

	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Livestock Loss Board</b>  <b>December 2, 2023</b>  <b>Board Meeting</b>  <b>Big Timber MT</b>    <b>Meeting Minutes</b></p>
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**Livestock Loss Board Members Present:**

Doreen Gillespie – Chairperson  
Elaine Allestad  
Dave McEwen  
Joe Kipp  
Raina Blackman

**Staff:** George Edwards – Executive Director

**Guests:** Butch Gillespie – State Senator, District 9

Mike Thomson  
Erin Thomson  
Jason Thomson  
Linda Owens  
Luanne Wallewein  
John Steuber – USDA Wildlife Services  
Doug Ekbert – USDA Wildlife Services  
Dalín Tidwell – USDA Wildlife Services  
Trina Bradley – Rocky Mountain Ranchlands Group

**Call to Order and Administrative Items**

**Introductions**

- Each board member and board staff introduced themselves.

**Board Minutes**

Ms. Gillespie welcomed everyone to the meeting. She asked if the board members had reviewed the August 14<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes and asked for a motion to approve them.

**Motion:** Elaine Allestad made a motion to approve the January minutes. Raina Blackman seconded the motion. **Discussion:** None. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

**Reports:** Mr. Edwards began by saying claims are down this year and at the lowest since 2014. He has visited with several people and none of them has an explanation why predation is down. This year the board has an additional \$150K for claims payments. This is thanks to Representative Joe Read. This is considered a one time only appropriation from HB2. Because this is a one time only appropriation, Mr. Edwards directed Department of Livestock accounting to use this money first rather than the board's statutory appropriation. Any excess money from the statutory appropriation rolls over on June 30<sup>th</sup> into the board's loss prevention account. Today's grant requests are about \$67K out of \$197K available. Unused money remains in the loss prevention account. With this large rollover combined with the \$100K the board receives in July, there will be enough money to fund large projects for the first time.

**Dalin Tidwell, USDA Wildlife Services State Director** began by stating numbers are significantly down this year. Mountain lion investigations average around 60 but are at 35 this year. Grizzly bear investigations are typically around 150 but down to 112. Wolves average 98 and are down to 58. The one area that increased for Wildlife Services was black bear damage. Their average is 28 but this year it's 45. He said when you remove enough problem animals in a certain area it makes a difference. Weather patterns and the availability of prey may cause differences in predation.

Mr. McEwen said another thing he would like to mention at this time is there's a movement to add black bears to the compensation list. He said he isn't against it but is worried about our budget. Mr. Edwards said he visits with legislators each session about this and has stressed to them if black bears are added, additional funding would also need to be added.

### **Registered Livestock Value**

Mr. Edwards said the board's bill this past session limits registered livestock values to twice the value of a grade animal. That works out for everything except registered bulls. He asked if he is to pay twice the value for a steer of the same weight. He said the USDA Market Report he uses for other classes of cattle only lists slaughter values for bulls which are typically low.

**Motion:** Dave McEwen made a motion that most bulls are sold within a year of their birth. The producer shall receive double the price he received for his steers. Joe Kipp seconded the motion. **Discussion:** Mr. Kipp asked if a producer buys a bull and it gets killed, would he be paid what he paid for the bull. Mr. Edwards said he believes the new law limits the top end of what he could be paid to double a grade animal. Mr. McEwen said that is not the intent of the new law. If

they have a receipt for the bull, we will still honor our past practice of paying that amount. Mr. Kipp and Ms. Gillespie agreed. Mr. Edwards said he will continue the past practice as directed by the board. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed.

### **Grant Form Discussion**

Mr. Gillespie asked Mr. McEwen to bring to the board items he would like to change or add to the grant form.

