

**MINUTES**  
**MONTANA SAGE GROUSE OVERSIGHT TEAM**

December 11, 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  
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  
Mr. Malcolm Long, Montana Department of Transportation (MDT), Director  
Mr. Dustin Temple, Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP), Director

**Staff Present**

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

**Call to Order and Administrative Matters**

10:02 pm: Chairman Freeman was unavailable at the beginning of the meeting and gave temporary Chairman duties to Director Long. Director Long called the December 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team (MSGOT) meeting to order.

Director Long asked the Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team members in attendance to introduce themselves.

Director Long asked the Montana Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program staff to introduce themselves.

**Program Consultation Process – Program**

10:07 am: Mr. Kauth, Ms. Moran, and Ms. Reather presented the Program Consultation Process overview.

See '[Program Consultation Process](#)' presentation.

## MSGOT Discussion

10:26 am: Senator Lang: Asked the Program what historic and scientific data is used to support the current Habitat Boundary Map.

Ms. Hartman: Explained that the boundaries of Core and General habitat were created by the Montana Fish, Wildlife, & Parks and have not changed since the creation of the Program.

Senator Lang: Asked if and how the State Historical and Preservation Office (SHIPO) interacts with the Program.

Ms. Hartman: Clarified that the Program does not work with SHIPO. The permitting agencies would be required to work with SHIPO, if needed.

11:03 am: Senator Lang: Asked the Program to clarify how the Program is handling access to county gravel pits.

Ms. Hartman: Explained that each project is site specific but that the Program works with proponents to minimize impacts. The Program has seen a lot of cooperation from proponents with the Program.

Senator Lang: Asked if the Program would consider an existing access road that has been on the landscape for over 40 years but crosses a lek area in a Program review.

Ms. Hartman: Stated that she has never seen an area where a lek is still active if an existing road had been active for 40 years. Ms. Hartman does not believe this scenario will be an issue. An existing road is considered an existing disturbance.

11:05 am: Director Long: Pointed out that MDT sees projects where project specific gravel pits are opened, and the project developers are fairly amenable to adapting the project.

Director Dorrington: Concurred with Director Long and added that the project specific gravel pits are considered seasonal and that they open and close and permit accordingly.

Director Long: Added that there is not a lot of gravel within the Greater Sage Grouse Habitat, so the gravel pits have existed for a long time.

Director Dorrington: Agreed.

11:07 am: Director Long: Thanked the Program for their presentation and appreciated the graphics and project examples.

## Public Comment on Other Matters

11:02 am: No public comment was received.

11:07 am: **Director Long: Called for a motion to adjourn the December 11, 2023 MSGOT Meeting.**

**Chairman Freeman motioned to adjourn the December 11, 2023 MSGOT Meeting.**

**Second: Senator Lang**

**Voice vote conducted: voted unanimously to approve.**

**Discussion:**

None.

**Motion Passed.**

**Meeting Adjourned at 11:08 am.**

Chairman for this meeting:

/s/  

Michael Freeman, Governor's Natural Resource Policy Advisor