

## CMR Community Working Group October 30, 2012, Malta, MT Phillips County Library Meeting Minutes

10:05 Welcome – Bill Milton

Introductions and Grounding Question “How much rain have you received in your area”

38 People in Attendance, everyone introduced themselves and responded to Bill’s question in turn.

10:15 Stephanie McGinnis, Montana Watercourse

MT Watercourse – Provides unbiased water info for all water users. Based in Bozeman. Rec’d funding to hold 3 workshops on riparian Best Management Practices (BMPs). Would like to hold workshop for landowners with no set specific agenda topic, tailored to local needs, must be held by end of June.

Would like to reach 50 landowners. Question to group: would this be beneficial?

Ideas for Topics: value of function, BMPs, something in between.

Question – rivers or streams.

Answer – target landowners, what is best way to reach them, what kinds of streams are on their lands.

- Outreach to landowners through CDs
- Discuss riparian potential, more water can increase riparian value
- Is the purpose hands-on application? Restoration practices? Preservation or restoration?
- Need to spell out benefits to landowners of workshop – need to entice them.
- Discussion of how to attract landowners
- Badlands grazing district did something a few years ago (12-13 years ago), maybe see where they are with photo-point monitoring of riparian areas. Valley County.
- Include a tour – functioning/non-functioning
- Water storage, water retention
- Possible speakers: a landowner.
- Hold a good discussion – can we agree on BMPs?
- When & Where: Both N & S of river (both), maybe when it looks its best, maybe when it looks its worst, must consider rancher’s schedules. Probably June. Contact MT Stockgrowers and piggyback on their mid-summer meeting. What about tying in with weeds?

Laurie Riley (MRCDC) will work with Stephanie to tease out how this (workshop) could best work.

10:50 Garfield County Conservation District CMR Grazing Pilot Project - PowerPoint Presentation (on hand-out, see attached) Dean Rogge, Karl Christians, Charley Orchard

Questions:

- Keeping a core herd – sustainability – consistent from year to year. Are you considering this?
  - Grazing is energy flow, creating value.
- Working together is not a novel idea, but it is a novel practice. Don’t spend necessary time building trust. I care about wildlife. Need to know ultimate authority on public land is land manager. Need to know CMR has ultimate authority.
  - On 8.5% of refuge. Temporary time period.
- What is reward to public? How do positive results impact public?
  - Reduce fire hazard (grass & trees), increased wildlife numbers on CMR (elk follow cattle).
- Does “wildlife” include bison?

- There are not there now, if they are placed on CMR then it will include them.
- To give some background info – Big question is why? Do you want to see more AUMs, more control of grazing? What is ultimate goal?
  - Wildlife brings sportsmen. Local businesses rely on hunters. Benefit wildlife, economy, ranchers. Not just looking at CMR when talk about non-use. CRP lands without wildlife. Non-use can reduce wildlife habitat. Would like to see positive aspects spill over onto private lands
- Does special use fee allow for decrease of grazing fees?
  - Don't know yet. From CMR, don't have authority to reduce fees.
- If CMR doesn't commit, can the project shift to private lands?
  - Mentioned one name who would not be interested until seeing positive results after 5-6 years. Need to get input from everyone – hunters.

(Prepping for lunch – missed some comments)

Rick Potts

CMR used to be a game range – jointly managed USFWS & BLM. When it became Refuge under USFWS, managed under a different Act – does not mention improving economies of neighboring lands. Rick thinks they need to be good neighbors. Neighbors need to provide habitat for wildlife – sage grouse & pronghorn travel long distances. Under new CCP, moving away from fixed AUMs under fixed season of use for fixed time. Washington mandating that grazing must be prescriptive. Rick must be able to tell DC that grazing improves wildlife habitat. So this project ties in with what he is trying to do and support to DC. Thinks managers in DC will believe that the area (under proposed Plan) is too big. We are all seeing this presentation for the first time, it is all under review and discussion. Won't wait 10 years for deliverables, must be able to show positive results sooner. Project would be undertaken under special use permit. Rick would like to see the project happen.

Under CMR, series of step down plans...new habitat management plans. Consolidate into 12-15 HMPs. Objectives will be developed in each HMPs. First HCP due in 2015. Looking for monitoring protocol, peer reviewed, science based, anyone can do.

12:30 Lunch Break

Break into small working groups to answer 3 questions: 1) What are the merits of this proposed project? 2) What are your concerns over proposed project? 3) What are your recommendations for proposed project?

