

Flathead Audubon Board of Directors, 11/1/21, FWP Conference Room
Prepared by: Pam Willison, Secretary

Board members present: Cory Davis, Rod Walette, Pam Willison, Kay Mitchell, Tom Roberts, Derrick Rathe, Joe Batts, Dave Manuwal, Jake Bramante, Margaret Parodi, Gael Bissell, Dan Casey, Carole Jorgensen

Others present: Daria Perez (Whitefish Community Foundation)

Minutes – No changes were offered. Dave made a motion to approve; Kay seconded; no discussion; passed unanimously.

Whitefish Community Foundation Endowment: As an introduction, Rod reminded the BOD that when FAS consolidated investments to a local agent, the BOD had set aside \$50,000 to invest with WCF. Linda at WCF suggested we might be a good candidate for an endowment fund rather than a regular investment fund. Daria from WCF gave a presentation to the BOD about endowments and why they are a good match for FAS. True endowments are permanently restricted assets and only the earnings are able to be spent, and some can be set up with restrictions on the uses. These permanent endowments are created by direct donation into the endowment. Because FAS would be using existing funds to establish this endowment, it would actually be a quasi-endowment, which is unrestricted.

Daria informed us that the WCF Board is responsible to safeguard the money and approve our requests to use the funds. WCF is audited annually by a CPA firm. Their current payout is 5% (4% for distribution), and 1% for administrative fee to WCF. Their earnings over the past 10 years have been 10%. They use a balanced formula to smooth out any lower earning/negative earnings years, so there are payouts each year. The main purpose of an endowment for an organization like us is sustainability, and not every organization is a good candidate for endowments.

Questions: Carole asked about the types of companies WCF invests the funds in, and Daria said they have asked for an assessment of the “cleanness” of their investments, and were told it’s about 90%, but that they don’t specifically seek “socially responsible” investments. Kay asked whether having a WCF endowment would have any effect on our participation in Great Fish, and Daria confirmed that it has no effect. Dan inquired about how the investment strategy might change if the market takes a downturn, and Daria commented that the markets are very closely monitored to minimize negative impact. Gael asked for further clarification about the difference between quasi-endowments vs. restricted/true endowments. Daria said that in order for any funds we have to go into a restricted/true endowment, the money would need to have been specified for that endowment at the time the money was given to FAS. If we receive funds in the future that are for an endowment, FAS could set up a restricted/true endowment also and they would be treated together by WCF, but would receive separate statements. Carole asked whether there was any way for us to actually remove our funds from an endowment at WCF, and Daria said it would be highly unlikely, but would be handled on a case-by-case basis. If approval is received to end our relationship with WCF, the funds couldn’t be released to FAS, but would need to be transferred to another endowment. Kay inquired about

local support for advising people who inquire about contributing to an endowment for FAS. Daria confirmed that WCF definitely will guide people through the process.

It was agreed that the BOD would wait until next meeting to discuss endowments further to allow people time to consider the information provided by Daria.

Financial Report: Rod reviewed the monthly cash balances report, and pointed out the deposit of the Great Fish proceeds. The monthly report included investment balances, which includes the \$50,000 money intended for investing with WCF. Rod will have some additional information next month about our investments and the advice he receives from our advisor (Dan) about moving forward with our investments; we currently are in a very conservative position. The monthly report also included memberships totals. Currently we have 71 paid memberships and last year at this time we had 115. Rod also commented that 44% of memberships are paid using Stripe. Jake mentioned that there is a need to communicate about memberships and their connection to donations during Great Fish. He said the communication needs to be well-formulated, and be done after some analysis of the contributions through Great Fish. The current feeling was that if people donated more than \$25 to Great Fish that we will consider their membership paid. Kay pointed out that we need a certain amount of money to cover the costs of a newsletter, so a \$25 level is too low. There was some recollection that Mike Fanning felt the donation amount should be \$40. This issue needs to be revisited again to try to get a more accurate count of memberships, and at this point, it's an unofficial policy to give a membership based on a Great Fish (or other) donation. Jake reported that if he quickly reviews the donations to Great Fish, that our membership total would be more like 88 membership. More to come on this topic.

There were no inquiries about the checking activity report provided by Rod. Rod pointed out the two deposits from Great Fish, which reminded us where the money was designated to be used when we applied for Great Fish 2021. Rod followed these designations to proportionately allocate the Great Fish money into our funds. As a result, the Education program is fully funded with \$28,743.00, \$3034.67 was allocated into OSNA, \$3241.58 into Jewel Basin Hawk Watch, and \$620.73 into Birds of Prey Festival.

Jake made a motion to accept and file the financial reports; Gael seconded; no further discussion. Unanimous vote to approve.

Equipment Purchases: The 2 storage cabinets were purchased and delivered, and Pam and Denny assembled them. After Denny gets back from hunting, some help is needed to move them and install them at Gateway. Cory mentioned that it needs to be coordinated with United Way because they want their maintenance personnel to provide input.

Computers – Kay brought her two Dell computers so people could assess whether it will fill our need and whether we are interested in purchasing them. Cory used one during the meeting.

