

# Billings Rod and Gun Club General Club Survey

## RESULTS

### Conservation and Club Mission

The Billings Rod and Gun Club's mission is to "serve sportsmen and women in the enjoyment of the hunting, fishing and shooting sports". Specific items that the founding fathers envisioned were to:

- To provide facilities and programs for Club members and the community that serve to support the enjoyment of these sports in the spirit of learning and maintaining skills, friendly competition, good sportsmanship and the responsible and safe use of firearms and archery equipment.
- To maintain an image in the community as a responsible organization, consistent with public expectations of true sportsmanship, good stewardship of fish and wildlife resources, the pursuit of hunting, fishing and shooting sports and in the general ownership and use of firearms.
- To represent the private sportsman and women in defending and promoting hunting and fishing opportunities, the wise management of the public fish and wildlife resources and opportunities for access to these resources; consistent with the hunting and fishing laws and the constitution of Montana.

Do you feel that the BR&G Club is adequately meeting it's mission? Circle one ----- YES – 15 NO - 7

If you answered NO what can be improved?

- 1) There should be more involvement with access issues & legislative initiatives.
- 2) I believe there should be a regular and recurring schedule of classes offered by each discipline, including advanced classes as well as introductory and range officer safety courses.
- 3) I don't like the current membership cap. It is hard on skeet. We can't get new shooter a membership card.
- 4) Decreased involvement in conservation issues, increased advocacy in firearms use, training and safety. (Archery).
- 5) I feel that the BRGC Board is isolated from the majority of membership, especially with the cancellation of the monthly meetings. This hurts the conservation division the most. There is really no venue for members to discuss issues that are important to them. The newsletter is insufficient to address this problem. The reason that the meetings were cancelled is low member participation. Perhaps, if meetings were to be reinitiated, a different format or less frequent meeting dates would garner member's interest.
- 6) More time, effort & money should be allocated to conservation issues.
- 7) Communicate how we are defending hunting opportunities. Are we hiring lobbyist groups? How do we stand on private property rights?
- 8) Conflicts over our sports will increase over time as places to do them decrease. Important to be a place where an open dialogue is respected and education of the public as to importance of hunting, fishing, conservation, & shooting to a healthy society and kids.
- 9) Eliminate the Waiting List. Open it up to everyone.
- 10) Please end affiliation with MT Wildlife federation. In my opinion, they and their parent organization the NWF, are environmental obstructionist groups that stand in the way of responsible development of natural resources in Montana.

### Club Governance

The existing Club is operated by an all volunteer Board of Directors with some part time paid administrative staff. The Club also employs a full-time caretaker and a part-time Sporting Clays range manager. Do you feel that the existing Club governance, staff and administration is adequate? Circle one ---- YES -17 NO - 5

If you answered NO what items could be improved?

- 1) More paid help – even part time would help out getting things done.
- 2) Not sure if they are already spending \$170,000 and I see no improvement – more staff would only cost more.
- 3) Add part time trained/certified course instructors. Provide alternative means for input, such as these surveys for members who are unable to attend general and division meetings.
- 4) Consider emailing meeting agenda and previous meeting minutes to all members.
- 5) The Board should explore establishing a volunteer corps to help with some club programs. Volunteers could take new members on facility tours and explain proper use of club facilities. The club house could be opened on weekends to give members a place to congregate and talk about matters.
- 6) I believe there should be an overall club manager to be on-site daily and oversee all shooting activities. This should be a paid position. The manager would report to the board. Initial hiring should include a 90 day probationary period. Pay scale - \$25 to \$35 depending upon experience. Paid for with an increase in dues.
- 7) I appreciate all of those who volunteer for the master plan!
- 8) Probably plenty of room for improvement, but these those that volunteer tend to do a pretty good job overall.

I personally am OK with the existing structure. Divisions being given the latitude to manage their own affairs while still understanding that actions going beyond day-to-day operations must be at the pleasure of the Board. I understand that maintaining a primarily volunteer group can be a challenge.

- 9) On several instances I have had to deal with the caretaker and I wasn't very impressed! She was rude, blunt and unfriendly. Once was when I asked to purchase another key at 8:15 am and got chewed out for bothering her so early and the other time was when she checked to see if I had a member card when I was on the rifle range and she was very unfriendly. I have also heard several other members complain about her as well.
- 10) The Board needs term limits and a method to absentee vote or a way to allow the full membership to vote.

### Club Capacity

Do you feel that the current 2000 family membership cap should be changed?

