



Minutes

Montana State Parks & Recreation Board Meeting

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

FWP Commission Rooms, Helena, MT

February 16, 2017

Parks & Recreation Board Members Present: Tom Towe, Chair; Mary Sexton, Vice-Chair; Jeff Welch, Member; Martha Williams, Acting Director, FWP

Parks Staff Present: Melissa Baker, Chief of Operations/Assistant Administrator; Pat Doyle/Marketing & Communication Manager; Zach Zipfel/Agency Legal Counsel; John Taillie/Region 4 Manager; Sara Scott/Heritage Resources Program Manager; Maren Murphy/Senior Planner; Katelyn Weber/Administrative Lead.

Guests: February 16, 2017 – See Parks file folder for sign-in sheet.

Topics:

- 1. Call to Order – Pledge of Allegiance**
- 2. Approval of December 14, 2016 Board Meeting Minutes**
- 3. Approval of December 14, 2016 Board Expenses**
- 4. Board Member Reports**
- 5. Director's Report**
- 6. Staff Report**
- 7. Parks Funding/Budgets**
- 8. Legislative Update**
- 9. Naming Update**
- 10. Hell Creek State Park Capital Project**
- 11. Ackley Lake State Park Transition Team**
- 12. Ackley Lake Lease**
- 13. Parks Board Lands Policy**
- 14. Capital Projects Over \$5,000**
- 15. Heritage Resources Strategic Plan**

- 16. AIS Task Force Update**
- 17. Biennial Smith River Rule**
- 18. Public Comment Not on Agenda**

1. Call to Order – Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Towe called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Approval of the Parks & Recreation Board Meeting Minutes of December 14, 2016

Action: Vice-Chairman Sexton moved to approve the December 14, 2016 minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

3. Approval of Parks & Recreation Board: December 14, 2016 Board Expenses

Action: Vice-Chairman Sexton moved to approve the December 14, 2016 Parks & Recreation Board expenses. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Board Member Reports

Chairman Towe reported that he visited Helena several times since the previous Board meeting to work with the legislature on the bill drafts discussed at the previous Board meeting. Chairman Towe also reported that the Board is working to find answers to the issue of the large ending fund balance for Montana State Parks. Chairman Towe attended the hearing for HB 324. He also attended a meeting with acting Director Martha Williams on the Montana State Parks budget.

Vice-Chair Sexton reported that she visited Helena several times to work with the legislature and answer questions about Montana State Parks in regards to pending bills.

Member Welch reported that he has also fielded questions and phone calls regarding legislation.

5. Director’s Report

Chairman Towe introduced Martha Williams, acting Director of FWP, as the new Secretary of the Board. Acting Director Williams affirmed her commitment to working with the Board and to supporting MSP. She reported that her two biggest issues coming into the position are MSP and Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS). Vice-Chairman Sexton stated that there has been a 42% increase in the use of Montana’s state parks in the last six years and that figure lends itself to the importance of parks and why it is the Board needs to stabilize MSP.

6. Staff Report

Acting Administrator Melissa Baker reported that parks staff has been very busy over the last several months. Visitation was up 3% overall in January, much of which is due to ice fishing. Smith River applications for permits will close at the end of business February 16, 2017, with 7,273 applications to date and more expected before the deadline. MSP hosted first day hikes on January 1st with 78 hikers. The Recreation Trails grant program (RTP) and Off Highway Vehicle grant program (OHV) reached grant application deadlines. RTP had 69 projects requesting 2.6 million dollars and MSP expects to have 1.5 million dollars to allocate for that. The OHV grant program had 12 applications for over \$170,000 and that program has \$150,000. Both programs are seeing more demand than there are funds. MSP has been working with applicants to improve their grant applications. The snowmobile program has also been busy with improving snow conditions. The Gallatin National Forest Avalanche Center and the Snowmobile Club of Cooke City to provide both classroom and snowmobile classes to visitors regarding avalanche safety; this is the first season without a fatality. The AmeriCorps program is recruiting members for the 2017 season, increasing the output for available positions and moving the application deadline up. The newly targeted outreach has brought in highly qualified applicants from across the country. Over the last year, MSP has hired eight new park managers because of increased career pathways for internal advancement. Applicant pools have been excellent and current managers have been given additional training for success in job searches. MSP is in final stages of finalizing the Lewis and Clark Caverns concession contract. The contract is for ten years with two optional five year extensions. Some of the fees included in the contract will be used for maintenance of the park. There is also a new concession at Whitefish Lake State, Sea Me Paddle Kayak, a local concession with excellent service. MSP has a meeting scheduled with FWP legal department to discuss the Hell Creek State Park concession. Parks staff is also working on management plans for state park properties, as per Goal A Target 1 of the Strategic Plan. The Operations Team has also begun working on Standard Operating Procedures. In the Flathead Valley there is a newly formed Flathead Valley Recreation Alliance who will be talking with park managers about partnership opportunities. Bannack Association has hired a new president, replacing Otis Anderson. Travelers' Rest Preservation and Historic Association held their annual dinner and fundraising auction, raising over \$38,000 to supplement operating costs and staffing.

