

Terrestrial Resources Technical Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
January 20, 2022
Call in Meeting
10:00 a.m. (MST)

TRTAC Representatives Attendees:

Avista – Arthur Potts
Green Mountain Conservation District (GMCD) – Terry Hightower
Elk Creek Watershed Council – Judy Hutchinson
Montana Department of Environmental Quality – Craig Jones
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks – Dave Bennetts
Noxon-Cabinet Shoreline Coalition – Rich Reich
U.S. Forest Service (USFS) – Les Raynor

Other Attendees:

Avista – Eric Oldenburg and Lisa Vollertsen
Avista Grant Writer – Susan Drumheller
Lower Clark Fork Watershed Group – Brita Olson
U.S. Forest Service – Ron Torretta

Welcome

Arthur welcomed those in attendance. The purpose of today's meeting is to review the draft 2022 Annual Implementation Plans (AIPs), make any necessary corrections, and recommend forwarding them for Management Committee's (MC) review and approval at their upcoming meeting March 15, 2022.

Other Business

- Potts is seeking to hire seasonal technician for 2022 summer.
- Would like to identify a contract forester for future project, pertinent to have an on-call forester. Let Potts know if there are any recommendations of local forester.
- Cabinet Ranger District personnel update (Les Raynor)-Kira Powell moved to the Flathead National Forest. In the meantime, Andrea Karoglanian will cover the position out of Libby. This afternoon there is a small project meeting coming up to discuss recreation projects.
- Grant Writer Update (Susan Drumheller)-2021 grants received \$46,500. Total raised through history of CFSA\$12,980,000.
- Potts is working with Avista IT to find an option for video conferencing to allow for hybrid meetings in the future.
- Fall Meeting Date set for August 31, 2022.
- Dave Bennetts – maintenance will be a separate division from Parks and they have developed a new division called Parks and Outdoor Recreation. Will have fishing access site program and WMA management is still getting worked out. Might see some different faces handling things in our area, depending on how it all shakes out. Fishing site manager getting involved in planning; may be someone else representing FWP on the TRTAC in the future. Reorganization is in motion with no timeline at this point.

Appendix G: Implementation of the Land Use Management Plan (LUMP)

1. Administration of the Land Use Management Plan (LUMP)
 - a. Five-year update of the LUMP – Met on 12/20/2021. Agreed the LUMP continues to function well in current iteration; will consider changes for review in 2023. Group to work on developing an FAQ sheet for interested public.
2. Managing Aquatic Invasive Plants on Noxon and Cabinet Gorge Reservoirs
 - a. Request is the same as last year for facilitation and other assistance to the Sanders County Aquatic Invasive Plant Task Force
3. Monitoring Associated with the Land Use Management Plan (LUMP)
4. Enforcement Associated with the Land Use Management Plan (LUMP)
 - a. Travis Johnson in place as new Warden. Still have some coverage from Morgan Post as needed. Note that FWP is not requesting funding for enforcement in 2022.

With no further discussion, the TRTAC approved forwarding Appendix G as presented to the MC for review and approval.

Appendix H: Implementation of Recreation Resource Management Plan (RRMP)

1. RRMP Administration and Resource Integration
2. RRMP Recreation Facility Development
 - a. Similar to last year, many of these projects were not completed due to staffing and contractor availability issues. As such most of the proposed projects are carried over from 2020.
 - b. Note that there are 2 proposals from the Cabinet Ranger District that are not included but will be added in before sending AIPs to the MC for approval:
 - i. **BULL RIVER VALVE REPLACEMENT (approx. \$10,000):** *The valve on the potable water main drain line, located in camping unit 17, just behind the wheel stop. The valve is located within several small, stacked valve boxes. The valve is an old ball valve type valve with a tiny valve handle and is located 43 inches below ground level. The valve has failed. It is most likely the original valve from over 30 years ago. Also, the trench that was dug to install the existing 2-inch pipe and valve in was most likely a semi-narrow trench. To replace the valve, the area will need to be excavated. Due to OSHA regulations and to be able to safely work within the trench, there is a need to excavate a large, deep trench well beyond the original trench a minimum of 5-6 feet in all directions. The existing ball valve would be replaced with a more functional and larger square-head gate valve, and much larger valve boxes. The existing 2-inch pipe would need to be cut to accommodate the new valve. The cut pipe would be threaded, and 2-inch galvanized unions installed to tie everything back together.*
 - Raynor provided background information for the Bull River Campground main drain. Current drain is the original from 1964; a small valve failed and needs to be replaced. Repairs will require digging (about 43”) to provide adequate depth for a new valve and facilitate pipe repair. Based on the scope, OSHA will require an open-sided trench to prevent collapsing.