Merits

- Easy way for multiple parties to achieve goals
- Increase active part in mgmt.
- Good opportunity for cooperation
- Increase community collaboration for wildlife conservation
- Increase available data to make informed decisions
- Opens communication between different interests
- Wise use – managed land is more productive
- Building trust & understanding
- If project works, could be model for much larger area (on & off CMR)

- Purpose to prove wildlife & livestock can co-exist
- Collaboration is positive, joint effort is good, ranchers might not feel like govt has taken their views & expertise into account in the past.
- Take rancher's expertise to benefit everyone & to benefit wildlife habitat
- If successful, in future more buy-in to collaborate
- Information
- Locally driven
- Interest of key people (CMR, CD, ranchers)
- Buy-in, interagency
- Data collection accountable
- Unbiased – outside govt agency
- Neat use of private enterprise
- Monitoring science based, easy to report
- Data transparent, no room for bias
- Simple to use/understand
- Holistic principles
- Bridging gap between folks
- Education of public
- Monitoring protocol understood by all
- Allow local 'ownership' of refuge mgmt.
- Group input as proposal moves forward
- Bring FWP, FWS, landowners, communities together for benefit of wildlife, habitat, economy, tax-base
- Allow using resources to achieve same goal
- Use LEK ( local ecological knowledge) w/ agency knowledge
- Potential benefits of an ecological service provider

#### Concerns

- Grazing may not be best tool or only tool
- Turning public property into private property
- Getting monitoring goals accomplished
- Special permits, access, logistics
- Timeframe: can we get it done
- Managing for different habitats & species
- All eggs in 1 basket, not science with sample size of 1
- You can have great idea and 1 bad year and it will fail
- Don't see on-the-ground changes in 2 years, takes multiple years
- Need to establish monitoring protocol for wildlife that everyone can agree on
- Goals & objectives have to dovetail into CMR framework-not possible, but will need work
- Level of bureaucracy, entrenched view of decision-makers elsewhere will be hurdle (there is a federal emphasis on partnering in DOI)
- Does project lend itself to expansion, affordable, repeatable, right partnership model
- All landowners – BLM, State – at same table
- Complexity of logistics/politics
- Scale of project – 8.5%
- Funding

- Not enough / restricted access, latitude to mng grazing
- Water availability – off the lake
- What if it fails
- Decision regarding goal ranchers aiming for
- Wildlife goals & targets agreed upon by participants & public
- Monitoring program participants can agree upon
- Working w/ USFWS sideboards (HMP may or may not contradict)
- Potential to duplicate efforts, some grazing systems can or will be part of CCP, HMPs not yet developed
- Timeframe, planning for CCP, funding
- “Easy to understand” needs to quantify
- Needs to enhance wildlife aspect of project
- Incorp private lands as well as CMR
- CD needs to prove themselves on public lands before private

#### Recommendations

- Pin down habitat mgt plans & baseline data
- Be sure to use available resources
- Develop mgt design
- Encourage and partake in interagency cooperation
- Mission Statement - form working group within this organization
- Monitoring. None-photopoints-remote sensing-Land EKG. Team to resolve need for info w/ time/money constraints
- Fed agency’s formal process of authorizing project – get before moving too far
- Acknowledging goals that meet both GCCD & CMR mandates
- Consider implementing project contingent on adding other simultaneous projects to get at key goals
- Hard sell is how to design concept to fit package of “home teams”
- Need example sites that show habitat in the state the CMR wants and doesn’t want , need both, don’t have to be on CMR. Need to correlate what is being measured & how CMR values those sites. Need connection between wildlife & Land EKG measurements. Need reference sites (5+ of ea) for good vs bad, for ea major land type/soil series.
- Plan won’t appease everyone’s goals. Plan is to prove livestock & wildlife are mutually beneficial to CMR. Livestock grazing can benefit wildlife habitat.
- Grants search
- Create incentives – economic
- More communication/collaboration/inclusion of wildlife, get help from wildlife experts for monitoring methods/data collection
- Define “allowable” acres
- Core wildlife indicators – identify
- Just do it, use this scientific data for all species
  - Have to include bison if they show up
  - Need FWS habitat unit goals
  - Give latitude to manage projects for mosaic of habitats
- See how this works and take what is learned to contribute to further positive outcomes
- Get private landowner, State, BLM buy-in to participate in project

- Stay transparent with working group
- Identify questions one by one to solve and move ahead. What's a deal breaker vs a compromise
- Have CMR provide group with clear sideboards within which plan is developed
- Give it a chance & support
- Leave it at 8.5% of refuge
- Keep CMR permits transferable
- Lands besides USFWS land be used
- Need NGO support

Rick would like a working group established from within the CMR Group to be a "sounding board" for this proposed project if it should go forward.