- Circle one: NO – keep the cap at 2000 family memberships - 12  
 YES – higher than 2000 family memberships - 9  
 YES – lower than 2000 family memberships – 2

- 1) Keep it at 2000 until the Master Plan is completed and additional range capacity is added.
- 2) Maybe add 250 to 500 life members @ \$1000 from present members. Pay fee off quarterly & a yearly \$25 maintenance fee. Off life membership to a new members if quota isn't full. When full create a waiting list.
- 3) If it is done wisely, calculating impact on current and future infrastructure, capacity maybe add 10% to 25%?
- 4) Keep at 2000 unless we expand facilities.
- 5) I think the club could handle more members if the dues are raised to a level to create a fund for greater expansion and improvement of facilities. Maybe offer a limited membership for use of certain areas only?

### Club Divisions

The BR&G Club currently has five separate divisions including:

- 1) Archery
- 2) Sporting Clays
- 3) Skeet
- 4) Rifle/Pistol
- 5) Conservation

The shooting sport divisions are very active and operate as separate entities with their own volunteer officers that report to the main club Board. The Conservation Division is operated by a small group of Board Members. Do you see a need for any change to this structure? Circle one ---- YES - 7 NO -14

If you answered YES what Divisional changes would you like to see?

- 1) I would like to see a youth programs division added to address the unique aspects of increasing youth participation in all of these disciplines.
- 2) Dump conservation. This division has nothing to do with the club or facilities. It should be separate organization which could still meet at club facilities. Limit money time and organizational assets to the use and upkeep of club grounds.
- 3) Consider separating pistol and rifle into separate divisions.
- 4) The separate division governance model generally works well for the day to day operations of each division. The needs of each division are different enough that those individuals familiar with the peculiar needs of the discipline should be allowed to manage. This management system breaks down, however, when it comes to disciplining individual members. I am referring to the skeet division and Tim Nagel. A cadre of skeet division personnel have essentially blackballed Tim and prevented him from regaining his key-holder status because of a personality conflict. This kind of behavior is an abuse of the division management system and needs to be addressed. I feel an independent judiciary board should be established to handle disciplinary actions, procedures established to fairly address any problems, and uniform rules of enforcement that apply to all divisions be enacted.
- 5) Conservation political efforts – more accountability to General membership.
- 6) The conservation division is largely isolated by John Gibson. He does a great job in his individual efforts, but a very poor job of including other members. There are no monthly meetings or structure of any kind in the conservation division. There is also no dissemination of information, other than the monthly newsletter which is extremely limited. This division needs more structure and effort to involve other members and resources. The division should also be allocated a larger part of the budget.
- 7) Maybe? Shotgun, while a driving force in the club seems to have some disproportionate influence in club decisions. --- maybe that's just democracy at work!!

I think the structure is fine. I would suggest taking another look at the Conservation Division which I believe to be one of the most important elements of BRGC. John Gibson has represented this group for a good number of years and is to be commended for that. He ain't gonna' be there forever, though, and there should be a mechanism that allows some tracks to be left. John's style is often to function as somewhat of a "Lone Wolf" when dealing with other groups and organizations throughout the State. He frequently speaks for BRGC and the general membership. Club positions advanced by John or anybody else should be with the knowledge and concurrence of the Board.

Perhaps it would strengthen this part of BRGC if there was more emphasis on leading a fully functioning team. A more active committee may help ensure continuity when John eventually chooses to step down.

- 8) It would be good if there was more integration, but I know attempts have been made to improve this – and folks are just very busy and tend to stick to their own thing. Can't think of any ways to improve this.
- 9) Term Limits especially in Skeet and Archery.
- 10) I feel that there is enough activity in the pistol events that it should be split out from the rifle and make its own division. As muzzleloading is starting to show some activity, maybe tie it inot a rifle/muzzleloader division.

### **Fee Structure**

The BR&G Club currently charges \$85 per year for membership. Additional fees are charged for special shooting events, and the shotgun sports. These funds are utilized for building, grounds and facility maintenance, utilities, staff salaries, new range improvements and moderate support of conservation issues. In

addition, a small land acquisition fund was recently started. How do you think the Membership fee structure should be changed in the future? Circle all that apply

- 1) No change – 007 - keep the yearly membership fee at \$85 or as low as possible. Please note that this will not allow for any expansion to the building and grounds maintenance program, new facility improvements, or any expanded land acquisition and conservation efforts.
- 2) Some change -011– up the fee somewhat (by \$25 to \$50) to properly keep up with grounds, building maintenance and possibly expand with new facilities, a larger land acquisition fund and better funded conservation efforts.
- 3) Big change - 005 – up the yearly membership fee (by \$50 to \$100) to allow for facility expansion and upgrades, and much improved land acquisition and conservation project funds.

I believe this question is deeply flawed. The language following the "No Change" choice is perhaps the best example I found of attempting to "push a response". It's not only misleading, it's flat out wrong! BRGC has accomplished a great deal over the years with less money. We've cost-shared with others such as FWP, etc. There seems to be repeated emphasis on land acquisition and conservation efforts and expansion plans although they are not particularly well fleshed out. What's in your minds? What conservation efforts? Are you initiating steps to move the Club?

