

# Memo

**To:** Montana State Library Commission

**From:** Jennie Stapp, State Librarian

**Date:** September 20, 2019

**Re: Montana Natural Heritage Program Administrative Study**

The Montana State Library (MSL) and Montana Natural Heritage Program (MTNHP) staff are currently studying the administration of MTNHP to evaluate whether there would be benefit to MSL and MTNHP if MSL directly administered the MTNHP rather than contracting with the University of Montana. To date MSL staff have discussed the study with the Commission, MTNHP staff, the Governor's Budget Office, and the Vice President for Research at the University of Montana. Staff compiled a list of the questions we have received to date along with responses. At this time no obvious red flags have emerged.

A decision to directly administer the MTNHP largely comes down to the financial feasibility of the decision; will the overhead dollars generated through MTNHP grants and contracts provide enough funding to adequately handle the increased workload in the Central Services office?

In addition to the financial feasibility of an administrative change, MSL wishes to better understand the differences in benefits to individual employees and, if necessary, to what extent any negative impacts could be mitigated.

Staff will conduct the necessary research and evaluation of the study questions we have identified. We will continue to communicate with staff. We will also discuss the study at the annual meeting of the MTNHP Partners (date to be determined).

MSL staff feels confident that we will be prepared to make a recommendation to the Commission regarding the future administration of the program at the Commission's December meeting.

Specific study questions include but are not limited to:

- Financial analysis of program income generated vs. additional cost
- What additional staff capacity is necessary to successfully administer the program?
- What do we project to be the indirect dollars available to the program?
- What indirect rate would MSL need to charge to general enough income to cover overhead costs?
- How can we best replicate the MTNHP reserve/SPABA account?
- Is the State's insurance coverage enough to meeting agreement requirements?
- What MTNHP MOUs need to be updated?/How would current individual grants transfer?
- What are relevant State employment classifications, including exempt vs. non-exempt status?
- How do MTNHP staff salaries compare to current state pay ranges?
- Will pay increases be needed to the point that it hinders project work?
- What will the recruitment process look like to hire MTNHP staff?
- Will employee benefits changes have a negative impact on MTNHP Staff?
- Are there options to mitigate any potential negative impacts to MTNHP employee benefits?
- What might be the impacts of comp time to science and field staff?
- Can MTNHP use volunteers for field work?
- Spatial Analysis Lab Director needs to stay a Research or Tenure Track Professor in order to be eligible to apply for higher education grants and leverage the position to its intended and full potential in meeting MTNHP's programmatic goals! How do we maintain present-law adjusted support of this position?
- What indirect rate would UM charge to Spatial Analysis Lab projects?
- Would the Spatial Analysis Lab be more vulnerable to losing space on campus?