

MINUTES
MONTANA SAGE GROUSE OVERSIGHT TEAM

June 29, 2023
Meeting Summary
DNRC Building, Montana
Conference Room and
Virtual Zoom Meeting

Members Present

Mr. Michael Freeman, Chairman, Governor's Natural Resource Policy Advisor
Ms. Diane Ahlgren, Rangeland Resources Committee Chairman
Representative James Bergstrom, House District 30
Mr. Chris Dorrington, Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), Director (Proxy Dir. Kaster)
Mr. Benjamin Jones, Montana Board of Oil and Gas and Conservation, Administrator
Ms. Amanda Kaster, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), Director
Senator Mike Lang, Senate District 17 (Proxy Chairman Freeman)
Mr. Malcolm Long, Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), Director (Proxy Chairman Freeman)
Mr. Dustin Temple, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife, & Parks (FWP), Director (Proxy Chairman Freeman)

Staff Present

Mr. Mark Bostrom, DNRC Conservation and Resource Development Division, Administrator
Mr. Logan Cain, Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program, GIS Analyst
Ms. Therese Hartman, Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation, Program Manager
Mr. Adam Kauth, Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program, Biologist
Ms. Jamie McFadden, PHD, Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program, GIS Analyst
Ms. Emily Moran, Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program, Biologist
Ms. Erin Reather, Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program, Biologist
Mr. Nate Wold, Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program, GIS Analyst
Ms. Robin Graham, Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks, Acting Chief of Staff

Call to Order and Administrative Matters

1:02 pm: Chairman Freeman called the June 29th Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team (MSGOT) meeting to order.

Chairman Freeman introduced the Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team members in attendance, quorum confirmed.

Director Kaster is the designated proxy for Director Dorrington for the June 29th, 2023, MSGOT meeting.

Chairman Freeman is the designated proxy for Senator Mike Lang for the June 29th, 2023, MSGOT meeting.

Chairman Freeman is the designated proxy for Director Temple for the June 29th, 2023, MSGOT meeting.

Chairman Freeman is the designated proxy for Director Long for the June 29th, 2023, MSGOT meeting.

1:06 pm: **Chairman Freeman: Called for any changes or correction of the October 27, 2022 MSGOT Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Ahlgren sought a correction of the October 27, 2022 MSGOT Meeting Minutes. The third paragraph, four lines down on page four stated:

“Overtime, the Johnson’s have implemented conservation measures through an EQUIP project including over 75,000 miles of pipeline between the two ranches and over 15 miles of wildlife-friendly electric cross fences with sage grouse markers.”

After confirming with Bruce Johnson, the record has been amended to reflect the following:

“Overtime, the Johnson’s have implemented conservation measures through an EQUIP project including over 75,000 ~~miles~~ feet of pipeline between the two ranches and over 15 miles of wildlife-friendly electric cross fences with sage grouse markers.”

Administrator Jones would like to amend the record to reflect his title change from ‘Director Jones’ to ‘Administrator Jones’.

Executive Action

1:08 pm: **Chairman Freeman: Called for a motion to approve the draft October 27, 2022, MSGOT meeting minutes.**

Administrator Jones motioned to approve the draft October 27, 2022, MSGOT meeting minutes with the amendments.

Second: Ms. Ahlgren

Voice vote conducted: voted unanimously to approve. Representative Bergstrom abstained from the vote.

Discussion: None.

Motion Passed.

1:09 pm: **Chairman Freeman: Called for a motion to approve the draft May 24, 2023, MSGOT meeting minutes.**

Ms. Ahlgren motioned to approve the draft May 24, 2023, MSGOT meeting minutes.

Second: Director Kaster

Voice vote conducted: voted unanimously to approve.

Discussion: None.

Motion Passed.

Proposed Rule Change Review – Program

1:10 pm: Ms. McFadden presented the HQT Technical Manual Rule Making Change overview.