**Motion:** Dave McEwen made a motion that matching funds for any grant application have to be producer dollars. Raina Blackman seconded the motion for the purpose of discussion. **Discussion:** Mr. McEwen said we have gotten several grants that they are donated dollars by third party entities and have nothing to do with the livestock industry and show little connection to the producer that were supposed to be working with and that is not the intent of the program. The program was for the producers and the producers need to have a dog in the fight and they need to show matching dollars for whatever grant they are asking for. Mr. Edwards said it can't be just dollars because the law allows for in-kind. Mr. McEwen said understood, but it has to come from the producer. He said this is a producer-based program and that was the way it was intended. He said he realized that this creates an issue with our tribal entity, however the tribal entity is made up of producers. What we are seeing is matching entities from Patagonia or other such organizations which have no interest or very little interest in agriculture. So, if those individuals want service through this grant process, those ranches need to put up their matching funds for clarification. Mr. Edwards said the board has in the past allowed matching funds for a project from all these other sources. It was to make sure a project got on the ground. If a livestock association was able to pull money together from multiple sources at least it got a project going. Ms. Allestad said when we went through the grants, some were using Patagonia. Mr. McEwen said by passing this at least they don't put it on the form, they are going to put somebody's name with those matching dollars. They are going to put a producers name with those matching dollars and make that producer accountable for those matching dollars, whether he is getting a check from the side or not. We make that producer accountable for that grant and those matching dollars. Ms. Blackman said people like Patagonia since Mr. McEwen used Patagonia who wanted wolves and grizzly bears on the ground and if they are willing to help pay some of the costs associated with it, I say great. Ms. Gillespie asked if there was any further discussion. Seeing none she asked if Mr. McEwen would like to restate the motion. He said matching funds must come from producer dollars. Ms. Gillespie called for the vote. **Vote:** All in favor Dave McEwen, opposed Joe Kipp, Raina Blackman, Doreen Gillespie and Elaine Allestad. Motion failed.

Ms. Allestad said while we're still on that subject, I think we should have a motion in here stating none of the matching funding can come from federal dollars. The form should require proof that they received a check from the person/organization they put down. Mr. Kipp said that's difficult. Say they have

received a \$800,000 grant from USDA for prevention practices and then they invest in some of these, is that not federal dollars. The Blackfeet tribe has a 638 fund, treaty monies from the federal government. That money is given to the tribe, but they have never contributed so far to any of our programs. The money was originally federal funds. Mr. Edwards said he asked this question through attorneys at the governor's Tribal Affairs Office and was told that once the money is in tribal hands it was no longer considered federal money. It's considered tribal money. Mr. Kipp said that is interesting and one reason they hadn't considered the Blackfeet tribe as a funding source. He said for their range rider program they reached out to many organizations, not just Patagonia and Defenders. They only received one response via email saying sorry we don't have any money for you. Ms. Blackman said the documentation ideas is a good one such as did you actually receive a check.

**Motion:** Elaine Allestad made a motion require proof of receiving the cash match from whom and where it will be spent on the grant form. Dave McEwen seconded the motion. **Discussion:** No further discussion. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

**Motion:** Dave McEwen made a motion in the follow up report from receiving grants that a log must be handed in that address's dollars spent per head of prevention, time per head of prevention and if it's for a range rider a report of their time and activities. Joe Kipp seconded the motion. **Discussion:** Mr. Kipp said that some of the grant requests had smaller numbers of cattle with a fairly large request for range riding. We had others with very large numbers and the request was similar. He is asking that not only do their reports reflect all of what Mr. McEwen mentioned but also a consulting service. They should reach out to a professional company that does this service and say this is my habitat so how many hours is it going to take to do the job thoroughly. We don't want some kids sitting up there and paying him for eight hours a day if the experts say two hours a day is fine. He asked Mr. Tidwell for his opinion because Wildlife Services guys are successful. Mr. Tidwell said it's difficult to quantify how much area one guy can cover in a day. We don't have those answers yet. It's also the quality of the employee. There are a lot a variables and we still need to gather more data. Some research projects are trying to gather data to compare and see what's happening. The National Wildlife Research Center is involved with this. Mr. Kipp said he and Mr. McEwen were looking at some of the grant requests. Some of them were like \$10.00 per head. They are providing that service and hopefully it will be reflected in their number of missing animals. On others, it was \$40.00 per head. So, if there was some way that we could intelligently quantify that risk and maybe we need to do a little bit more because some of these guys have big claims. Maybe that's what we need to do. We could take some of our office numbers and some of wildlife services field notes and maybe get the wildlife service's guys back east working on trying to come up with what we need. How much risk factor do they have on that insurance out there for that range rider? How much risk are we going to assume and what service are we providing? We want it to work. We want it to be funded, that we want to have the same