7. Parks Funding/Budgets

Dustin Temple, FWP Chief of Administration, presented to the Board information on the capital side of the budget that was presented to the Section F Long Range Planning Committee—departmental requests for all capital and projects for all divisions are contained in House Bill 5. The hearing on that section was very positive. The first three pages involve capital projects, including \$2.2 million requested for Lewis & Clark Caverns State Park. The final section is a description of the funds for each project. Capital authority exists across

bienniums so there are projects that remain on the books with unexpended authority. Also listed is the fire alarm system for Bannack State Park at \$1.65 million and Makoshika State Park funding for the interior access roads and trail structures for \$2.1 million. The final sheet contains the authority for MSP's grant programs included in House Bill 5 for a total of \$5.122 million. The committee work on the parks side of the capital budget has been mostly completed. The committee moved these projects in as submitted by the department. House Bill 5 will now be headed to full appropriations.

Vice-Chairman Sexton asked for clarification on whether leftover Dingle Johnson money was taken for the purpose of AIS. Assistant Administrator Reilly informed the Board that because there was no state match of funds, Dingle Johnson money not allocated to projects previously appropriated to parks was taken for AIS purposes. Vice-Chairman Sexton asked whether what remained in the ending fund balance could have at some time been allocated for a capital project that could have used the Dingle Johnson, that could have had the state match, and then the Dingle Johnson money could have been utilized had MSP used some of its ending fund balance for a specific project. Assistant Administrator Reilly confirmed that information. Vice-Chairman Sexton asked how much Dingle Johnson money went to AIS. Chief of Administration Dustin Temple replied that the total amount was \$1.5 million and a lot of that was cash balance with the Fish and Wildlife Service that was not allocated. The amount Tom is referring to is around \$600,000. Vice-Chairman asked for confirmation that that \$600,000 of Dingle Johnson money could have gone to a park with a boating component had there been a match in state funds. Chief of Administration Temple confirmed that statement.

Chairman Towe asked if the passage of House Bill 5 would clean the slates. Chief of Administration Temple indicated it would cut the balance in half with a projected remaining balance at FY19 year-end of \$5.4 million. Vice-Chairman Sexton asked if an overview of revenue would be provided as it has been in previous years. Chief of Administration Temple indicated that that information would be available as soon as possible. Chairman Towe stated that he expected Chief of Administration Temple to provide a budget report at every Board meeting. Chief of Administration Temple replied that he would be ready and willing to provide that to the Board.

Chairman Towe asked Chief of Administration Temple to help him understand why MSP got into the \$11 million ending fund balance issue. Chief of Administration Temple reported that he and his staff have dug into the issue of department funds, looking back to fiscal year 2012 to line out what the requests were, what the appropriations, allocations, and expenditures were. He indicated that there were various people and decision points along the way in that process so the numbers are being pulled straight from the state budgeting system (known as SABHRS), to show the Board and the Director from 2012 forward exactly what happened with the budget. What he cannot answer or speak to is why certain decisions or budget

allocations were made. Director Williams reported that she is also considering the issue and in addition to the information that Temple is pulling, she has asked for the protocol for each budget decision including how money is requested, appropriated, allocated, expended and who makes each of those decisions. She believes there is fundamental disagreement about that and her understanding is that the department, along with the Board comes up with the request, the legislature appropriates the money, and allocations and expenditures are made by division administrators. In trying to figure out where the breakdown occurred is the protocol Director Williams has requested be made clear.

Chairman Towe reported that he is concerned about MSP's earned revenue because he is not able to see why revenues did not increase after fees were increased. He asked for help in finding out what significant events have occurred within the revenue stream.

