

**Meeting Minutes for CMR Community Working Group  
Meeting  
Thursday, August 28, 2014  
FWP Building, Lewistown, MT**

**Attendees:** Bill Milton, Terry Selph, Ralph Corbett, John Chase, Rachel Frost, Pete Husby, Kit Fischer, Sandy Youngbauer, Dean Rogge, Monte Billings, Steve Wanderaas, Mike Granger, Bridget Nielsen, Bill West, Doug Pal, Sue Fitzgerald, Tara Ostler, Mark Good, Carl Sielstad and Matt DeRosier joined at lunch time, Ron Moody came in at 2pm.

Facilitator Bill Milton opened the meeting up at 10:05 am by asking people in attendance to introduce themselves, state who they represent, and answer the grounding question: How much rain did you receive during the big storm last week?

Bill Milton 6" at the Ranch

Bridget 6.9" in Jordan and 8" north of Zortman

Monte 4-5" not a lot of damage

Ralph Corbett – 10" in the town itself – quite a bit of damage across the county

Steve – 5" of rain

Kit (Missoula) maybe 1 -2"

Pete (Bozeman) 2"

Rachel – (Livingston) 1"

John (Great Falls) – about 4" around the area

Terry – (Lewistown) 5" maybe a little more Winifred had 7-8"

Dean (Sand Springs) 6-8"

Bill West (Beaverhead County) 5" in August 3" last week

Sue (Jordan) 4" at Jordan

Tara (Jordan) 4"

Sandy (Lewistown) 11" around Roy

Mark Good – 5"

Bill provided background on the last 4 meetings of the CMR CWG, which have been mostly educational about rangeland monitoring methods, disturbance and animal behavior. Bill yielded the floor to Pete Husby, NRCS State office, Bozeman.

Pete Husby – *"Thoughts on Grazing management and Wildlife Habitat – Can we have both?"* -

3 Main Points

1. Super organism – **the land** – needs to be protected and conserved
2. Becoming common to use animal populations as indicators of ecosystem health instead of looking directly at the soil and land condition
3. The "great natural fairy tale" – that we (humans) are not natural and the best thing that we can do is to stop all human activities

What's required for healthy soils on grazed native rangeland?

- Covered soil – covered with litter
- Biodiversity – as many choices as possible – humans have been simplifying agriculture since ancient times and it always causes problems in the end
- Allow for complete recovery of grazed plants between grazing events
- Proper stocking rates
- Animal impact – have to have some animal impact to stimulate the mineral cycle

Rangeland Health Attributes

- Soil-site stability
- Hydrological function
- Biotic integrity
  - Litter cover
  - High successional plants
    - Feed – forage balance
  - Biodiversity

What is required for healthy “wildlife habitat”?

- Species specific!! (*Not all wildlife need the same habitat, there are species with conflicting needs that occupy the same range*)
- Need a range of successional stages/ cover types
  - That is achieved through disturbance

It's all about biodiversity

- Biodiversity tends to be greatest at some level of disturbance compared to the extremes of too much or no disturbance
  - Huston, M.A. 1994 Biological Diversity, Cambridge University

Effect of too much “thatch”

Reduces light availability at the soil surface and reduces soil/litter contact for degradation

Prairie Dog Towns: Extreme Disturbance

- Soil enrichment? – claims of >N,P, and organic matter
- Regrowth & plant diversity attract grazers – nutritional advantage to some level of prairie dog colonies
- Biodiversity

Bill Milton introduced Bill West, Red Rock Lakes NWR Manager – “Partnerships with National Wildlife Refuges = Landscape Conservation”

- Impact can only come through relationships when you have these small postage size refuges....even large ones when dealing with animals that use large landscapes.
- Refuges should not try to operate as islands, they are not big enough to accomplish things on their own....rather they should use their ground to Leverage Conservation on surrounding area.
- Mentioned that the condition of the landscape in Yellowstone National Park is overlooked because people like to see the wildlife. However, if an adjacent piece of say BLM land was in similar condition, it would be front-page news, even though they are both public lands.
- Trust can be built and the refuge system has a “Partners for wildlife program” great for building trust with local landowners. This program is key where there are critters of interest, but not a big land base, such as with migratory birds. In this case, the USFWS coordinates using neighboring private land to help conservation of their species.
- Mentioned the Artic Grayling project in the Big Hole and the success of the Artic Grayling being removed from the Threatened and Endangered Species list.
  
- Red Rock Refuge
  - Has been reducing AUM’s similar to that of the CMR; the Refuge was 40,000 acres and supported 20,000 AUMs originally and now is 61,000 acres and supports only 6,000 AUMs.
  - They have been working on the 80 percent they agree on, such as development
  - Working on conflict resolution on grizzly bear and wolf interactions – wolf rider is a cooperative partnership with the refuge and the private landowners.
  - Have been monitoring for habitat with the thought that it would lead to wildlife. which is not always the case; habitat does not mean wildlife any more than wildlife means habitat.
  - Sage Grouse came into play as a candidate species and two LEKS on the Refuge, but most of the breeding ground and habitat is off the refuge.
    - J-M enrolled 40,000 acres in SGI and received 1,000 AUMs on refuge ground in a collaborative agreement with the refuge.
    - Using large blocks of DNRC ground as community grass banks

Bill West feels that if the community is behind him then USFWS leadership is not as likely to question his innovative ideas and efforts.