See [‘Rule Making Change: HQT Technical Manual’](#) presentation.

MSGOT Discussion

1:14 pm: Representative Bergstrom: Requested clarification of what a 'Rule Making Change' process entails and who the Rule Makers are in the process.

Chairman Freeman: Explained that MSGOT will initiate the process which will include a public comment opportunity.

Administrator Bostrom: Clarified that MSGOT is administratively attached to the Governor's Office, which means the Governor's Office is considered the Rule Makers in this process and the Program Staff will provide the necessary information to the Governor's Office.

Public Comment

No public comment was received.

Executive Action

1:15 pm: **Chairman Freeman: Called for a motion to initiate the Rule Making Process, as recommended by the Program.**

Director Kaster motioned to initiate the Rule Making Process, as recommended by the Program.

Second: Administrator Jones

Voice vote conducted:

Aye: Chairman Freeman, Ms. Ahlgren, Representative Bergstrom, Director Dorrington (by proxy), Administrator Jones, Director Kaster, Senator Lang (by proxy), Director Long (by proxy), Director Temple (by proxy)

Nay: None.

Discussion: None.

Motion Passed.

Net Present Value Review – Program

1:17 pm: Ms. McFadden presented how the 3% Net Present Value (NPV) concept is applied to the Program.

See ['3% Discount Review: Application of the Net Present Value to Credit and Debit Pricing'](#) presentation.

MSGOT Discussion

1:21 pm: Ms. Ahlgren: Inquired what the proposed stakeholder process will look like this time.

Ms. Hartman: The proposed stakeholder process will have a narrow focus and will be tailored to the application of the NPV. The Program will invite the same stakeholder groups from previous stakeholder processes.

1:22 pm: Director Kaster: Inquired if the Program has an estimate of how long the stakeholder process will take.

Ms. Hartman: The Program anticipates the first meeting to take place at the end of August.

After the first meeting, the Program will assess if additional stakeholder meetings will be necessary.

1:23 pm: Ms. Ahlgren: Inquired if the Program has a set timeline if additional meetings will be required.

Ms. Hartman: Hopes the first stakeholder meeting will yield a general agreement and potential solution recommendations from the stakeholders, which the Program will bring to MSGOT tentatively by the end of 2023.

Public Comment

No public comment was received.

Executive Action

1:24 pm: **Chairman Freeman: Called for a motion to approve the initiation of the stakeholder process to review the application of the net present value concept, as recommended by the program.**

Director Kaster motioned to approve the initiation of the stakeholder process to review the application of the net present value concept.

Second: Ms. Ahlgren

Voice vote conducted:

Aye: Chairman Freeman, Ms. Ahlgren, Representative Bergstrom, Director Dorrington (by proxy), Administrator Jones, Director Kaster, Senator Lang (by proxy), Director Long (by proxy), Director Temple (by proxy)

Nay: None.

Discussion: None.

Motion Passed.

Approval of Grant Applications

High Ridge Land Perpetual Easement and Restoration Project

1:25 pm: Ms. Hartman presented an overview of the High Ridge Land Perpetual Easement and Restoration grant project.

See the ['Item Brief Sheet: Updated Request for High Ridge Ranch Perpetual Easement and Restoration Project'](#) and associated documents.

1:30 pm: Mr. Chris Pfister shared a pre-recorded presentation. Presentation available by request.

MSGOT Discussion

1:38 pm: Representative Bergstrom: Inquired if there will be any cost associated with DNRC staff and Montana State University (MSU) students assisting in restoration implementation and monitoring.

Ms. Hartman: There would be no cost from the MSU students and DNRC staff time associated with the project implementation and monitoring.

Representative Bergstrom: Noticed other projects had monitoring costs associated with their budgets.

1:40 pm: Chairman Freeman: Asked if the High Ridge Land Perpetual Easement is the first restoration project MSGOT has seen.

