



# MONTANA FISH, WILDLIFE & PARKS

## CAC MEETING MINUTES

June 6, 2022

### In Attendance

**Members:** Clayton Elliott, Matt Fregerio, Everett Headley, Denley Loge, Tracy Manley, Bill Mitchell, Kylie Paul, Ron Skinner, Pat Sweeney, Susan Thraen, Matt Gravely, Marc Cook, Lea Bossler, Laurie Johnson, Greg Price, Matt Quinlin, Commissioner Jana Waller, & Parks and Recreation Board Member, Jody Loomis

**R2 Staff:** Randy Arnold, Vivaca Crowser, Liz Bradley, Pat Saffel, Loren Flynn, Morgan Dollinger, Joe Jaquith, Dori Schiele, Desiree Cozad, Mike Ebinger and Sydney Young.

**Other FWP staff & guests:** Ron Howell, Mike Volesky and Tim Aldrich

### Welcome, Overview & Introductions

Vivaca Crowser welcomed all in attendance and Zoom worked well for those joining online. Randy welcomed new faces at the CAC meeting and thanked those who helped set up and cook for this meeting. He mentioned we will continue to have new staff attend CAC meetings to allow everyone the opportunity to connect and know who works in the area, as well to allow staff to understand what a CAC meeting involves.

### Pat Saffel: Fisheries

- Fishing Regulation review process began for 2023-2024 changes. Suggestions from the public ended May 27<sup>th</sup>. In works of reviewing those suggestions to go out for public comment on Aug 26<sup>th</sup>. Commission is scheduled to decide on those proposals on Oct 20<sup>th</sup>.
  - Region 2 proposals:
    - Remove bait restrictions in Gold Creek and the Blackfoot.
      - Initially restrictions were implemented to protect bull trout which are no longer found consistently in this area.
    - Current closure along the Rattlesnake Creek to the water company dam to be reduced in size.
      - Dam is no longer there so would be reduce by about 1 ½ miles. Bull trout concentrate above the Spring Gulch way. Would like to keep this closure where it was before.
  - Other suggestions statewide:
    - Restrictions on what kind of hooks and bait are used in catch and release waters.
    - To loosen brown trout restrictions in some our streams with a goal to control numbers a bit.
    - Georgetown Lake catch and release for the fish that congregate along shoreline.

- Working on the Statewide Fish Management Plan
  - Better map of management areas, what we do, and why
  - Hoot Owl restrictions: this will be discussed at the June commission.
- MSU student, Katie Furey, started study of food habits of salmonids in Georgetown Lake.
- Continuing surveys to monitor human pressure on fish with the increase of anglers both on R2 rivers and Georgetown.
- Blackfoot cutthroat restoration project on the North fork of the Blackfoot River above the falls is on hold.
- Working with stakeholders to approaches for when and when not to remove woody debris hazard from the Bitterroot River to provide safer access for noncommercial and commercial users, while still providing habitat for fish.
- Studying Northern Pike this season (using radio telemetry) to understand how many exist and where they are coming from to control their numbers and distribution.
- Continuing to monitor the effectiveness and benefits of the screen in Flint Creek at the Allendale Ditch.

#### **Loren Flynn: Parks & Outdoor Recreation**

- Fort Owen State Park: meeting with the contractor, core interpretive planning committee and tribal members on June 8<sup>th</sup>.
- Continuing discussions regarding the Clearwater Junction RV dump station with stakeholders.
- Currently, reviewing public comments to develop a vision statement regarding The Nature Conservancy and Placid Lake State Park recreation visioning process for the area.
- Working with Front Country Collaborative to look at ways to better communicate across all the recreation sites in the greater Missoula area.
- Blackfoot corridor road will be closed by BLM to pave road by the Whitaker bridge until October. Can still access Johnsrud.
- Been working with Missoula County and MDT to find a solution to the overcrowding occurring during summer months with recreationists that use Sha-Ron FAS parking lot.
- Geographic areas of recreation managers have been confirmed.
  - Upper Clark Fork (upstream of Milltown SP to Anaconda)—Rory Zarling
  - Hellgate (downstream of Milltown SP to St. Regis) – Mike Kustudia
  - Blackfoot River—Chrissy Oschell
  - Clearwater (Salmon and Placid SP, Harpers Lake, BCWMA, and Marshall Creek WMA)—Ryan Sokoloski
  - Bitterroot (south of Missoula) – Ben Dickinson (acting)

#### **Morgan Dollinger: Maintenance**

- We have created three maintenance teams to be more efficient and save on time and travel to maintain fishing access sites, wildlife management areas, and state parks. Areas include:
  - One team for Bitterroot and lower Clark Fork
  - One team for Missoula to Anaconda
  - One team for Missoula, North (to Browns/Salmon Lakes)

- Hired two new staff and have two people left to hire. This will allow for teams to cover these areas mentioned above.
- In process of updating the signs to make all the signs follow the same structure at R2 FASs, WMAs, and state park sites.
- Weed contracts have been completed for this year.
  - Sprayed 180 acres in the FAS sites and 154 acres in the state parks.
- WMA projects just received \$363k in grant funding for projects listed below:
  - Spotted Dog Road and Warm Spring Road improvements
  - Bridge on the BCWMA.
  - We are considering drone spraying invasive weeds in areas impossible to get to at Fish Creek & Blackfoot-Clearwater WMAs.

#### **Liz Bradley: Wildlife**

- Mike Ebinger, new Blackfoot Area Wildlife Biologist, who previously was the Region 1 Thompson Falls Area biologist started 6/6/2022.
- Kristie Yeager will begin July 5<sup>th</sup> as the new Upper Clark Fork Area wildlife biologist. She is currently a management biologist for Colorado Parks & Wildlife.
- Completed the elk surveys on the Clark Fork, Blackfoot, and around Missoula.
  - Kara Clark, technician with block management, assisted with these surveys.
- Still monitoring Influenza HPAI in birds.
- Torrey is working on several non-game surveys.
- Finished up surveys on dusky grouse.
- In works of a tour at Spotted Dog WMA to discuss grazing management. Powell County opened Jake Creek Road that goes through Spotted Dog.
  - MSU is going to monitor elk grazing before/after road opens. This road will close during winter months.
- Mid to late June we will begin scoping to receive public input on current elk population.
  - Throughout the summer until Sept/Oct, we will have public meetings for Region 2 to get feedback from local stakeholders.

#### **Vivaca Crowser: Communication & Education**

- Currently recruiting new CAC members through July 1, 2022. Four members are expiring this term. Members may reapply when term expires and serve a two-year term.

Meeting adjourned at 9:30pm. Next meeting is Tuesday, Aug 30, 2022.