

CMR NWR Community Working Group Meeting Minutes for December 13, 2012 Fort Peck Interpretive Center

Attendees: Dean Rogge, Monte Billing, Alan Pluhar, Jennifer Bolinger, Destanie Melin, Linda Poole, Mary Jones, Mark Good, Dyrck Van Hyning, Jason Holt, Sylvan Walden, Leonard Swenson, Rick Potts, Bill Berg, Aaron Johnson, Kit Fischer, Don Woerner, Ron Moody, Mark Sullivan, Drew Henry, Denise Wiedenheft, Pat Gunderson, Melissa Hornbein, Ron Garwood, Diane Ahlgren, Carie Hess, Facilitator Bill Milton and 4 others who did not sign in.

The CMR NWR Community Working Group held our 19th meeting on December 13th, 2012 at the Fort Peck Interpretive Center in Fort Peck Montana. Coffee and pastries were available prior to the start of the meeting.

Facilitator Bill Milton opened the meeting at 10:15 a.m. by asking the grounding questions; please give the group a brief weather report from your area, tell us how far you had to travel and where if it took 2 days or not. The participants were seated in a circle and each person introduced themselves and answered the questions in turn.

Bill mentioned that there would be the following criteria for the proposal presentations;

- Keep to 20 minutes
- Can the proposal leader gather people, resources, and possible funding for the project?
- Can the group support the proposed project with consensus?

It was also asked if the group had any further criteria and after some discussion the group came up with the following.

- The proposal needs to fit the mission of the group and that if it requires action on the refuge it will need to fit within the CCP.

The group also mentioned that they would like to see the proposals but did not want to choose this early on unless the proposal did not fit or it is something that the group did not want to engage in.

The first proposal presenter was Linda Poole with the Rancher's Stewardship Alliance entitled "Wildlife Habitat, Livestock Grazing and the CMR Area." The last sentence of the 7 premises was what Linda was asking the group for consensus on and the other premises were background information. She then read the questions and the proposal. For the full proposal please see attachment entitled "Wildlife Habitat, Livestock Grazing and the CMR Area"

The group then went into discussion and Bill Berg mentioned that the CMR has completed a couple of studies in the past couple of years that will tie in with a lot of the economics and use. Linda mentioned that she sees this proposal as 2 projects; 1 being a study of the background material that is available and the second the actual on the ground project.

Mark Good presented a proposal entitled "Making Wildlands Work for Local Communities." This proposal looks into the possibility of making maps of the wildland areas for tourism similar to the Crown of the Continent maps. These maps would have information about the areas so people who were traveling across the areas would have a tool to help them navigate the area and about the local atmosphere and history.

Jason Holt stated that with the current mindset of some people feeling that ranchers need to be removed from the wildlands areas, if tourism is added it would be very detrimental to local ranchers. He stated that there needs to be some education to change people's mindset of these areas before tourism is promoted. Rick Potts mentioned that this Eco-tourism is not going to go away and is becoming increasingly more popular. He went on to say that in a recent publication the CMR is listed as the number three destination for eco-tourists.

Dyrck Van Hyning presented a proposal entitled "Premise of Bison on the CMR Refuge" in which the project would be for the group to consider the CMR as one of the sites for free-ranging bison at some time in the future, maybe 3 to 10 years. This would take place after the statewide bison management plan is complete. For a full proposal please see attachment entitled "Premise of Bison on the CMR Refuge." Kit Fischer stated that there needs to be a day where information from all sides can be shared and differences can be looked at and concerns can be addressed. Dean Rogge agreed with this statement.

It was a consensus of the group that the issue of bison is not going to go away especially with the current administration. Someone noted that bison will even be in play in the legislative session.

Monte Billing stated that there is a difference in a domestic bison and a free roaming bison.

Bill Milton asked what would need to happen to allow bison on the CMR. Pat Gunderson thought of a pilot project where a small number of bison could be run on old or abandoned CMR grazing allotments as domesticated livestock. This would be funded with private funds and the rancher would be responsible for the maintenance and keeping them within the allotment area.

The group broke for lunch.

Bill Milton presented Laurie Riley's proposal (Laurie was absent due to a death in the family) entitled "Riparian Outreach with Montana Watercourse." This project proposes holding a full day educational event with the first half in a classroom environment and the second half in the field analyzing riparian areas for their level of health. A brown bag lunch would be offered and the day would end with a discussion and recap. The group would have an opportunity to observe both a healthy riparian system and an unhealthy system. While in the field the leading indicators of both systems would be observed and the participants would identify ways to improve riparian health through best management practices. For a full proposal please see attachment entitled "Riparian Outreach with Montana Watercourse."

