

# **CMR NWR Community Working Group Meeting Minutes for August 8, 2012 MT Dept Fish Wildlife & Parks Building, Lewistown, MT**

**Attendees:** Dennis Jorgenson, Tasha Torchon, Maia Aageson, Bryce Christiansen, Sandy Youngbaur, Monte Billing, Linda Poole, Carl Seilstad, Mary Jones, Clint Loomis, Terry Selph, Deloris Hill, Phil Hill, Denise Wiedenheft, Mark Good, Beth Kampschorr, Jason Holt, Laurie Riley, Heidi Finke, Rick Potts, John Chase, Kit Fischer, Ron Moody, Damien Austin, Bill Berg, Carie Hess, and Bill Milton.

The CMR NWR Community Working Group held our 15<sup>th</sup> meeting on August 8th, 2012 at the MT FWP Building in Lewistown, Montana with 27 people in attendance. Coffee and cookies were available prior to the start of the meeting.

Facilitator Bill Milton opened the meeting at 10:10 a.m. by asking the grounding question: Why do you choose to invest time into the CMR Community Working Group? The participants were seated in a circle and each person introduced themselves and answered the questions in turn.

Bill introduced **Jason Holt, Timber Creek Think Tank- Valley County**

Jason had an interactive PowerPoint presentation entitled *How We Develop Land Management Objectives*. He started out by defining goal-based objective and methods-based objective. He moved forward to an example on his ranch of a cattail slough. He showed the group pictures and gave background information about what vegetation exists, what animals use the area, how they use the slough and how it looks through the seasons. He then asked the group to come up with management plans for 3 different values - natural, sustainable, and diversity.

For the natural management objective, Jason gave a “heavy handed definition” of natural as the *absence of human impacts*. The word pristine was also discussed in relation to natural. The definition is only in an individual’s mind so it never has one solid meaning. The group discussed if cows are natural. Jason stated that this depended on your bias and that one perspective is that they were brought to the United States by boats. He stated that some think that bison were here naturally so by managing bison in the same manner as cattle then it is natural. Others will state that cattle are natural. Other issues such as the dikes above the slough came up as well as roads, corrals, and water improvements. Are they natural or do they need to be removed? He also asked if these improvements were removed what would happen to the sage grouse leks (breeding areas) that are in the surrounding area? Jason stated that natural is really based on one’s own bias. He asked how would one measure progress towards natural? Jason listed the group’s ideas on the PowerPoint. He then stated that most of those were methods-based objectives.

## **Methods-based objectives:**

- Measure progress in implementing methods;
- Are easy or even trivial to measure;
- Are accomplished as soon as the method is implemented;
- Do not rely on feedback from the land.

Jason then asked the group to manage for sustainability. With this example a definition of sustainability was needed in order to understand what to sustain. Jason entered the group’s ideas into the PowerPoint. The group brought up that by sustaining what is currently there, it might stop the natural succession of the slough. By maintaining the slough it could create an artificial response, and that there are other factors to figure in. How can one tell if the system is sustainable? The group brought up (more than once) that we need to figure out how all of the parts interact with one another and to be sure that we are aware of what is happening on the ground. Jason stated that most of these were goal-based objectives.

## **Goal-based objectives:**

- Attempt to measure progress towards the goal;
- May be difficult or time consuming to measure;
- Does not always imply an obvious method;
- May require us to change methods;
- Relies on feedback of the land;
- Must be revised if they don’t lead to the goal.

This led to the subject of timeframes; Jason stated that there are two timeframes. One is the timeframe that the agency personnel have to use to follow their deadlines and the other is the farmer's or rancher's timeframe that they use to meet the goals of their operation.

Jason then asked the group to manage for diversity; he asked the group a few questions.

1. How do you measure progress towards diversity?
2. Do you have enough diversity right now?
3. Can we find a "model" slough and replicate it with more species than occur currently while maintaining all the existing species?
4. What is good diversity and what is bad diversity?

To increase plant diversity we could just plant as many species as we wanted.

Jason stated his definition of diversity: Number of different native plant species present, measure the number of events that contribute toward that diversity. He also said we might need to just consider perennials and not annuals.

Lunch was served

Bill Milton had the group break into smaller working groups of 4 - 5 people each and had them answer 3 questions. The groups were given about 20 – 30 minutes to gather their answers.

Q-1) What is the most important thing you learned today and how do you feel about it?

Q-2) What is the next most important question today for the CMR working group?

Q-3) What would be a specific (tangible/ measureable) action that would move you towards answering the question?

### **Group Summaries:**

#### **1. Group 1:**

**Q1:** Small area, different approaches, reveal complications of CMR group issues was expected, good model. What is natural and how? When Indians were here? Can't go back completely, lifestyles so different, natural vs. diverse vs. sustainable applies to ranchers, economics are big, private land manager is more flexible than public land manager, changes with each new owner, fewer pressures (eyes looking at you), flexibility OK but uncomfortable with ability (N-Bar into Texas style ranch), don't understand the difference between the two types of objectives, frustrated, more complicated than expected, no one approach, scary to think of solution that would please all.