Bill provided the following words of wisdom for the group:

- Harvesting conservation = building relationships and reaping the benefits in conservation.
- You don’t have to have a leader title to be a leader.....it is time for communities to put ourselves in the news to demonstrate a cooperative approach to landscape management.
- “Litigating can stop things, but it cannot build things.” Build relationships, **then** take on those problems that other people can’t solve.
- Groups like this can only move at the speed of trust. This doesn’t happen when we have very different agendas (*agendas being different from concerns and even beliefs*)

## Comments:

- Dean mentioned that over the last 5 years the attendance numbers are going down and he believes that this could be due to trust.
- Ralph asked how long it took the Red Rock Refuge to get to the point they are now. – Partner's for Wildlife was in the area in 1997 starting to build the trust and relationships.
- Rachel mentioned that with Red Rock it was the ability to leverage conservation which could give assurances to the private landowner and use the refuge to accommodate a need of the landowner. They help the landowner look at alternatives they could never envision before.
- Bill Milton asked if the community has ownership in the project. Can they be the driving force as they will be here when management is changed? Land can't be managed without the community.
- Carl – mentioned that the CMR has been managed without the community. Mentioned that up until Rick Potts there was no trust with the CMR and the people. Water Rights Compact is a huge success.
- Matt it's always nice to hear success stories, wish the issue that is facing this group was as easy as grayling. Feels that this group is bombarded by big issues and he wishes that there were smaller issues to build success and trust.
- Doug – mentioned that to be able to build the trust it means that people need to be around more than a couple of years. **COMMUNICATION!**
- Bridget mentioned that there has been progress made since she came on board with this group.
- Blackfoot Challenge was the poster child for how to collaborate in the USFWS training. Progress moves along a timeline and that the timeline does not always move at the same speed and that conservation takes time. There is a lot of benefit to having someone within a refuge for a long period of time – knowledge of the issues and people. CCP is a guideline to what needs to be done but it does not spell it out there is flexibility. **COMMUNICATION!**
- Tara –Less turnover = less start over
- Ralph – Positive – Cooperative effort with the fire crews with both efforts – half full
- Steve – too soon to give up – sees progress – speakers were sincere
- Sue – both speakers were really interesting – has not really been that long when you factor in the distrust.
- Kit – always human nature to be reactive to things – it is some of those that cause them to be reactive – some are economical reactions as no ones that wants to be beat down economically. Trying to find the pieces of commonality on issues sometimes that might be the 20 % instead of the 80. Has faith in the group although there are steps backwards there are still meaning conversation.
- Mark Good – has the same feeling that the agencies aren't hearing us and that sometimes it is easier to just sit back and let them make the decision. Collaborative efforts are a lot more difficult but better in the long run. Everyone is afraid of losing something
- Pete – importance of community involvement and some type of ownership.

- Rachel – Hears a lot of positive momentum while Rick was here. The next manager will have a huge influence with the group. It will be up to the group to meet the manager with open communications.
- John – not an option to abandon ship on the group – whether it leads to where the group wants it to be is hinged on the new manager. Water Compact was a great success and hopes that there can be more success.
- Terry – presentations were both out of the box on thinking – lawsuits and trust don't go hand in hand. Sometime the best way to get things done is to keep the lawyers out.
- Dean – trust showed up with Rick as he had trust with the group. The group has a couple of trust building projects – Saltcedar project and the pilot project. Maybe the group could work with the senior administration to have an agreement that if something is going good that the refuge manager could stay on if they want to.
- Bill – outside conversations can sometimes be where your key spots for progress – trust can sometimes be better outside then in the room with everyone. There is an act that would not permit a federal administrator to have an advisory committee that could lead to persuasion of the person's choice but don't under estimate the power of a good letter writer or hand shaker. Find the higher administration and voice your opinion.
- Mike – now is the time to make your voice heard and provide input Mike Blenden and Will Meeks.
- Matt has spoken to his bosses about the project leader and they have asked him questions about how people feel. He feels that a well written letter would not hurt.
- Mike is kicking himself for not coming to these more and listening as this is where things get done. He is enjoying listening to the open, respectful dialogue that goes on.
- Ron talked about silo thinking and the NGO's have several silos they work in. Rural people not being engaged with Urban people and how there is no trust between the two. Urban people do not trust rural people to make good decisions about their urban concerns. Only way to build trust is sweat equity.
- Matt mentioned that you can't argue with success – mentioned that there is no one in the agency that will derail success. No one will tear it down. Find something that you can be successful at it won't get tore down or changed.

Monitoring Workshop is rescheduled for October 3<sup>rd</sup> – Next meeting sometime after the workshop will meet.

Dean brought up that the group needs to discuss bison that if it is the CMR it is the group that should make a recommendation. If the group does not talk they could get left out as the planning process is out of the way. The process will not be quick but they (FWP) are being forced to go through the process.