Chairman Towe asked how revenue projections are made down to 2021 because he does not have confidence in those numbers. Chief of Administration Temple indicated he would provide an explanation of revenue projections to the Board and that historically the projections for the department are close. Chairman Towe asked Chief of Administration Temple to check whether there has been a change in methodology in revenue projections because he suspicious that something else is going on that the Board does not understand. Chief of Administration Temple reported that a significant change in methodology for revenue projections has not changed and has been in place for over two decades. Vice-Chairman Sexton asked whether the software change in the budgeting system could account for a shift in methodology or accounting. Chief of Administration Temple replied that that system is not used for revenue projections but that there has been a change in that system that was in place last biennium, whereas the fund balance began to climb in fiscal year 2013. Chief of Administration Temple indicated he would look into the accounting and methodology and report back to the Board.

Vice-Chairman Sexton asked that someone report back to her how appropriations requests have been made. Her understanding is that requests come from the division administrator, are moved on to the department, and discussions between the administrator, director and finance officer are held about what the request is. She wants to understand the chain of requests, how requests were passed on, what filters were used, how requests got to the budget office, and how that line of communication broke down because at the end of the fiscal year, money was left in the ending fund balance that could have been used for capital projects. Vice-Chairman Sexton also indicated that if things were being watched along the way, and ending fund balance of over \$11 million should not have been a surprise. Chairman Towe seconded the Vice-Chairman's request. He reiterated that looking back at the reports provided by Sue Daly as of December 18, 2013 MSP would have ending fund balance for FY 2014 of \$5,600,000 and the budget showed MSP spending it all down. The next time any information was

provided to the Board was August of 2016, two years later, with an ending fund balance of \$11 million.

Member Welch asked if the Fish and Wildlife side of the department has an ending fund balance, and if so, how much. Chief of Administration Temple reported that the fund balance is in 40 or 50 different funds; the largest is the general fund with a projected ending fund balance of around \$15 million. Member Welch asked to know the ending fund balance for all the accounts.

Chairman Towe reiterated that MSP cannot spend money unless the legislature authorizes it and they have not authorized MSP's expenditure at the ending fund balance. House Bill 5 will take \$5.9 million of it but there is still over \$5 million left. He is concerned about it and believes the legislature should authorize it. The budget director has reported he will not authorize it until MSP gets more money. Chairman Towe intends to follow through on that, in addition to working on improving communication because it has been very difficult to get anything moving on solving this problem.

In regards to House Bill 2, Chief of Administration Temple reported that the hearing was good in regards to the parks section. An additional 2% vacancy savings was imposed across the board and the agency's statutorily required 5% reduction plan was adopted. That plan affects all funds that revert either their balance or interest earned to the general fund. Chief of Administration Temple indicated the parks division has the most that are affected totaling a reduction of \$286,000 across about six funds. A schedule will be provided. Chief of Administration Temple also provided the Board with a schedule of the decision packages.

Chairman Towe asked for clarification on whether MSP funds get raked into the general fund, consider MSP does not receive general fund monies. Chief of Administration Temple replied that some funds have interest earned on the money in the account that reverts to the general fund and that is a 5% statutory requirement prepared for every session.

Vice-Chairman Sexton asked Chief of Administration Temple about the fiscal note prepared for Representative Hamlett's bill 324. Specifically, the note refers to office space and storage space. Her rec is that there is a base budget for the department and office space is taken into account. Chief of Administration Temple replied that all fixed costs for the agency are in the administration budget within FWP. Chairman Towe asked if Chief of Administration Temple had anything to do with the fiscal note. Chief of Administration Temple responded that it is his division's responsibility to prepare fiscal notes for all legislation that affects the department. Chairman Towe indicated that it is the worst fiscal note he has ever seen and that it was not accurate, it was misleading, gives the wrong impression and is a blemish on anyone

that had anything to do with it. He indicated he would talk with Chief of Administration Temple about the matter further.

8. Legislative Update

Acting Administrator Melissa Baker reported that MSP is tracking the following bills. House Bill 225, primary sponsor Edward Greef, provides funding to maintain maintenance of paved paths. MSP is tracking the bill because it includes a request for a \$2.00 opt-out on vehicle registration, similar to that for MSP. It designates money to the Department of Transportation for paved paths.

Chairman Towe indicated the bill has changed substantially in committee and is now a \$5.00 opt-in fee.

