MONTANA WILDLIFE AND TRANSPORTATION

STEERING COMMITTEE
Meeting Notes
June 24, 2020

PURPOSE: To hear an update on time-sensitive public interest in wildlife and transportation, review recommendations from the PIT Crew, give direction on those recommendations, and share any other thoughts regarding this opportunity.

ATTENDEES:

- Steering Committee (Committee): Kevin Christensen (MDT Proxy), Charlie Sperry (FWP), Ken McDonald (FWP), Kylie Paul (MSWP)
- Agency Staff: Bill Semmens (MDT)
- Planning and Implementation Team (PIT Crew): Deb Wambach (MDT), Renee Lemon (FWP), Hannah Jaicks (MSWP); Nick Clarke (MSWP); Laramie Maxwell (MSWP)

AGENDA:

1. **Background on group of conservation organizations interested in wildlife and transportation**
    a. **The PIT Crew provided the following updates:**
        - The U.S. Department of Interior's (DOI) Secretarial Order 3362 directs DOI agencies to work with western states to conserve winter range and migration corridors for pronghorn, elk, & mule deer. There is associated funding for research and conservation projects.
        - In December of 2018, FWP hosted the SO3362 Partners Workshop. There was a breakout session on policy and communications, which decided to reconvene after the workshop to develop a communications plan for wildlife movement.
        - Heart of the Rockies hired a consultant to help develop the communications plan. FWP, Heart of the Rockies, and the consultant met several times over the fall of 2019 and winter of 2020 to determine goals of the plan. They decided to develop complementary plans instead of one joint plan because goals are slightly different.
        - From the start, FWP and Heart of the Rockies have recognized the opportunity to ensure any communications about the broader topic of wildlife movement compliment the Wildlife and Transportation Steering.
        - A coalition of conservation organizations led by Heart of the Rockies started meeting regularly this spring. They have a policy subgroup and a communications subgroup. While their focus remains on big game migration corridors, they also want to engage in wildlife and transportation issues.
        - Other groups have also recently formed or gained momentum around wildlife movement and transportation (Paradise Valley Safe Passages Partnerships; North Bitterroot; Jens; High Divide Collaborative, MSWP US 191 subcommittee, others) and are interested in engaging as well.
        - How does the Committee want to engage with these groups?
        - Is this an opportunity to leverage increasing public interest in a way that supports the vision and recommendations that came out of the summit? If so, how?

b. Committee discussion

- MSWP stated that a lot of what the MSWP Coalition discusses and hears about in its work are questions about who and how to engage on wildlife and transportation issues, so the SC providing direction and outlining the answers to these questions would really address that challenge and need in a unified way. It is an important leadership step for the group to take, and MSWP reps would like to see the PIT Crew and SC work together provide more details on how these types of groups and interested individuals can engage.
- The group agreed about the importance of the SC establishing the answers to these questions, and the PIT Crew presented a draft Recommendations Document as a strawman framework for SC engagement with interested stakeholders that can be shared with the public. This document (discussed below) will be shared with the public (upon completion) to enhance and strengthen engagement and collective achievement of shared goals and common messaging around wildlife and transportation issues.

2. PIT Crew's recommendations to best engage these conservation organizations and other members of the public

a. What are the recommendations?

- The PIT Crew explained the draft Guide for Stakeholder Engagement, which included a purpose, background on the Committee, and a framework for engagement. The recommendations are outlined below.

b. Recommendation 1: Explore the Montana Wildlife and Transportation website and review the Summit final report and other webpage content to understand current efforts with wildlife and transportation in Montana.

- FWP recommended including a list of contacts.

c. Recommendation 2: If you have an idea about a project or are forming a group to consider wildlife and transportation issues, please contact the Montana Wildlife and Transportation Steering Committee via a member of the Planning and Implementation Team.

- MSWP asked about the process for addressing inquiries. The PIT Crew and Committee need to start thinking about a process for receiving, reviewing, and responding to comments. It is unclear what the inquiries will look like and how many will be received. The Committee needs to develop an internal process and set clear expectations for timelines, process, and response to the public. Everyone agreed.
- One idea for organizing input is to filter inquiries into two 'buckets' or categories, e.g., regionally specific or project-level ideas versus conceptual program-level inquiries. This could also include public input about additional resources that are not traditional like alternative funding sources.
- The PIT Crew noted one of the desired outcomes of the Summit was recognition of the agencies' limited staff and resource capacity and the need to establish common goals and shared priorities. The hope is to streamline and focus efforts around shared priorities so as not to be pulled in too many different or divergent directions on this topic.
- FWP recommended adding the context of limited resources to Recommendation 2. For instance, being up front about limited resources for

wildlife accommodations, then go into detail about how stakeholders can engage and what types of efforts might be most helpful.

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- MDT suggested the Committee set expectations by being proactive and engaging the public through an open house forum. The group had been talking about how other groups can engage with them, but what about vice versa – the Committee engages with the public? MDT offered to help facilitate this forum within their renewed public involvement process to increase public involvement.

d. Recommendation 3: Implementing projects to address wildlife and transportation challenges or opportunities is complex and takes time. Consider the history and local community and private landowner perspectives about wildlife movement and habitat conservation, specifically related to wildlife and transportation issues.

- MSWP suggested this recommendation could be part of a future prioritization process (e.g., develop criteria for success that can provide consistency, set clear expectations, and guide more local/regional efforts)
- FWP suggested breaking this recommendation out into three components. First, stakeholders must consider the social and community dynamics of a project area. Second, there are technical and engineering complexities to wildlife accommodation projects. Third, implementing projects will take time. Breaking it down would help the public and stakeholders understand all facets and consider them comprehensively when providing input and inquiries.

e. Recommendation 4: Provide basic messages for communicating about wildlife and transportation

- MDT noted this recommendation was repetitive to the other recommendations. Everyone agreed. One solution was to merge these basic messages with the other recommendations.
- MSWP suggested making the entire framework for stakeholder engagement more prescriptive like a recipe.
- MSWP suggested separating the framework for engagement and messaging into two separate documents.
- MDT recommended a Frequently Asked Questions section on the website as the PIT Crew and Committee identify common questions from the inquiries we receive.
- The question about an online comment box remained but the group was open to it to provide some consistency in format for initial inquiries.
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3. Review and Close

ACTION ITEMS:

The PIT Crew will edit the draft Guide for Stakeholder Engagement based on the Committee's feedback and email the draft to the Committee. The Committee will review the draft and

provide edits within a two-week time period. The goal is to share the draft with the group of conservation organizations as soon as possible. It can be further revised and discussed at the next Committee Meeting in August.

- Other items for future Committee discussion:
    - The PIT Crew could offer to present to the group of conservation organizations sometime this summer.
    - Consider open house forum in the future to engage stakeholders.
    - Consider FAQ section on the website.
    - Consider a vehicle for sharing the Guide to Stakeholder Engagement like a story map.