What is accurate and appropriate for the membership to consider is that with current budgets, a good prioritization process is necessary taking entire Club needs into account, and to recognize that overall accomplishments will be somewhat slower to realize than if a larger pot of money is available.

I know there is a certain faction within BRGC that continues to push for hiring everything done, throwing open the Club to all comers, raise dues, and perhaps move the entire operation to another location. Etc.

- 4) I'd see no problem with \$150 per year.
- 5) Some of us will have to make a hard decision on whether we can afford to renew our membership if it goes over \$100 per year. I know that there will not be any problem filling any open memberships that would occur but from my personal viewpoint, it would be sad to lose any current members because the club priced its membership higher than they can afford. An alternative would be to have a one time initiation fee for new members. Or if a division wants to improve their facility, they would have to raise ½ the cost (minimum) through events or donations with the club covering the other ½. At some point, there may be enough development close to the club that normal operation would become impossible. With any luck, the ground will be worth enough to purchase land in another location. The buildings would probably not add any value as they would have to be removed from development.

#### Additional comments

- 1) Require a floor – a mandatory minimum – for competition entry fees, with the mandatory minimum amount to be spent on discipline specific improvements.
- 2) Increase fee to \$100 --- now you have \$10,000 per year to add to land acquisition, new facilities & maintenance. I wonder how my \$85 fee is allotted, or is everything in the general fund?
- 3) Let supply and demand determine club dues, especially with large backlog of people wanting membership.
- 4) If you increase the family membership you could earmark that money for club improvements, expansion etc. If we get aggressive with a fee increase I feel we run the risk of pushing our members to the new Blue Creek range with their \$700 lifetime membership fee. One thing to consider would be to offer 1000 - \$1000 lifetime membership. Then increase the family membership by 1000. The lifetime members could even pay a small maintenance fee.
- 5) Dues should be \$125 per year or \$10 per month.
- 6) No change except for occasional assessments for major capital projects? Or a way to keep fees reasonable for those who use the club infrequently? Maybe 2 or 3 tiered rates, based on annual usage. The more you use it the more you pay. Country Club members pay greens fees don't they?
- 7) Upping the membership dues by \$50 to \$100 would help with our backlog of membership requests.
- 8) Focus on the facility and not on conservation projects. People can join and donate to conservation groups if they agree with their mission and tactics.

## Other Comments

Please list any other comments that you may have which will assist the Master Planning efforts on the back of this sheet.

- 1) The vast majority of members are there for the rifle range & most only use the grounds to site in their guns. If you move the range then why be a member if one has to drive to several locations to shoot. Maybe archery and shotgun sports could be at one location & rifle – black powder & pistol at another. I am amazed how much activities are slanted toward shotguns. You should change the name to Billings Rod and Shotgun Club. I understand the safety issues with rifles but if you move the rifle range I can go back to shooting at 16 mile.
- 2) General Meetings – lack there of: --- 2000 members and our only communication is through the newsletter, website & general election. I know this is because of apathy of members, but how about a fall agenda, Sept. birds & archery 20 min each. October Pheasant, Antelope, November Big Game and December election.
- 3) Increase land acquisition fund to establish better perimeter and possibly increase club facilities like long range rifle 600 yards plus and more shotgun facilities, close contact rifle/pistol area.

Thanks you for your efforts in working on a master plan.

I'd like to offer some general thoughts that are triggered by a review of some of the Division Surveys, General Club Survey, and the BRGC website

I think the idea to prepare a long-range Master Plan for the Club is excellent and that reasoned change and periodic tweaking of any organization is often a good thing. If nothing else this effort should stimulate some organized thought which will include collecting an inventory of existing conditions plus a needs assessment. This should include analyses based on fact rather than rumor or guesses (e.g. what direction does big bore face in relation to schools, etc. or are shooters fallout zones truly adequate or inadequate?). You have an opportunity to pull the club and its parts together, but you need to keep "spin" and independent agendas out of the process.

Currently, it seems that the structure of some of the questions are leading the reader in ways that should be avoided.

I personally do not favor a "country club" approach where more and more is "hired out", volunteerism gradually evaporates, and costs to belong spiral upward. If there is a mentality that we need to move the Club in the short-term, get over it cause we don't. Looking to the future to be prepared should needs arise down the road is right on, just don't make major shifts out to be short- term needs when they aren't.

Makes perfect sense to me that your group is preparing a draft plan if the intent is then to put it in front of all 2000 members for review. Certainly, you won't get response from many of those, but nobody can later come back and say they were not given reasonable opportunity to review and comment. Gotta' do this through a mass mailing.

I would hope that we can continue to provide a safe affordable family friendly place to pursue our interests. Provide a reasonable level of public opportunity to enjoy BRGC , maintain relevance in conservation issues, and continue to accomplish adequate maintenance and improvement of the grounds and facilities. That should be enough.