- ii. **NORTH SHORE SAMPLE TAP/LINE REPAIR (approx. \$5,000):** *The potable water line between the well and reservoir has either broken or the connection has come apart. The problem is located under the sample tap. To repair the line, the area will need to be re-dug to make the repairs. The pipe is 43 inches deep so a larger area will need to be excavated to make the repairs. It may go past where the original excavation to put in the sample tap, valve box and water meter. While repairing the pipe, the piping and water meter should be raised approximately 30 inches within the valve box so the meter can be easily read as it is currently 43 inches deep below ground level.*
 - Raynor provided information on the issue - water sample collected in August was bad; could hear water shooting out through the well sample tap, not sure if pipe is broken or disconnected. Coordinating with Montana DEQ and shut down public water supply until it is repaired.
3. RRMP Monitoring – *Note that 2020 Recreation Monitoring Report is available for anyone that would like a copy.* Overall, we saw a 2% increase in visitors over last year. Largest increases were at Flat Iron and Lower McKay. Marked increase at the beginning and then sharp decline after July 4th, likely due to drought and wildfire. Susan Drumheller, Dave Bennetts, and Les Raynor requested a copy of the Recreation Monitoring Report.
4. Operation and Maintenance of Recreation Facilities
5. Interpretation and Education Program

Bennetts noted a minor edit on page 30 – funding request was increased to \$19,000 for Thompson Falls State Park and Flat Iron. Also, mentioned MFWP is looking for a part-time host 5/16-9/20.

With no further discussion, the TRTAC approved forwarding Appendix H as presented to the MC for review and approval.

Appendix I: Aesthetics Management Plan

- Note that AIP is the project plan, and compliance is achieved through implementation of the LUMP and RRMP.

With no further discussion, the TRTAC approved forwarding Appendix I as presented to the MC for review and approval.

Appendix J: Wildlife, Botanical and Wetland Management Plan

- Note that the AIP is the project plan.
- Potts explained that the primary activity under the PM&E is updating the spreadsheet and ensure the MC is reviewing ownership on a regular basis.
- Bald Eagle, peregrine falcon, and loon observations can be tracked through this PM&E.

Ron Torretta requested a bald eagle survey form if there's an existing template; noted that he plans on doing some this winter. Potts will investigate a bald eagle survey form and get back to Ron (406-847-2717).

With no further discussion, the TRTAC approved forwarding Appendix J as presented to the MC for review and approval.

Appendix K: Wildlife Habitat Acquisition, Enhancement, and Management Program

1. Operation and Maintenance of Acquired Property and Contingency Fund
2. Habitat Acquisition and Conservation and Contingency Fund
 - a. Avista complete purchase of a 342-acre tract on upper Graves Creek. We are working with the adjacent landowner and Appendix B may look at options to provide protection to more of Graves Creek.
 - Brita Olson discussed the Wood Duck Re-Veg Maintenance Proposal. After monitoring revegetation efforts over the decade, shrub-type species were observed growing into the fences during last year's work. Teams removed large cages and fences. Transitioning project into long-term revegetation. Since removing the fencing; trees look good. Just a few rubbed trees and minimal beaver browsing. Encouraging to see the wildlife and avian use. Nice public access site to show the active revegetation and conservation easements. Always happy to give a tour if folks are interested. Potts noted a lock was placed on the gate in the fall to prevent motor access to the site.
 - Ron Torretta asked for a map of the area. Potts will follow-up with Torretta and set up a time to tour the sites.

With no further discussion, the TRTAC approved forwarding Appendix K as presented to the MC for review and approval.

Appendix L: Black Cottonwood Habitat Protection and Enhancement

- Note that the AIP is the project plan.
- Primary protection is provided through implementation of the LUMP.
- Continue to monitor and if needed repair existing exclosures at Hereford Slough

With no further discussion, the TRTAC approved forwarding Appendix L as presented to the MC for review and approval.

Appendix M: Wetlands Protection and Enhancement Program

- Note that the AIP is the project plan.
- Will continue to work evaluate opportunities to enhance the Twin Creek property.

With no further discussion, the TRTAC approved forwarding Appendix M as presented to the MC for review and approval.

Appendix P: Forest Habitat Protection and Enhancement

- Protect/enhance parcels identified by the Wildlife, Botanical, and Wetland Work Group as having significant value.
- There are deliverables or new project plans associated with this PM&E.
- If a new forester is identified, may evaluate some areas for potential improvement projects. Explained how any revenue generated through timber management remains within the

Clark Fork Settlement Agreement. Any proposed project will need TRTAC review and MC approval

With no further discussion, the TRTAC approved forwarding Appendix P as presented to the MC for review and approval.

Appendix Q: Reservoir Island Protection

- Note that the AIP is the project plan.
- This PM&E was developed in recognition of the importance of protecting the Avista owned island habitat along the project area.
- There is no budget associated with this PM&E for 2022, as the activities are covered under the implementation of the LUMP.

With no further discussion, the TRTAC approved forwarding Appendix Q as presented to the MC for review and approval.

Appendix S: Erosion Fund and Shoreline Stabilization Guidelines

- There are no project plans associated with this PM&E
- In 2022, work efforts will focus on addressing any erosion concerns identified by the CRMG; and utilize engineering assistance to help evaluate erosion control proposals received by Avista from adjacent landowners.
- Continue to work with adjacent landowner in the Vermilion Point area who was reaching out to a local contractor to provide an opinion and budget.

With no further discussion, the TRTAC approved forwarding Appendix S as presented to the MC for review and approval.

- Meeting Adjourned: 10:50 a.m. (MST)