Charley – we need a dialog in development. Timeline: 2013 to be observational year, set up some of the monitoring, new management to come on board 2014. Time to discuss and develop dialog among key stakeholders. Comes down to communication...what is being proposed and not proposed.

Jason – next steps develop correlation between what Charley measures and what Rick values.

Kit – what has been presented today and from discussions with Dean, headed in right direction. Need to develop trust. Can't realistically expect guarantees. Need to trust professionals.

Discussion of how to develop committee; who should participate; what should composition be.

Rick – identifying fatal flaws and comfort level(s). Don't need technical advice. Ability to bring everyone along in spirit.

Ron – get a sign-in list.

Dean – Garfield County would depend on this sounding board also. Not just a sounding board for CMR.

Dennis – Can "cloud" be used for communication?  
Probably Garfield County CD 's web site would be better than cloud.

Bill – between now and next meeting, could a 2<sup>nd</sup> draft proposal be developed and people can comment – give feedback.

Rick – present counter proposal to Garfield County CD and Working Committee within next month.

Bill – Partners will take notes and develop amended proposal, share with entire Working Group,

Need to leave the door open for anyone who wants to participate. Anyone who wants to participate, put your name on a list.

Just send the proposal around and whoever wants to comment on it can. This is what was decided as the way to get input to proposed Plan.

Melissa Hornbein – brief overview of CMR Reserved Water Rights Compact process. Third negotiation on Oct 12. 4 main components: 1) priority date subordinated to date of compact, 2) uses currently exempted from permitting will remain exempted from compact, 3) give quantified minimum right to 76 drainages of 1 to 0.5 cfs for period of use not to exceed 4 mos. CMR wants period of use the same 4 mos for all drainages. 4) selected drainages closed to new on-stream impoundments 15af or larger, off-stream impoundments allowed. Other provisions are “sweeteners”. Much less than original proposal, so recognizing water that runs onto refuge is avail for use of refuge – not a right that can be used to call on other users. Preserving and facilitating riparian habitat. They will have no impact on current state-based users or the available water supply, but make the proposal more palatable to the CMR in light of the considerable diminution in amount and extent of the proposed water right compared to what they initially requested.

- Used USGS model to support 1.0 or 0.5 cfs quantified right.
- How riparian defined.
- Unquantified right – right to use on refuge
- State-based rights: CMR has filed over 400 claims in the state-wide water adjudication. We have proposed to incorporate those claims into the compact that comport with the purpose of the refuge as articulated in Executive Order 7509. The claims that are incorporated will be withdrawn from the state-wide adjudication.
- FWP has 70 cfs right. CMR has requested duplicate of right. Similar done on Missouri Breaks Monument on Judith River. Water already taken out of system.

Bill – USFWS MOU with BLM. People at 3<sup>rd</sup> negotiation wanted to see MOU. CMR will make it available. Either thru MRCDC mailing it or MRCDC giving mail list to CMR and they mail it. Also want time at next meeting to present 15 minutes and 30 minutes for Q&A.

Bill handed out Attachment B of our NRCS grant with a very brief Work Plan outline for 2013. Everyone should bring their project write-up to the next meeting.

Laurie mentioned that a letter supporting the Water Rights Compact would help the CMR and could be our deliverable #4 – prepare a natural resource land management recommendation letter.

Ron will prepare a FWP-centered project proposal if the group wants one.

Bill had each participant speak about how they felt the meeting went. The comments /feedback about the meeting were very positive. The participants seemed pleased with our input and outcomes.