Acting Administrator Baker reported that House Bill 240, sponsored by Kerry White, clarifies allowable use of groomed snowmobile trails. There was a hearing on February 7th. This bill would clarify exactly what vehicles would be allowed on groomed snowmobile paths, including tracked ATVs and UTVs.

House Bill 294, sponsored by Jean Price, encourages accessible playgrounds statewide. It had a hearing on February 21, 2017 and has since been amended. The amendment changes allowing for \$100,000 in general fund money to be allocated through an MSP grant program for accessible playground equipment to putting those funds into MSP's special revenue. Chairman Towe clarified that the bill would essentially short MSP \$100,000 from its revenue that it would have to make up somewhere else.

House Bill 324 introduced by Bradley Hamlett, revising laws related to State Parks administration, had a hearing on February 7, 2017 and has not had executive action yet.

House Bill 454, introduced by Kerry White, to generally revise laws related to Fish, Wildlife & Parks, would move Montana State Parks to the Department of Commerce. There is a hearing on February 21st.

House Joint Resolution 7, sponsored by Ellie Hill Smith, is an interim study on economic impacts of outdoor recreation. MSP does not currently have a role in that bill but is interested based on its content.

Senate Bill 161, sponsored by Roger Webb, to revise motor vehicle registration fees for parks, requested a \$25.00 opt-in rather than a \$6.00 opt-out was originally scheduled for hearing next week but the hearing was canceled this morning.

Senate Bill 213, sponsored by Jill Cohenour, clarifies Smith River Corridor funding. This bill takes the division of the revenues MSP gets as listed in the fee rule and puts it into statute for the Smith River Corridor Enhancement Accounts.

Senate Bill 232, sponsored by Pat Connell, provides for an off-highway trail pass, has a hearing scheduled for today in Committee on Highways and Transportation. Chairman Towe asked for clarification on who would receive the money. The bill would provide for a \$10.00 trail pass, \$9.00 of which would come back to the program to grant out for trail improvements, ethics and education. The remaining dollar would stay with the vendor who sells the permit.

9. Naming Update

Assistant Administrator Baker reported that Goal A of the 2015 Strategic Plan required that the division manage significant, relevant and accessible parks in a manner that is consistent with available resources. As part of meeting that goal, the Montana State Parks and Recreation Board passed the Classification and Prioritization Policy in December 2015. Directive 2 of the policy instructs MSP to develop a naming strategy for MSP properties that is consistent with Classification and to present this strategy to the Montana State Parks Board.

The draft naming strategy was presented to the parks board in October 2016 and includes 4 primary designations: State Parks, State Heritage Sites, State Recreation Areas, and State Natural Areas. In addition, there will be an Undesignated Property category for properties that do not yet have a management plan and/or are not yet developed. At this time, the Board requested updates in December and February related to naming.

Since December, staff have been refining the criteria for each type of designation and working on design standards for the website, park brochures, and signage. The Classification and Prioritization Policy was the subject of a 31-day public comment period prior to its passage. Stakeholder engagement in the implementation of the policy is ongoing.

Acting Director Martha Williams indicated that it is best for Parks to determine what the statutes provide and exactly what the delineation of authority is in renaming policy. Chairman Towe asked for clarification on whether there is someone within the agency that is not supportive of renaming policy and indicated that he would be amenable to the policy going through legal for final approval. Chairman Towe indicated that if Paul Sihler has a problem with the renaming policy, he would like to be made aware of it because the division has done a great job with this plan and he does not want to see the agency intervene in its implementation.

Member Welch indicated that he is supportive of the plan and thinks it is imperative, as per the Strategic Plan, but would like to see the division begin working on the cost of implementation.

10. Hell Creek State Park Capital Project

Assistant Administrator Tom Reilly reported that per policy, Board approval is required for proposed capital funding commitments exceeding \$5,000. This agenda item pertains to proceeding with proposed infrastructure improvements at Hell Creek SP. Specifically, replacement of the 8,000-gallon water storage tank serving the park (new = buried 25,000-gallon capacity) and installing a separate septic system for the high-volume Fish Cleaning Station (FCS). These are the highest priority infrastructure needs for the Hell Creek site.

