



MONTANA **FWP**

Meeting Minutes

FWP Region 3 Headquarters – 1400 South 19th; Bozeman, MT

March 10, 2020

Parks & Recreation Board Members:

Angie Grove, Chair; Mary Moe, Vice-Chair; Erica Lighthiser; Scott Brown (via video) and Betty Stone (via telephone).

Staff Present:

Dustin Temple; Mark Deleray; Pat Doyle (via telephone); Coleen Furthmyre; Scott Harvey; Betsey LaBroad; Michelle McNamee; Karla Mertens-Morse (via telephone); Rachel Reckin; Tom Reilly; Beth Shumate; Raymond Schell; Ken Soderberg; and Terri Walters.

Guests: Rachel Schmidt.

Topics:

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of Board Minutes
3. Approval of Board Expenses
4. Board Member Reports
5. Administrator Report
6. Office of Outdoor Recreation Update
7. Planning Program Updates
8. 2018-2019 State Agency Biennial Report on Cultural Resources (SB 3)
9. Outdoor Recreation Program Update
10. Flathead Lake State Park – Big Arm Unit Permanent Easement Acquisition
11. Agency Budget Priorities
12. Capital Program Update
13. Public Comment ~ For Issues Not On This Agenda ~ Adjournment

1. Call to Order

Chair Grove called the meeting to order at 9:26 a.m.

2. Approval of the Board Minutes

Motion: Vice-Chair Moe moved, and Member Lighthiser seconded that the Park and Recreation Board accept the Board minutes as presented.

Action on Motion: Motion Carried. 5-0

3. Approval of Board Expenses

Motion: Vice-Chair Moe moved, and Member Brown seconded to approve the Parks & Recreation Board expenses as presented.

Action on Motion: Motion Carried. 5-0

4. Board Member Reports

Member Lighthiser: Visited several Montana State Parks: Missouri Headwaters, Makoshika, Bannack and Pirogue Island; fantastic experiences; learned a lot about the park system and the assets we have.

Vice-Chair Moe: Attended the Region 4 Citizen Advisory Council (CAC) meeting; great group of people. Talked with Kyan Bishop, Park's Planner, about the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP); very interested in the Board's involvement with the plan. Tomorrow I'll be talking about the Smith River and the nuisance algae situation there. Smith River Advisory Council will meet at the end of the month.

Member Stone: Have been in Arizona and visiting their State Parks; been comparing their fee structure to what we charge and their amenities; comparable; they only charge a \$5 reservation fee versus our \$10 reservation fee.

Member Brown: Attended the Region 5 CAC meeting in January; impressed with the members of the committee; they are dedicated and take their job very seriously; members were from all over Region 5, all small towns; very productive meeting; Beth Shumate talked extensively about the SCORP program, our goals and how it's going to be implemented. We also talked about Lake Elmo, it is a well-used park and there is a good opportunity to enhance the trails. The subject we spent the most time on was Asian clams that were found in Lake Elmo.

Terri Walters, FWP Region 5 Acting Park Manager: We are currently working on completing an MEPA document and will be holding a public meeting at the beginning of April. The Region 5 Supervisor and Fisheries Manager are taking the lead on the Asian clam situation; parks are working together with them to devise our approach as to how we think it can best be managed from the park angle. It looks like the best practice is to draw the lake down to be able to manage the clams, which would be done during the offseason and those cold temperatures would hopefully eradicate the clams.

Chair Grove: Thanks to all the Board members for going to the CAC meetings, I know it's another commitment of your time, but I think it's been very useful. They really help us recognize what's happening on the regional level. I'm attending one tomorrow in Kalispell. It'll be the first time I've attended one up there; they have dedicated the meeting to outdoor recreation, need to encourage other Regions and CACs to do that as well.