It was mentioned that this workshop would have to be conducted before June 2013. The group felt that this proposal is a go and could be attached to any existing projects.

Bill Milton presented his proposal entitled "Atlas Project Information." The project would collect and display a wealth of information about a county or region that would inspire and inform local planning initiatives as well as conservation and development efforts. Actual project products would include:

- An Atlas document with at least 80 charts, graphs, and maps as well as text and photographs.
- An on-line interactive Atlas that will display all of the above graphics and allow the manipulation of these for creating customized maps and other images.
- A CD version of the Atlas.

The desired result of these products and the process used to create them include:

- A clearer understanding of the state of the environment, economy, demography, natural resources, county infrastructure, and fish and wildlife species and habitats among decision makers and the general public.
- A greater appreciation for these values and resources and greater support for their protection and appropriate management.
- A greater awareness of the relationship between a healthy environment and a healthy economy among the citizens.
- Broader support for land use planning efforts in the county, especially proactive efforts that can be undertaken during this time of slower growth.
- Close working relationships between local governments and the non-governmental conservation community that can be the basis for jointly addressing other important planning and conservation issues.

This would be a way to find out what is really going on in the communities. It was the consensus of the group that at some point someone from Future West could be invited to a meeting and present what the Atlas program is and how it works. At that point the group could then decide if the project was a good fit for the group.

Ron Moody mentioned that there is one downfall with this and that is for some people the information might be perceived as negative. He gave the example of a business owner who thinks their business is the most successful and once this is complete they find out that their neighbor is actually more successful than they are.

Bill Milton presented for Dennis Jorgensen his proposal on the structure and roles of the group. This proposal was on how the group could be set up in a more formal structure with a coordinator for the group. It was hoped that this would allow the group to pursue more funding opportunities.

The group consensus was that Dennis should come to the next meeting with more information about the project.

Melissa Hornbein stated that the draft reserved water rights compact for the CMR was presented at the December 6th Compact Commission meeting in Lewistown. She reviewed the following concerns within the draft proposal:

- The whereas statement on the first page regarding the statute under which the refuge was established. Some people feel that it needs to be removed.
- The definition of concurrent and how that relates to the 70 cfs instream right on the Musselshell River that is currently held by Fish Wildlife and Parks.
- The definition of “stacked: reservoir or ponds.”
- The definition on wildlife habitat instead of riparian use.
- Quantified rights over the four months- worries about whether it will result in the closure of basins. Melissa thought that on a small basin it is possible that a half cfs water right could basically be a basin closure.
- Restrictions in some of the restricted basins- it was stated that the USFWS has been asked to pull those restrictions back to public land boundaries.
- Federal reserved rights can only be used for the uses in which it was written. Example that the CMR could not sell water for fracing as it was only written for wildlife.

Melissa noted the compact will look better when it goes to legislature if more public comments are received and considered during its preparation. She also noted that the Compact Commission has a legal obligation to submit a compact before the legislature and she encouraged everyone to talk with their legislative representatives about their thoughts on the compact. She noted that there will be 2 smaller meetings held in early January before the last negotiation meeting in late January. She stated that directly after the last negotiation meeting the Compact Commission will vote on the compact and send it directly to the legislature.

Ron Moody asked about the 70 cfs on the Musselshell River that the FWP currently holds. Bill Berg mentioned that this is for fisheries but if the river is kept at that flow then it will not erode the riparian habitat but anything below that would. Ron thought that you could not have 2 water rights on the same water but Melissa clarified that is not the case as the right is for non consumptive use so they can have 2 on the same water. She also mentioned that as producers increase their irrigation efficiency that they can place an instream hold in their name for the difference in their water right and the water they use.

The Garfield County Conservation District’s pilot project was brought up and it was the consensus of the group to keep it on their work plan as a monitoring factor so that they could be kept informed on the progress. Dryck asked when the CMR recognizes the original 56 habitat units that will be restructured into 12 units in the new CCP and defines what these units will and will not have in them how will that effect the pilot project? Rick mentioned that the pilot project could be a starting point and it is his thought that even though the CCP step down plan templates could take 3-4 years he believes that increasing habitat on any parcel is worthwhile. Rick stated that at a future meeting in 2013 the CMR staff would brief the group on the general step down plan template and how and what role the group would have with these step down plans.

Jason Holt mentioned that there are 6 proposals and only 6 meetings in 2013 and that some of the proposals could take more than one meeting.

It was to be noted in the minutes that on the work plan the Riparian and Best Management Practices Workshop will happen in addition to the 6 meetings and 1 tour.