An on-site water and sewer flow study was conducted in Summer 2016. This data is needed for designing the infrastructure upgrades and the DEQ permitting process. The preliminary cost estimate for the work is \$634,000 (\$364,000 water storage and \$270,000 FCS septic). These consultant estimate include design fees. Funding proposal is; \$579,738 (75% Fed. DJ) + \$193,246 (25% State) = \$772,984; say \$773,000 total (+20% est.).

Following the design, permitting, and bidding process, it is anticipated that the improvements would be constructed in Fall 2018. The new systems would be on-line and available for use beginning with the 2019 season. Associated with completing this project in late 2018, it is recommended that the Board consider clarifying its' decision on Hell Creek lease-type issues until the end of the summer 2019 season. The project has no impact on the current concession lease at Hell Creek State Park.

If approved, the next step will involve the drafting of an Environmental Assessment for the proposed project, including a 30-day public comment period. An update would be provided at a future Board meeting.

Chairman Towe asked the status of the issue regarding the concessionaire's objection that a water tank be placed where he intends to put in campsites. Assistant Administrator Reilly indicated he would be working with the concessionaire directly to work out that issue.

Chairman Towe called for public comment on the agenda item. Teddy Robertson, a commissioner in Hell Creek Country, addressed the Board, indicating that she is aware of the problem at Hell Creek State Park. The park receives more than 30,000 visits per season. The marina is very important to the community, a small and not-well-funded community. The improvements have the potential to help things get progressively better. On behalf of the community and its board, Commissioner Robertson appreciates the effort of MSP to make

improvements. Vice-Chairman Sexton indicated that the loss of the gas tax monies has a large impact on how much MSP can partner with the community on these improvements.

Representative Bridget Smith, House District 31, just north of Hell Creek State Park, addressed the Board to ask for help with the road to Hell Creek. Rep. Smith believes that if the road were improved, visits to the park could double, and that is extremely important to the residents of eastern Montana. Working with the existing concessionaire on his lease and contract is also very important, namely trying to get him a long-term lease. Rep. Smith also indicated she introduced a bill that would provide for a tax on soda pop that would go to Montana State Parks.

***Action:** Member Welch moved to approve the Parks Division's proposal to commit \$773,000 in available capital funds to proceed with the water tank replacement and FCS septic system project at Hell Creek State Park. Motion carried unanimously.*

***Action:** Vice-Chairman Sexton moved to clarify that if there are decisions to be made concerning lease arrangements or terms in 2019 they will occur after the summer season, at the August 2019 Board meeting. Motion carried unanimously.*

Chairman Towe, upon the arrival of Rep. Ken Holmlund, called for his comments after action was taken on this item. Rep. Holmlund indicated that he is happy a decision was made to update the water and sewer systems because it is crucial to maintaining the facility. His concern now lies with the road because he believes that visitation could rise to 50,000 from 30,000 if the road was improved. Rep. Holmlund contacted someone from Garfield County to get an estimate on the cost of fixing the road using magnesium chloride. The holes in the road would have to be filled before that step is taken. These steps may have to be taken in sections over several years, to afford it. Rep. Holmlund also expressed his concern over the reservation system because it reports that Hell Creek is full when it is not, causing people not to come to the park when it is not, in fact, full. Rep. Holmlund indicated that Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks has a terrible reputation in eastern Montana because promises have been made that have not been kept by the agency. He urged the Board and FWP to follow through on any decisions or promises that are made.

11. Ackley Lake State Park Transition Team

Regional Parks Manager for Region 4, John Taillie, reported that the classification of state parks was directed by the Montana State Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan for 2015-2020 in an effort to prioritize the Park's Division most significant sites, resources, and programs and manage them in a manner that is consistent with available resources. Part of this process includes the potential transfer of Class 4 sites to other management entities. Ackley Lake is one of the sites considered appropriate for a transfer of management. In August, the lease

State Parks held with the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) was renewed through December of 2017. The public expressed considerable concern over the departure of State Parks from the Ackley Lake site. In August of 2016 the Parks Board requested that a transition team be organized by State Parks to consider and explore various options that will maintain public access at Ackley Lake.

A Board of Directors has since been organized and 3 meetings have been held in Stanford. Board members include representatives from State Parks, the Fisheries division, DNRC, Judith Basin and Fergus Counties, Ackley Water Users, tourism and chamber of commerce, and local business. At the first meeting on November 15, officers were elected and discussions begun on the costs associated with maintaining and managing recreation/camping facilities at Ackley. The next two meetings continued and expounded on these discussions. We are now in the process of developing management options and what will be necessary to carry these out.

