

## Montana Conservation Strategy: 2015-2023 Implementation Chronology

### 2015

#### May 2015

- May 7: Governor Bullock signed the Stewardship Act [effective upon passage and approval].

#### July 2015

- July 1: \$10M is transferred from the general fund to the Stewardship Account.

#### September 2015

- September 9: Program manager began employment.
- September 18: first MSGOT meeting.

#### September – November 2015

- Initiate rulemaking for Stewardship Fund Grants with proposed administrative rule.
- Develop and launch Program website.
- November 17 MSGOT meeting:
  - Approved proposed administrative rules to implement the Stewardship Act's grants for publication in the December 10, 2015 edition of the Montana Administrative Register. Public comment on the rule opened.

#### December 2015

- December 15 MSGOT meeting, approved:
  - Three step-down documents related to the proposed grant rules considered: (1) MSGOT procedures for receiving and processing grant applications; (2) a document summarizing the eligibility and evaluation criteria for grants set forth in the Act; and (3) a draft grant application.
- Draft grant documents published to the Sage Grouse Program's webpage.

### 2016

#### January 2016

- January 1: Program begins implementing consultation requirements of Executive Order 12-2015.
- Public hearings on the proposed administrative grant rules in Malta, Roundup, and Dillon. Printed copies of the proposed rule, draft MSGOT Procedures 01-2016, Draft Eligibility Criteria and Guidance document, and a draft application were available at the hearings and on the Program webpage.

#### February 2016

- February 19 MSGOT meeting:
  - Adopted the proposed administrative grant rules as final
  - Endorsed Procedures 01-2016; approved the Eligibility Criteria and Guidance document.
  - Directed the Program to move forward and have submitted applications available for its review and decision-making during the May 24, 2016 MSGOT meeting.
- February 22: Administrative Rule Adoption Notice filed with the Montana Secretary of State's Office.
- GIS Coordinator began employment; two experienced wildlife biologists begin employment as short term workers for 8-10 weeks.

#### March 2016

- March 5: Final administrative grant rules become effective.
- March 17: Program announced through its list serve and a media release that MSGOT opened the first Stewardship Fund grant cycle.
- March 31: Final administrative grant rule replacement pages submitted to the Montana Secretary of State's Office.

### April 2016

- April 8: Stewardship Fund Grant application deadline.
  - Program and Peer Review of applications; assemble independent data to assess sage grouse habitat values as a surrogate for the habitat quantification tool.
- April 11: Environmental Science Specialist began employment.
- April 19 MSGOT meeting:
  - Approved programmatic exceptions to Executive Order 12-2015 consultation requirements so that Program review is not required for activities requiring a state permit or authorization under the following circumstances:
    - incorporated city limits
    - certain Dept. of Labor permits and licenses
    - certain Dept. of Environmental Quality permits (solid waste).
  - Approved deviation from the No Surface Occupancy requirement for a Mont. Dept. of Transportation highway reconstruction project.
- Complete two RFP processes to select contractors for IT-related Program needs: (1) create consistent digitized GIS layer of existing anthropogenic disturbances for the Density Disturbance Calculation Tool; and (2) new website and integrated web application tool for the consultation process (SG2.0).

### May 2016

- May 24 MSGOT meeting:
  - reviewed nine grant applications; five selected for funding (four conservation easements and one habitat restoration project); others to be reconsidered in the future.
    - projects selected for funding totaled \$3,099,500
    - 1100 acres habitat restoration in Core Area, southwest Montana
    - 34,688 acres conservation easement in central and northeast Montana Core Areas.
  - Approved programmatic exceptions to Executive Order 12-2015 consultation requirements so that Program review is not required for activities requiring a state permit or authorization under the following circumstances:
    - Clarified exception for Butte-Silver Bow and Anaconda-Deer Lodge city-counties
    - Certain Dept. of Environmental Quality permits (air).

### June – October 2016

- Program negotiations with grant recipients on grant agreement, conservation easement documents, and compensatory mitigation.
- Environmental Science Specialist (second and final) began employment.
- Through Sept. 9, Program reviewed 687 submissions for consultation; 55 projects cancelled; Program completed 578 consultations (91%).
- September 16: First mitigation stakeholder meeting
  - Two areas of emphasis: policy guidance and habitat quantification tool (HQT).
- Ongoing contract oversight for development of consistent existing disturbance GIS data and SG 2.0 web platform.
- October 26: Mitigation stakeholder meeting.