Bill Berg mentioned that the CMR is working with the NRCS on the BMPs and standard monitoring protocols. This past summer 4 of the staff attended the cultural resource training in South Dakota and that they are working towards a common language.

Someone inquired about the sale of land within the CMR boundaries and the purchase of new land some of which is outside of the refuge boundary and how that land would be managed. Rick Potts said that the CMR has sold a bunch of the cabin sites within the refuge and had used the money from those transactions to purchase just less than 2,000 acres in 3 parcel tracts in Mc Cone County. He did note that one of those parcels is located outside of the refuge but will be managed as part of the refuge.

Bill Berg discussed the MOU between the CMR and the BLM which is an internal document between the 2 agencies. Bill stated that in his opinion it is a good first effort of the agencies to get together and talk.

Bill Milton asked everyone to go home and think about each of the proposals and jot down some notes or call him. Rick Potts mentioned that maybe we can find a common thread between the proposals and melt them into 1-3 proposals. It was to be noted in the minutes that Laurie will need to mail out to a list the proposed proposals and leaders for each and their contact information to the entire group.

Bill Milton concluded by asking the group what went well and what needs work.

Went Well	Could do better
Proposals	Possible sub- committees on projects to report back to the larger group
Dialogue	
Respect for one another	
Working towards common goals	
Diversity	
Dynamics	
Values	

The next meeting date was announced as February 21st in Circle.

The group adjourned at approximately 3:20 pm.

Full Proposals:

WILDLIFE HABITAT, LIVESTOCK GRAZING AND THE CMR AREA

Premises:

1. CMR manages for wildlife first, and will consider livestock grazing if and only if it can be shown to benefit wildlife habitat. CMR staff are responsible for clearly defining what outcomes they desire for wildlife habitat, natural vegetation and ecosystem processes.
2. Economies of the counties surrounding CMR are largely driven by agriculture, especially by livestock grazing. Our group will work to ensure that all actions we take as a group sustain or enhance the economies of the counties.
3. The business of ranching produces many benefits (economic, cultural, environmental) but can persist only when revenues exceed costs by a significant and dependable margin; without profit, all benefits of ranching are extinguished. At the same time, ranching tends to be a high risk, low return, isolating, increasingly turbulent lifestyle in which fewer and fewer people are willing and able to persist. Our group recognizes that ranching provides diverse values to society which are worth conserving.
4. Cultural identities and family traditions of the near-indigenous (i.e., people who have spent around 100 years or more in one place) people in the area surrounding CMR are closely tied to family ranching of cattle and sheep. Our group values

maintaining unique cultures and historic traditions, especially those of land stewardship and responsible citizenship. We value innovation that retains good from the past.

5. Our nation is in a precarious, unprecedented financial position. Cost-effectiveness of all actions needs careful assessment and focus by our group.

6. Food security is one of the top concerns of the American public, often topping their concerns for the environment. Wherever it is feasible to do so sustainably, it is desirable to maintain or enhance food production capability.

7. The effects of livestock grazing are highly variable in both time and space, and are dependent upon a complex suite of conditions, some of which are in constant flux. Published literature and anecdotes are rife with examples of grazing triumphs and tragedies, and anyone wanting to back up an assertion that grazing is either good or bad can find plenty of documentation to back their point of view. Unless and until we collect site-specific, objective information on grazing practices and outcomes, we are acting more on imagination (i.e., things we see in our head) than reality (i.e., things we see on the ground).

Questions:

What options are there for livestock grazing on and around CMR that simultaneously meet the goals above? What has been tried in the past in this area, and what have been the outcomes? Among the previous grazing programs, is there one or more worth replicating on CMR? What other programs could be developed which might better meet the goals above? How would we develop and evaluate the success of livestock grazing programs based on shared premises such as those above?

Proposal:

This group would take on the challenge of developing a knowledge and data base on site-specific grazing practices and their outcomes. Review of past and other existing practices would be followed by expert-based development of grazing options for consideration for implementation on and around CMR.

Implementation Needs:

Project development team; fundraising; implementation team; project review team.

PREMISE OF BISON ON CMR REFUGE

The CMR NWR working group may want to consider the CMR as one of the sites for freeranging bison at some time in the future, 3 to 10 years period.

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks is conducting a Statewide Bison Management Plan Environmental Impact Statement Public Scoping. Background information, the agency is currently in the process of evaluating the opportunities for establishing a huntable population of free-ranging bison somewhere in Montana. This evaluation is part of the development of a statewide bison management plan.