The team has made considerable progress with this effort. The group is positive and optimistic that we will develop and implement a solution that will keep Ackley open for recreation to the public and allow for the departure of Parks from the site including an exploration of a recreation district managed by Judith Basin and Fergus counties. The team has agreed to meet every month until we have reached that goal.

Vice-Chairman Sexton encouraged continued meetings to keep the momentum and dialog going regarding improvements and funding of the site.

12. Ackley Lake Lease

Acting Administrator Baker reported that Ackley Lake State Park is located approximately 13 miles southwest of Hobson. The park is located on land owned by the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) as part of an irrigation reservoir. It is comprised of 250 acres and has 15 campsites and two boat ramps. In August, the Montana State Parks and Recreation Board directed signature of a one-year lease for Ackley Lake State Park and directed the Department to form a working group to develop alternative management strategies for the park. That working group has since been formed and is presently meeting. While the team has been highly functional and solution oriented, the needed structure and funding for a local management solution of Ackley Lake will take time to develop. Upon discussion with the working group and local elected officials, the department is recommending an extension of the Ackley Lake lease.

This agenda item involves the proposed mutually-agreed upon lease agreement between Montana State Parks and the DNRC through the end of 2021. This lease is needed to clarify roles and responsibilities for management while working through the details of a change of

management. The lease agreement proposed does not require any payment to DNRC. The proposed action does not result in any immediate change of services or management to the public and thus a public involvement process related specifically to the lease was not conducted. There are, however, public outreach efforts underway (including a recent public meeting) related to allowing management of the site to revert to DNRC.

Commissioner Cody McDonald of Judith Basin County addressed the Board to thank them for their work on the lease, especially Regional Park Manager John Taillie. The County would like to help MSP as much as it can. Commissioner McDonald indicated that Ackley Lake is self-sustaining but that a partnership is important to keep it maintained. Vice-Chairman Sexton asked that there be a review in three years to assess any issues that can be addressed by an ongoing partnership between MSP and the County.

Commissioner Don Hajenga addressed the Board to let them know that some issues have come up regarding funding for Ackley Lake State Park projects. He indicated it may be advantageous to consider charging for camping. He also reported that he is grateful for the work of and partnership with MSP.

***Action:** Vice-Chairman Sexton moved to approve the signature of the mutually-agreed upon lease for Ackley State Park between MSP and DNRC with the caveat that the transition team committee continue with annual reports regarding partnerships to improve the park. Motion carried unanimously.*

13. AIS Task Force Update

Jim Williams, incident commander for the Aquatic Invasive Species task force in Region 1, reported to the Board the status of the AIS check stations. Baby mussels were detected in Montana's Tiber and Canyon Ferry reservoirs. The incident command was established upon their detection at the end of November 2016. Williams attended the Montana Association of County Commissioners the previous day to discuss threats to drinking water, recreational opportunities, irrigation, and fisheries. A plan for inspections has been put in place across the state at thirty waterway access points; the inspections serve to decontaminate vessels with hot water. The AIS Team is working with the Bureau of Reclamation to secure sites for the stations. Stations will perform inspections from dawn to dusk. Roving stations will be present at several state parks. Lab results are committed to be turned out within two weeks. Data availability and website presence are underway as well. There will be 166 seasonal employees hired. Education and outreach regarding AIS is also a priority.

14. Parks Board Lands Policy

Assistant Administrator Tom Reilly reported that the Parks and Recreation Board "Acquisition and/or Transfer of Interests in Land" Policy was finalized and adopted in August 2015. At the December 2016 Board meeting an amendment was proposed to

strengthen the policy discussion concerning possible public perceptions concerning ‘closing parks’. The Board requested that staff modify the existing Policy to add stronger language to clarify their position on the issue. The added/modified clarification language is included in #5 at the end of the document.

Given the limited scope and effect of the proposed modification, no formal public comment period is necessary or planned concerning the proposed minor policy adjustment.

It is recommended that the Board approve a Policy adjustment to clarify its’ position and intent concerning exiting public recreational lands remaining available to the public.