Ms. Hartman: The Program has seen one additional project containing restoration, the Burgess Ranch Conservation Lease. Program staff has not been involved in the Burgess project.

Chairman Freeman: Is there a benefit to this project beyond the credit creation aspect? Specifically, will this project be beneficial for data collection and experience with a restoration project?

Ms. Hartman: Absolutely. The High Ridge Land project is a perpetual easement, which allows the Program and the Landowner to try multiple different restoration practices. Mr. Pfister has already implemented activities on the group and has found success; the Program is optimistic of the project.

Chairman Freeman: The project seems to be a good learning opportunity and the knowledge gained can be applied to future restoration projects.

1:41 pm: Ms. Ahlgren: Asked for an update on the Burgess project.

Ms. Hartman: Clarified that the Conservation District is providing the annual monitoring site visit, but a third-party contractor hired by the Burgess Ranch is providing the vegetation monitoring data.

Ms. Ahlgren: Does the Program receive the monitoring data?

Ms. Hartman: The Program has not received any monitoring data to date but an annual report was submitted.

Administrator Bostrom: Shared that the Burgess Ranch was delayed in planting. The ranch experienced two years of drought and one year of bad grasshoppers.

Ms. Hartman: The Burgess Ranch has recently conducted some seeding. Ms. Hartman is in communication with Mr. Burgess and the Conservation District and anticipates data soon. The Program has already visited and collected data on the High Ridge Land property. Ms. Hartman believes the project has high potential of success.

Ms. Ahlgren: Appreciated Mr. Pfister's acknowledgement of Ms. Ahlgren's concern of returning the High Ridge Land property into working lands. Ms. Ahlgren was also surprised by the high-quality habitat within Mr. Pfister's property which is classified as General Habitat for sage grouse and believes this Project will be a good addition to the habitat. Ms. Ahlgren noted that the delay in planting associated with the Burgess project is not dissimilar to conditions and roadblocks that may occur with Restoration projects located in Eastern Montana.

Ms. Hartman: Stated that the High Ridge Land property is located directly adjacent to a Core Area for sage grouse and is located ideally for the Grow the Core concept. Ms. Hartman hopes to show the extent of habitat loss in Core Areas at a future MSGOT meeting. The restoration of General Habitat will be required to augment the Core Areas.

Public Comment

No public comment was received.

Bruce Johnson Perpetual Easement Project

1:45 pm: Ms. Hartman presented an overview of the Bruce Johnson Perpetual Easement grant project.

See the '[Item Brief Sheet: MSGOT Consideration for Final 2022 Grant Requests](#)' and associated documents.

MSGOT Discussion

1:47 pm: Representative Bergstrom: Asked who would monitor the Bruce Johnson project.

Ms. Hartman: The Bruce Johnson Perpetual Easement would be held by the Montana Land Reliance (MLR). Ms. Hartman requested Brad Hansen with the MLR to answer the Representative's question.

Brad Hansen: As a Land Trust, MLR monitors over 1,000 conservation easements annually. Monitoring includes an MLR staff member meeting with the landowner to conducting a site visit and review the conservation easement terms.

1:48 pm: Ms. Ahlgren: Does the \$50,000 project costs listed cover MLR's easement monitoring?

Brad Hansen: Confirmed the \$50,000 in project costs covers MLR's due diligence to close the conservation easement, appraisal report, resource documentation report, mineral report, title work, and contribution to MLR's Stewardship Monitoring Fund.

Public Comment

No public comment was received.

Dan and Mary Ann Perpetual Easement

1:49 pm: Ms. Hartman presented an overview of the Dan and Mary Ann Johnson Perpetual Easement grant project.

See the '[Item Brief Sheet: MSGOT Consideration for Final 2022 Grant Requests](#)' and associated documents.

