

Flathead Audubon Society Board of Directors, January 4, 2021 (held online)
Prepared by: Pam Willison, Secretary

Board members participating: Gael Bissell, Cory Davis, Pam Willison, Rod Walette, Cindy Roberts, Tom Roberts, Will Beyer, Margaret Parodi, Kay Mitchell, Carole Jorgensen, Jan Metzmaker, Dave Manuwal, Joe Batts, Jake Bramante, Bob Lee, Darcy Thomas
Others participating: Denny Olson, bj Worth

Meeting was called to order by President Gael Bissell at 6:06 pm.
Gael needs the final total of volunteer hours for Board members for last fiscal year – last call.

Minutes: Dave made a motion to accept the December 2020 minutes as written, Joe seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Financial Reports: Rod clarified that the \$678.30 payment to Pachner and Associates on 12/17/20 was an insurance payment, reflecting a 7% increase. He is working on getting bids for the other insurance policy. The Board Financial Report indicates there are 197 memberships so far, and investments are doing well. Rod also mentioned that we need to start doing our taxes so we will have them done, using the correct method, in time to apply for Great Fish. Rod is in the process of looking for someone who is an enrolled agent, but not a CPA, to complete the taxes. Gael mentioned that she will be working on the final report for the COVID grant and will work with Rod to get the numbers correct. Rod also inquired whether we are on track to complete the final Hawk Watch report, and Gael said she has forwarded the information to Dan Casey, and asked him to be in charge of its completion. She suggested we could pay Josh Covill to help, using leftover JBHW funds. She hasn't heard back from Dan yet. Jake made a motion to accept and file the financial reports. Second by Kay. Motion passed unanimously.

Financial Plan meeting: WFCF employees are just getting back into their offices, and when Kay contacted them, they said this time of year would be best for a meeting, but she hasn't heard anything back yet. Our purpose is to talk to them about setting up a financial plan. Cory wondered if we still wanted to have an internal follow-up meeting about Great Fish so we can have a clearer strategy for the coming year. Cory will issue a poll to set up a mid-January date.

Online Meetings: Gael was unable to be the sponsor of the Zoom platform (Montana Audubon) for the membership meeting today, so she wonders about having a backup system. Jake suggested Google Meet-up, and he will work on a set of instructions/tutorial. He suggests using it for a meeting on short-notice, or for committees because it's easy for small groups to use, but wouldn't work for general meetings. Cory said he doesn't mind setting up the general meetings on Zoom, but would like someone else to serve as the host, and they would need to have good internet service (which he doesn't have). Darcy said she could do it as she lives in town and has good internet, but isn't familiar with how to serve as host. Cory will contact Darcy and give her the information she needs.

BOD Membership: Gael noted that she has talked to Darcy Thomas about joining the BOD as an appointment. She would need to serve as a Chairperson of a Committee, if appointed. Darcy has an interest in serving on Field Trips, but Margaret and Kathy suggested waiting a while to add Darcy, until Kathy and Margaret have worked through planning with field trip leaders. They are in the process of getting input and figuring out how field trips might work, given ongoing Covid-19 concerns. They think it would be more appropriate to add Darcy in May, when they know more. It was decided that Darcy would serve as Chair of the Refuges Committee. Dave made a motion to appoint Darcy Thomas to the FAS Board, and to the Chair position for the Refuges Committee. Margaret seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Photos: Gael mentioned that we should all work on taking photos of FAS activities and submit them for our library, so they can be used in publicity, PP, etc.

Thank you notes: Gael has talked to Michele Tohtz about helping with thank-you notes, and she is interested, should the need arise. Jan mentioned there aren't many, right now, but will keep it in mind.

Great Fish application: Kay clarified that she plans to divide up the application, and send out one question at a time to the BOD and seek reactions and suggestions within 10 days. She will then compile the information we provide, and write the answer for the application. It's important that Board members participate, so Kay receives a variety of perspectives and information to use for the application.

Kay mentioned the mandatory Great Fish meeting on January 19 for new or former participants. It will be held online and starts at 9:30, lasting 1.5-2 hours. Gail Cleveland will participate with Kay. Cory will be sure that our Great Fish review meeting is held after the January 19 meeting, so the group can benefit from information Kay and Gail receive.

Membership Working Group Meeting: They held their meeting earlier today, resulting in the following "homework assignments": Mike will make a flow-chart of how all the information is received and disseminated. Mike will also call National Audubon to see if we can automatically get the email addresses so our newsletters can go out via email instead of paper. A notice about getting email newsletters will be in the next PP. Kay mentioned that some chapters in Montana charge an extra fee to cover the expenses for people who receive a hard copy newsletter, and they also offer help to people to make that transition to online newsletters. Gael suggested that Michelle Tohtz could serve a valuable role doing follow-up with people and try to get them transitioned from hard copy newsletters.

Jan is going to check with her son, who is a CPA, about the exact IRS rules of documentation we have to provide for tax deductible donations. Jan will also make a list of all the ways people have participated and/or been recruited to join FAS. Rod will now send information about everything he receives, to both Mike and Jan, so no one is overlooked. Other: The membership group also discussed having our membership cycle match a calendar year to make it easier for members and us to track. It was also recommended that we remove the list of options to designate the purpose of your donation, resulting in all being unrestricted. Cory will do a poll to set up a time for the next Membership meeting.