### November 2016

- November 1: Mitigation stakeholders meeting.
- November 9-10: Mitigation stakeholder HQT subcommittee meeting; presentation and discussion of Denbury Resources and SWCA Environmental Consultants (a professional collaborator) example approach; also discussed draft administrative rules.
- November 16-17: Mitigation stakeholders meeting; consensus that more time was needed on both general policy and HQT prior to finalizing draft administrative rules for MSGOT's consideration.
- November 18 MSGOT meeting:
  - Reviewed Draft DEQ Internal Guidance document.
  - Information on Cloud Peak Energy Haul Road Corridor project.

- Mitigation Guidance and HQT presentation by mitigation stakeholders on progress to date given by Denbury Resources and The Nature Conservancy.
- Discussed draft mitigation proposed administrative rules but acknowledged that stakeholders wanted more time.
- Stewardship Fund Grants:
  - 44 Ranch Conservation Easement MSGOT final approval given.
  - Proposals Deferred for Future Reconsideration:
    - Hansen Ranch Conservation Easement: MSGOT awarded funding contingent on grant applicant securing and documenting matching funds by Sept. 30, 2017.
    - Smith Conservation Easement: MSGOT deferred action.
- November 29: First proposal funded through the Stewardship Act closed (44 Ranch Conservation Easement, 18,033 acres in Petroleum and Fergus counties).

#### December 2016

- December 6 MSGOT meeting:
  - Reviewed ongoing DEQ permitting for Cloud Peak Energy Haul Road Corridor
  - Authorized exemption from the Executive Order 12-2015 consultation requirements for implementation of the Colstrip Steam Electric Station Administrative Order on Consent.
  - Approved proposed administrative rules for Mitigation Guidance and the Habitat Quantification Tool and directed the Program to move forward with formatting and publication in the Montana Administrative Register; solicit public comment on line and schedule formal hearings.
  - Stewardship Fund Grant Agreements
    - Thomas L. Watson Conservation Easement: reviewed and approved for execution
    - Raths Livestock Corp. Conservation Easement: reviewed, approved for execution
- December 16: mitigation stakeholder conference call.
- December 19: HQT draft document v1.0 completed, provided to mitigation stakeholders for review and comment.
- December 23: Mitigation stakeholder comments on draft tool and framework due; draft administrative rules published in the Montana Administrative Register.

### **2017**

#### January - February 2017

- January 12: public hearing on mitigation proposed administrative rules (Dillon).
- January 16: public hearing on mitigation proposed administrative rules (Roundup).
- January 17: public hearing on mitigation proposed administrative rules (Malta).
- January 23: public comment period closed on proposed rules; ultimately rulemaking was terminated with stakeholder support; final rules were not adopted because stakeholders desired more time.
- January 25: mitigation stakeholder webinar on HQT
- January 31 and February 1: Mitigation stakeholders workshop, Helena.
  - Review updated Habitat Quantification Tool GIS model.
  - Review Guidance and Procedures Policy concepts for compensatory mitigation, discussed the basics of the crediting and debiting process.
  - Sage Grouse Habitat Conservation Program SG 2.0 Website Demonstration.
  - Discussion of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Order Assessment Methods and Protocols.
- February 16: mitigation stakeholder webinar on policy guidance document.

#### March 2017

- March 1 and 2: Mitigation stakeholders workshop, Helena
  - Reviewed progress on quantifying conservation benefits (credits) using HQT, SWCA.
  - Confirmed first and second orders remain settled, that 3<sup>rd</sup> order methodology and data sources are appropriate, and discussed 4<sup>th</sup> order assessment approach and protocol.
  - Explored approaches for quantifying impacts using HQT with SWCA.
  - Introduced concepts for potential impact models.

- Learned about Sweetwater Ranches Conservancy - a USFWS-approved conservation bank in Wyoming.
- Discussed DRAFT Guidance and Procedures Document with Willamette Partnership.
- March 27: mitigation stakeholder webinar on HQT.

