



Montana Code Annotated 2019

TITLE 90. PLANNING, RESEARCH, AND DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER 15. NATURAL RESOURCE INFORMATION SYSTEM

Part 3. Information System

Natural Heritage Program

90-15-302. Natural heritage program. (1) There is a Montana natural heritage program to be operated by the library. In order to establish the program, the library may contract with an independent contractor or may employ necessary staff. In order to minimize costs, the library or other state agencies may make available state resources and facilities to an independent contractor as part of a contract for services.

(2) The Montana natural heritage program shall be designed to be compatible with similar programs in other states. This program is to be an initial step in the formulation of the comprehensive natural resource information system referred to in **90-15-301** and is to be considered a part of the system.

History: En. Sec. 5, Ch. 650, L. 1983; amd. Sec. 8, Ch. 395, L. 1985.

MTNHP Program Overview

The Montana Natural Heritage Program (MTNHP) is Montana's source for information on our plants, animals, and habitats. Through one-on-one research consultations, customizable reports, and online web applications, the MTNHP delivers data that informs natural resource management and powers economic growth. The data managed by the MTNHP comes from a variety of sources including data exchange agreements with state and federal agencies, observations submitted by individuals, and field work conducted by staff. The MTNHP also develops and delivers value-added data products produced by subject matter experts on staff.

At the time the MTNHP program was created in statute, the Montana State Library (MSL) did not have the knowledge or expertise to create and administer such a program. That point is no longer the case. Now MSL supports the Natural Resource Information System (of which the MTNHP is a part), the Water Information System, and administers the Montana Spatial Data Infrastructure and statewide GIS coordination. The functions closely align with the work of the MTNHP.

Recommendation

It is in the best interest of all stakeholders to ensure the long-term stability of the MTNHP.

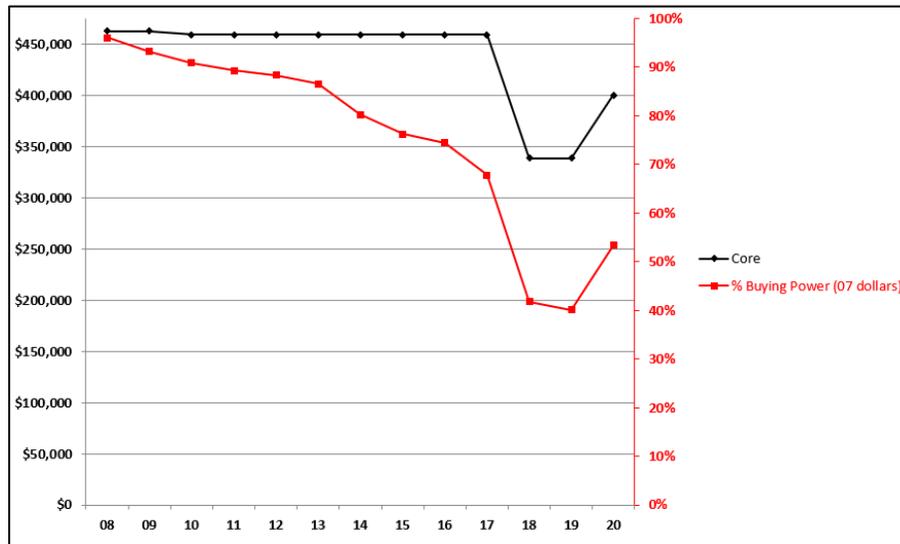
The Montana State Library (MSL) values the work of the MTNHP, the staff, the Program partners, and our on-going relationship with the University of Montana. MSL believes that it is appropriate to continue to contract for certain deliverables that are outside the scope of the expertise of MSL and/or that can be more effectively managed by third parties. However, as the legal entity responsible for the success of the MNTHP and the fulfillment of its statutory responsibilities, it is the responsibility of MSL to ensure the stability and positive strategic direction of the MTNHP.

The Montana State Library (MSL) staff recommends to the State Library Commission (Commission) that the Commission act to approve a transition of the administration and operation of the Montana Natural Heritage Program (MTNHP) from the University of Montana to the State Library over an eighteen-month period concluding at the end of the 2021 biennium.

Nature of concerns

Prior to conducting this study, MSL staff were aware of the ongoing erosion of core funding to operation the MTNHP. Through our analysis, additional information has enhanced these and other concerns that illustrate the long-term instability of the program. As a contractor, it is not the responsibility of the University to resolve these concerns. That responsibility lies with MSL.

1) Decline in core contract dollars and buying power (Chart source, August 14, 2019 MSL Commission meeting presentation)



- 2017 biennium contract total: \$878,226
- 2019 biennium contract total: \$657,419
- 2021 biennium contract total: \$800,000

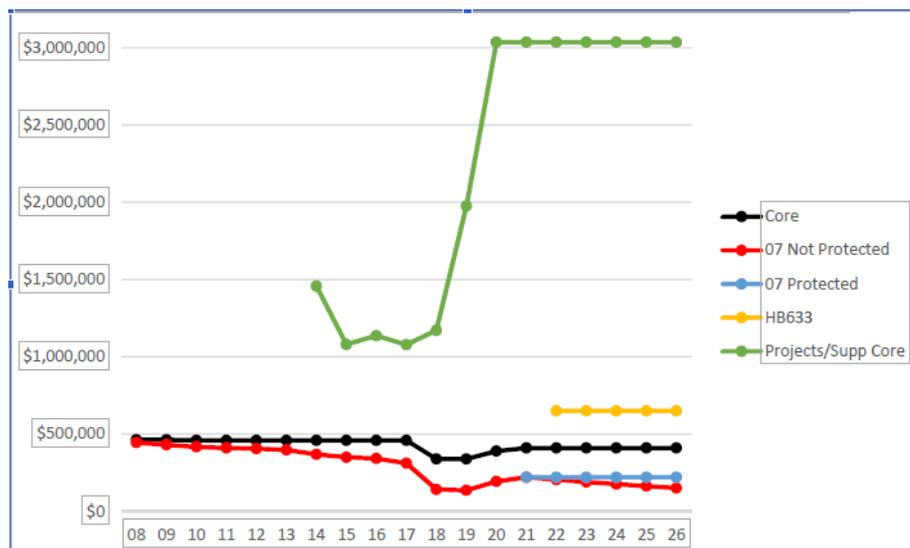
2) Erosion of core funds for permanent FTE

Core FTE Needed 2005 *	Core FTE Funded 2005*	Core FTE Funded 2019**	Difference
10 FTE	4.5 FTE	3.29 FTE	-1.21 FTE

* Data supplied by program coordinator in 2005 when evaluating contract options for the MTNHP

**Data source, August 14, 2019 MSL Commission meeting presentation

3) Program reliance on soft monies (Chart source, Dec. 18, 2019 Maxell letter to MSL Commission)



- Agreements with a start date of calendar year 2018 to the present total \$3.1M
- Agreements for work performed for other states in this period total \$1.5M
- Of the \$3.1M, \$1.396 is from one funder
- Of the \$3.1M, \$2.1M are dollars raised by one staff member