5. Administrator Report

Beth Shumate, Parks Administrator: We have changed our administrative park boundaries; we have established a Region 6/7 for parks, to be more consistent with the rest of the agency. We have taken a solid approach at the classification policy implementation efforts to comprehensively assess and evaluate our core products, services or programs and all our assets across our entire system. The classification overview work group is trying to implement work that emanates from the classification policy itself; their first task is to develop the foundation planning documents for every state park in; we've contracted with the University of Montana to assist with the review and editing process, so we will have consistent terminology throughout all the 55 parks. This will also include a site boundary map that details the basic footprint of each park as well. Research and survey efforts are underway; the main goal is to construct a data and information gathering foundation for the systems to strategically collect information about visitor use patterns preferences and benefits. The asset management and data collection workgroup are fully underway with all the geolocation efforts of all our assets and infrastructure points across our state parks. We hired our first asset and facility manager position, Scott Harvey. Staff are working on a project prioritization tool that will encompass all sorts of information, including all the information from our facility condition inventory, as well as the condition of each asset. The coordinator graphics work group is underway; this work group is a joint effort with our Design and Construction unit and communication and education division. We are looking at trying to make sure we have a more thorough visitation report to the Board as well as a reservation program update at the May meeting. We have hired Rachel Reckin as the Heritage Resource Program Manager and Jessica Goosman as the Region 5 Parks Maintenance Supervisor. Very busy with making sure that all our camp host and volunteer positions are filled; we couldn't manage our parks without the camp hosts and volunteers. A reminder that our division meeting is next week in Red Lodge; day one we will be hearing from the previous state park director of South Carolina, who was extremely successful and is now a professor at Clemson University. Working on the Nature Prescription Program; it is occurring in certain communities; needs to happen at the community level, a decade ago, we tried to do this as a statewide directive or initiative and it didn't work. It is the 25th anniversary of the AmeriCorps program; this program has been extremely successful

for our state parks programs as far as really trying to provide additional people on the ground for land improvements community service. They also do a lot of interpretation and education events and provide those nature based educational opportunities as well.

6. Office of Outdoor Recreation Update

Rachel Schmidt, Office of Outdoor Recreation: Ms. Schmidt gave a brief update on the Montana Office of Outdoor Recreation and presented a power-point on Montana's outdoor recreation and economy and the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). (see copy of power-point in the Parks and Recreation March 10, 2020 meeting file).

Board members and Ms. Schmidt discussed ways the Board members can help foster implementing SCORP across the state.

7. Planning Program Updates

Kyan Bishop, Parks and Recreation Planner: Ms. Bishop gave a background report and update on SCORP. We are making updates to our State Parks 2015-20 strategic plan; hope to deliver a final plan by the end of the year, prior to the 2021 legislative session. Ms. Bishop presented a power-point on the State Parks Division Strategic Planning Update. (see copy of power-point in the Parks and Recreation March 10, 2020 meeting file).

8. 2018-2019 State Agency Biennial Report on Cultural Resources (SB 3)

Rachel Reckin, Heritage Resource Program Manager: Every two years, in compliance with the reporting requirements enacted in 2011, Montana's state agencies document the status, condition, stewardship efforts, and maintenance needs of our cultural resources. There have been notable stewardship accomplishments over the last two years in all regions. Montana State Parks (MSP) submitted our report as required on February 4, 2020, for review by the Montana Historic Preservation Review Board in spring 2020. (see copy of report in the Parks and Recreation March 10, 2020 meeting file). FWP has put together a working group to look at Tribal Affairs for the whole Department; just had our first meeting yesterday and there were some good outcomes. I would like to start understanding better which tribes want to hear about which parks, that's not something we really have a firm grasp of right now.

Board members and Ms. Reckin discussed areas where there could be Board policy development which would help her in her job.

9. Outdoor Recreation Program Update

Tom Reilly, Parks Assistant Administrator: Several programs not directly connected to the management of State Park sites, benefit outdoor recreation throughout Montana. The most obvious and beneficial are the grant program opportunities, which provide both state and federal funding for a variety of projects each year. They are: Snowmobile Program (state)—annual grooming grants plus grooming equipment; Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Program (state); Recreational Trails Program (RTP) (federal); Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) (federal); Accessible Playground Grants (state)—one-time opportunity, 2017 Legislative Session; Community Recreation Grant Program (state) 2019 Legislative Session; Summer Motorized Trail Pass Grant Program (state) 2019 Legislative Session. Mr. Reilly gave an update on each Program, including the average annual funding available, grant applications per cycle, the citizen advisory committees, constituent groups/local clubs, the history and uniqueness, and other aspects for each Program.

Board Members and Mr. Reilly discussed ways that the Board can help educate the public on Senate Bill (SB) 24 (Community Recreation Grant Program).

