - Two wardens will be starting soon (Missoula and Seeley Lake) but will still have to complete training assignments and the law enforcement academy.
- ❖ AIS boating checks have started, along with warden support of making sure boaters stop.
- ❖ Seeing larger numbers of nonresident bear and turkey hunters.
- ❖ Prepping for river season and associated volume of people at access sites.

Mike Ebinger: Blackfoot Clearwater Biologist

- ❖ Biennial Season setting meetings will be different this year:
 - June 15 – July 15 public scoping meetings (10 meetings in R2); these replace the traditional winter “tentative meetings.”
 - July 15th – Aug 31st take feedback learned during scoping and finalize draft regulations.
 - Oct/Nov—draft regulations out for comment (comments directed to the Commission) and FWP will hold information meetings.
 - Commission will make final decisions at December meeting.
- ❖ Spring flights were a challenge this year due to weather/late winter but eventually completed.
 - Goat surveys were completed as well in Anaconda and Flint Creek- awesome job, Kirstie!
- ❖ Next Wildlife Quarterly will be out in June. Thanks to Bitterroot wildlife biologist, Rebecca Mowry, for getting these Quarterlies going again and to all the wildlife staff that contributed.
- ❖ Gearing up for the WMA opens and associated antler hunting.
- ❖ FWP is working with the town of Philipsburg to create an urban deer management plan.

Pat Saffel: Fisheries

- ❖ Currently focusing Deer Lodge to Warm Springs Settling Ponds
 - Working to understand what is impacting fishery/brown trout in particular
- ❖ Georgetown Lake survey of winter anglers (Feb & March)
 - Average length of kokanee decreased from 11” in 2021 (record high) to about 8” this year (near record low)
 - MSU study on diet of trout -- found rainbows are not feeding on kokanee

- ❖ Browns, Harpers, and Upsata Lakes were impacted to varying degrees by a winter kill event this year.
- ❖ Proposal to change fishing regulations for the community pond in Butte to be only kids and senior citizens would go to commission in Aug.

Closing

- ❖ Plan on a field trip for our next meeting (Aug. 24) that might start early in the afternoon for those that are available –more information to come!

Meeting adjourned at 9 p.m.