MSGOT Discussion

1:51 pm: Ms. Ahlgren: Ms. Ahlgren likes the work the combined Bruce Johnson and Dan and Mary Ann Johnson easements propose. Ms. Ahlgren enjoyed the Bruce Johnson's presentation at the May MSGOT meeting. Ms. Ahlgren appreciates the location of the Conservation Easements and appreciates the compromise the Johnson's have made to make the projects more affordable for MSGOT.

Public Comment

No public comment was received.

Conservation District Fees and Title Reports

1:52 pm: Ms. Hartman presented an overview of the difference between Title Insurance and Title Reports.

See the ['Item Brief Sheet: Conservation Lease Updates, Conservation Fees, Title Co. Fees and Changes to Projects'](#) and associated documents.

MSGOT Discussion

1:52 pm: Chairman Freeman: Requested Ms. Hartman to expand upon the differences between a Leasehold Policy and Title Report, and whether both can be purchased.

Ms. Hartman: Elaborated that purchasing the Title Report would only provide the results of the title search. The title search will provide the owners of the property, and any encumbrances on the property, etc. The Title Report does not include title insurance or protection. The Program and the Conservation District would have to work together to file the closing documents for the lease. The Leasehold Policy would include results from the title search, title insurance, and the Title company provides closing for the lease. The title insurance protects the Program and DNRC from loss and title defects.

Chairman Freeman: Asked for the Program's recommendation on which option to choose.

Ms. Hartman: Clarified that the Leasehold Policy includes the title search, title insurance, and closing.

1:54 pm: Ms. Ahlgren: Asked for clarification if closing was included with the Title Report.

Ms. Hartman: Clarified that the Program and the Conservation District would be responsible for filing the closing documents with the County if MSGOT chose to select only the Title Report. If MSGOT chose the Leasehold Policy, the Title Company would file the closing documents with the County.

1:54 pm: Representative Bergstrom: Suggested the Program asks landowners who are interested in entering into a lease agreement with the Program to submit their Property Tax Statements. These statements report the legal property description, owners, and legal acres within the property.

Ms. Hartman: Stated since the October 2022 grant cycle was the first cycle where lease agreements were awarded since Ms. Hartman has become Program Manager, she did not foresee the level of difficulty it would take to obtain the legal owners and property description/boundaries of submitted projects. In future grant cycles, the Program will require applicants to submit evidence of legal owners and property description/boundaries before the project is presented to MSGOT. Unfortunately, the Program did not require this evidence at the time of application for the October 2022 grant applications. To rectify the situation, the Program is proposing MSGOT select to purchase either a Title Report or Leasehold Policy for the October 2022 Lease Agreements at an additional cost.

Representative Bergstrom: Asked if a study/focus group could be created to survey how comfortable potential landowners who are interested in entering into a lease agreement with the Program are in providing their Property Tax Statements along with their lease application to the Program. Representative Bergstrom indicated he has a problem with changing numbers, figures, and voting on projects where the ownership are unknown. As an individual, Representative Bergstrom would not enter into a lease agreement with and unknown party.

Ms. Hartman: Assured MSGOT that the lease grant projects will not close, and no money will be paid until all information is known. In specific, one lease project has had difficulties determining which family members own which parcels. In this circumstance, many members of the family own different parts of the family property. The Program is required to have every owner sign the Lease Agreement.

Representative Bergstrom: Restated that all the required information, including ownership, will be listed in a Property Tax Statement. Representative Bergstrom is listed as an owner on the Tax Statement of a property owned by all of his siblings. The Property Tax Statements seem to be a good alternative to define all owners of the property and the legal description.

Ms. Hartman: Appreciates the suggestion.

1:58 pm: Chairman Freeman: Shares Representative Bergstrom's concerns about the lack of and changing information. Believes the Leasehold Policy would provide the best support but asked for the Program's recommendation.

1:59 pm: Administrator Jones: Asked the Program to clarify what coverage the Title Insurance provides; what would be the risk if MSGOT only chose the Title Report.