discussion with the kids while every year that numbers are down. We need to keep funding what works. Mr. Edwards said we could possibly be looking at cost-benefit analysis in terms of how much we fund. What's justifiable per head for dollars on a grant? Mr. McEwen said I think that's what Mr. Kipp and I are coming to. The other piece to this puzzle is the range rider reports. What do people consider range riding? I mean from ten to three in the afternoon is not my idea of range riding. Going over and picking up the film out of a camera is not range riding. So, in this motion to be clear, we would request a log of daily activities by that individual and that includes where you're riding, who you are riding for and are they part of the program. Also, how many acres did they ride that day, what was the depredation report for the day and what were the sightings of large carnivores for the day. This is not on camera and what was the mediation if there was a large carnivore in the area. Those are the kind of things we need to know to help put a dollar value on this. I know feds in Washington are looking for the same thing because they're having the same problems, and if we can provide this information and justify this program, it might be the salvation of this program. This might go away because of ineffectiveness. We know in one scenario it works, but I think much of that is on personnel too. Mr. Steuber said there's a lot of complexity to this because you are looking at different habitat types. You're looking at different levels of conflict. Every range has different levels of conflict. One range rider in the Gravelly range covers many allotments with cattle spread out over 100 miles. This includes four bands of sheep. It's difficult to measure the success of a range rider program because when you have a range rider, they might find more dead animals. People want to measure how many did they save from predation. Hopefully they did, but it may show up on paper that there's more dead animals when they get a range rider so that that needs to be considered in there. They may find more dead animals and more animals in a timely basis where a determination can be made. Mr. Kipp said even though the forms were filled out correctly, it was hard to determine. He said they contacted many people including wildlife services to try to determine needs. Mr. Steuber said certain areas have a history of predation. Mr. Kipp said what we try to use is the turnout count and the count when they come back home. So, we are actually just looking at missing animals and then the range rider will supply a certain number of natural death and animal kills. Ms. Allestad asked the screening committee to come up with a format for what they want in a range rider report. Mr. Kipp said they are working on that. Chair Gillespie directed the committee to come up with a format for range rider reports. Mr. Edwards said it would be nice to have it before the next round of grants so it could be incorporated into the new form. Ms. Allestad said it would be good to have it so it could be handed out to the range rider, so they know what the board is looking for. Mr. McEwen said we will sit down and get it done. Mr. Edwards said it would be important, so applicants know the requirements. Ms. Blackman asked to have the motion read again. Mr. Edwards said it was motion for a follow up report for a log that must be handed in, dollars per head and time per head and requiring a range rider report that must be handed in. Ms. Gillespie called for the vote on the motion. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.



## Proposed Board Screening Panel Scoring

Ms. Blackman began her proposal by saying we will scratch out the words for 50 total points because we really have 57 total points. It's because you can have multiple points like page 3 such as 10 points per bear, eight points per wolf and four points for mountain lion. Our grant selection rubric cube currently awards 44 total points per application and that should be 57. I recommend an additional six point to be added to the score card. A full six points will be awarded to new applicants. Three points would be awarded to those applicants who have received loss board monies in the past that are now submitting a new loss prevention method application. Zero points would be awarded to applicants who have been funded in the past and are now submitting an application which is very similar to past funded applications.