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Spring 2012- Formal Public Scoping Process

Summer 2012- Initial Identification of Potential Restoration

Locations to be Further Reviewed

Fall 2012- Citizen Working Group Meetings

Winter 2013- Development of Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

Spring 2013- Public Hearings Conducted Statewide on Draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement
Summer and Fall 2013- Preparation of Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement
Winter 2014- Release of Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement..

What better place to discuss controversial issues and find a list of solutions? We don't know if bison on the CMR are workable. The group has been together for over two years. Members may not always agree with one another's statements but always respect their right to say it and not get emotional. The structure of the group to establish study committees, investigate single topics in depth adds to the credibility of the whole group decisions.

Submitted by Conservation Group Member - Dyrck Van Hyning

**Proposed Project for CMR Community Working Group
Riparian Outreach with Montana Watercourse**

Background: At the CMR Community Working Group meeting in Malta on Oct, 30, Stephanie McGinnis, Montana Watercourse Education & Outreach Coordinator, presented an opportunity to partner with MT Watercourse to conduct a workshop for prairie ecosystem landowners on riparian health. Stephanie envisioned highlighting best management practices and outreach on value and function of riparian areas, targeting land owners adjacent to prairie streams.

Why Project Should Rise to the Top:

1. The project is fully funded by a grant obtained by MT Watercourse
2. We have an active and willing partner (MT Watercourse) to help coordinate and conduct the workshop.
3. This project addresses an issue (healthy riparian systems) identified as priority by the group.
4. It is small enough to be manageable as a first project for the group, leading to high likelihood of success.
5. It can be completed within calendar year 2013 – giving us a success behind us on which to build.

Project Outline

The project is a full day workshop.

The target audience is landowners (farmers/ranchers) in the prairie ecosystem.

We envision a half-day in a classroom environment, followed by a brown bag lunch with discussion and recap, followed by a half-day field trip to observe a healthy prairie riparian system and an unhealthy prairie riparian system. While in the field we will observe the leading indicators of healthy and non-healthy riparian systems and identify ways to improve riparian health through best management practices (BMPs). We need to identify an area where we can hold a "classroom" training that is a short distance to the 2 stream types we want to observe. Preferably this would be on private lands in partnership with a farmer/rancher, but could also be on the CMR Refuge.

Special Note

This project can be done simultaneously with another long-term project that involves identifying funding and research.

Atlas Project Information

Project Summary: The completed Beaverhead County Atlas and in progress Park County Atlas attractively displays through maps, charts, graphs, photos and text, many of the natural, cultural, economic, and demographic features of the counties. The final products can include 1). Hard copies of the Atlas, 2). An interactive on-line version of the Atlas, and 3). Copies of the Atlas on CD.

Information and graphics included in the Atlas can be used to update the County Growth Policies, provide compelling information to potential county investors, serve as an educational tool for local students, provide useful information for tourists, and perhaps most importantly build a sense of place and pride that can foster support for local conservation and smart growth.

This collaborative project between Future West and the project partners requires considerable coordination, including for example:

- the identification of Atlas contents and design
- identification of sources of information related to Atlas content
- collection and display of this information
- drafting text
- procurement of photos
- editing
- final production
- dissemination of Atlas products

Opportunities or Issues Being Addressed and Relevance to Planning Goals: The Atlas can serve many purposes, but the most immediate application for Park and Beaverhead Counties was to incorporate the data into their revision of their Growth Policies. In addition, the Atlas can support a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. But while the CEDS is a technical report, the Atlas will be for the general public and will serve as a vehicle for delivering technical information -- such as that included in the CEDS document -- to a broader audience. The Atlas would provide useful information for a variety of planning process, as well as build a sense of pride and concern about the state the natural environment and other community assets highlighted in the Atlas.

Project Outcomes: This project will collect and display a wealth of information about a county or region which will inspire and inform local planning initiatives as well as conservation and development efforts. Actual project products will include:

- An Atlas document with at least 80 charts, graphs, and maps as well as text and photographs.
- An on-line interactive Atlas that will display all of the above graphics and allow the manipulation of these for creating customized maps and other images.
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The desired result of these products and the process used to create them include:

- A clearer understanding of the state of the environment, economy, demography, natural resources, county infrastructure, and fish and wildlife species and habitats among decision makers and the general public.
- A greater appreciation for these values and resources and greater support for their protection and appropriate management.
- A greater awareness of the relationship between a healthy environment and a healthy economy among the citizens.
- Broader support for land use planning efforts in the county, especially proactive efforts that can be undertaken during this time of slower growth.

- Close working relationships between local governments and the non-governmental conservation community which can be the basis for jointly addressing other important planning and conservation issues.