Regarding memberships and elections, Bob mentioned that National Audubon has a family membership status, and we don't, so it's confusing. When he held the proxy ballot vote, there were people who wanted to cast 2 votes because they felt they were a family membership. He feels this needs to be clarified, and aligned with our by-laws to resolve this. We want it to be one vote per membership, one membership per person. As an example, there currently are some couples who each pay a separate membership. At some point, Gail Cleveland had suggested that we eliminate the voting process, but this was put on hold. Related to this, Joe mentioned that we need to be sure we maintain our requirements in accordance with how we are registered with the State of Montana. Currently, we are registered so that our members select our officers and Board. Joe pointed out that Montana Audubon is registered differently, so their members don't elect the Board or officers.

In a follow-up comment, Kay confirmed there are several reasons for our memberships to be matched to the calendar year: fall Great Fish donations make membership payments confusing because they also happen in the fall, and for easier preparation of our tax return.

Legislative Updates: Gael wondered if anyone had contacted Amy Seaman about doing a half hour video for legislative news updates. Bob feels she would be too busy during the session, but Joe feels it's worth mentioning to Larry to see if it could be done and available to all chapters. FAS is interested in these updates, and would be willing to make them available through our website so other chapters or people could access them.

Website: Gael said she would like the very timely items, such as the new videos, kept more in the forefront so people don't have to query to find them. Jake said he has plans to update the front-page theme, and he will move the new videos to a more visible spot. Gael also asked about the website calendar, and Jan said when she adds event items, they add to the calendar automatically. Carole mentioned that the Facebook page looks like it hasn't had any new events added for quite some time. Jake replied that it is easy to do, but needs someone who is interested in keeping it current, and no one volunteered when the membership was offered the opportunity to volunteer. Jake said there are some things that automatically post, but the events items have to be created by someone. Denny will ask Nancy Gresham if she is interested. There was discussion about whether our Facebook page was used much, and Denny feels like our Facebook page is used fairly actively. Pam wondered about Shannon and/or Bridger Donaldson might be interested, and Denny said he would check with them.

Pileated Post:

*Everyone was comfortable with their assignments on the list.

*Per Kathy Ross, we should add a small thank you to Mary and Tom Nelesen for past service as board member and donations through Soroptimists, because they are moving. It was suggested that Bob Lopp or Mike Fanning know them and might write the thank-you.

*On a related note, Jan mentioned that Soroptimists said they aren't going to give us any more money because they only give to programs directed toward girls. Jan will follow up and try to clarify that our programs serve girls.

*Conservation Corner: Carole had written some information about MBTA but didn't hear back from Larry Berrin. Carole said it might be better to cover the MBPA because that might be enacted in addition to the MBTA. Gael suggested Carole to finish the article to update people on the status of the MBTA, and include news about the upcoming MBPA.

*Cory and Jake will look at the recording of the past program and see if it's adequate quality to put on the website. If so, it will be mentioned in the newsletter, but if quality is poor, it won't.

*Field Trips: Margaret wondered about a Freezout Field Trip. Bob will look at the dates, and how it can be held safely, such as not doing a group carpool or dinner. Bob has been vaccinated because of his job, and he would be the trip leader. There will be a brief heads-up in the February PP, and details in the March PP, as it will be held the end of March.

*New Video – have Linda use the same one as last month, but change the name and link.

*Update on OSNA negotiations – Laura Katzman will write this

*Climate change/native plants issues. Gael left it open if someone wants to write one. Cory remembered that there was going to be a small group to make a plan for this, so he will do a poll and set up a date for that group. Carole mentioned that she participates in the Zooms for Flathead Climate Group, and they are working on some of these subjects. She will check with them about using their links. Gael suggests having Constanza from the Climate Group write a small article about their group and share date. Carole will follow-up.

*Program: Dave will provide.

Committee Reports:

Programs: Dave said it will be Native Montana Fish in January, then wildlife tracking technology in February. Dave will provide the writeups for the newsletters.

Publicity/Website: Jake said he gets messages through our website and he responds to them, and decides whether it's appropriate for us to promote things people request be promoted.

Education: Cindy said she and Tom will be working with Denny on getting the trunks ready to be on line. Some have been scanned and are on memory sticks. Gael wondered about the plan to share information about the videos and education information. Denny said it's recommended that it be put onto paper and distributed in mailboxes of the appropriate level of teachers. Denny, Cindy, and Tom will now get on this project, now that the videos are done.

Field Trips: Gael said Derrick had an interest in coordinating programs with us, but hasn't gotten back to set up any. Denny mentioned that they are being a little passive at Lone Pine because of the slow time of year, and safety restrictions, but Derrick made a bulletin board to coordinate with the raptor silhouettes on display and they are appreciative of having them. We will keep this avenue open and try for some spring activities.

OSNA: Weed Log was sent to the County. Many thanks to Will for all his hours. Gael added some more native grass seed to the slough bank. Pam will monitor the area because once the cheatgrass sprouts in early spring, it can be pulled or weed-whacked so it can't go to seed.

Next meeting February 1, 2021. Gael will be traveling during the March meeting, so Cory will conduct that meeting. Jan made a motion to adjourn. Jake seconded. Meeting adjourned at 7:51.