

Flathead Audubon BOD Meeting via Zoom, December 7, 2020  
Prepared by: Pam Willison, Secretary

Board Members participating: Gael Bissell, Cory Davis, Pam Willison, Tom Roberts, Cindy Roberts, Jan Metzmaker, Mike Fanning, Rod Walette, Bob Lee, Margaret Parodi, Carole Jorgensen

Others participating: Denny Olson, Larry Berrin

The meeting was called to order by President Gael Bissell at 6:07 pm.

**Minutes:** No additions or changes. Mike made a motion to approve, Margaret seconded. Motion passed with one abstention.

**Financials:** The checkbook activity was reviewed and there were no questions or issues. The Board Financial Statement was reviewed, and Rod noted that investments are doing well, and that we continue to receive memberships and are on track to come close to matching last year. The Profit and Loss Statement was reviewed. Of the Whitefish Foundation money, the first \$15000 went to Education, and Rod distributed the balance of the money with 40% to OSNA, 40% to Hawk Watch, and 20% to Birds of Prey Festival. He noted that these funds can be moved from program to program as needed, including putting more into Education. Also, Rod noted that the COVID grant will be utilized by the end of the year for expenses for the video production and Conservation Education program expenses. Bob made a motion to accept and file the profit and loss report, Cory seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Rod noted that Josh Covill has expressed an interest in serving as the contracted primary for the Jewel Basin Hawk Watch again next year. Gael also mentioned the possibility of Josh doing the written portion of the final report for Hawk Watch this coming March. Dan Casey compiles the numbers for the report, and could assist Josh. Bob suggested that we include the report preparation in the contract with Josh so the money can be allocated.

Rod also reported that he and Kay have completed the process of getting Kay's computer and software compatible with his, so once a month he forwards the financials so she can complete her review process.

**Montana Audubon Wildlife Grant:** Gael wondered if we needed to apply for this grant for Hawk Watch. Bob suggested that we should apply and noted that if we didn't get a grant last year was because there are now more applications, so there is more competition. Rod said he would be willing to complete the application, as he has done it in the past. It was agreed that Rod would complete the application.

**WFCF Follow-up Meeting:** Cory did a survey for scheduling the follow up meeting, with December 10<sup>th</sup> being the best. However, because Kay has a family emergency and is an

important member of this meeting, the meeting will be postponed until early January. Cory will do another poll for dates/times, and schedule the meeting.

**Board Membership:** Gael wondered if we should look at making a one-year appointment to fill one of the recent openings resulting from resignations. Bob clarified that a person would need to be a chair/co-chair of a committee in order to receive a one-year appointment. Gael will inquire with Darcy Thomas and see if she is interested. Bob said that any time someone is a good candidate, it's a good idea to be open with them about our interest in having them join us, and to invite them to participate in a meeting or two and see if they are interested.

**Complimentary Memberships:** Kay contacted Whitefish Foundation about this, and they feel the complimentary memberships and/or newsletters are not a problem because it's not a benefit to the donor, and that it's very common for organizations to send newsletters to donors. If we decide to send newsletters to all Great Fish donors, Mike would need to receive the information so he can compare with memberships, and get their information into our data base. Jan will get this information to Mike. Rod mentioned an issue related to this, because we sometimes get a check with no additional information, which he usually considers it to be a donation. He wondered if he should consider the first \$25 of each new donation (non-member) as a membership, and the balance as donation. Carole wondered if that causes an issue with the tax-deductibility of their donation when part is used as a membership. Mike feels that's not an issue because it's just our internal record keeping, and we aren't giving any goods or services, and Gael confirmed that was the also the opinion of WFCF. This will also be discussed at the membership meeting next January.

**CAR:** Cory announced that results of the vote: Lewis Young (Lifetime Achievement), Dirt Rich (Business), Pat Jaquith (Volunteer).

**Migratory Bird Treaty Act:** Larry Berrin, Montana Audubon, joined us to help clarify the status of MBTA. Regarding the final EIS, there is a mandatory 30-day "waiting period", but they are not required to have a "comment period", and they are not willing to accept any more comments on this action. The final EIS is going to be pushed through without comment, so he feels there isn't anything more we can do at the national level, so his focus is on local publicity in newspapers throughout the state. At the federal level, their efforts are now focused on working for some protective action through the Biden administration, via the Migratory Bird Protection Act.

