

**Custer-Gallatin Working Group (CGWG)**  
**Meeting MINUTES; Wednesday, January 20, 2021**  
Virtual meeting via Zoom

**Attendance:**

John Prinkki	Earl Atwood
Tony Colter	Nancy Ostlie
Kerry White	Nancy Schulz
Steve Caldwell	Jason Brey
Jeff Schmidt	Tim Love
Darcie Warden	Richard Lyon
Joe Skinner	John Durnal
Hilary Eisen	
Jim Hart	
Ed Joiner	

**Consent Agenda: Past Minutes and Financial report/disbursements**

Motion to approve consent list by Steve Caldwell, Jeff Schmidt - **Approved.**

**Membership applications and cancellations. University seat and the Timber seat**

John Prinkki opened consideration for action on open seats on the Working Group, which include the University System, timber industry and Tribal representation. Dominique Woodham has recommended a successor for her seat representing the University system (Jared Beaver), however he was not available for this meeting and will be deferred for consideration at the next meeting. Terry Spang, Northern Cheyenne Tribal Forester is under consideration for the Tribal seat was connected to the meeting however we had no audio and was unable to correct the problem. John agreed to follow up after the meeting, and will queue this up at the next meeting also. Application by Tony Colter, Sun Mountain Lumber, was considered. Tony introduced himself to the group and answered a few questions from members. On a motion from Kerry White/Steve Caldwell that Tony Colter's application was approved for membership, and that Terry Spang be formally invited to join the Working Group to represent Tribal interests.

**Approved.**

**Letter of support for Cross Boundary Work with Staged completion**

John Prinkki invited comments from guests in attendance. Nancy Ostlie, representing Great Old Broads of Montana, had submitted a letter to CGWG concerning forest projects and commented further that the CGWG should delay any further work on projects under the Montana Forest Action plan that were or may come under litigation to avoid wasting our taxpayer resources on actions that the courts may ultimately deny, along with the suggestion that we engage legal counsel to insure that our actions are in line with best available science. In response, John Prinkki explained that the CGWG is not conducting the projects, rather is a collaborative that is simply

providing input to the Forest Service along as other interested parties. As such the Working Group is not in a position to authorize or suspend work on any proposed action, other than expressing our position. Jeff Schmidt pointed out that we are simply attempting to help identify cross-boundary opportunities that would be eligible to utilize the funds (\$5 million) which are already allocated before the spending authority expires on June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Darcie Warden added that she and Jeff are continuing to work with the MFAC to gain clarification on which projects meet the criteria, focusing on projects already approved and ready to implement. No new projects requiring NEPA are considered in this category. Stephen Kimball, DNRC, Jason Brey and Corey Lewellan, USFS confirmed that they are focusing on projects that are already approved but have the potential to unify efforts on landscapes that include multiple landowners to expand the scale of treatments through cooperation. John thanked Nancy Ostlie and others for the input and clarification on the nature of projects being discussed. Kerry White inquired about limitations on what the funds can be used for. Stephen Kimball clarified the funds are for project restoration activities such as vegetation, fish and wildlife, biodiversity and other 'on the ground' activities. The emphasis is on implementation of existing approved work, not planning new projects. Approved applications will have to be obligated by contract by June 30 and expended over the next two years.

#### **Letter of support endorse, or submission of grant applications from the Summer Motorized Trail Grant**

Members continued discussion regarding the CGWG issuing a letter of support to the Forest Service and DNRC for submission on application for MFAC funds emphasizing those that will involve cross-boundary projects. Jason Brey suggested that any such letter should specifically reference the projects that are action-ready in various districts, and agreed to furnish a current recap of those actions to Darcie that could be identified in our support letter. Members authorized Darcie to work with John to finalize the letter and submit by the end of January.

#### **Other business**

Kerry White provided information about the availability of grant funds for motorized trail maintenance and improvement through Fish Wildlife and Parks. Kerry is requesting endorsement from CGWG members. Although letters of support are not required he feels the CGWG should express support for trail improvement grants that fall within the guidelines of legislation. Members discussed and agreed that proper maintenance of existing roads and trails within the Custer Gallatin forest are vital to forest health to protect and supported by the CGWG mission, especially when grant funds are available. Motion by Kerry White/Jim Hart to confirm CGWG support for such projects in our meeting minutes. **Approved.**

#### **Next Meeting**

March 10, 2021 via zoom.