#### April 2017

- April 4 and 5: Mitigation stakeholders workshop, Bozeman
  - Discussed how the mitigation approach would work under Stewardship Account and other mechanisms.
  - Discussed DRAFT Guidance and Procedures Document.
  - Reviewed impact model methodology and types of expected results.
  - Discussed types of projects that should be considered for functional acre gains.
  - Reviewed state-wide modeling efforts and looked at completed hypothetical examples.
  - Discussed next steps including modeling additional hypothetical projects desired by stakeholder group, and documentation of HQT process and protocols.
  - Discussed remaining challenges: Legal protection, Financial assurances, Baseline, Multipliers and discounts.
  - Assigned individuals to follow-up focus call groups for resolving outstanding issues such as site-specific verification/validation data surveys, wind farm impact curves, and transmission line definitions and buffers.
  - Discussed merits of finalizing proposed rules relative to draft nature of the mitigation documents.
- April 24-27: five mitigation stakeholder webinars – small working groups each focused on specific topics.

#### May 2017

- May 7: mitigation draft documents distributed to full mitigation stakeholder group for review and comment.

#### June 2017

- June 1 and 2: Mitigation stakeholders workshop, Helena
  - Discussed how the mitigation process would work by integrating the Guidance document with the Habitat Quantification document.
    - Draft Habitat Quantification Tool Technical Document with SWCA.
    - Draft Mitigation Guidance and Procedures Document with Willamette Partnership.
    - Substantive comments on key issues to seek resolution, determine final direction.
    - Need for Scientific Peer Review of final draft documents.
    - Details regarding Rulemaking process.
    - Timing and process for future MSGOT consideration of final documents and designation of the HQT.
- June 2 MSGOT meeting:
  - Approved the reallocation of funds from the Hansen conifer reduction project to the Hansen Conservation Easement.
  - Heard proposals to reconsider two conservation easement applications
    - Weaver Ranch Conservation Easement: approved award of \$300,000.
    - Smith Conservation Easement: approved award of \$36,000.
  - Mitigation presentations by professional collaborators and stakeholders:
    - Draft Mitigation Guidance Document: Willamette Partnership.
    - Draft Habitat Quantification Tool Document: SWCA Environmental Consultants.
  - Directed Program to finalize the draft Guidance and HQT documents and rulemaking.
- June 29: mitigation stakeholder conference call.

### July 2017

- July 8: mitigation stakeholder webinar on policy guidance document and HQT technical manual; request for comment.

### August 2017

- August 31 MSGOT meeting:
  - MSGOT endorsed exempting range improvement projects (e.g. removal of conifers encroaching into sagebrush areas) from the DDCT 5% disturbance cap limit.
    - where it can be shown they are short term, impacts are temporary, and have documented habitat benefits.
    - individual projects still reviewed by Program and all EO 12-2015 stipulations apply.
  - Montana Land Reliance found alternative funding for Smith Conservation Easement and withdrew request; other easements funded by MSGOT not expected to close this year.
  - Dept. of Env. Quality working with Program to identify potential permit types that could receive Program review exemptions.
  - NRCS provided information on grazing management research on private lands.
  - BLM provided information on Instruction Memorandum MT-2017-037.
  - BLM and USFS provided their agency's perspective on Secretarial Order 3353.

### November 2017

- November 3 MSGOT meeting:
  - No executive action taken during this meeting.

### December 2017

- December 15 MSGOT meeting:
  - No executive action taken during this meeting.
  - Development of Sage Grouse Mitigation: Program presentation in Parts I, II, and III; HQT and Policy Guidelines development, goals, challenges, and upcoming decisions
  - Presentation of HQT results for hypothetical credit and development projects.

## **2018**

### January 2018

- January 30 MSGOT meeting:
  - MSGOT executed the Grant Agreement and approved funds to proceed with the Hansen Livestock Company Conservation Easement agreement, with contingencies, and to begin the Environmental Assessment process for public comment and review of terms.
  - MSGOT approved a narrow programmatic exception from consultation requirements of Executive Order 12-2015 for DEQ Water Protection Bureau for renewal and modification of certain Pollutant Discharge Elimination System and Montana Ground Water Pollution Control System permits for existing facilities.
    - exceptions specific to permits for modifications of permanent facilities, minor modifications to existing permits with no new disturbance or disrupting activities.
  - Program presentation and MSGOT discussion: Development of Sage Grouse Mitigation: Special focus on portions of the July DRAFT Guidance Document, and how the HQT and Guidance documents work together.
  - MSGOT decided to provide an opportunity for additional public and agency comments on the proposed rules, focusing on remaining issues where there is not consensus.