Ms. Hartman: Clarified that from discussions with the Title Company, the Title Insurance would cover any loss due to undisclosed information missed by the Title Report.

Administrator Jones: Asked for an example of a loss covered by the Title Insurance.

Ms. Hartman: The Title Insurance covers the amount of money MSGOT, and the Program pays the Landowner. Looking at the Schultz – Gran Prairie conservation lease, the total Stewardship Account Grant amount of \$555,055.21 would be covered under the Title Insurance.

2:00 pm: Chairman Freeman: Added that the loss of \$555,055.21 could occur if the Title Company missed information during the Title Search.

Ms. Hartman: Confirmed and is working with the DNRC Attorney to include legal language that allows DNRC or MSGOT legal recourse if the Title information is misrepresented.

Chairman Freeman: Would prefer the Leasehold Policy to reduce the possibility of losing any Stewardship Account dollars.

2:01 pm: Representative Bergstrom: Stated that he does not believe a Property Tax Statement would yield as detailed results as a Title Search. Specifically, a piece of property being purchased under a contract for deed or Trust Indentured would not show up in a Property Tax Statement but would show up under a Title Search. Potentially both a Title Search and Property Tax Statements may be necessary.

2:02 pm: Ms. Hartman: Asked Mr. Brad Hansen to address if the MLR uses a Title Report or Leasehold Policy and why.

Brad Hansen: MLR chooses to purchase the Leasehold Policy because MLR has encountered problems where previous landowners did not pay their property taxes or have rights of first refusal or contracts for deeds. MLR has come across encumbrances on the land that prohibits current landowners from entering into a conservation easement. The Leaseholder Policy is a tool used at the beginning of the conservation easement to determine if the landowner is qualified to enter into a conservation easement. The Title Insurance has saved MLR a few times, an example is when Brad Hansen was working with a potential conservation easement property in Carter County. The previous landowner failed to pay +\$60,000 in property taxes, which was not reported on the Title Report. The Title Insurance purchases for the project was able to back-pay the outstanding property taxes and cleared the title for the conservation easement to go forward.

Additionally, MLR requires Property Tax Statements and Warranty Deeds at the beginning of

the process and cross-references the information of the documents with the information displayed in Montana Cadastral and on the Title Report. Many times, Cadastral is incorrect and MLR submits suggested edits to the Cadastral site. Mr. Hansen believes the Leasehold Policy is worth the money.

2:05 pm: Representative Bergstrom: Asked Mr. Hansen if MLR has already run a Title Report on the proposed Lease Agreements. Is MSGOT and the Program paying for services that have already been provided.

Chairman Freeman: Clarified that MLR conducts these services for the conservation easements and holds conservation easements, but the conservation leases will be held by the Conservation Districts and MSGOT and the Program will have to provide these services.

Chairman Freeman stated that he would like executive action to approve either the Leasehold Policy or Title report before continuing to discuss and vote on the conservation lease projects.

Public Comment

2:06 pm: Ms. Ahlgren: Asked for a breakdown in price difference between the Leasehold Policy and the Title Report.

Ms. Hartman: See the [Item Brief Sheet: Conservation Lease Updates, Conservation Fees, Title Co. Fees and Changes to Projects](#)' and associated documents.

For the Schultz – Gran Prairie conservation lease, the Title Report costs \$1,400 and the Leasehold Policy costs \$3,500.

2:07 pm: Ms. Graham: Asked if the fee paid to the Title Company will be refunded if a grant application is now approved.

Ms. Hartman: Hopes future grant applicants will provide evidence of land ownership and legal descriptions before the Program spends a lot of time working on the project and before MSGOT takes executive action. The cost of the Title Report or Leaseholder Policy will be included in MSGOT's executive action to approve the grant.

2:08 pm: Ms. Hartman: Clarified that the fees associated with the Title Report and Leaseholder Policy would be in addition to the previously presented Stewardship Account figures.

