



## Montana Chapter of The Wildlife Society – 2024 Business Meeting

*February 9, 2024, 7:30-9 am*

### Copper King Convention Center, Butte, MT

1. **(7:30) Call to Order and Roll Call** (Brandi notes all attendees)

*Chad called the meeting to order at 7:33am*

#### Participants

Chad Bishop, Katie Benzel, Andrea Litt, Heather Brower, Brandi Skone, Megan O'Reilly, Brent Mitchell, John Waller, Dan Bachen, Heather Harris, David Willey, Claire Gower, Ken Plourde, Elise Loggers, Alixandra Godar, Rebecca Mowry, Emily Mitchell, Noah Sechrist, Brandon Quamme, Sonja Andersen, Gary Olson, Brent Lonner, Liz Bradley, Bryce Maxell, Braden Burkholder, Terry Lonner, Andrea Litt, Chad Bishop, Ben Jeffries, Lindsey Parsons, Dana Harty, Daniel Johnson, Tabitha Graves, Adam Grove, Kelvin Johnson.

2. **(7:35) Secretary's report – Brandi Skone**

- a. Brandi read minutes from 2023 business meeting

*Motion was made by Brent Lonner, seconded by Andrea Litt, passed unanimously*

3. **(7:40) Treasurer's report – Heather Brower**

- a. Total assets currently \$191,286.41

- In the bank

- Checking has ~\$34,619.26
- Savings (Recreation Project) has \$25,760.89
- Project Savings as \$49,113.94
- Student travel has \$1,998.03
- Lewis Young Award has \$13,533.10

- Paypal has \$66,000.07 (\$12K in the last 7 days)

- b. Board got a new laptop (old one from 2007). QuickBooks was costing quite a bit with the new computer. Queried membership to let treasurer know if there is a better tool out there than QuickBooks for future use.

*Motion was made to approve budget and passed.*

4. **(7:50) Vote on Bylaws Changes (Awards committee and procedures) – Brandi Skone**

- a. Changes proposed within the bylaws that cleaned up the language for the awards committee.

- b. Terry asked what difference was between a standing committee vs. ad hoc. Asked about the IJS being a part of the education committee. At one point that was a consideration.

- c. Lynn asked about the procedure for making changes to the by laws.

*Motion passed to make changes to the by laws.*

5. **(8:00) Committee reports**

a. Nominations and Elections – **Chad Bishop** (2 nominees for Pres-Elect, 1 nominee for Treasurer)

- Rebecca Mowry is the new president-elect
- Heather Harris is the new treasurer
- Chad put out a call for other folks to consider running in the future and noted it is difficult to garner interest.

b. Membership – **Heather Brower**

- 408 members total
  - 218 Regular
  - 70 Students
  - 94 Retiree
  - 1 Honoree
  - 22 New Professionals
- 179 members renewed or became new MT Chapter members
- 229 members also part of National

c. Programs – **Katie Benzel**

- Plenary theme for this year's conference was "Cultivating respect for nature without destroying what we seek." We had Doug Chadwick as the banquet speaker. 36 oral presentations and 8 poster presentations. We provided 4 workshops: Occupancy modeling, Identifying wildlife tracks, Managing stress and burnout, and lead-free ammunition. All working groups met on Tuesday (MT Bat Working Group, MT Harlequin Duck Working Group, and Montana Bird Conservation Partnership)
- 310 conference attendees this year

d. Financial Management – **Heather Brower**

- No report since could not meet with Lorelle Berkely (no longer in the state)

e. Education and Information – **Brent Lonner**

- Northwestern Energy grant used for students in the past – asked if that was still a thing. NorthWestern Energy did donate to the conference, not specific to the students. Chad noted that we have been doing more to create opportunities for students to attend.
- MFPE – this year was in Billings (no attendees). October 17-18, 2024 will be in Bozeman. Could put this in the newsletter.
- Talked with Vanna B. about Kendeda funds (grant to help with tribal participation in conference). Andrea has reached out to them in the past couple of years, they are no longer the same organization (different structure). Lynn asked if there is a fund to help tribal students attend. Andrea looked up

Kendeda. January 2023, that was their last year as a foundation. Since they are no longer a foundation, could not support us with funds.