### April 2018

- April 26 MSGOT meeting:
  - MSGOT approved the Cloud Peak Energy's Spring Creek Mine Amendment 5 Transportation Corridor Mitigation Plan.

### May 2018

- May 4 MSGOT meeting:
  - MSGOT approved initiation of the second Stewardship Account grant cycle with discussion around streamlining and clarifying the MSGOT approval process.
  - Program presentation of the Draft Mitigation HQT Technical Manual.
  - Program presentation of the Draft Mitigation Policy Guidance Document, with discussion regarding how the HQT calculates direct and indirect effects, and how existing disturbances are evaluated.
  - Program presentation of proposed Administrative Rules to adopt the Draft HQT Technical Manual and the Draft Mitigation Guidance Document.
  - MSGOT decided to extend the public comment opportunity and obtain additional mitigation stakeholder group input prior to initiating rule making.
- May 16: mitigation stakeholder meeting.

### July 2018

- July 5 through August 5: mitigation stakeholder and public comment period on the July 2018 Draft Sage Grouse Mitigation Policy Guidance Document and the July 2018 Draft Sage Grouse Mitigation Habitat Quantification Tool Technical Manual.
- July 5 – August 16: July 2018 draft mitigation documents under independent scientific peer review.
- July 24 MSGOT meeting:
  - MSGOT approved the Hansen Livestock Company Conservation Easement Final Environmental Assessment, Proposed Decision Notice and Stewardship Fund contribution with discussion regarding compatibility between subsurface mineral rights and easements, and how landowners can use tax benefits.

### September 2018

- September 14 MSGOT meeting:
  - Program presentation on the Montana Mitigation System: Policy Guidance Document September 2018 version 1.0 and Habitat Quantification Tool Technical Manual September 2018 version 1.0
  - Program presentation and proposed timeline on the proposed Administrative Rules to adopt the Draft Mitigation HQT Technical Manual and the Draft Mitigation Guidance Document, initiating the public comment period, and subsequent final MSGOT decision to adopt.
  - MSGOT discussed additional public comment and the process and timing for adoption of the proposed Administrative Rules to adopt the Draft HQT Technical Manual and the Draft Mitigation Guidance Document; deferred executive action on whether to initiate rulemaking until October to allow for final opportunity for stakeholder and public input.
  - BLM presentation on disturbance management maintenance action to align the disturbance cap from 3% to 5% for consistency with the State Program, and further integrate BLM consideration of Executive Order 12-2015, MSGOT actions, and the Program when making decisions.
  - MSGOT approved the Raths Livestock Conservation Easement and Decision Notice.
  - MSGOT approved the KXL Pipeline and Associated Facilities Conservation and Mitigation Plan and contribution to the Stewardship Account.
  - MSGOT approved the Denbury Cedar Creek Anticline CO<sub>2</sub> Pipeline Mitigation Plan, noting creative permittee-responsible approach and voluntary multipliers to maximize conservation and create a surplus of credits available to future projects.
  - MSGOT approved the ONEOK Elk Creek Pipeline Project Mitigation Plan and contribution to the Stewardship Account.
  - MSGOT approved the American Colloid Company Daun West Mitigation Plan and contribution to the Stewardship Account.

### October 2018

- October 4 MSGOT meeting:
  - MSGOT discussed various policy options available to developers to meet debit obligations and changes to HQT model inputs for tall structures and transmission lines.

- MSGOT approved adoption of the October 2018 version 1.0 Policy Guidance Document and the October 2018 version 1.0 Habitat Quantification Tool Technical Manual subject to changes discussed and approved during this meeting specific to tall structures and transmission lines.
- MSGOT approved initiation of formal rule-making and public comment for the proposed Administrative Rules.
- MSGOT approved re-calculating American Colloid Company's Stewardship Account contribution for the Daun West Mitigation Plan to apply the 3% discount method.
- October 5-15: Program incorporated MSGOT's October 4<sup>th</sup> directives into the October 2018 v1.0 Policy Guidance Document and the October 2018 v1.0 Habitat Quantification Tool Technical Manual. Published the final documents to MSGOT's webpage.
- October 19: proposed mitigation administrative rules published in the Montana Administrative Register; public comment accepted through November 19.