Projection Screen – no one had offered to investigate this, so no action was taken. Dave and Jake will follow up.

Binoculars – Dan hasn't followed up yet. Dan had mentioned the company Alpen, and Pam said when she mentioned that company to Denny, he said they had gone out of business. Dan will confirm that and also inquire with some other companies about discounts.

Mountain Dew Grant – Gael is working on it, and with some feedback from other BOD members will pursue the grant for a group set of better binoculars with an emphasis on using them for the field trips related to the middle school curriculum (Osprey in OSNA, Waterfowl and Sandhill Cranes at West Valley, Waterfowl in fields off highway 82). Pam reported that Denny had expressed an interest in a basic Vortex binocular, so she looked into them and it looks like we could get the Razorback with a harness for about \$250, which means we could get about 20 pair. Derrick feels Vortex would offer us a volume discount. Gael will work on the application, and seek help from people if needed.

OSNA – Gael and Pam have been attending the DNRC sessions. Gael has been in contact with Amy Seaman at Montana Audubon about them helping with fundraising for the \$100,000 commitment FAS made (October BOD meeting). Gael and Amy will put together an internal strategy with input from Laura Katzman (FLT). Gael feels it will be a good opportunity to work with the Montana Audubon Board and include Montana Audubon in our local publicity once FAS can start public fundraising. Joe (President of Montana Audubon Board) reported that OSNA is on their agenda for a future meeting, and he feels Montana Audubon will be glad to provide support. He suggested that the name Audubon be used frequently in the communications because it's something many people recognize and feel positively about.

Pam mentioned that the OSNA bird list needs to be made more accurate, especially because it might be used as a publicity tool for the OSNA Conservation Easement and related fundraising. She asked that people who frequently bird there take a look at the list and provide information about missing species, and changes to the designation of sightings and breeding. Jake confirmed that the latest version is on the FAS website.

BOD Lists: The Committee and BOD lists were reviewed and some changes made. Cory updated as the information was offered, so his version is the most up-to-date, and he will distribute it to the BOD.

Conservation Issues: Related to the Conservation Committee, Carole opened a conversation about the issues to be covered in the conservation article in the PP. Carole noted that there are so many issues around the world, nation, state, etc., and it's a challenge to know whether it's a good choice for our membership. It was felt the article should be "actionable issues" with information about what our members could do to help, or examples of what other places/organizations have done to take action and what similar things we could do locally.

Cory mentioned the Black Ram project in the Yaak and most people weren't up to date on it, so Cory will check with Lewis Young and provide some information. In general, people recalled that it's a huge logging project in the habitat of endangered species.

Cory also mentioned that he is contracting with the Forest Service to facilitate the Krause Basin recreation plan discussion. He's concerned that we be aware of his involvement so there are no conflicts of interest if FAS wants to participate in the comments.

Field Trips: Margaret reported the Christmas Bird Counts will be in December, and also Derrick has offered to do a field trip. She is working on planning for January.

Education: Tom reported that Cindy contacted all the Education ambassadors and is making an effort to get the trunks into the classrooms. Several teachers have mentioned that Lone Pine closes at 3:00 so returning trunks is problematic. Cindy is also trying to recruit more Ambassadors and work to coordinate transporting the trunks for teachers.

7th Grade Curriculum – Cindy and Denny are working to finalize the document, and once Denny has recovered (knee replacement surgery) and ready to get back into the classrooms he will schedule some visits using the curriculum.

Hawk Watch: Dan said surveys can still be done, he anticipates there are still plenty of golden eagles to come through, and most of the snow has melted. BJ is going tomorrow, and Dan is going Wednesday.

Pileated Post:

*CBC – Dan is taking over the Kalispell count and will write an article. The teams will be organized similar to last year – a grassroots effort relying on past participants, rather than recruiting new people (this is related to continuing health safety issues).

*From the Board – usually one or two paragraphs (per Linda Winnie, this can be 500-600 words) by a Board member about themselves or related to birds. Derrick said he would do one for December.

*Conservation Corner – Carole will complete and will also include a call for help to review conservation related projects.

Meetings: BOD meetings will continue to be in-person at FWP at 5:30.

The general meetings will continue to be virtual for December. Dave reported that the speaker for January doesn't want to do a virtual presentation, but has some colleagues who could do one if we have to continue with virtual meetings. There was some discussion about going back to in-person meetings in January. Jake is working to be able to hold a hybrid live/virtual presentation, and will try to have it ready to test at the December BOD meeting.

Great Fish: Kay reports that we have 2 things to do: Cory needs to send a thank you card to the CEO and Staff (Tom donated a card). We need to put a small ad in the Whitefish Pilot to thank donors and the staff of WCF. Jan is willing to do this and can use the same information as last year, so Cory will contact her. This will cost about \$100.

Good-of-the-order: Jake reported receiving an email from someone at the UM about two art exhibitions about birds. Dan reported that he saw one of them virtually, so Jake will send the link to the BOD.

Carole made a motion to adjourn; Tom seconded. Meeting adjourn at 7:30.