***Action:** Vice-Chairman Sexton moved to approve the amendment to the existing Parks Board “Acquisition and/or Transfer of Interests in Land” Policy as presented to the Board. Motion carried unanimously.*

15. Capital Projects Over \$5,000

Assistant Administrator Tom Reilly reported that per the Parks and Recreation Board Policy adopted in December 2013, Board approval is required for unanticipated expenses exceeding \$5,000 within the Parks Capital Program. For this meeting, there are six projects pending involving capital funds which will incur costs which have not been previously approved by the Board;

1. Giant Springs SP/Maintenance Building– \$27,440; a River Fund grant was submitted/approved in December 2016. The grant will be utilized to construct a maintenance building within Giant Springs SP.
2. Giant Springs SP/Electric Gate - \$17,122; a River Fund grant was submitted/approved in December 2016. The grant will be utilized for the installation of an automated electric gate at the park entrance.
3. Black Sandy SP/Pave Park Entrance - \$15,600; a River Fund grant was submitted/approved in December 2016. The funds will be used to pave the entrance area leading into the park from the county road.
4. Travelers’ Rest SP/Interpretive and Flag Plaza – up to \$25,000; interpretive plaza area, including flag poles near the entrance to the visitor’s center building. Funding will come from donations, the TRPHA, and other sources.
5. Bannack SP - \$34,000; \$17,000 provided by the Dale Tash Fund matched with \$17,000 from Park Operations funds. The funds will be utilized in reroofing priority buildings in the townsite.
6. Gallatin Regional Park (Bozeman) – potential LWCF grant amendment of \$75,000. Gallatin Co. currently has a \$65,000 LWCF grant. The amendment option is an approved means to increase available funding to a current grant recipient by the federal National Park Service.

An EA will be issued for the Maintenance Building at Giant Springs SP. The other four projects don't require an EA.

Action: Member Welch moved to approve the Parks Division's proposal to accept and commit available funds to the five projects identified above. Motion carried unanimously.

16. Heritage Resources Strategic Plan

Heritage Resources Program Manager, Sara Scott, reported to the Board that In December 2016, the Parks Board approved the release of the Draft Heritage Resources Strategic Plan for a 30-day public review. The Montana State Parks 2015-2020 Strategic Plan calls for the development of a heritage resource strategy to address the unique management challenges and opportunities of heritage resource sites within our state park system. The Draft Heritage Resources Strategic Plan synthesizes the results of the heritage planning process and associated meetings and sets a direction for heritage resource program priorities outlined in five goals (A-E) that state parks will work to achieve over the next seven years (2017-2024).

Heritage resources touch a diverse group of stakeholders, and stakeholder engagement was a key component of the entire planning process. Key points of engagement throughout included: Informational email (June); online forum (July); website resources (ongoing); survey on program and processes (July); stakeholder workshop (September); and public review of the Draft Heritage Resources Strategic Plan (December).

The draft plan was released for a 30-day public review period, which closed on January 18, 2017, from which 17 comments were received. These came from seven individuals, five organizations and user groups, and from five agency officials. All comments were supportive of the draft plan and the commitment of state parks to protect and effectively manage heritage properties. Comments received were specific to the various goals and to specific parks, the classification process, artifact collection management, tribal involvement, and partnership engagement and opportunities.

Action: Vice-Chairman Sexton moved to approve the Final Heritage Resources Strategic Plan and authorize the State Parks Division to implement the goals set forth in this document within the proposed timeline. Motion carried unanimously.

17. Biennial Smith River Rule

Acting Administrator Baker reported to the Board that the Smith River Management Act, 23-2-401 through 23-2-410, MCA, authorizes the Board to provide for the 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 administrative rules for private, commercial and landowner float trips in Smith River State Park. The current rule was last adopted by the Board in March 2015 and is scheduled to expire in March 2017. The Parks Division conducted a 30-day comment period to solicit public input on the proposed

biennial rule, which would be in effect for two calendar years following adoption. One comment was received which recommended that floaters be required to use bear resistant containers. However, the Parks Board already authorized a mandatory food storage regulation that began January 01, 2016. The most significant change to the rule involves eliminating a method of storing food, garbage and other attractants in a bear resistant manner. The remaining majority of edits/changes to the rule are grammatical to improve consistency and understanding of terminology and the recognition of a new commercial outfitter. The Parks Division identified the following alternatives regarding the Smith River Biennial Rule.

*Action: Member Welch moved to approve the final Smith River Biennial Fee Rule.
Motion carried unanimously.*

18. Public Comment Not on Agenda

No public comment.

Meeting adjourned at 2:30 PM.

Tom Towe, Chairman

Martha Williams, Director