

# CMR Community Working Group Meeting Summary

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**Where:** Malta Business Center

**Opening:** 10:12 AM

**Attendance:** (34 on sign in) 39

**Self-Introduction & Grounding Question:** Share an opportunity and a threat to your local community.

Most feel the opportunities include:

- Strong Ag Communities
- Young people coming back
- Education of the next generations
- Opportunities are in the eye of the beholder
- Partnerships
- Groups coming together to discuss the hard issues and collaborate
- Getting young people on the landscape for firsthand knowledge of issues on the landscape
- Niche markets

Most feel the threats in the area include:

- Outside interests/ influence
- High land values that people can't compete with for agriculture production
- Price of housing
- Regulations coming down on the producers/ landowners - (ESA)
- Lack of education
- Litigation
- Losing sight of the big picture

## CMR CWG Committee Reports:

- **Sage Grouse Committee:** Have not met in a few months, have the rangelands conservation menu to be reprinted, will have an online menu as well. Looking at a weed menu. MSGOT – Stakeholder groups has been really active the last few months working on the habitat quantification tool and all of the documents to go with it. Funding has to go through the legislature again as the original sunsets on June 1, 2017. Proposed to have 2 million each year over the next four years to run program and fund projects, if that is approved there would be no new projects funded until 2018.
- **Montana Saltcedar Team:** McCone CD put in for funding for the Lower Missouri River above the high water mark from the dam to the state line. Working with WD, CD, ACOE, MCC, Tribes and landowners in that stretch.
- **Bison Committee:** The group really is not a committee but more of a group. A diversity of interests is making it impossible to get consensus, a lot of nonstarters. There is not the same level respect as the full CMR group and most on the committee feel that it should either disband or just go away.

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## Rural Community & Economic Research in Six County region: Julia Haggerty, MSU Professor

- Julia researches the socioeconomic trends of rural communities and how income variability in agriculturally dependent communities changes.
- She has quantified land ownership change to modal how ranching communities mitigate agricultural instability.
- She interviewed producers about perceived threats and opportunities to inform her scope.
- She found that grassland valuation can be exasperated by the insecurities of landowner leases, financial status is seen as a hurdle, not a deterrent, and the generational trends (rancher choice, aging demographics and alienation from policy) influence the resiliency of agricultural communities.

## Breakout Sessions: (6 groups)

### Questions:

1. What do you see as the top 3 impediments to young people returning to the community (please stay specific to the 6 county region as much as possible)
2. Identify 1 specific task the CMR CWG could do to help with the issue of returning young people to the communities? What resources would be needed to accomplish that 1 task?

### Group 1:

- Amount of business and job opportunities
- Not enough variety or diversity of opportunities
- Farm & ranch retirement planning
- **Task:** To develop or improve an internship program to provide qualified help
- **Resources:** people and time investment

### Group 2:

- General lack of housing
- Job opportunity or low wages
- Hard to start own business
- **Task:** Support emerging ranchers
- **Resources:** create a list of emerging and transitioning landowners; facilitation of information

### Group 3:

- Size of the operation may not allow people to come back (ranch)
- Jobs need to provide an income (town)
- Childcare & housing
- **Task:** Have people who have been through the process talk to the full group

### Group 4:

- Land cost & availability
- Small paying jobs
- Industry
- **Task:** Identify certain NGO's to help purchase land or help with grass banks

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## Group 5:

- Not enough space on the ranch
- Land availability and cost
- Distance to markets
- Housing and costs
- **Task:** create natural resources jobs; through the research & technical needs that exist in our area.

## Group 6:

- Family dynamics – health care, fairness among siblings,
- Prices and competition for land & uncertainty in leasing
- Regulatory pressures
- **Tasks:** Develop a program similar to student loan forgiveness for those beginning in agriculture

**Open discussion on items brought up in group discussions/ implementation:** What did you hear that really makes sense and how would you put it together?

- How do you link willing sellers to willing buyers to keep lands in agriculture? Farmlink already exists – call and reach out and see if we can help; