



Minutes

Montana State Parks & Recreation Board

Montana Wild, 2668 Broadwater Avenue Helena, MT 59601, Helena MT

March 11, 2015

Parks Board Members Present: Tom Towe, Chair; Mary Sexton, Vice Chair; Diane Conradi; Jeff Welch; Doug Smith

Fish, Wildlife & Parks Staff Present: Mike Volesky, Deputy Director; Chas Van Genderen, State Parks Administrator; State Parks Staff

Guests: March 11, 2015- See Parks file folder for sign-in sheet

Topics of Discussion:

1. **Call to Order - Pledge of Allegiance**
2. **Approval of Minutes Board Meeting Minutes**
3. **Approval of Board Expenses**
4. **Board Members Report**
5. **Director's Report**
6. **Public Comment Not on Agenda**
7. **Legislative Update**
8. **East Gallatin Site**
9. **Lands**
10. **Smith River Biennial Rule**
11. **Capital Projects Over \$5,000**
12. **Facility Condition Inventory (FCI)**
13. **Strategic Plan Implementation**
14. **Parks Foundation**

1. **Call to Order - Pledge of Allegiance**

Chairman Towe called the meeting to order at 8:35AM and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. **Approval of the Park Boards Meeting Minutes of December 17, 2014**

Action: Chairman Towe moved and Member Smith seconded the motion to approve the December 17, 2014 minutes. Motion carried.

3. **Approval of Parks Board Expenses**

Action: Chairman Towe moved and Member Conradi seconded the motion to approve the Parks Board expenses. Motion Carried.

4. Board Member Reports – tours, conversations, questions, etc
(Not on legislative issues)

Chairman Towe shared an article from the Seattle Times about Washington State Parks limited funding; Member Welch and Chairman Towe' article on state parks got published in Gazette and several other places.

Vice Chair Sexton reported she attended the Smith River Advisory Council meeting, great discussion by advisory council. (lost audio)

Member Conradi reported she visited cultural places in Myanmar (Burma) and South Korea, discussed how Myanmar has braced and cultivated tourism.

Member Smith reported he spent a month exploring Jamaica; parks issues: had discussion with landowner in Lewistown area to arrange a tour of property for the October board meeting, land has great potential for a state park.

Member Welch reported he spent time in Hawaii, testified on three bills.

5. Director's/Staff Report (not on legislative issues)

Mike Volesky Deputy Director, on behalf of Director Hagener, reported FWP is all legislation at this time.

Chas Van Genderen Administrator for Montana State Parks, reported Parks are in preparation for summer; in 2015 had one million more visits then 2002, 80% increase in 12 years. Parks events since last board meeting: First Day Hikes, Passion Plunge; park staff in process of hiring for season. Two new hires in Helena: Pam Novak Business Services Manager, Pat Doyle Marketing and Communication Coordinator, still vacant Chief of Operations.

6. Public Comment Not On Agenda

Bob Walker, Our Montana and Montana Trails Recreation Parks Association; discussed the completed strategic plan for Our Montana, thanked Member Conradi and Member Welch for testifying at the legislature this session. Thanked Parks Board for all their hard work.

7. Legislative Update - Informational

Chas Van Genderen, Administrator Montana State Parks reported about the current Legislative session; legislative bills increased this session for Parks. HB2: Parks received all new proposal requests; \$210K each year of biennium to purchase snowmobile groomers, 3 FTE at front line level (Rangers/Maintenance Staff/Seasonal Employees), and operations adjustments; approved all three proposals but got 2.87FTE cut, up .13 FTE (about 260 hour). Legislative bill

update: HB5 Capital Request, status unknown at this time, split into two bills; HB9 Cultural and Aesthetic Grants, interpretive project at Milltown State Park and project at Chief Plenty Coups State Park, no change; HB82 Dock on Wild Horse Island, signed by Governor; HB167 Off Highway Vehicle (OHV) law revision to remove reciprocity, raise fee to \$26, passed House, tough hearing with Senate Fish and Game; HB263 Madison Buffalo Jump, bill died; HB300 Create Snowmobile Trail Pass \$18, passed House Committee; HB191 Procurement Law increase contracts to 20 years, hearing House State Administration next week; SB264 Revise Distribution of Tax, redirect general funds money to receive \$1.7million annually for renovation and replacement of park facilities; HB386 Revise laws on sale or exchange of park lands, bill died on third reading. Parks and Recreation board confirmation hearing tentatively scheduled for March 19 must show up in person.