**Motion:** Raina Blackman made a motion approve her recommended changes. Elaine Allestad seconded the motion for the purposes of discussion. **Discussion:** Ms. Blackman felt in years where money was very tight, and we had more applications than we had money to award that we should give preference to new people. Mr. Edwards offered a clarification statement. Board members going clear back to the first few years of the board stated we would not be a continual cash source for people seeking grants. They would eventually need to absorb that into their operations. A term board members stated was that we're not a perpetual cash cow for an organization and that we would slowly wean those organizations off to allow more new people to come in for new projects. Ms. Allestad said that is correct. Mr. Kipp said he is going to support Ms. Blackman's proposal for new people and clarify to the public that points don't really matter if there is enough funding for all submissions. In the event there are more applications, first time grant receivers should have priority. On the same token I want to say if depredations are down because of certain practices, do we want to stop funding them and I understand we can't fund them forever. If it's working, I think we need to keep going. Mr. McEwen said the biggest one is the range rider continuation. When we fund an electric fence for a calving yard there is no reason to fund it the next year because it's set up. Related to dogs, I would say, and we haven't had this happen yet, but if I have a repeat customer that has to buy a dog every year and we keep funding these dogs, I'm just going to say are the dogs working for you. In the range riding program, when we can prove and if we get data that we are seeking, we can prove that it's working as the sheep industry has proven. He said he concurs that you don't shut off something that's working. We need this information to validate that point. Ms. Allestad said one of the negative things of the range rider program is that it can move the problem onto their neighbor. Mr. McEwen said it's the same way with dogs. It isn't right that my dogs do a good job and chase the bear to the neighbor. Morally it isn't right to him. Chair Gillespie called for the vote. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

## State Grant Fund Balance

Mr. Edwards said this is on the agenda so that the board knows how much money is available for grants. The fund balance is \$197,165 dollars. No action is needed for this topic.

## Grant Applications

Ms. Gillespie asked board members if they had reviewed all of the applications. Every board member had reviewed the applications individually at their homes. She then handed over introductions of each grant to Mr. McEwen and Mr. Kipp as they are the two board members of the board screening panel. Mr. McEwen said he will present each one individually as several applications appeared to need more information.

### 1. Apex Angus Ranch

Mr. McEwen said they passed everything and scored a 49. This is for a range rider program. It was filled out properly and they are in a high predation area. Ms. Gillespie asked Mr. Edwards to address problems found with this grant. He said several board members had questions on the in-kind equipment and value. The big problem they pointed out was that Apex is paying the range rider, yet the range rider is then providing the in-kind match. This looks like the grant money is being used as the match instead of an actual match which is just circling the grant money around. If Apex was supplying the horse and vehicle, it would be a match but in this case the range rider is supplying these things. There is no separation between the grant money and the match.

**Motion:** Dave McEwen made a motion to approve the Apex Angus Ranch request. Elaine Allestad seconded the motion for the purpose of further discussion. **Discussion:** Raina Blackman said she had the same question in her notes. The match seemed confusing and seemed to be reimbursed so it was just a runaround. It wasn't a true match. Dave McEwen said he would like to see this grant reconsidered and the producer be allowed to straighten out these irregularities. We can allow him to reapply with the producer providing a proper match. **Vote:** All in favor none, all opposed. Motion failed.

**Motion:** Dave McEwen made a motion to allow Apex Angus Ranch to correct their application and call for a short video meeting in February. Joe Kipp seconded the motion. **Discussion:** Mr. Edwards was asked if the unused grant money rolls over to the next grant cycle. He said it does. It would be very irregular to hold a special meeting for one grant applicant. He said he would need to talk to Kristen Juras to ask her opinion if this would be proper. **Vote:** Chair Gillespie moved to table this motion.