10. Flathead Lake State Park – Big Arm Unit Permanent Easement Acquisition

Beth Shumate, Parks Administrator: Big Arm State Park is located on State School Trust property that is leased annually by FWP from Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC). The Department has leased

this site since 1966. The park provides a public recreation and lake access site in the Big Arm Bay of Flathead Lake in Lake County approximately 18 miles north of Polson. Big Arm State Park is one of Montana's flagship recreation parks and is annually among the top four most heavily used public campgrounds in Montana's State Park system. The park is one of the best access points for boating and angling access on Flathead Lake including a key jumping off point to the iconic Wild Horse Island State Park. The 2019 Montana Legislature approved House Bill 695, which authorizes FWP to spend up to \$12 million to purchase a permanent recreation easement on the Big Arm site from DNRC. This one-time transaction will eliminate the annual lease payments, which were expected to increase significantly due to the value of lands on Flathead Lake. The draft Environmental Assessment (EA) was available for a 30-day comment period, ending on January 3; 26 written comments were received; all comments were supportive of the acquisition; preserving public access to Flathead Lake and family camping traditions at Parks were cited in numerous written responses as the reason for support; no modifications to the draft EA based on public comment.

Motion: Vice-Chair Moe moved, and Member Brown seconded that the Parks and Recreation Board approve FWP proceed with the purchase of a permanent easement at the Big Arm Unit of Flathead Lake State Park for the operation of a public recreation site.

Chair Grove asked for public comment.

Action on Motion: Motion passed. 5-0.

11. Agency Budget Priorities

Dustin Temple, Chief of Administration: The Parks Division consists of dedicated staff throughout Montana who manage state park sites, as well as contribute to outdoor recreation at the local level. Visitation for 2019 was 2,647,877, up 3% from the previous year. Residents and visitors enjoy the recreation opportunities and programs managed by State Parks, whether camping, boating, cultural/historic or other interests. The Parks and Recreation Board will continue to be an integral part of setting the direction for the Parks Division for the biennium. Priorities for the FY22/23 biennium include: stabilize and expand existing staffing resources and funding for parks programs, operations and maintenance, law enforcement and grants to benefit outdoor recreation throughout Montana; continue to invest in reducing deferred maintenance projects and enhanced services throughout the State Parks system to; remain a relevant and recognized component of Montana's growing outdoor recreation economy; continue and expand the successful AmeriCorps Program; continue to address the need for warden presence in state parks during key public visitation periods-leverage 2019 session funding changes into increased law enforcement patrols in State Parks; continue to steward the recreational grant programs; implement new trail(s) grant programs authorized in the 2019 legislative session via SB 24 and HB 355; secure permanent funding resources for Milltown State Park including adequate staffing and operations; explore efficiencies in maintenance staffing and practice in cooperation with the Fisheries and Wildlife Divisions; continue to evaluate use of the State Parks system by hunters and anglers to explore collaborative budget and policy opportunities in the 2021 Legislative Session; invest in diversifying campground and visitor services development at Makoshika, Big Arm, Yellow Bay, and other state parks; participate and support the development of the new XploreMT system for delivering FWP services, opportunities, and information to the public.

Motion: Vice-Chair Moe moved, and Member Stone seconded the motion that the Parks and Recreation Board approve the Parks Division priorities for the 2021 legislative session as presented.

Chair Grove asked for public comment.

Action on Motion: Motion passed. 5-0.

12. Capital Program Update

Tom Reilly, Parks Assistant Administrator: Mr. Reilly gave an update on completion and fund balance reversions for the three large 2017 Legislative Session capital projects – Lewis and Clark Caverns, Makoshika, and Bannack State Parks and the current status and general overview of the approximately 50 parks major maintenance projects funded via the 2019 Legislative Session. The following capital fund expenditures over \$50,000 value for Board approval are: Chief Plenty Coup State Park – replace existing wastewater treatment system, \$150,000; Cooney State Park – shoreline erosion project at Cottonwood Campground, \$130,000; Giant Springs State Park – rehab parking area at the park entry area, \$250,000 (from 2015 road fund balance); Bonner Development Group (BDG) Property/Milltown State Park – accept cash donation for access improvements, \$125,000.

Motion: Member Lighthiser moved, and Vice-Chair Moe seconded that the Parks and Recreation Board approve the commitment of current parks capital funding for the projects listed here, including the acceptance of the \$125,000 donation for the improvements at the recent BDG donation.

Chair Grove asked for public comment.

Action on Motion: Motion passed. 5-0.

13. Public Comment ~ For Issues Not On This Agenda ~ Adjournment

Chair Grove asked for public comment.

14. Adjournment

*Motion: Vice-Chair Moe moved, and Member Stone seconded to adjourn the meeting.
Motion carried. 5-0.*

Chair Grove adjourned the meeting at 3:08 p.m.



Angie Grove, Chair



Martha Williams, Director