- If there is ever a need for the student chapters needing assistance with a project or if the state chapter can help with an education event, reach out to Brent Lonner.
- In Choteau next month, called wild wings, Brent is looking into getting a booth up there and would like a banner from the Chapter. March 22-24, 2024. Can google the website.
- Student chapter – if you have interest in coming and attending, great way to engage with community. Located at Freezeout Lake.
- Chad offered to send the banner that we have now with Brent Lonner at the end of this conference rather than sending to Helena and having to orchestrate that later.

f. IJS Status Report – **Terry Lonner**

- Could put this in the next newsletter. In major transition. Will be no more printed copies going forward, strictly an e-journal. Will be more accessible world-wide. Has a search engine within the website. Working with the library to get that done soon (next few months).
- Fisheries still no longer wants to be a co-sponsor. Stopped submitting abstracts in 2011. Chrissy Carpenter – new president. Also in a state of limbo. TWS is the last standing contributor. Used to require the journal had 50-55 pages to print it, meaning sometimes would need to wait between years to have enough material. But now, can publish annually with the electronic version. They only charge ~\$50 for submission, much more affordable than other options.
- Lorelyn Mackie wants to take over helping out with the MSU library to work format. Mentioned our website needs updating now. Suggested that we get a person within our chapter dedicated to website management that could work with Lorelyn. IJS could continue to be a sub-committee of the education committee.
- Sonja asked if they have considered approaching other state chapters to be involved. Idea was received well. Suggested involving the education committee to get more involvement. Lynn suggested that a presentation be done a MPFE/MEA. Terry – this has been done in the past.
- Brandi gave update that we are working with Lorelyn to update the website

a. Scholarships – **David Willey (MSU), Chad Bishop (UM)**

- Dave Willey – there is a team at MSU that helps develop curriculum for the chapter. Asks for a nomination from the student chapter and from Andrea – Dave makes the decision. Next year will be an undergraduate.
- Chad Bishop - at UM has a standing committee that works on scholarship. Receives input from faculty to make final decision. UM went with Maddy Budine this year.

b. Awards – **Megan O'Reilly**

- The Meadowlark Award, given to a student from another school other than UM and MSU. The Awards Committee also votes on that. Janene Lichtenberg is a new member. Lost Lewis Young last year. Missing a person from eastern MT – reach out to Megan if interested or know of someone.
  - Extended the deadline for a week this year. The deadline is always right after Christmas. Mentioned it's worth making nominations earlier in the year.
  - Terry asked if high school students can receive Meadowlark. No – it's meant for 4-year schools in MT to be equivalent to the Wynn Freeman option for MSU and UM.
- c. Dick Mackie Award – **Andrea Litt**
- Used to get students to the National conference in the fall. It's a \$500 award. Take requests in the summer. The conference is in Baltimore this year. Award went to Matty Budine. Thanked Brent Lonner for helping with communication with Barb on that award.
- d. Conservation Affairs Committee – **Andrea Litt**
- Members are Sonja A., Lance M., and the past president. SB442 – did sign on and support that bill (recreational marijuana). Invited more folks to be involved if there is interest. Things move quickly, would be nice to have more people to help out with this task.
  - Chad reminded everyone that we can do position statements. It's been over 5 years since the last one. The board is not going to take that on with everything else on their plate. Encouraging others if there's an issue out there they want to address, to be willing to champion it. Lynn asked what else can we do besides position statements.
  - Next year is a legislative session, Dan asked what our plans are since Amy Seaman and Nick Gevock. The last year donated 2500. Brent Mitchell asked about donating to Montana Wildlife Federation – we used to support both. Bryce said we have only financially supported MT Audubon since 2005. Lynn would like to see us also support both. The board will look into how/if we can make this help.