2:08 pm: **Executive Action**

Chairman Freeman: Called for a motion to add the Leasehold Policy associated fees to the total Stewardship Account Grant Amount for the Conservation Leases, as recommended by the Program.

Administrator Jones motioned to proceed with the Title Insurance.

Second: Representative Bergstrom

Voice Vote Conducted:

Aye: Chairman Freeman, Ms. Ahlgren, Representative Bergstrom, Director Dorrington (by proxy), Director Kaster, Senator Lang (by proxy), Director Long (by proxy), Director Temple (by proxy).

Nay: None.

Discussion: None.

Motion Passed.

Schultz-Gran Prairie Conservation Lease

2:10 pm: Ms. Hartman presented an overview of the updated Schultz – Gran Prairie Conservation Lease and the associated Conservation District fees.

See the '[Schultz - Gran Prairie Ranch: Updated Conservation Lease Information](#)' document and associated map.

Haywire Ranch Conservation Lease

2:12 pm: Ms. Hartman presented an overview of the updated Haywire Ranch Conservation Lease and the associated Conservation District fees.

See the '[Haywire Ranch: Updated Conservation Lease Information](#)' document and associated map.

Nowlin Ranch Conservation Lease

2:12 pm: Ms. Hartman presented an overview of the updated Nowlin Ranch Conservation Lease and the associated Conservation District fees.

See the '[Nowlin Ranch: Updated Conservation Lease Information](#)' document and associated map.

MSGOT Discussion

2:14 pm: Representative Bergstrom: Asked Chairman Freeman to clarify what executive action will be taken at today's meeting.

Chairman Freeman: Asked the Program to share their recommendations.

Ms. Hartman: Stated that the Program recommends MSGOT approve the Schultz – Gran Prairie 20-Year Conservation Lease with a 40% baseline, Conservation District Fees, and Leaseholder Policy at the amount of \$573,005.21.

Representative Bergstrom: Clarified that MSGOT will be voting to approve the Grant projects with today's executive action.

Ms. Hartman: Confirmed.

Representative Bergstrom: Shared that he does not like voting on the Nowlin Ranch project without knowing all of the owners.

Ms. Hartman: Stated that the owners will not know until a Title Search is conducted on the property.

2:15 pm: Chairman Freeman: Clarified that MSGOT will be voting to approve and proceed forward with the grants, but the projects will not close until the information comes back from the Title Search. The votes will be a conditional approval to take the steps necessary to close. If the information does not meet MSGOT's understanding or how the project was presented, then the project will not close.

Representative Freeman: Restated that MSGOT's votes will not be final approval.

Ms. Hartman: Clarified that if the Title Search reveals no issues, then the Program will take the steps necessary to close the project as approved.

Representative Bergstrom: Asked if the MSGOT votes may or may not be the final approval for the grant projects.

Ms. Hartman: Clarified that MSGOT's votes would give the Program approval to proceed with the Title Search, and assuming no issues arise from the Title Search, then the Program would proceed to close the project. If the property lines of a project change, the Program would come back to MSGOT for additional approval.

Chairman Freeman: Agreed that if any information related to a grant project changes, the project will be brought back to MSGOT for re-approval. MSGOT can also reach out to the Program with any concerns related to grant projects.

Ms. Hartman: The Program has presented the properties as the Program knows it at the moment, if anything changes, the Program will come back to MSGOT.

2:16 pm: Ms. Ahlgren: Stated that in the past, MSGOT has approved conservation easements that have not closed for one reason or another.

Chairman Freeman: Added that the Landowner can still back out of the grant agreement after the MSGOT approval.

Ms. Ahlgren: reiterated that MSGOT is not setting themselves in stone with the approvals. The votes will be for approving to move the project forward with the potential to see the project again if any major changes happen.