History and Accomplishments of Future West: Future West is a non-profit organization that helps communities create the future that they want. We do this by providing information, training, technical assistance, and facilitation services to key land use decision makers such as city and county officials, farmers and ranchers, and public land managers. Future West core staff -- Dennis Glick and Jennifer Boyer -- have been working in the field of community-based conservation for decades and have extensive experience in a variety of land use, sustainable development, and natural resource conservation issues. Future West staff also has solid working relationships with many key regional decision makers, conservationists, resource managers and land use planners, and professionals in a variety of resource related fields. While core staff is small, over 20 professionals – Future West Associates – have made themselves available to work on Future West projects. Cartographer Josh Gage is one of these and has been involved in several projects including the “Beaverhead County Atlas” which Future West recently completed for Beaverhead County. This is the inspiration and prototype for the Park County Atlas. Josh, together with the Park County GIS Department, will help to create the maps and other Atlas graphics.

In addition to this project, Future West staff is playing a leadership role in a wide variety of watershed and landscape scale conservation efforts in Montana and Idaho including efforts such as the Henrys Fork Legacy Project in Idaho, the MSTI Transmission Line Analysis in Idaho and Montana, the Big Hole River Corridor Protection Project, and the Rocky Mountain Front GIS Collaborative.

www.future-west.org

Structure and Roles

Structurally, we are a network of groups and individuals who support, promote and work together to implement the CMR Community Working Group’s vision. The Group is not a legal entity. In its efforts to create a democratic, egalitarian culture, as well as to avoid a hierarchical “command and control” bureaucracy, the CMR Community Working Group has adopted a structure composed of the entire Group, a planning committee, and working committees that are created on an as-needed basis.

The Group

The Group consists of all participants and is committed to determining the overall policy and setting its specific programs. To ensure compatibility (but not uniformity) of participants’ goals, any group or individual who agrees to work toward the Group’s agreed upon purpose may join the Group: *A partnership of diverse interests working to ensure the vitality of both the Charles M Russell National Wildlife Refuge and the surrounding communities.* Members of the Group agree to abide by the principles and values contained herein.

Group decisions regarding actions, policies, or formal positions are made on a “consensus/ acquiescence” basis at Group meetings. If a decision cannot be reached in this manner, a 2/3 majority vote will be required at formal meetings or via network communication channels with objections recorded in the minutes. The Group meets at least six times a year. The Group’s mandate includes (but is not restricted to):

- promoting the CMR Community Working Groups purpose;
- educating people locally, regionally, and nationally about our purpose,
- identifying local, regional, national initiatives needed to implement the CMR Community Working Groups purpose;
- developing opportunities for greater participation in key CMR Community Working Group issues;
- accessing and analyzing data needed for furthering the CMR Community Working Group’s purpose; and

- sharing approaches and information about common issues of concern to CMR Community Working Group participants.

Everyone in the Group will be notified well in advance of Group meetings. No set quorum has yet been declared necessary for the Group to conduct its business.

The Planning Committee

The Planning Committee is committed to implementing the policy and programs set by the Group. The Planning Committee is self-selecting, composed of 5-10 Group participants who are willing to work on specific CMR Community Working Group issues, programs and projects. The Planning Committee will hold monthly conference calls, and will meet in person when possible. Decisions are made on a “consensus/acquiescence” basis or, failing that, a 2/3 majority vote with objections recorded in the minutes.

The Planning Committee draws its authority from the Group. Membership is to be reviewed, and authority granted anew, at each Group meeting. The Planning Committee chair is to be approved by the Group.

The broad mandate of the Planning Committee includes (but is not restricted to):

- developing the vision, mission, goals, and principles of the CMR Community Working Group’s effort, circulating them for comment, and completing a concise statement of them;
- formulating the agenda for bi-monthly Group meetings and arranging for meeting speakers;
- addressing funding and staff needs;
- overseeing and giving strategic direction to CMR Community Working Group’s “working groups”;
- discharging other tasks assigned to it by the Group;
- keeping CMR Community Working Group participants informed about progress on tasks by, for example, circulating minutes of Planning Committee meetings;
- supervising the CMR Community Working Group’s Coordinator.

Coordinator

The Coordinator, who draws his/her authority from the Planning Committee, is committed to managing the day-to-day operations of the Group, including (but not restricted to):

- promoting the CMR Community Working Group concept;
- assisting the Planning Committee in managing the CMR Community Working Group budget;
- enabling internal and external communications systems;
- identifying new constituencies of support; and
- traveling as necessary to fulfill any of the above.

Working Groups

The Group and Planning Committee may form and disband working groups as they see fit. Appendix I will be a list of existing and past working groups.