#### November 2018

- November 9: public hearing on proposed mitigation administrative rules.

#### December 2018

- December 18 MSGOT meeting:
  - MSGOT noted the Western Governors Association unanimous adoption of policy resolution covering support for compensatory mitigation, mitigation strategies with federal partners, clarification of state authority, and important mitigation principles. MSGOT actions and MT's approach to mitigation have been consistent with this newly-adopted policy, and that although other states may have diverse approaches, all 22 governors supported the resolution.
  - MSGOT formally adopted Administrative Rules on Stewardship Grants and Mitigation; directed the Program to immediately begin preparing all that was necessary to implement the HQT and the policy guidance when final rules took effect in early 2019.
  - MSGOT approved the Rosebud Coal Mine AM5 Greater Sage-grouse Mitigation Plan.
  - MSGOT approved the American Colloid Amendment 5 to Opencut Permit 8 Warren Mine Site sage grouse Mitigation Plan.
  - MSGOT approved the NorVal Cooperative Inc., Black Coulee Transmission Line Project Mitigation Plan.
  - MSGOT approved the Big Flat Electric Cooperative PS-09 Transmission Line Project Mitigation Plan.
  - MSGOT approved the TRECO Fallon Transmission Line for Keystone XL Pump Station PS13 sage grouse Mitigation Plan.

### **2019**

#### January 2019

- January 11: Final administrative rules on mitigation and the Habitat Quantification Tool took effect.

#### March 2019

- The Program released a request for proposals (RFP) to solicit bids from potential contractors to update the web application, incorporate mitigation, the Habitat Quantification Tool, and the credit/debit registry in the current web application.

#### April 2019

- April 25 MSGOT meeting:
  - MSGOT approved Denbury Resources Permittee Responsible Credit Project to offset impacts of a major pipeline – Ringling Ranch Limited Partnership Conservation Easement. Denbury worked directly with the Montana Land Reliance which will hold the easement and provide annual reports to the Program assuring the future integrity of the credits calculated for the project.

- MSGOT granted a partial waiver of a portion of compensatory mitigation triggered by a cellular communication tower proposed by Triangle Communications that would be located in a Core Area at DY Junction on Highway 191. Triangle had sought a 100% waiver based on economic hardship. See the final minutes of the meeting for a complete record.
- Informational presentation on the Mud Springs Wind Facility Project located near Bridger, MT in Carbon County. The Project was initially scoped out in 2014 and had changed hands several times before ultimately being purchased by PacifiCorp from Innogy.

#### May 2019

- May 2: 2019 legislative amendments to the Stewardship Act (SB 299) became law.
- May 14 MSGOT meeting, single agenda item:
  - MSGOT decided that the boundary delineating the project area identified in a 2014 stormwater discharge permit issued by Montana DEQ constituted the portion of the project area that pre-dated Executive Order 12-2015. MSGOT determined that mitigation would not be required for any project elements located with the boundary delineated in the 2014 permit. MSGOT afforded PacifiCorp full discretion to site additional project infrastructure outside the 2014 boundary (including wind turbines even though new wind facilities are barred from Core Areas) but also required mitigation for anything PacifiCorp decided to locate outside the 2014 boundary.

#### June 2019

- The Program executed a contract with ProWest & Associates to update the existing disturbance spatial data layer using the most current 2019 NAIP imagery, and to verify whether development projects submitted to the Program had been implemented (and if so, to verify and correct if needed, the spatial data provided by developers to the Program).
- The Program executed a contract with Sitka Technologies to update the web application, incorporate mitigation, the Habitat Quantification Tool, and the credit/debit registry. Because Sitka Technologies had designed and built SG1.0, it was expected that they would hit the ground running. The Program worked closely with Sitka Technologies throughout the second half of 2019 to prepare an initial batch of enhancements and improvements to the existing web application that would be released in January 2020.