## **2. Big Hole Watershed Committee**

Mr. McEwen said this is an application for a range rider program. It's an ongoing program and they have met all the requirements. The only thing the screening panel put in there was the need of a daily diary. It's the things described in previous motions. He said they also mentioned a compost program. Mr. Edwards said they are both prevention and they do both practices.

**Motion:** Dave McEwen made a motion approve this grant request. Raina Blackman seconded the motion. **Discussion:** Elaine Allestad found it confusing to have two different programs in one grant. Maybe they should have turned in two applications. Mr. Edwards said he will mention this to them for future applications **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

## **3. Blackfeet Fish & Wildlife**

Mr. Kipp said this grant request was failed by the screening committee. It was incomplete and no further discussion is necessary. They do have quite a need up there. They are looking at a carcass disposal system as they have tried several sites and even dug a hole. Now they are looking at a possible incinerator. They really haven't done their homework yet.

**Motion:** Doreen Gillespie made a motion to deny this request. Joe Kipp seconded the motion. **Discussion:** No further discussion. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

**Break** – A disruption occurred when Linda Owen came into the room and began filming Dave McEwen. Mr. McEwen walked up to her and said some profane words. Mr. Edwards asked Mr. McEwen to leave the room which he did.

## **4. Centennial Valley Association**

Mr. Kipp said this application passed with a score of 43. He said the screening panel would ask them for a daily diary containing the time spent per day, method of travel, time of travel etcetera. The reason he and Mr. McEwen are asking for this is they are on a National Wildlife Services Advisory Committee and are working hand in hand with NRCS to develop programs. This more detailed information will help them.

**Motion:** Joe Kipp made a motion to approve this request. Elaine Allestad seconded the motion. **Discussion:** Elaine Allestad said she is wondering if some of their match comes through other organizations that receive federal money. This would be different than the previously discussed tribal/federal money because they are private organizations. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

## **5. Holland Ranch**

Mr. Kipp said they had a couple of questions on this application. He mentioned grizzly predation in the Western Pioneer range. They questioned if he has had depredations. Mr. Edwards said he has paid claims for wolf predation on this



ranch. Mr. Kipp said he would like to see clearly stated if they had losses, what was the cause. He said this application scored a 22.

**Motion:** Raina Blackman made a motion to approve this request. Elaine Allestad seconded the motion. **Discussion:** None. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried. Mr. McEwen is not present for this application and the following applications.

#### **6. Parker Jones**

Mr. Kipp said this one passed the screening panel with a score of 45. He is asking to fund dog food and collars.

**Motion:** Elaine Allestad made a motion to approve this request. Raina Blackman seconded the motion. **Discussion:** Raina Blackman said he is not asking for a lot of money. It doesn't look like enough for his project. Joe Kipp agreed with this assessment. Elaine Allestad said he didn't fill out the application very well by not listing the total cost of the project. Mr. Edwards said he is asking for \$702 and matching it with \$702 for a total of \$1,404. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried. Mr. McEwen is not present for this application and the following applications.

Mr. McEwen reentered the room to apologize for his behavior.

#### **7. Russ Lewis**

Mr. Kipp said they had some questions about this applicant. He asked if Mr. Edwards could clarify if he owned any land or cattle on the per-capita payments. Mr. Edwards said he looked at the tax roll and could not find Mr. Lewis owning land in the area of this grant. He also could not find him anywhere in the per-capita payments spreadsheet he gets from the Department of Revenue. Ms. Gillespie asked so he hasn't paid any per-capita. Mr. Edwards said he could not find any payments. Mr. Tidwell said he has had some wolf damage over the years. He is not sure if the cattle are his or if he is just running them for someone else. Wildlife Services has had a little difficulty working in this area because of anti-trapping sentiments. Ms. Gillespie asked if he runs cattle or is just the ranch manager. Mr. Tidwell said he doesn't know. Mr. Kipp said maybe he buys cattle in the spring and sell them in the fall. Ms. Allestad said he still would owe per capita. Mr. Edwards said he might not depending upon when they were bought. Ms. Allestad said he needs to provide a map even if he doesn't own the land.