## PowerPoint Presentation on Garfield County Conservation District CMR Grazing Pilot Project Dean Rogge, Karl Christians, Charley Orchard

- Slide 1    **A Novel Idea Has Emerged...**  
Let's try working together to see if it is possible to benefit the land, the wildlife, the people, and the social wellbeing of all involved using a new approach on a test basis CMR Grazing Pilot Project.
- Slide 2    CMR Grazing Pilot Project Led by the Garfield County Conservation District
- Slide 3    Statutory Responsibilities of a Conservation District- Starting in 1939 – MCA's 76-15-102
1. provide for the conservation of soil and soil resources of this state,
  2. prevention of floodwater and sediment damages, for furthering the conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water,
  3. Preserve natural resources,
  4. protect the tax base,
  5. protect public lands,
  6. protect and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the people of this state.
- On a non-paid basis, these elected officials are responsible for these obligations*
- Slide 4    **76-15-102. Declaration of policy. It is hereby declared to be the policy of the legislature** to provide for the conservation of soil and soil resources of this state, for the control and prevention of soil erosion, for the prevention of floodwater and sediment damages, and for furthering the conservation, development, utilization, and disposal of water and thereby to preserve natural resources, control floods, prevent impairment of dams and reservoirs, preserve wildlife, protect the tax base, protect public lands, and protect and promote the health, safety, and general welfare of the people of this state.
- Slide 5    The CMR
- In 1936, established the Fort Peck Game Range
  - Sole and unique purpose to manage, conserve and use the land for:
    - its outstanding wildlife values
    - and domestic livestock habitat values.
- Slide 6    CMR Grazing History
- Prior to 1986, there were +150,000 AUMs.
  - 2003, 22,304 AUM's were grazed on the CMR.
  - 2008, there were only 18,872 AUMs grazed.
  - Overall, Livestock grazing has been **reduced by 89%** over the last 60 years.
- Slide 7    Project Goals
1. Maintain or Improve wildlife habitat quality to a point where wildlife are drawn from adjacent lands to CMR.
  2. Maintain or improve ecological process function and species diversity on the project area lands using advanced livestock grazing techniques.
  3. Provide economic benefits for participating ecosystem service providers and local communities all while staying within the scope of the CCP.
  4. Improve communication, trust, and sustainability for the CMR and residents of Garfield county.
- Slide 8    Progress of Effort
- **2008** GCCD Resolution to work with local FWS offices in Montana.
  - **2009** SJ-19 to reinforce the 2008 resolution.
  - **2010** D.C. meeting with USFWS. Idea was welcomed.
  - **2011** Rick Potts discussion, wanted to see a written proposal.
  - **Jan 2012** GCCD contracts with Land EKG
  - **Feb 2012** GCCD met with CMR staff and Land EKG and presented draft concept proposal.

- **April 2012** present and discuss concept with permittees.
- **Sept 2012** GCCD hires project coordinator.

- Slide 9 CMR Pilot Project Concept
1. 10-15 year pilot project.
  2. Focus is on an area that can be managed successfully. (last area of contiguous permittees).
  3. Program managed by GCCD thru special use permit(s) with FWS.
  4. Project outcome has to work for land, wildlife, and the economics of the participants. “conserving wildlife by conserving a way of life” Dan Ashe, National Director of FWS.
  5. Project areas must be accessible to management.
- Slide 10 Project Benefits
- Help sustain Garfield Co. economy
    - Potential employment
    - Hunting and recreation
    - Help sustain a way of life and culture
  - Grazing.. Creating value out of grass
    - Beef production
    - Manage fuels for reduced fire threat
  - Maintain/Improve wildlife habitat/ecological process
  - Transparency and education to others
  - Creating a model that can be duplicated
  - Communication and cooperation
- Slide 11 Proposed project area (Map)
- Slide 12 CMR Pilot Project Approach
- GCCD will coordinate management practices with Permittees.
  - Use advanced and proven planning and grazing practices as the primary management tool.
  - Will use rangeland monitoring as a mechanism to validate what is going on and to make improved management decisions.
  - Need expertise and training in resource management, planning, and monitoring.
- Slide 13 Management Needs
- Access to advanced management practices
  - A way to validate response to practices
  - Need a way to report it
  - Need to learn how to do this in-house, thus allowing sustainability of efforts
  - Need funds
- Slide 14 Why Land EKG, Inc.
- Land EKG monitoring system – Cloud database
  - 20 years grazing/ monitoring training experience
  - Experienced nationwide on large ranches and conservation properties
  - Excellent track record with private & federal land projects – takes a holistic approach to management
  - Charley Orchard was a 5-yr CD supervisor in WY
- Slide 15 Blank
- Slide 16 Land EKG Mission
- To help Ranchers optimize business (solar) profit, by creating
- healthy soil systems
  - diverse plant and animal communities



