

**Meeting Minutes for CMR Community Working Group Meeting  
Wednesday, December 11, 2013  
Interpretive Center, Fort Peck, MT**

**Attendees:** Dennis Jorgenson, Kit Fischer, Paula Gouse, Shay Piedalue, Dick Rhode, Monte Billing, Dean Rogge, Ron Garwood, Sue Fitzgerald, Leonard Swenson, Jarrell Schock, Jenifer Anderson, Arlie Cordon, Joe Yeoman, Nancy Heins, Dave Heins, Sylvan Walden, Drew Henry, Jessica Flint, Damian Austin, Aaron Johnson, Steve Schindler, Steve Wanderaas, Randy Matchett, Jason Holt, Dyrck Van Hyning, Bridget Nielson, Bill Milton, and Carie Hess.

Facilitator Bill Milton opened the meeting up at 10:07 am by asking people in attendance to introduce themselves, state who they represent, and answer the grounding question – Why did you come today? Most people in attendance were there to talk about the issue of bison.

Bill opened up the floor to Rick Caquelin, NRCS Great Falls Area Range Management Specialist to give a presentation on Grazingland Monitoring. Rick opened up with the statement “If you don’t know where you are going, you’ll wind up somewhere else.” He explained that when you are doing grazing management you need to look at stocking rates and how much litter and residual cover is left, you need to allow that important 45 day growing season recovery, and you need to monitor and not only keep your records but use them as well. Rick said that monitoring matters because it’s about being the best you can be and it helps take control of your grazing and focus your management for a positive outcome. He goes on to say that you need to recognize the fact that you have to keep records because you won’t remember, and in the course of doing so, it will be the best education you never expected. Additionally, with monitoring getting an outside, unbiased opinion is invaluable.

He notes that you should be managing for what you want and not what you don’t want. Thus the result will be healthier, more productive grazing land for livestock and wildlife and a healthier more sustainable ranching business. He states that it is not about the tools, it’s about the goals. Rick does say that the hardest part is picking the monitoring spot. He advises when looking at a monitoring site you want to first define your landscape and production goals by pasture, pick areas that represent acreages worth managing for improvement, and spots that you are willing to adjust your management to improve.

He then explained the basics of establishing permanent transect stakes and recording GPS locations. You take 1 landscape photo down the tape from each end and then 5 ground cover shots at the 10, 30, 50, 70 and 90 foot marks (he notes to center the plot frame over the tape and not to one side or the other) Rick states that these photos need to be taken annually and usually in late July thru early September. He states that the rancher keeps his own grazing records and then he provides them with a copy of the precipitation records and analysis. Rick usually has 2 visits per year with the producer. He notes that this process is not intended to be a statistical analysis, but has proven effective for making better grazing management decisions. He warns that if you only take the time to put the photos in a book then you have a nice scrapbook, you need to take the time to compare your photos over the years and against your goals and adjust your management; only then are you monitoring. He showed the group photos of monitoring that has been done and how it has benefited the producers and their goals. He sums up his presentation saying that the best thing to put on the land is your footsteps next to the land managers. Rick then answered various questions from the group and it was mentioned that the group should go out to a local producer to look at some monitoring. Jason Holt offered that group members could come out to his ranch and look at how, where and why he monitors.

Dean Rogge updated the group a little on where the Garfield County CD’s CMR Grazing Pilot Project is at and stated that the type of monitoring that is being done for the pilot project is more in-depth than what Rick showed the group. He said that most of the current monitoring sites are in on private and BLM land due to the weather and the government shutdown preventing the sites on the CMR lands from being established. This does put the project a little behind as they had hoped to have all of the sites and initial data collected this year. Dean notes that this will be a long process to ensure every step has been done

correctly so that the data is all there.

After lunch Bill asked the group “are there still any unmet needs in the CMR region and can we usefully and measurably engage?” This time instead of breaking into small groups he left everyone as one large group and went around the room.

**Damian Austin** – said that he feels there are unmet needs but that he is not sure if the group can usefully and measurably engage.

**Kit Fischer** - said that he feels that the wildlife aspect has not been met. He said that the focus should not be on those that are doing well and are here but those that are not such as bison and sage grouse.

