

Flathead Audubon Society Board of Directors Meeting, January 3, 2022 (Hybrid format)
Prepared by: Pam Willison, Secretary

Directors participating in-person: Cory Davis, Rod Walette, Gael Bissell, Pam Willison, Tom Roberts, Cindy Roberts, Kay Mitchell, Jake Bramante, Bob Lee, Dan Casey, Margaret Parodi, Carole Jorgensen

Directors participating virtually: Darcy Thomas, Derrick Rathe

Other present: Denny Olson

The meeting was called to order President Cory Davis at 5:40 pm.

Minutes: Two typos were noted for corrections. Bob made a motion to approve as corrected; Cindy seconded; and the vote in favor was unanimous.

Gael is collecting the volunteer hours for Board members for July 2020 – June 2021 for the annual report. Get them to her ASAP if you haven't yet.

The donated Zeiss scope in Gaels possession was offered to Margaret to store and make available to the leaders of field trips Margaret coordinates. It's currently not being used much. For now, Gael will get it to Denny for the next field trip, and then it will go to Margaret. Cory reminded the group that he also has a donated scope that's available on field trips or activities.

Spring Auction option: We have a few larger (more valuable) items that have been donated and could be used for an auction or raffle. It was decided to incorporate them into the May (Annual) meeting. The items will be promoted in the Pileated Post and website, and raffle tickets sold during live monthly meetings (and other avenues?), and the drawing held at the May meeting. A silent auction for smaller items will still be held during the Annual meeting.

Outreach and Fundraising for OSNA Conservation Easement: Some events are already being planned by FLT, and FAS is coordinating with Montana Audubon for some additional fundraising events. Examples would be private birding trips with a guide, or an open-air painting (plein air) event (Paint the River) on the Flathead River and north shore of Flathead Lake – which is a suggestion that has been made to FLT by someone familiar with this fundraising approach. Gael is looking for a group to coordinate these events initially for high-end donors, and to plan to be ready for promotion to start a few months in the future. After the meeting at DNRC on 1/6/22, Gael will know more about the timing.

Cory will help coordinate with Amy (Mt Audubon) and Laura (FLT), and will work with Gael, Denny, Dan to start planning some events. Dave may also help plan these field trips.

Financials: Rod reported on the financial report showing restricted and unrestricted cash balances, donations (there have been some good ones at the end of the year), revenues,

expenses and net income. The investments were up some at the end of December, and he noted they aren't affected too much by market swing because it's a very conservative mix. Rod also reviewed the bank activity report, and no one had questions. He noted that the Profit/Loss vs. Budget report was included in the Board packet.

Margaret made a motion to accept and file the financial reports; Kay seconded; unanimous vote in favor

Rod mentioned that we received a thank you letter from CSKT for our letter of support for the tribes to manage the National Bison Range.

Insurance: Rod has been working to get quotes from 2 local agencies, and neither could come close to the premiums of our existing carrier (located in NY). Also, our existing insurance company has made it possible for the billing on the two policies to coordinate and both be due at the start the calendar year. Rod has not experienced problems working with this carrier, so because of that and the lower costs, has renewed both our policies.

Financial Investments: Rod met with Dan Short (our financial advisor) about moving us from a very conservative investment position to a less conservative. Rod noted that our financial policy dictates this mix, so a change in the percentages of that policy would be needed via a BOD motion, before the mix can be changed. The option Rod proposes would to change the ranges for Equity from 0-30% to 20-55%, for Bonds from 60-75% to 40-60%; and for Money Market/Cash from 0-10% to 0-5%. Through discussion there was concern for the ranges and it was suggested by Bob that the wording be changed to indicate an amount "not to exceed" rather than a range. There was general support for a wording change, and also for adjusting our investment mix to a less conservative position.

Rod asked that changes to the financial policy be considered today, but didn't feel a final decision had to be made about the actual investment mix. Dan made a motion to set our financial policy for Equity not to exceed 55%, Bonds not to exceed 65%, and Money Market/Cash not to exceed 10%. Kay seconded. During discussion, Carole noted that should there be a major downturn in the market and a desire to pull out some investments and safeguard them as cash, that the 10% maximum really limits our ability to do that quickly. As a result, Dan amended his motion to say Equity not to exceed 55%, Bonds not to exceed 70%, and Money Market/Cash not to exceed 20%. Kay seconded the amended motion. Unanimous approval of the motion, as amended.