- Slide 17 Land EKG™ specializes in training & equipping ranchers with the most effective ways to monitor the land:
- Simply
  - Quickly
  - Credibly
  - Professionally
- Slide 18 Photo
- Slide 19 How we help land managers across the west... EKG Monitoring
- Grazing/Training On-line Database
  - Contract monitoring and
  - Consulting Services
  - Mgmt products
  - Monitoring Products
- Slide 20 The North Star
- Let's try working together..... Let's see if it is possible to benefit the land, the wildlife, the people, and the social wellbeing of our community,... using a different approach,... on a test basis.
- Slide 21 The Basic Steps for a Mgmt Project
1. Determine Goals and Participants
  2. Evaluate resource situation (baseline)
  3. Develop Management Plan
  4. Engage the plan
  5. Monitor results
  6. Compare against goals
  7. Re-plan or adjust if necessary
  8. Continue with management and monitoring
- Slide 22 Project Couched in Training Managers to.....  
*"Give a man a fish vs train a man to fish"*
- Setting up the mapping – GIS application
  - Setting up the monitoring – Valid, objective
  - Setting up the planning – well considered
    - Land Planning
    - Grazing Planning
  - Carrying the monitoring forward
- Slide 23 The Basic Steps for a Mgmt Project
1. Determine Goals and Participants
  2. **Evaluate resource situation (baseline)**
    - **Phase 1 of monitoring**
      - **Rangeland system**
      - **Grazing behaviors and patterns**
      - **Wildlife situation**
    - **Talk about the rangeland and EKG**
- Slide 24 Tactics n Tools Google Earth – Easy Maps Easy Monitoring (Graphic)
- Slide 25 Ecological Processes (Graphic)
- Slide 26 thru Slide 28 (Graphics)
- Slide 29 The Basic Steps for a Mgmt Project
1. Determine Goals and Participants

2. Evaluate resource situation (baseline)
3. **Develop Management Plan**
  - **Land Planning – figure out grazing areas**

Slide 30 (Graphic)

- Slide 31 The Basic Steps for a Mgmt Project
1. Determine Goals and Participants
  2. Evaluate resource situation (baseline)
  3. Develop Management Plan
    - Land Planning – figure out grazing areas
    - **Grazing Plan**
  - **The Premise of Grazing Approach–  
Using the Grazing Index for decisions and monitoring**

Slide 32 thru 33 (Graphics)

- Slide 34 The Basic Steps for a Mgmt Project
1. Determine Goals and Participants
  2. Evaluate resource situation (baseline)
  3. Develop Management Plan
    - Land Planning – figure out grazing areas
    - **Grazing Plan**
      1. **Grazing budget**

Slide 35 (Graphic)

- Slide 36 The Basic Steps for a Mgmt Project
1. Determine Goals and Participants
  2. Evaluate resource situation (baseline)
  3. Develop Management Plan
    - Land Planning – figure out grazing areas
    - **Grazing Plan**
      1. Grazing budget
      2. **Grazing pattern / sequence / flow**

Slide 37 (Graphic)

- Slide 38 The Basic Steps for a Mgmt Project
1. Determine Goals and Participants
  2. Evaluate resource situation (baseline)
  3. Develop Management Plan
  4. **Engage the plan**

- Slide 39 Engage the Plan Coordination & Oversight
- GCCD Grazing Coordinator / Land EKG
  - Participate and Communicate planning with ES Providers (core participants)
  - Follow up
  - Track deviations from plan with Actual Grazing Use Records

- Slide 40 The Basic Steps for a Mgmt Project
1. Determine Goals and Participants
  2. Evaluate resource situation (baseline)
  3. Develop Management Plan
  4. Engage the plan
  5. Monitor results

- Phase 2 – Annual Monitoring
  - Rapid – repeated - objective

Slide 41-42 (Graphics)

Slide 43 The Basic Steps for a Mgmt Project

1. Determine Goals and Participants
2. Evaluate resource situation (baseline)
3. Develop Management Plan
4. Engage the plan
5. Monitor results
6. Compare against goals
7. Re-plan or adjust if necessary
8. Continue with management and monitoring

Slide 44 This is what is needed for project to be successful

1. The designated area must be accessible and 'manageable'
2. Economically viable for participants
3. GCCD has discretion of management practices
4. No repercussion for participation
5. Project must be long enough (10-15 yrs)