**Q2:** In moving forward what action would we take on the ground?

How to come up with an action that we could all agree on?

How to keep the communication lines open so that we can define change and work towards that?

**Q3:** List important issues and prioritize them. Compromise; keep things transparent so we all take responsibility in product. Identify something we can all agree on (e.g., weeds, water quality, road maintenance, fire)

#### **2. Group 2:**

**Q1:** Jason presented self as arrogant, yet humble and admitted that he was not an expert- interesting and refreshing, nature is dynamic, we have our own definitions that don't really fit what we mean (natural, pristine, wilderness), dikes would help to maintain stability – hard to manage in isolation, no wonder everyone seems confused and is on a different page, may not be a right or wrong way to manage land, it is all based on your own biases, viewpoints and objectives.

**Q2:** How do you manage the CMR, meeting its mission, while considering the values and impacts to and from neighbors without doing this as an island?

**Q3:** Compare overlap of common and different land management practices, recreation, economic benefits, history and heritage between CMR and private landowners, businesses, sportsman; participate in groups like this to ensure that the CMR is listening; participate in the step down plans of the CCP.

### 3. Group 3:

**Q1:** Excellent presentation, amazed, surprised, the useful “cricket story,” importance of establishing goals and objectives in land management strategy, “beauty is in the eye of the beholder” makes finding common ground very important among a diversity of perspectives, it’s easy to fall into method-based objectives as a measure of progress, need both types of objectives at different stages and with respect to different activities (flexibility).

**Q2:** How do goals and outcomes change between ranchers and refuge managers? Work together to set and achieve them. What are the conservation outcomes (vegetation, wildlife numbers, diversity of populations of key species) of various typical grazing regimes? Compare CMR with more rest, BLM rest rotation, private land twice through grazing, etc. These should include the economic outcomes. Other on the ground projects—one in each county that are similar to the Garfield County CD Pilot Project.

**Q3:** In the next 2-3 months we will choose priority questions, what are the next steps, who will participate on the ground? Where and which ranches, agencies, land managers? What are the specific conservation outcomes desired (not necessarily the same across all sites), consider site potential, needs to dovetail with particular CMR targets, establish parameters of studies (who is responsible and their roles), understand the step down planning process and how learning from the CMR working group would contribute, need measures of success for the implementation by the group, conservation outcomes, agreed on by participants in advance.

### 4. Group 4:

**Q1:** Never thought how complicated it is no matter what you do, factoring in human caused climate change and developing natural and diverse. The presentation left out the mission and purpose of the land. Learned that there are categories that do not fit most land management goals.

**Q2:** What can we work on that will draw in better representation of the communities, how do we organize our goals into actions, how do we move forward to prioritize actions, how do we all walk out of the room satisfied, what happens with the bison?

**Q3:** Have a group work with the water rights compact; begin discussion on FWP bison plan.

### 5. Group 5:

**Q1:** This group understands that these are not simple questions, these land management questions tie into sociological and political questions, we have to consider many, many factors and perspectives, a design for the future needs to include everyone who will be in that future, you cannot manage one swamp at a time, it takes a bigger plan, you have to know where you are to know where you will end up, watch what the land is doing, structure helps us get our ideas out, talking about a topic (instead of feelings) opens us up and gives everyone a chance to join in the discussion, animals are easier to manage than people.

**Q2:** Are we going to talk about or consider the CCP right now or move onto something else? Is our mission directed at the CMR refuge or outward at the 6 county area, **what land management goal can we agree on that would be positive for all parties**, how is the Garfield County CD Pilot Project coming, what is the most urgent land management issue on the refuge, what issue on the CMR refuge is the most important to you personally?

**Q3:** Could we pick a wildlife goal, could we get a representative from all stakeholders involved in the decision before it was made, can we bring neighbors in to help make decisions?

Bill then asked the group if developing a project design was a priority issue that the group could agree on. After a lot of discussion there was no definite answer. Bill asked everyone at the meeting that if they had a project proposal to notify either Laurie or himself and they could be brought to the next meeting.

Laurie mentioned briefly the deliverables that are needed from the grant the working group has through NRCS.

A tour was discussed. Last year Bill Berg pulled together a tour on the CMR. Linda Poole mentioned combining the CMR Group tour with the tour the Rancher's Stewardship Alliance puts on in the fall in Phillips County. People felt this would work well and reflect another aspect of the group. The week of September 10 – 17<sup>th</sup> was discussed and it was noted that it would be nice to end the tour with a social of some sort. Linda, Laurie, Rick and Bill will work out the details.

Our next meeting will host the Garfield County CD, Karl Christians with DNRC, and a consultant from Land EKG to present the Garfield County CD Pilot Project. The next meeting date was announced as October 10<sup>th</sup> in Malta. **(This date is currently under reconsideration based on speaker availability).**

The group adjourned at approximately 3:20 pm.