**Sue Fitzgerald** – said that the group not taking on or agreeing on an issue or project is an unmet need.

**Steve S.** – said that the group not taking on or agreeing on an issue or project such as the sportsman’s topics on the CMR is an unmet need. He went on to further state that there is not enough local input into the CMR or that the locals feel that they are not being heard.

**Jessica Flint** – stated that the grassroots and local voice has a lot more pull than they realize. She went on to say that Senator Daines feels that the local on the ground people are the best decision makers.

**Randy M.** – said that the trust concept is lacking and that this group has that ability to serve that need.

**Joe Gilman** – said that the agency folks need to take back the information from these meetings and work with their constituents to make working relationships with their higher ups.

**Jenifer Anderson** – said that it is the feeling of her board that nothing gets accomplished with these meetings.

**Steve Wanderaas** – said that it is possible for the group to do good things but there needs to be communication.

**Dean Rogge**- said that there seems to be a lot of impatience among the group members and he feels that the group should start small such as a saltcedar or monitoring project or tour in the next couple of years.

**Monty Billing** – feels that the group is important to keep communication flowing and feels like a weed project might be a good starting point.

**Ron Garwood** – agreed that a small project such as a weed project is a good place to start and he also said that local input being heard and communication flowing is critical.

**Dick Rhode**- said that he was impressed with the local interest.

**Bridget Nielson** – said she felt this group was very useful in keeping communication going and having the local input. She would like to see a tangible project such as a weed or monitoring project or habitat plan.

**Aaron Johnson** – said that he likes product driven meetings but that he feels that this group is the exception to the rule. He feels that these meetings are very beneficial.

**Dyrk Van Hyning** - feels that these meetings are more beneficial and have more clout than is realized. Feels that the group does not have to have a product but needs to keep communication open.

**Jason Holt** – feels that the unmet need is security and assurance, he said that the federal government needs to realize that the land needs its ranchers. He too feels a monitoring project with the focus on plants is a good idea.

**Sylvan Walden** – feels that yes there are unmet needs but that the group can cooperate with the CMR on specific CMP plans and projects to serve as a knowledge force for the CMR staff.

**Drew Henry** – said that these meetings are important to him and it fulfills a part of his professional needs.

**Nancy Heins** – said that these meetings are important and it needs to be more cohesive to come up with solutions. She suggested that the agenda and communications be more publicized and that the group does need to have a project.

**Paula Gouse** – thinks that the group members should not discount those in uniforms as these meetings are important to them and that they have a lot of things to do within their job and take the time to come and participate.

**Shay Piedalue** – said that this was her first meeting but she thinks that there are good successful things to come from the group.

**Dennis Jorgenson** – said that these meetings give a person a different perspective. He said the land needs people/ communities to help grow. If there is no community there is no place for a land manager to live. He asked “What is the long term outlook” and feels that there should be more meetings out on the land instead of in a building.

**Steve S.** – mentioned that he would like to see the information from when the elk were reintroduced into this region and what process was taken. He noted that there are a lot of weeds along the lake and that there are many different managers responsible for those weeds.

From listening to the responses from the group a draft list of potential projects was mentioned:

- communication project
- saltcedar map & survey project
  - Rachel and Bill to report on grant by next meeting
- CCP working group to work on how these will breakdown – habitat management plans
- Bison working group
- Monitoring project where a kind of down and dirty type of monitoring methods are discussed and then have the group do some monitoring. Field tour exercise the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of July
  - Working group to find 5-6 experts on different types on monitoring to lay out a menu
    - Dean Rogge, Sue Fitzgerald, Dennis Jorgenson, Jason Holt, Nancy Heins, Bridget Nielson, Rachel Frost

**Wrap up**

Bill asked everyone in attendance to tell him what worked and what needs improvement

<b>What worked</b>	<b>Needs Improvement</b>
Not breaking in small groups	Agenda
Progress	Getting people to meetings
Monitor fest	Informational/ education aspects of area

**Announcements**

It was mentioned that the group needs to have a definition of bison and a list of their pro’s and con’s so the group can dwell over them before making any decisions.

Next meeting is Jordan on February 19<sup>th</sup>.

Adjourned at 2:35 p.m.