#### September 2019

- September 18 MSGOT meeting:
  - Selected six projects to receive funding from the Stewardship Account: three perpetual conservation easements and three term leases.
    - Marc Lewis Property Conservation Easement
    - Sauerbier Ranch Conservation Easement.
    - Willow Basin Ranch Conservation Easement.
    - King Ranch 30-Year Term Lease.
    - Schultz-Gran Prairie 25-Year Term Lease and Restoration.
    - Burgess 30-Year Term Lease and Restoration.
  - Substantive discussion regarding the valuation, baseline adjustments, and credit calculation methodology for term leases vs. perpetual conservation easements. Also discussion around complexity of land protection instruments like easements or leases and capacity for enforcement, proper monitoring, and documentation. Tentative direction provided to staff to refrain from negotiating any additional term leases in subsequent Stewardship Account grant cycles until the policy concerns were addressed by MSGOT during a future meeting.

#### November 2019

- November 15: Introductory conference call with stakeholders interested in participating to develop a modified policy approach to development projects utilizing trenchless excavation methods in response to SB 299 directives that became law in May, 2019. Goal was to determine desired outcomes, processes and a timeline.



- November 21 MSGOT meeting:
  - Follow up discussion on future policy direction for Program staff concerning term leases vs. perpetual conservation easements. Executive action was taken. A motion directing to Program staff to not bring any more term lease projects for MSGOT's consideration and to do more outreach and research on the issues with landowners, NRCS and other interested parties for MSGOT's future consideration was passed.
  - MSGOT approved additional funding in support of the Watson Conservation Easement which had been awarded funding by MSGOT in 2016 but closing delayed by the Watson family. An updated land appraisal increased the cost of the project. The additional costs were also shared by NRCS, who also increased funding support.

## 2020

### February 2020

- February 4: The Program met with stakeholders regarding projects that involve utilizing "Trenchless" methods. This scoping meeting with stakeholders allowed the Program to gather information from developers about methods they used when constructing buried features. This information was used to develop a standardized definition and criteria applicable to projects considered "Trenchless". The Program provided a straw dog example for potential policy revisions that could streamline the review process and reduce mitigation costs.

### May 2020

- May 20 and 21: Two more stakeholder meetings were held. After incorporating stakeholder input, the Program presented a proposed modified policy for trenchless methods.

### June 2020

- June 9 MSGOT Meeting
  - MSGOT reviewed Spring Creek Coal Company's requirement to provide compensatory mitigation for the revision of a mine project in southeastern Montana. In 2010 the BLM, MFWP, and DEQ approved a habitat recovery and replacement plan for a mine revision with the condition that Spring Creek Coal must pay for compensatory mitigation. MSGOT agreed to allow the compensatory mitigation funds to be paid to the Stewardship Account in lieu of the closing of MFWP's Landowner Incentive Program account.
  - MSGOT reviewed and approved the Modified Mitigation Policy Approach for the Development of Projects Utilizing Trenchless Methods. The modified mitigation policy: 1. provides a standard definition of "trenchless methods" which must be met to qualify; 2. streamlines the process using a two-part analysis that provides certainty, flexibility, and consistency; and 3. results in no mitigation obligations whatsoever for the vast majority of trenchless projects implemented to date.
  - The Board of Oil and Gas Conservation provided an informational summary of the 2019 Senate Bill 299. MSGOT discussed how the program might implement the legislation and agreed to review the information and to address to the adoption of definitive language at a future meeting.

### October 2020

- October 27 MSGOT Meeting
  - MSGOT reviewed and adopted the Modified Mitigation Policy Approach for Unsuccessful Oil & Gas Wells (Dry Holes) if Properly Plugged and Abandoned. The MGSHP and the MT Board of Oil and Gas will continue to develop and finalize the recommendations for the policy.
  - Highlights from the 2019 Annual Report were presented and reviewed by the committee.

### November 2020

- November 30 MSGOT Meeting

- Reviewed seven projects to receive funding from the Stewardship Account. Seven perpetual conservation easements were approved to receive funding:
  - 54 Ranch Livestock Conservation Easement
  - Alexander Ranch Conservation Easement
  - Fauth Ranch Conservation Easement
  - Jackson Ranch Conservation Easement
  - Mussard-Barrett Conservation Easement
  - Peters Ranch Conservation Easement
  - Bequette Property Conservation Easement
- MSGOT approved an update to the Basemap through the adaptive management framework to be completed within the next year.

