

**CMR NWR Community Working Group  
Meeting Minutes for December 4, 2014  
Jordan VFW Hall, Jordan, MT**

Bill Milton called the group to order at 10:00 am

People in attendance: 34 plus FFA students

Opening & Introductions:

Grounding Question - What are you grateful for?

For the students they need to add what they see in the future of their community?

Bill mentioned that there are many issues in the region with one being sage grouse.

Kelsey Molloy – NRCS Sage Grouse - presentation

- Large intact landscapes of sagebrush
- Explained their lifecycle
- Sage grouse are an umbrella species
- Status – endangered in Canada and in US there are a candidate for listing
- Threats – conversion, conifer encroachment, wildfire & invasive species, energy development, overgrazing, urban development, sodbusting, West Nile virus, predators & predator control
- Sage grouse initiative – what it is and the 3 main goals
  - Remove threats to sage grouse and improve sustainability of working ranches
  - Implement enough of the right practices in the right places to benefit populations
  - Assess effectiveness, quantify benefits, adapt program delivery, and tell the story
- What's good for rangelands, is good for grouse
- shared vision of wildlife conservation through sustainable ranching
- what programs and practices NRCS can assist with, process for application, easements

Jordan FFA Students - 23 students & 1 advisor attended the meeting

Tarissa & Koree – The students presented on research they did on sage grouse

- History
- Population
- Threats
- Endangered species listing
- Some financial info

Bill asked the girls why they feel that there has been an increase in sage grouse on their family ranches.

One girl noted that on her ranch she has seen a lot more birds in more of the fields/pastures. The other noted that she has birds on her ranch but that she is unsure if there has been an increase or not.

Opened up to the group for questions on sage grouse –

- It was mentioned that predator control is a big concern in the conservation of sage grouse.
- It was noted there is a dramatic increase in all predators.
- It was mentioned that some bird populations will use other crops (ie alfalfa, cover crop, juniper berries) for forage instead of sage brush.
- It was mentioned that the overall goal is to reduce habitat loss and slow the decline of bird numbers not just increase the bird numbers back to a historical level.
- It was thought that in regards to cattle grazing in LEK and nesting areas is that it is not to remove the cattle but to adjust the timing of grazing to increase nesting and brood rearing habitat in the area.
- It was asked if anyone is looking at the consequences of the endangered species act will have on the sage grouse (ie will landowners attempt to remove the birds prior to the listing to avoid additional regulations).
- NRCS SGI practices have been approved by the USFWS and will work similar to a CCAA on incidental takes of listed species; it will have predictability to those producers as long as they follow the standards of the NRCS program standards. (this only applies to private lands)
- The 1080 program was discussed in regards to predator control pre 1972 and the effects of that program now.

Bridget offered for any of the students or anyone in the room to come volunteer on the CMR in the USFWS biological data collection efforts this summer.

Bill explained what he was looking for in asking the group to discuss vision for the group and how to measure progress towards that vision. He asked the breakout groups to discuss the following:

Q1 -What do you want for quality of life for the region in 5 to 10 years?

Q2 -What kind of production will be needed to sustain this quality of life?

Q3 - What does the landscape have to look like to obtain your production?

### Responses

#### **Group 1**

**Q1 –**

Government agencies work with landowners

**Q2 –**

Each ranch produces enough to be sustainable

Government needs to understand the importance of agriculture

**Q3 –**

Dirt right side up

**Group 2**

**Q1 –**

Small towns that are economically viable

LEK is recognized and respected

**Q2 –**

Maintain working ranches

Incentives so ranchers want wildlife

Meet regional production

Positive incentives to increase wildlife

**Q3-**

No net loss of grasslands

Ranches stay but no plowing of sod

No mass growth

Better communication between partners

Thriving Main Street

Intact ecosystem

**Group 3**

**Q1 –**

Reduce predators

Increase wildlife

No big Ag

Keep existing quality of life

**Q2 –**

Produce more hardworking and responsible children

**Q3 –**

Landscapes are diverse healthy and rural

Humans are part of that landscape

**Group 4**

**Q1 –**

**Q2 –**

Diversifying

Increasing Efficiencies

Increasing information distribution

From the ground up not top down

**Q3-**

Effective dedicated communication

Certainty

Flexibility

**Group 5 -**

**Q1 –**

**Q2 –**

To maintain quality life but to have opportunity to improve

**Q3-**

Very similar to how it is now

Education

## **February Agenda**

What do you think the next step should be to develop a 3 part goal (triple bottom line)?

Find the common threads between the groups and bring those back to the next meeting?

Decision that is going to be made about sage grouse in 9 months, what do we want to do about sage grouse?

CCAA in Wyoming will pass the information to Rachel then on to the entire group and if anyone is interested those efforts to contact Rachel.

Paul Santavy– Refuge manager starts January 25<sup>th</sup>. Mid- February meeting.

## **Communication**

E- newsletter with minutes and press releases and save the dates...

Local papers – work with them to publish meeting announcements and summaries

Huge amount of work building up to the monitoring workshop - What are the benchmarks or what should this group be monitoring over the next year to make sure the group is making progress.

It was asked if the monitoring event could be done as an annual event. Will think about until the next meeting.

Roland Kroos – monitoring class Feb, 23 – 26 in Saco

## **Date and Place:**

### **February 19 @ Fort Peck**

What worked well in the last 5 years what could be better?

More comfortable, likes little groups

Everyone gets a chance to talk and speak their mind

Partnerships and working well others

Opportunity to share ideas, share knowledge with agencies, landowners and CD's and info to take back to those that are not here.

Communication is great

Feels like the group jumps from one fire to the next and they need to find a central idea (needs improvement)

Monitoring Roundup worked well was a big success. Took a lot of planning

Networking and communication building

Need to make sure the meetings don't end when you walk out the door need to keep the talks going in between the meetings.

Good to see that the different people have some of the same goals.

Sometimes it takes forever to get anything done.

Likes the openness of the group – wanting the land to prosper

Have been able to build trust and patience amongst all members

Need to have a small project that everyone can have buy-in on

Start talking about the harder things/ driving the groups own agenda (needs improvement)

Break out groups work even though some people don't like them.

Meetings build on each other (needs improvement)

Meetings driven by the problems needing to be talked about instead of who can speak.

Comfortable atmosphere with in the group

Projects (needs to find one)

Objective for the group (need to do)

Water compact with CMR (big success)

Group has the capacity to have the conversations about the tough issues