2:17 pm: Representative Bergstrom: Thanked everyone for the clarification. Representative Bergstrom also asked how the Conservation District calculate their monitoring fees. Representative Bergstrom believes the monitoring fees seem to be a bit expensive and wonders why there is a different per-hour rate for each conservation lease.

Ms. Hartman: Negotiated with the Conservation Districts for each conservation lease. The Conservation District monitoring fees are based on the distance needed to travel to each location, and size of property. The Program has set up photo points throughout each property that the Conservation District will need to visit each year to capture a photo. Additionally, the Conservation District will need to compile a yearly condition report to send to the Program.

2:19 pm: Administrator Jones: Clarified that the Conservation District needs to conduct monitoring yearly for the length of the lease.

Ms. Hartman: Confirmed. The Conservation District will need to monitor the Schultz – Gran Prairie for 20 years and will have to monitor the Haywire Ranch and Nowlin Ranch for 15-years, respectively.

Chairman Freeman: Clarified that the Conservation District Fees listed in the Updated Conservation Lease Information document is the total cost over 20 or 15-years, not a yearly rate.

Representative Bergstrom: Asked for clarification.

Administrator Jones: Broke down the Schultz – Gran Prairie Conservation District costs. \$14,450.00 in Conservation District fees divided by 20 years equals \$722.50 per year. Divide \$722.50 by 16 hours per year and the Conservation District is asking about \$45.16 per hour to travel to and monitor the Schultz – Gran Prairie lease.

Ms. Hartman: Shared that the Conservation District fees also includes the adjustment for inflation over the next 20 or 15 years. Ms. Hartman is happy to share the Conservation District proposal with MSGOT.

- 2:20 pm: Ms. Ahlgren: Is a member of the Petroleum Conservation District and had many discussions of how to calculate monitoring fees because there is little to no guidance. The Conservation District cannot lose money but also does not want to ask for anything too exorbitant.
- 2:21 pm: Administrator Bostrom: From discussing with the Conservation Districts, the monitoring fees are the only way the Conservation District can be compensated for holding the conservation leases.
- 2:22 pm: Representative Bergstrom: Is thankful the Conservation Districts are willing and able to hold the conservation leases.

Public Comment

No public comment was received.

MSGOT Executive Action

- 2:23 pm: Chair Freeman called a MSGOT to vote on each individual project, as recommended by the Program.

2:23 pm: **High Ridge Land, MLR Perpetual Easement**

Chairman Freeman: Called for a motion to approve the High Ridge Land Perpetual Easement Proposal, as recommended by the Program.

Director Kaster motioned to approve the High Ridge Land Perpetual Easement Proposal.

Second: Ms. Ahlgren

Voice Vote Conducted:

Aye: Chairman Freeman, Ms. Ahlgren, Representative Bergstrom, Director Dorrington (by proxy), Director Kaster, Director Long (by proxy), Director Temple (by proxy)

Nay: Senator Lang (by proxy)

Discussion: None.

Motion Passed.

2:24 pm: **Bruce Johnson Ranch, MLR Perpetual Easement**

Chairman Freeman: Called for a motion to approve the Bruce Johnson Ranch Perpetual Easement Proposal, as recommended by the Program.

Ms. Ahlgren motioned to approve the Bruce Johnson Ranch Perpetual Easement Proposal.

Second: Director Kaster

Voice Vote Conducted:

Aye: Chairman Freeman, Ms. Ahlgren, Representative Bergstrom, Director Dorrington (by proxy), Director Kaster, Senator Lang (by proxy), Director Long (by proxy), Director Temple (by proxy)

Nay: None.

Discussion: None.

Motion Passed.

2:25 pm: **Dan and Mary Ann Johnson Ranch, MLR Perpetual Easement**

Chairman Freeman: Called for a motion to approve the Dan and Mary Ann Johnson Ranch Perpetual Easement Proposal, as recommended by the Program.

Administrator Jones motioned to approve the Dan and Mary Ann Johnson Ranch Perpetual Easement Proposal.