## 6. (8:20) Ad Hoc Committee reports

### a. Small Grants – **Claire Gower**

- Only awarded 1 recipient last year. Did not extend the deadline to be fair to those that had already submitted proposals.
- Used to award \$500, now give out \$1,000. Still doesn't seem to garner much interest.
- Committee is happy to continue with the small grants, but if there is a better use of the funds, would open that up to the chapter for consideration.
- Award recipients need to either present at the next conference or provide an update on the website/newsletter.

- Lynn said we could do more with publicity – reach out to local Audubon groups, maybe other conservation organizations. Megan asked and got clarity on - they need to be a state member to qualify for the grant.

b. Species of Concern – **Dan Bachen**

- Meant to mirror what's done at AFS. With the SWAP update, have identified a number of species (have put together a list of 40 species to contribute information). If anything has a species that they would like considered in the process, reach out to Dan. Would like us to consider how the chapter could be more effectively involved with this committee.

c. Recreation – **Bryce Maxell/Liz Bradley**

- 1991 – report created on recreation effects on Rocky Mountain
- Put together a proposal to use funds \$62. Wanted to fund a
- \$10k from department of commerce. \$3k recreation summit. TWS had an account on the website to also update, \$3K more. Received a grant from RMEF of 8K.
- Proposed \$31k budget needed to make this update
- The \$16k that sits with MTTWS here's how they propose to use it:
- 13K with MNHP and 3k contract with a student
- Will have ~9k leftover.
- A private landowner donated some money a few years ago that goes to supporting a student through UM. Looking to use the 3k funds to support this student.
- Still need to raise another \$20-25k for that effort.
- Also discussed (Chad, Katie, Bryce, and Liz) how to use that remaining 9K. How would membership like to decide how the 9K gets used? The board could make that decision or we could make open to membership. Brent Mitchell said we should go for it. Bryce would love to hear ideas from other folks on how to

7. **(8:30) NW Section report – Alixandra Godar**

- a. Had a meeting here to get some ideas of how to get our chapter more involved with the NW Section. Updating their by laws as well, most recent was 1985. Looking for a new

8. **(8:35) Student Chapter reports**

a. University of Montana – **Brandon Quamme**

- Worked with Trout Unlimited on BDAs. Trying to centralize location for materials when folks transition

b. Montana State University – **Noah Sechrist**

- Restructured their positions. Created positions for younger students to be more involved. Have also worked on opportunities to get more experience –

workshop opportunities, working with NGOs, officer led training options (bear safety, WNS). Volunteer service picking up trash out of Gallatin River. Always looking for service opportunities – please reach out.

## 9. (8:40) Ongoing Business

### a. Planning and locations for future MT TWS conferences – **Chad Bishop**

- Future conference locations – board is still looking into other options besides Butte and Helena. Helena was extremely expensive. Katie put together a Request for Proposal (RFP) to the Copper King to test out how it would work with future hotels. Submit this to hotels to get bids. No good location in Lewistown.
- Plates in Helena were \$56/plate, Butte it was \$32/plate. Also challenging to get hotels to honor the state rate is difficult during a legislative session. Bryce mentioned that the strategy was to be able to interact more with legislators during the session, but this has never really been something that we've engaged in. Rebecca noted that her first year at a TWS conference, there was a workshop that provided the opportunity to sit in on a session and hear the legislative committees – was a good opportunity.
- Megan said in 19 years, never been in Billings. Megan pointed out how many students actually participate
- Liz – didn't get as good of attendance when it's been held out east. Also pointed out that it's nice to have central location for students.
- Timing of conference is a challenge for students with exams this time of year, adding distance to travel makes it a larger challenge.
- Kenny pointed out benefits of traveling to different locations for students and professionals to gain new experiences.
- Brandon asked why does it have to be Billings, why not Great Falls or Bozeman. Chad pointed out that we will put out this request to multiple locations, not just Billings. Want to get competitive bids.