**Motion:** Elaine Allestad made a motion to deny this request. Raina Blackman seconded the motion. **Discussion:** Doreen Gillespie said we need to know who owns the cattle. Joe Kipp agreed. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

#### **8. Lenore McEwen**

Mr. Kipp said he reviewed this application by himself as Ms. McEwen is the wife of Dave McEwen. He recommended a due pass on this application. She is

requesting funding for an optic device that picks up heat signatures. They plan on flying over brushy areas looking for bears and are volunteering to fly over neighboring areas to help other ranchers. Ms. Gillespie called for a motion prior to further discussion.

**Motion:** Raina Blackman made a motion to approve this request. Elaine Allestad seconded the motion for the purpose of discussion. **Discussion:** Joe Kipp said Mr. McEwen will be able to provide a service for the reservation. Last spring a big boar went into a piece of brush. The specialists were on hand. Also, the Grizzly Bear Advisory coordinator was in contact. She asked the specialists to get more proof of the predation. This bear bedded down 45 feet from where they had been walking. This was extremely dangerous. That is why he is advocating for additional tools/help. The wind was blowing so hard to fly over the site. The coordinator approved removal of this bear. If this device can be shown to work for safety reasons, they can advocate the service to purchase more of them. Elaine Allestad said there is not a whole lot of description of what this project entails. Have they had predation. Mr. Edwards said he has paid a claim for sheep loss caused by a grizzly on their property. Elaine Allestad said she has a little bit of heartburn using their airplane for a match. Raina Blackman asked if it has camera capabilities. Lenore McEwen said people around grizzly bears put their life on the line to protect themselves and livestock from bears. A member of the public, Trina Jo Bradley said she doesn't want to be disrespectful, but this looks like a toy and maybe this should be left to the professionals. Lenore McEwen said it is so they can safely haze livestock away from where a bear maybe in the brush. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

#### **9. Brian Quigley**

Mr. Kipp said the panel didn't sign off on this application. The amount of money being asked for and the match seem to be out of wack. It looks like he is providing \$420 and \$980 so the project is \$1,500? He asked if Mr. Edwards had any comments. Mr. Edwards said this ranch is in a high predation area. He has had losses including a guard dog. He appealed the guard dog claim because he felt the \$1,030 was not enough and he wanted the board to revisit values which this board has done.

**Motion:** Raina Blackman made a motion to approve this request. Elaine Allestad seconded the motion for the purpose of discussion. **Discussion:** Joe Kipp said it looks like he is requesting \$980 to purchase two additional dogs and dog food. Mr. Edwards said a photo of his signature was sent in this time and is difficult to see. His prior application was rejected due to no signature. People and Carnivores filled out this application for him. The map is of the general area where his ranch is located. **Vote:** All in favor, none opposed. Motion carried.

#### **Public Comment**

Ms. Blackman said she heard several times that there was not enough time for the screening panel to gather needed information. Maybe for the next time there

should be at least a month for review. Mr. Edwards said this time was pushed in part so the board could attend the Woolgrowers Convention and hold the board meeting to keep costs down. He also would like to see more time, so he has more time to prepare grant books for a meeting. He asked if the board would be willing to open up grant applications in mid-May through the end of June. Then the panel could take the month of July to go over applications for a meeting in September. Ms. Allestad said June would be a better month for her as she is busy with an outfitter business from July to the end of hunting season. It was decided to hold the meeting during the last week of June. Grant applications would be accepted during April and May. The screening panel will review the applications prior to the last week of June.

**Motion:** Raina Blackman made a motion to adjourn. Elaine Allestad seconded the motion.

**Adjourned**

DATED this 2nd day of December 2023



Doreen Gillespie, Chairman  
Montana Livestock Loss Board