

Spotted Dog Minutes

7/17/2014

Attendance: John Hollenback, Jim Flynn, Jodi Pauley, Dan McQueary, Donna Young, John Beck, Neil Horne, Jason Swant, John Stavlo, Dan Lucas. Others present: Jim Applegate, Pat Hansen, Steve Knapp. FWP present: Ray Vinkey, Dave Dziak, Randy Arnold

John called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. He said at the last meeting we talked about roads and wildlife. This meeting we may work on water and grazing management. John said the group did a tour on 1st of July. Donna said it was a good tour and helpful that Tom Davis was there to give some historical perspective on the cattle grazing, etc. John H. thought it was good and he felt having the bird lady from FWP was good. Neil wondered what the consensus of the group was and what did they think of the grass, etc. John said we talked a lot about grasses, the riparian areas and what needs to be done. Jodi Pauley said we had Jeff Mosley, Extension Range Specialist for MSU, Tracy Mosley, MSU Park County Extension Agent, Dan Lucas, MSU Granite County Extension Agent and Paul Hansen, Ecological Solutions, to talk at each of the stops and what they observed and what areas are in good shape and what areas need some work. John said at the last surrounding landowner meeting there was discussion on using existing fences and thinking about grazing plans and working on determining how many cattle could be in the WMA, etc. He said the surrounding landowners are very interested in working with this group and expanding the WMA.

John said perhaps we need to discuss water management and fisheries. Pat Hansen asked about the water rights on Spotted Dog. Dave Dziak said there are some rights on the Spotted Dog. Dave said we have been going through all the culverts in the WMA as some do not allow fish passage on some of the streams. John Beck asked what kind of fish are in the WMA. Ray said there is cutthroat but in the reservoir there are others like browns, etc. John B. wondered if there is much fishing pressure. Ray said he did not know for sure. Dave said they are still working on a land swap with Cross Canyon Ranch so access to the reservoir is still up in the air. John asked if one of the goals with this group is getting riparians in good shape and keep them in good shape. Dave said yes and one of the goals is seeing how grazing and fencing of riparians will work. John asked if FWP had set any money aside for water development. Dave said no they do not have money set aside for that. John Beck asked if they have prioritized which streams to replace culverts. Dave said yes on the major streams or in critical areas. Dave said if we put in a pasture system there is the day to day aspects of riparian, boundary fences, etc. Dave stated that FWP does 100% of the boundary fences on upkeep and maintenance. Dave gave us a financial recap.

Dan Lucas asked if on other WMAs is their formalized agreements on neighbor fencing or is it done on a handshake. Dave said they vary from WMA to WMA. Dan said he envisions the surrounding landowners working with FWP on surrounding fences as wildlife do not know the boundaries and often do not respect fences. John H. asked why is the boundary fence one foot inside the WMA. Dave said it is mostly to be neighborly and that there is no question about the survey. John Beck asked when the money in the WMA is gone what do they use to manage the WMA. Dave said they are looking at using

habitat Montana monies. John said do you have any ideas how much that will cost. Dave said right now we are trying to figure out a 5 year budget for this property. Jim Flynn said this habitat Montana money is money that is to go for the acquisition and maintenance of FWP lands. Jim said costs are going up and license sales are going down. There are a lot of people who do not like the department. He said there are several politics going on that may hinder hunting licenses and funding of the department. John wondered if we decided to fence the riparians, who pays for that? Steve Knapp said perhaps we need to manage riparian pastures and looking at how does that look. He said these areas may need to be rested for several years. FWP has integrated livestock grazing into several of their WMA's. John said as a group we are called together to come up with a plan to present to the commission that is workable for everyone. Steve Knapp said in his opinion we are looking at 7 to 8 years of rest. John Stavlo said there are a lot of people that do not agree with that and some of the conversation has been 3 years of rest.

Dan McQueary said since FWP has acquired this property the elk have left the WMA. He asked if FWP is going to pay him for the elk grazing on his private property? We have been developing a plan to work with FWP and he cannot tolerate 7 years of elk grazing on his property. Dan said since 1956 he has had elk only once in his haystacks, since FWP has had it he has had elk in their haystacks at least twice a year. John H. said we have been working with this group for a year and a half and we cannot throw out the work that has been done. John said he was asked to chair this group and there will be lots of differences of opinions in this group and we have an obligation to try and make this work. He said taking the stance of not doing any management is not going to work. Mr. Knapp said the group has never been under such scrutiny from anti-grazing groups. Randy Arnold said he is not interested in letting all the hard work go out the door and he is certainly interested in increasing the WMA footprint. He said this property was bought for wildlife enhancement and we really would like to be good neighbors. John Stavlo said there are other groups that we have no control over that could influence FWP, etc. Jim said when we first started this he was not very happy with the comments that were made from the Ag group. Dan Lucas said these problems are not unique. Dan said there is diversity of opinions in this group and letting this group think outside the box is a good thing. He said there are a variety of management tools beside fence. He said we do not always have to think about fencing but making areas more appealing to livestock, etc. He said there are lots of opportunities for this group to be successful. Donna said considering where this group first started a lot of healing has happened within our communities and working with FWP. She did not think that could of happened 4 year ago. Jodi Pauley asked who ultimately writes the management plans for the Spotted Dog WMA. Ray Vinke said Mike Thompson would probably start to write the management plan with the assistance of many FWP department folks. Ray said when FWP buys a property they do a management plan but then they also develop management plans for each WMA and it has to go to public comment, etc. Randy said management plans are flexible and are changing all the time. He said most management plans are 10 years and can be visited at any time. Pat Hansen asked even though a management plan has not been developed can things happen within the WMA like fixing small things in a riparian, etc. Ray said yes we have an existing management plan and we can certainly do that. John H. said we need to think about a direction for the next meeting. Jim said this group is here to discuss what make sense for the WMA and to develop some middle ground. He said if we get into litigation the value of this group is important in front of a court of law, etc. Neil said we have had several conversations on what we want in WMA. He

said we should make some concrete decisions to give to FWP in helping to write the management plan. Jim said we can talk and talk but yes it is time to come to some concrete decisions. He said perhaps we need to break into our groups again and start making some decisions. John Stavlo said we need to look at the existing management plan and start addressing areas that need to be changed or approved, etc. Dan Lucas said working off of the existing plan would be a good idea and the main parts are there. Jodi said perhaps we need to send the document out for this group to read over at the next meeting and start working on certain areas. Public access may be a good place to start.

The group decided to wait until September to meet again as August is very busy. It was decided to work in subgroups again on access and wildlife and come up with some specific plans for the management plan. Next meeting will be September 18th at 6:30 at the Elks Club.

Respectfully submitted,

Jodi Pauley