Volesky, Deputy Director reported on current bills for Fish and Wildlife, same types of bills but volume is down. HB140: License and Funding Fee Increase for Fish and Wildlife up for 2nd reading on House Floor, budget items faired, but across all departments possible 4% global reduction to include FTE.

8. East Gallatin Site (Affiliated Lands Parcel)

Tom Reilly, Assistant Administrator Montana State Parks explained a 29 acre portion of the East Gallatin site located west of Bozeman and slightly north of I-90, initially purchased in the 1983/1984 timeframe for \$420,000; utilized funds from original Coal Tax Parks Proposal Program. Two subsequent parcels were added to site: 47 acre parcel owned by City of Bozeman and leased to division and a 6 acre parcel donated to FWP. Originally located in Gallatin County, has been annexed into the City of Bozeman. Montana State Parks holds a lease on 47 acres of City of Bozeman owned parcel; State Parks performs no management, maintenance, nor has any other active involvement with property. The City of Bozeman has management responsibility and considerable investments have been made in the recreational site over the past two decades. There have been preliminary discussions with the City of Bozeman on options to resolve the land ownership of the site; no public involvement has been initiated to date. This site is one of several Parks 'Affiliated Lands' in the Department records. It is not a site actively managed by Montana State Parks, but yet ownership and legal tie to the lands exist via Agreements or MOU's. It is Montana State Park's desire to explore options with the City of Bozeman for resolution of the land ownership at this site and terminate the lease agreement that is in place. The East Gallatin site is not and never has been managed by Montana State Parks.

Vice Chair Sexton stated this is the first part of the process; enter into discussion to get rid of lease, next step how do you deal with underlying fee title ownership.

Reilly clarified there are 3 parcels: 29 acre parcel where the lake is located, state owned, under lease arrangement with Montana State Parks and City of Bozeman; 47 acre parcel Montana State Parks entered into lease agreement with city on land City of Bozeman owns; 6 acre parcel state owns donated to City of Bozeman who donated to FWP, Parks division.

Member Conradi asked for clarification of ownership of the parcels on map provided.

Reilly explained owner of GL1: 47 acre parcel City of Bozeman owned leased to Parks Division, GL2: parcel owned by Montana State Parks leased to City of Bozeman, GL3: 6 acre parcel donated to City of Bozeman who donated it to Parks Division.

Action: Vice Chair Sexton moved Member Conradi seconded the authorization for Parks Division to enter into discussion with the City of Bozeman to terminate the lease on the 47 acre parcel.

Chairman Towe asked for public comment.

No public comment.

Action: Motion Carries.

8. Lands - Update

Chas Van Genderen, Administrator Montana State Parks reported in 2014 Parks Board began discussion on land issues for parks division in earnest; focus is on two primary components: departmental process and needs related to good stewardship as discussed in April 2014, and a policy for dealing with land acquisitions and disposals as discussed in August of 2014. Finalization of the strategic plan took priority over lands discussion but the issue has not gone away. Over the past few months there have been three inquiries from individuals wishing to have sites considered for State Park designation; all have been discouraged. The Parks Board policy document concerning new State Park sites has yet to be finalized and adopted but the division is interested in resurrecting the policy discussion in April. Parks request opportunity to work with a single board member to help finalize the policy document for draft consideration. To date no formal public outreach beyond that which has been discussed at board meetings. Should any proposals be developed further, they will be presented to the Board for consideration and approval, followed by the appropriate public involvement process.

Van Genderen asked for a board member to assist with finalization of the Lands policy.

Member Smith and Member Conradi volunteered to assist Parks Division with Parks Land Policy.

