

Friends of the
Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge
P.O. Box 758 • Stevensville, Montana 59870

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DEC 28 2016

Ravalli County Commissioners

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December 22, 2016

Mike Blenden
Refuge Supervisor
National Wildlife Refuge System
Mountain Prairie Region
134 Union Blvd., Suite 300
Lakewood, CO 80228-1807

Dear Mr. Blenden:

We wish to follow up on our letter to you of August 17, 2014, to request a meeting with you and any other representatives of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service you deem appropriate to discuss our ongoing proposal that the working relationship between your agency and the Friends of the Lee Metcalf Refuge be reinstated. As you know, it has been six years since the Memorandum of Understanding between our two groups was terminated and we believe that restoration of that agreement is long overdue. Sufficient time has passed for us to work through any problems that may have existed in 2010.

I won't repeat the historical details outlined in the referenced August 17, 2014, letter because we believe it provided you sufficient background for you and us to move ahead on this situation, except to point out once again that your predecessor, Dr. Rick Coleman, urged us to stay the course in our efforts on behalf of the Metcalf Refuge and we believe we have honored that suggestion. The record shows that we have worked diligently to promote the well-being of the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge.

For example, last year (2015) our Friends of the Lee Metcalf group were honored in our community on two significant occasions for its continuing efforts on behalf of the Refuge – receiving from the highly respected Bitterroot Land Trust its annual and major “Conservation Group of the Year Award” and also being named “Outstanding Citizen Organization of the Year” by the Stevensville, Montana, Civic Club at its annual recognition/awards program. Both, we believe, demonstrate our positive, ongoing, forward-thinking and highly visible approach to work in the Bitterroot Valley on behalf of our mission statement to “Support the operation, growth, preservation and perpetuation of the Metcalf Refuge’s fish, wildlife and overall ecosystem.”

What’s missing in all that, of course, is that while our efforts on behalf of the Metcalf Refuge must, at the present time, be focused on doing helpful projects off the refuge that relate directly to its present and future well-being, there are things we and the Refuge could be cooperatively accomplishing – by financial support and otherwise – by reestablishing the working agreement between us. Our board is emphatic in its emphasis on working positively with you and within our community to enable the betterment of the Refuge’s mission and therefore we propose that we get together with you at your convenience to formally discuss this with you.

Also, please review and consider the following sections of the **Comprehensive Plan for the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge**

Approved on July 12, 2012 – by Tom Reed, Refuge Manager

July 18, 2014 – by W. Dean Rundle, Refuge Supervisor Region 6

Chapter 3 Page 73, 3.9 Partnerships. In addition to this section the term partnerships are listed at least 30 times throughout the document but never the word “Friends”

“APPENDIX A – Public Involvement

A.3 Public Comments on the Draft Plan

“Response 3a-c, pg. 124

The service is not opposed to partnerships that support the goals, objectives and priorities of refuge management. The service has added language to the document that in the future (four years have passed) the refuge staff (of one) would pursue and foster a refuge advocacy group (why note a “Friends group?”) that will support refuge management priorities including the achievement of the goals and objectives in this and other refuge planning document.”

For the record, we provide here a formal presentation of our “mission statement” that literally motivates and drives the work we do on behalf of the Lee Metcalf National Wildlife Refuge:


Mission Statement


The Friends of the Lee Metcalf Refuge will support the operation, growth, preservation and perpetuation of the Refuge’s wildlife and overall ecosystem. We will complement the Refuge’s staff and work to enhance public awareness and promote public participation in the Refuge’s emotional and economic benefits to present and future generations, on local as well as regional and national basis, in harmony with the refuge’s mission.


In closing, we leave you with the following quote from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service Publication – *“Conserving the Future Wildlife Refuges In The Next Generation”* stating a major goal of the Service:

“Develop and Nurture Active and Vibrant Friends Groups on Every Refuge.”

Sincerely,


Paul Hayes, President
Retired Civil Engineering Tech, U.S. Forest Service
422 El Capitan, Stevensville, MT 59870
email: pdgpaul@q.com


Fred Thomas, Treasurer
Montana State Senator - District 45
1004 S. Burnt Fork Road, Stevensville, MT 59870


Dale Burk, Secretary
Owner, Publisher Stoneydale Press
523 Main Street, Stevensville, MT 59870

cc:

*** Senator Steve Danes**

*** Senator Jon Tester**

*** Representative Ryan Zinke**

*** Tom Reed Lee Metcalf Refuge Manager**

*** Ravalli County Board of Commissioners**