#### December 2020

- December 14 MSGOT Meeting
  - Last meeting for the current MSGOT team.
  - Conservation spotlights from throughout Montana were presented to MSGOT.
  - No executive action was taken at this meeting.

### **2021**

#### February 2021

- February 25 MSGOT Meeting
  - MSGOT approved Clearwater Energy Resources LLC corporate guaranty offer associated with the Clearwater Wind Project.

#### March 2021

- March 24 MSGOT Meeting
  - MSGOT decided on the final and remaining contribution amount by Clearwater Energy Resources LLC to fulfill their compensatory mitigation obligation associated with the Clearwater Wind Project.
  - An overview of sage grouse population numbers was presented to MSGOT by Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MTFWP).

#### April 2021

- Senate Bill 230 signed into law, directing the Program to transfer a percentage of compensatory mitigation funds from the Stewardship Account to the State General Fund to repay the initial implementation of the Stewardship Act.
- Senate Bill 249 signed into law, revising funding of the Program by authorizing a cost-sharing agreement between the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) and MTFWP. Additionally, this bill recodified the Stewardship Act in Title 87, MCA.

#### May 2021

- Senate Bill 284 signed into law waiving certain costs incurred by counties, cities, and towns related to Opencut mining operations.

#### September 2021

- September 16 MSGOT Meeting
  - The Program presented MSGOT with a PowerPoint detailing the HQT model and function.
  - No executive action was taken at this meeting.

### October 2021

- October 14 MSGOT Meeting
  - MSGOT hosted a listening session and public comment opportunity.
  - No executive action was taken at this meeting.

## **2022**

### February 2022

- February 11 MSGOT Meeting
  - MSGOT authorized the 2022 grant cycle.
  - MSGOT discussed SB 230 Transfer of surplus Stewardship Account Funds to General Fund

### May 2022

- May 27 MSGOT Meeting
  - MSGOT heard a request for a waiver presented by HC Resources
  - Program introduced the need for initiating the rule making process to address an error found in the HQT Technical Manual.

### June 2022

- June 28 MSGOT Meeting
  - Common Ground Capital presented their proposal for a credit banking system.
  - The Program provided MSGOT with an update on the 2022 grant cycle proposed projects.
  - No executive action was taken at this meeting.

### October 2022

- October 27 MSGOT Meeting
  - MSGOT voted to approve five of nine Stewardship Account Grant requests presented for funding.

## **2023**

### May 2023

- May 24 MSGOT Meeting
  - The Program reintroduced the proposed rule change to the HQT Technical Manual that would rectify an error in how the Unsuitable Lands is incorporated in to the HQT Basemap.
  - The Program introduced a review and discussion on the application of the net present value discount method to the cost of debits and credits.
  - The Program provided MSGOT with an update on the 2022 grant cycle propose projects.
  - The Bureau of Land Management presented an overview of their Greater Sage-Grouse Planning Amendments.
  - No executive action was taken at this meeting.

### June 2023

- June 29 MSGOT Meeting
  - MSGOT voted to initiate the rule making process, as recommended by the Program in the May 24, 2023 meeting.
  - MSGOT voted to initiate the stakeholder process to review the application of the net present value concept, as recommended by the Program in the May 24, 2023 meeting.
  - MSGOT voted to add the Leasehold Policy associated fees to the total Stewardship Account Grant amount for Conservation Leases.

- MSGOT voted to approve three Conservation Easements and three Conservation Leases.

#### September 2023

- September 8
  - Program held a stakeholder workshop to brainstorm ways to address the net present value concept.

#### October 2023

- October 7
  - Hearing held for the proposed rule change to the HQT Technical Manual.

#### November 2023

- November 20 MSGOT Meeting
  - The Program provided MSGOT with an update on the proposed rule change hearing, net present value stakeholder workshop, and Conservation Lease Grants.
  - Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks provided a sage grouse population report.
  - No executive action was taken at this meeting.
- November 28
  - Proposed rule change to the HQT Technical Manual adopted.

#### December 2023

- December 11 MSGOT Meeting
  - The Program gave a presentation to MSGOT on the consultation process.
  - No executive action was taken at this meeting.