Regarding the actual investment mix, Rod suggests that decision be addressed next month so people have time to consider it. The options he proposed for consideration, based on conversations with Dan Short (Financial Advisor), are:

Option 1: stay the same at 30/60/10 (Equity/Bonds/MM&Cash)

Option 2: change to 45/50/5

Option 3: change to 50/45/5

Option 4: other

OSNA: Gael reported that the draft conservation easement document has been completed. In the meeting to be held on January 6, the two big issues to be addressed are whether DNRC has full support from higher levels in the state government; and, whether DNRC will support a timeline that will allow public release of information (i.e. scoping) by fall 2022, which will allow for some publicity and promotion to begin this year.

Field Trips: Margaret reported trips include: Denny in January; Kathy Ross is looking at something in the near future; Darcy is thinking that in February or March she could conduct a simple walk-about. There was some mention of contacting Karen Nichols about getting back into leading field trips. In March the trip to Freezeout will be held, and Bob and Dan are coordinating on that. There was discussion about what public health protocol we would need to use in the coming months. Margaret said that currently they are limiting field trips to 10 people, and people can coordinate their carpooling at their comfort/safety level. Bob reported that most people want to take their own cars to Freezeout and arrange their own travel companions, so he's not going to limit that trip. He would be looking at March 25-26 or April 1-2. Bob reported that Elise Robocker (daughter of Jean Robocker) would like to lead some trips on her family property. Margaret will ask Linda Winnie for the information to be able to contact her and arrange field trips.

Education: Denny reported he is on the new STEAM alliance committee. He's also working on the Natives Rule video, working on dividing the riparian trunk, and that the spring waterfowl power point is nearly done for the 7th grade curriculum. He's working with the West Valley Naturalists, including Linda deKort, to try to partner with some events and will report proposed ideas back to the Board. Gael asked about whether anyone is going into the classrooms yet, and Denny reported that it isn't happening much. Denny feels that's the best way to stir up enthusiasm. Denny said no one has contacted him, and he thinks it's not on the top of the list for educators. Everything will be dependent on the public health situation.

Cindy reported that she's received responses from Ambassadors and she feels we have adequate people to cover the valley should the Education trunks be requested. Gael wondered if some promotion can occur, and Denny, Cindy, and Tom explained some of the barriers to accomplishing that. Personal contact by Denny would probably be the most effective. Pam suggested that the promotion/contact needs to happen soon because the start of second semester is coming and that's when teachers start planning teaching units and making field trip requests for the rest of the school year.

West Valley: Cory inquired about the West Valley Viewing area and the native planting we were discussing for that area. The landowner does not want to change any vegetation practices outside the FWP easement area, and there were changes of key FWP personnel. These both contributed to the plan getting stalled. Gael noted that the scope we helped finance wasn't put up last year, likely due to covid, and we will encourage that it be put out again in 2022.

PP Content:

*February meeting – Cory will take care of the details

*Conservation Corner – Cory will check with Dave Manuwal (he's sick this evening)

*Great Backyard Bird Count – Margaret will update the article from last year

*OSNA Article – Pam will work with Linda W. to use the OSNA history from the website. Denny inquired about whether an OSNA Committee meeting will be held, noting that he made contact with the family member living in Jeanette Oliver's house. Pam noted that the current committee members are all kept informed through Board meetings and the PP articles, but she would be willing to coordinate a meeting if there was a need for one.

January meeting: Will be held hybrid: in-person and virtual. Bob or Dave will see if they can get some disposable masks and hand sanitizer. Jake would like to have a practice run of the set up (possibly this week). Cory will coordinate with Dave about getting access to the room.

Great Fish: It's time to start working as a committee. Kay mentioned there is an initial meeting on January 27 in Whitefish. Cory will send out a message to start getting people coordinated. It was mentioned that Gail Cleveland is usually able to attend this January meeting to represent FAS.

Little Green Light: Jake reported the transition is getting closer, and he will start coordinating to complete training with the people who need to use. Work will also be done to create a code of conduct or sensitivity policy about having access to the personal information in the data base.

Jake made a motion to adjourn; Bob seconded; unanimous approval. Meeting adjourned at 7:20 pm.