### b. Student support for MT TWS annual conference – **Andrea Litt**

*See below under Lewis Young Memorial Fund Award (discussed student support then)*

## 10. (8:50) New Business

### a. Lewis Young Memorial Fund Award – **Gary Olson, Brent Lonner**

- Lewis is a retired forest service biologist who has contributed greatly to conservation efforts in MT, recently passed away. Created this fund (family wishes) to provide an opportunity for students to attend meetings. Family feels it doesn't have to be any specific conditions but would like to fund students. Considering whether we try to raise more money to create an endowment (would need to get up to \$25k to make that happen). Gary is asking the chapter if we can contribute something? Lynn asked if it could contribute to the Mackie

award. Andrea – that's meant to get students to National. Chad said we need to figure out how to raise another \$10k this year. Lynn will investigate what MT Loon Society can contribute. John Waller said we should be patient. Most foundations are past the point of charitable donations this year. Megan asked where most of the funding came from – family contributed \$5k to get it started. MT Flathead Valley Audubon society also put in \$5k. Dan asked if Gary was planning to put together a sheet on what the fund will be used for.

- Lynn asked if there's a motion on the plate right now of how we want to use these funds. We're holding off to see where we get with current funding (how much we can raise) and then the chapter might be able to weigh in. Lynn wants to make sure there is forward progress.
- The student support has been really important to Andrea since she started. Wanted to make sure students from other schools outside of UM and MSU were being given those opportunities. The Chapter has always supported offsetting costs for students at the annual meeting. Continuing those efforts, we decided to support registration costs for other schools. Has reached out to all 4-year schools in the state with this opportunity. This year added in a travel award to the other schools outside UM and MSU for one night of travel they could apply for.
- UM Western, SKC, Montana Tech, MSU, and UM participated this year.
- A lot of students said it was their first conference ever and were super excited to be here.
- 63 students here from a total of 6 schools.
- Lewis Young Award is a great way to continue these efforts.
- Brent Mitchell motioned that the board needs to work on funding strategy and to report back through our newsletters to keep membership updated.

*Motion passed.*

b. Chapter Financial Strategy – **Chad Bishop**

- Had initial discussion at retreat this summer, how much money do we need in our account for financial security, what's the ideal zone (little higher) to help us accomplish our mission? Charging membership fees for the conference that account for conference needs and how to accomplish bigger goals.

c. Hard Copy Programs at Future Conferences? – **Chad Bishop, Board**

- Sonja pointed out there are still some folks that do not have smart phones. Lynn is completely opposed to it.
- Dan asked if he didn't want a hard copy, could he donate that extra money to Lewis Young or something different.
- Rebecca said it would be nice to have both, might get folks used to having an app.

- Andrea pointed out that we weren't necessarily thinking of an app given the costs that come with that.
- Brent thinks the idea of having it on the website, keep hitting people with the idea, visit the website and print your own copy.
- John, appreciated having a program when he got here.
- Dave suggested polling the members for what they want.
- Andrea pointed out that we could incorporate into our registration whether folks want to have a hard copy or not.
- Terry thinks the hard copy is worth having, can serve as a memento.
- Noah thought we should poll the members on locations for future conferences.
- Braden suggested having just a summary of talks and events as an option with the full abstracts/program in a pdf version.

d. Other Items from the floor?

- Kenny recommended the chapter consider purchasing a couple cheap computers for conference use rather than having the moderators use their own. Board has been very fiscally conservative this past year.
- Braden – could use air drop space to share presentations.
- Brent M. – proposes that we get our logo out there. Will get the black and white and colored version of our logo, see if we can get some examples for stickers. Will bring that back to the board and see where we go with that. Brent will volunteer take this effort on it.

11. **(8:55) Passing of the Gavel** (special thanks to Terry Lonner)

- a. Chad passed the gavel to Katie
- b. Terry proposed that the passing of the gavel should happen at the Awards banquet. Full support from membership. Will plan for this next year.

12. **(9:00) Adjourn – motion to adjourn?**

*Motion to adjourn passed (9:39)*