Carole asked whether the new administration can change or reverse the interpretation of the current administration, or if there is nothing they can do. Larry feels there will need to be some legal action to slow it down long enough for it to not get completed, because it would be complicated for the Biden administration to undo. Carole said some of the things she has read indicate that the MBTA has some weaknesses or vagueness that could be exploited, especially since our new Montana administration is very supportive of resource development, so wondered if it would be best to inform and pressure our local officials. Bob asked if there were some numbers indicating the impact of birding on the economy of Montana. Larry said he has

presented economic impact information to Daines and Tester and they don't seem to respond to it. Jan mentioned that the Institute of Tourism and Recreation (Forestry School) at UM has all done that research and has that information. Carole also mentioned that the MBTA has an impact on reduced air pollution and she wonders if we are asking the wrong questions, and should focus on personal health and pollution impacts, rather than economics. It was agreed that Carole brought up some interesting points and she was encouraged to develop some of those items, then share it with Larry. Carole also wondered about whether the bird death at the Berkley Pit still has value as an avenue to get attention, or if it's too far in the past. Many felt it was still relevant and effective in messaging. Carole and Larry will work on some of these.

Gael inquired with Larry about getting updates on Legislative actions. MA has a new person (Carmen) working with Amy, and they will be doing updates. Larry said it's going to be a difficult year because we are unsure how the legislators are going to meet, and how much is going to be done. Gael suggested a weekly update at the same day and time. Bob mentioned that in the past, people could sign up for email alerts on actions being considered. Gael also mentioned that FAS also usually donates to MA during the legislative session to support policy and legislative action. Bob made a motion to donate \$1000 to MA for their lobbying efforts in the Montana Legislature. Mike seconded. Gael mentioned that this cannot come from a restricted account, and that this amount is within the IRS limitations allowed for non-profit status. It will come from general donations, and will be shown as an expense under Donations to Montana Audubon. Motion passed unanimously.

**Pileated Post:** Gael wondered about having an opening message, and wondered if anyone had ideas. Carole suggested Migratory Bird Protection Act, and encouraging people to be sure their representatives at all levels are representing what's important to them, and to be aware and involved. Jan will get the economic impact information from ITR to Gael and Gael will write it.

Kathy Ross had offered some information about initiatives for Native Plants. Gael is picturing a series of articles using that information, and then continuing with the impact of climate (such as the Hebbelwhite report, Ranching for Wildlife, carbon sequestration in soils, etc.). Denny mentioned he has done some research of climate and birds for the final video and would be willing to do an article. She pictures this over the next 4-5 issues of the PP. Denny suggests a meeting of the principals involved to make a plan, and then find appropriate authors. This would include Denny, Carole, Cory, Dave, and Linda Winnie. Bob mentioned there is quite a bit of useful information on these topics on ebird.

Darcy also needs two more authors for the Bird of the Month for February and March issues. Gael asked Margaret if she would write one, and said Darcy can tell her which have been done and can guide her selection and content, so Margaret will contact Darcy. One more author is still needed.

**Committee Reports:**

**Membership:** Gael has tentatively scheduled the membership review team to meet on January 4<sup>th</sup>.

Publicity: Denny, Tom and Cindy will work out a release plan for the second video and get that to Jan and Jake, and the rest of the Board.

Education: Video distribution and publicity plan (see above). Denny reported that he held a great classroom Zoom with a second 2<sup>nd</sup> grade class from Hedges Elementary through teacher Melaina Haines. He presented the chickadee trunk and dressed Mary Jo in the costumes. Denny also noted that Shannon Donaldson has been working with Tom and Cindy and has been working to scan and digitize the education trunks so they can be accessed on-line. He expressed gratitude to Shannon for stepping forward to help.

OSNA: Cory reported that the negotiation team met again, and Laura Katzman had prepared a draft management plan and conservation easement, which they reviewed. They also discussed scheduling the initial appraisal to be done in February or March (2021), and created a timeline for the coming year that sequences everything that needs to be done. Gael mentioned there are numerous unknowns and there will be a slow roll-out, but that DNRC seems to be on board with the process and CE option. She feels the problems are not between the agencies, just with the unknowns and details that might come up.

Misc.: Bob mentioned that at the MA Board meeting, MA agreed to enter into an agreement with some other conservation organizations, and there was discussion about sharing membership lists, which would include those provided to MA by each Chapter. Bob suggests that we add a caveat when we next share our membership list, stating that we are not giving them authorization to share with other organizations. Mike reported submitting our membership list to MA done by him once a year in response to a request from MA, and the next time it happens he can add a statement to that effect.

Jan made a motion to adjourn, Bob seconded. Motion passed. Meeting was adjourned at 7:58.