Second: Director Kaster

Voice Vote Conducted:

Aye Chairman Freeman, Ms. Ahlgren, Representative Bergstrom, Director Dorrington (by proxy), Director Kaster, Senator Lang (by proxy), Director Long (by proxy), Director Temple (by proxy)

Nay: None.

Discussion: None.

Motion Passed.

2:26 pm: **Schultz- Gran Prairie Conservation Lease**

Chairman Freeman: Called for a motion to approve the Schultz – Gran Prairie Conservation Lease Proposal, as recommended by the Program.

Ms. Ahlgren motioned to approve the Schultz – Gran Prairie Conservation Lease Proposal.

Second: Administrator Jones

Voice Vote Conducted:

Aye: Chairman Freeman, Ms. Ahlgren, Representative Bergstrom, Director Dorrington (by proxy), Director Kaster, Senator Lang (by proxy), Director Long (by proxy), Director Temple (by proxy)

Nay: None.

Discussion: None.

Motion Passed.

2:26 pm: **Haywire Ranch Conservation Lease**

Chairman Freeman: Called for a motion to approve the Haywire Ranch Conservation Lease Proposal, as recommended by the Program.

Ms. Ahlgren motioned to approve the Haywire Ranch Conservation Lease Proposal.

Second: Representative Bergstrom

Voice Vote Conducted:

Aye: Chairman Freeman, Ms. Ahlgren, Representative Bergstrom, Director Dorrington (by proxy), Director Kaster, Senator Lang (by proxy), Director Long (by proxy), Director Temple (by proxy)
Nay: None.

Discussion: None.

Motion Passed.

2:27 pm: **Nowlin Ranch Conservation Lease**

Chairman Freeman: Called for a motion to approve the Nowlin Ranch Conservation Lease Proposal.

Ms. Ahlgren motioned to approve the Nowlin Ranch Conservation Lease Proposal.

Second: Administrator Jones

Voice Vote Conducted:

Aye: Chairman Freeman, Ms. Ahlgren, Director Dorrington (by proxy), Director Kaster, Senator Lang (by proxy), Director Long (by proxy), Director Temple (by proxy)

Nay: Representative Bergstrom

Discussion: None.

Motion Passed.

Public Comment on Other Matters

2:28 pm: Brad Hansen: Mr. Hansen from MLR thanked MSGOT and DNRC Staff for their thorough review and support of the Conservation Easement Projects.

2:29 pm: Representative Bergstrom: Requested a copy of the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program Annual Report.

Ms. Hartman: The 2022 Annual Report will be published soon, and all Annual Reports can be found on the Program's website at Sagegrouse.mt.gov. Once the 2022 Annual Report is complete, Ms. Hartman will send a copy to Representative Bergstrom.

2:30 pm: Ms. Ahlgren: Requested a report on the Stewardship Account Balance.

Administrator Bostrom: The end of the fiscal year is next week, and a fiscal report will be generated then. The Program can provide MSGOT with the status of the Stewardship Account as a snapshot in time. The Stewardship Account is invested in short-term interest pools, which fluctuates the status of the Account. The Program can provide the balance of the Stewardship Account and a report on expenditures from the MOU with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks which funds the DNRC staff positions.

2:31 pm: Ms. Ahlgren: Asked the Program is there are any large projects on the horizon.

Ms. Hartman: Indicated that there is a large potential project but cannot share more details until the project goes public. Ms. Hartman hopes the potential project will commit to the Permittee Responsible method.

2:31 pm: **Chairman Freeman: Called for a motion to adjourn the June 29, 2023 MSGOT Meeting.**

Administrator Jones motioned to adjourn the June 29, 2023 MSGOT Meeting.

Meeting Adjourned at 2:31 pm.

Chairman for this meeting:

/s/  _____

Michael Freeman, Governor's Natural Resource Policy Advisor