9. Smith River Biennial Rule - Final

John Taillie, Region Four Park Manager, reported Smith River Management Act, 23-2-401 through 23-2-410 MCA authorizes the Board to provide for administration of the Smith River waterway and adopt rules for this purpose. The Smith River State Park and River Corridor Biennial Rule establishes fees and rules for private, commercial, and landowner float trips in Smith River State Park, current rule was last adopted on December 17, 2014. The Board has authority to amend the rule at anytime during the two year calendar period. (Reference Section I part B of Fee Rule). During 2013 and 2014 float season, a series of human/black bear conflicts were documented; resulted in numerous boat camp closures and removal of 8 black bears. In response to significant public safety concern, FWP chartered an interdivisional committee that recommended establishment of food storage regulations on the Smith River. This recommendation consistent with the following desired condition stated in the 2009 Smith River State Park and River Corridor Management Plan: *“River recreation on the Smith River will not adversely impact wildlife or result in human injury or property damage resulting from conflicts between humans and wildlife.”* Parks Division issued statewide news releases October 22 and November 14 announcing a 30 day public comment period that ended on November 21. A total of 60 individuals commented; included one federal agency, three conservation organization, 16 comments supported the rule as proposed, 27 supported some form of food storage but provided significant suggestions and 17 comments generally opposed food storage rules and/or were critical of the rules as proposed. The Smith River Biennial Rule was approved by the Board on December 17th, 2014 with the exception of the proposed food storage provisions (Items C and D of Fee Rule were removed prior to approval). The Board agreed that before making a decision on food storage, they would prefer the Smith River Advisory Council make a recommendation. The Council met January 13, 2015; upon review of the issue, the Council made a recommendation that the Board approve the original preferred food storage rule as written to take effect in January 2016. In addition, the Council recommended the public be notified during the upcoming 2015 float season as to how the rule would be implemented. The Agency recommended the Board follow guidance of the Council and adopt the preferred food storage rule as originally proposed at December meeting. The original proposal is as follows: *“Establish mandatory food/attractant storage rules that place the responsibility for safety and resource stewardship on the public and requires them to provide their own approved food storage equipment or methods.”* During 2015, Parks Division will notify public of the rule and its implementation in 2016 through press releases, personal communication, social media, state parks website, and postings at Smith River State Park. The Division will encourage and research opportunities for approved storage device rentals.

Vice Chair Sexton stated she attended council meeting, great discussion by council members, some members recommended more regulations such as carrying bear spray; council reached consensus of mandatory food storage rule implementation for 2016 but the 2015 float season is the time to educate floaters of the new rule.

Member Welch commented Parks should look to add key information to the online licensing web-site when applying for permit; people do not always read the packet.

Chairman Towe asked for public comment.

Mike Malloy, member of Smith River Advisory Council, landowner on Smith River; supports all regulatory efforts by department. As council member he supports the recommendation presented to board, council voted twice unanimously on current rule presented.

Joe Lampson, Smith River Advisory Council member, stated until recently there has been no bear problem, council agreed education is important so floaters can correct the problem so bears do not appear in area.

Chairman Towe asked board members for questions.

Member Conradi thanked Vice Chair Sexton and Council Members for all the time and energy put into coming up to this decision.

Chairman Towe asked how will Montana State Parks educate the public.

Taillie responded due to the late approval of the rule nothing was on web site during the application process or sent out in their floater packets, when season starts Camp Backer will have various information packets, bear aware cards to distribute, and press releases.

Vice Chair Sexton thanked the staff for all input and work to gather the information on food storage, recommend multiple press releases for bear proof storage rule on the Smith for 2016.

Chairman Towe asked for Motion.

Action: Member Conradi moved the Parks Board that the adoption of the Smith River Biennial Fee Rule with the addition of the recommended original food storage portion of the rule to take effect in January 2016.

Motion Carried.

10. Capital Projects Over \$5,000 -Update

Tom Reilly, Assistant Administrator Montana State Parks reported per the Parks and Recreation Board Policy adopted in December 2013, Board approval is required for unanticipated expenses exceeding \$5,000 within Parks Capital Program. Two projects have incurred capital costs which have not been previously approved by the Board; Hell Creek State

Park hiring of a private consultant to complete a master site plan to include recommendation for potential site improvement, infrastructure needs, and other options for the site; recommendation will contain order-of-magnitude cost estimates as well; cost of this master site plan effort is \$30,000. Makoshika State Park there are three items on project; resolution of consultant claim for extra work conducted onsite during the course of the project due to unanticipated conditions, initial claim of approximately \$47,000 has been resolved to \$20,664; resolution of contractor costs for revised design of post-tension anchors on project at \$118,992; and a year-long slope monitoring program via the engineering consultant at \$39,312. No public involvement is necessary or planned concerning the funding of these capital project efforts. Parks division recommend the Board approve additional costs for the new consultant work at Hell Creek State Park and the settlement of the consultant claim on Makoshika State Park project, as well as additional work items.

