



Steve Bullock, Governor

Dan Vermillion, Chairman
PO Box 668
Livingston, MT 59047
406-222-0624
District 2

Richard Stuker
1155 Boldy Road
Chinook, MT 59523
406-357-3495
District 3

Tim Aldrich
3340 Rodeo Road
Missoula, MT 59803
406-542-3144
District 1

Logan Brower
P.O. Box 325
Scobey, MT 59263
406-230-2188
District 4

Shane Cotton
335 Clark
Billings, MT 59101
406-670-2374
District 5

Martha Williams, Director
MT Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1420 East Sixth Avenue
PO Box 200701
Helena, MT 59620-0701
406-444-3186
(Fax)406-444-4952

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MINUTES

Montana Fish and Wildlife Teleconference Commission Meeting

FWP Headquarters – 1420 East 6th Avenue - Helena, MT

February 15, 2017

Commission Members Present: Dan Vermillion, Chairman, Richard Stuker Vice-Chairman, and Gary Wolfe (all via phone)

Fish, Wildlife & Parks Staff Present: Martha Williams, Director and FWP Staff.

Guests: February 15, 2017 - See Commission file folder for sign-in sheet.

Topics of Discussion:

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance
2. Future Fisheries Improvement Projects – Winter 2017 Funding Cycle – Final
3. Public Comment – For Issues Not On This Agenda

1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Vermillion called the meeting to order at 12:06 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Future Fisheries Improvement Projects – Winter 2017 Funding Cycle – Final

Eileen Ryce, Fisheries Administrator, explained the Future Fisheries Improvement Program continues to provide funds for projects that restore fishery habitats in streams, rivers and lakes for the benefit of wild fisheries. Applications are reviewed twice each year by a 14-member Citizen Review Panel (CRP) appointed by the Governor. Recommendations are forwarded to the Commission every six months for consideration and approval. For the Winter 2017 funding cycle, the CRP recommends funding 15 of 19 submitted proposals at a program cost of \$236,456.78; matching funds or in-kind contributions from outside sources total \$828,030.98, for a 3.5-to-1 match. The public was informed about program funding opportunities via news releases, a public meeting, and information posted on FWP's website; CRP conducted a public meeting and reviewed applications, discussed proposed projects with applicants in attendance, and provided the opportunity for public comment, no public comment was received at the meeting, except from applicants in attendance. All applications received for the funding cycle were posted on FWP's website, which allowed viewers to submit comments online; no online comments were received. Environmental Assessments (EA) were prepared for 10 of the 15 projects recommended for funding; of the remaining five, one project fell under a categorical exclusion (defined under ARM 12.2.454), two will be assessed under the federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and two will have EAs completed by applicants. The comment period for draft EAs ended February 12; two comments in support were received for Sauerkraut Creek instream flow lease and Williams Creek riparian fencing.

Action: Vice-Chairman Stuker moved and Commissioner Wolfe seconded the motion that the Fish and Wildlife Commission approve the Citizen Review Panel funding recommendations for the Winter 2017 funding cycle of the Future Fisheries Improvement Program.

Chairman Vermillion asked if the dollar amount is lower than previous years.

Michelle McGree, Habitat Restoration Program Officer, responded in the past, funds were operating under a surplus of funds, meaning there were more funds than applications; this is no longer the situation and now have more applications than funds. The requested amount of funds represents the remainder of the Future Fisheries authority and the next grant cycle will be using funds currently requested during the legislative session.

Chairman Vermillion asked what the current request for Future Fisheries funds are.

McGree stated the request for the current biennium is \$1.17 million dollars; slight decrease this year due to a reduction in interest from the Resource Indemnity Trust Fund as well as a smaller amount of license dollars available.

Chairman Vermillion asked for public comment.

Action on Motion: Motion passed.

3. Public Comment – For Issues Not On This Agenda

Action: Vice-Chairman Stuker moved and Commissioner Wolfe seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion Passed.

The meeting adjourned 12:27 p.m.



Dan Vermillion, Chairman



Martha Williams, Director