Chairman Towe asked if the engineers and architects are confident that waiting will solve Makoshika road problem.

Reilly responded yes, waiting one year to asphalt is the better option in case there is movement; the road will be passable this summer with a gravel section.

Action: Member Smith moved the Parks Board approve the Parks Division's need to commit capital funds to these two projects.

Chairman Towe asked for public comment.

No Public Comment.

Motion Carried.

11. Facility Condition Inventory (FCI) Progress – Update

Tom Reilly, Assistant Administrator Montana State Parks reported in December 2014 a private engineering consultant was selected to conduct Facility Condition Inventories (FCI's) at fourteen (14) Montana State Park sites statewide as part of implementing the strategic plan. The goal of the effort is to have qualified private professional consultant visit, document, and objectively evaluate existing infrastructure and maintenance needs at selected parks. To date Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park has been completed; results of the FCI effort have demonstrated the need for \$2.0 - \$2.5 million of infrastructure investment in this park alone beyond the caverns lighting needs, various project needs are ranked in order of importance and an estimate is provided for each line-item. Visits to the remaining park sites will be conducted beginning in March as weather conditions improve statewide.

Chairman Towe asked how much did the consultant cost and how were the 14 parks selected.

Reilly responded about \$109,000 for consultant effort; selected parks by highest infrastructure, locations east to west, large and small, infrastructure includes: buildings, staff housing, roads, and campgrounds.

Reilly explained in detail the Lewis and Clark Caverns FCI summary.

Chairman Towe asked for public comment.

No public comment.

12. Strategic Plan Implementation - Update

Chas Van Genderen, Administrator Montana State Parks explained the importance of implementation of the strategic plan in the next 5 years. Dave Landstrom, Region 1 Park Manager, developed standards for staffing and funding. The Strategic Plan was approved at the December 2014 Parks & Recreation Board Meeting after a year-long public process. Beginning in 2015, the Division is now focusing on implementing the plan. The first stage involves conducting a facility condition assessment and establishing operational and staffing standards based on peer analysis with surrounding state park systems. Regional Park Managers have contacted neighboring state park systems in Idaho, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wyoming to collect data to compare funding and staffing levels to the Montana State Park system. In addition, the Division formed an internal team that will develop criteria to analyze the park system based on brand promise of significance, relevance, and accessibility. The team consists of 9 staff from around the state that meet and discuss key questions: what is the appropriate composition of the park system, how the Division should balance and prioritize resources across the system, and what are the experiences and management approaches of the brand promise. Once the analysis is complete, the Division will propose to the Parks Board a reallocation of resources to the most significant sites in order to meet the brand promise. The Division is working internally now on data collection, and will bring forth the draft criteria for the classification process at the April Board Meeting.

Landstrom explained in detail the matrix of the analysis with surrounding states, will have a more detailed analysis by April board meeting.

Chairman Towe asked how this fits into the strategic plan.

Van Genderen explained that within the strategic plan it states Parks will establish standards for operating and staffing the state park system, this will give specific data and a definitive response.

Van Genderen and Parks Board had lengthy discussion about the classification process.

Chairman Towe suggested we adjust the tight timeline.

Van Genderen suggested we incorporate a work session to the April Board meeting.

13. Parks Foundation


Member Welch and Member Conradi moved forward with the creation of a non-profit partnership or foundation after the March work session. The Parks Board recognized the need of a foundation for the success of state parks. Member Welch contacted with Kris Komar who had created the plan and vision about one year ago; it is necessary to first build the organization, credibility and establish the State Park brand. Member Conradi discussed the mechanics of creating this foundation and both Member Welch and Member Conradi will provide their professional service pro bono to get this established.

The next meeting will be held April 17, 2015 @ Lewis and Clarke Caverns.

Adjourn at 2:00p.m.



Tom Towe, Parks Board Chairman



for M. Jeff Hagener, Director
Mike Volesky, Acting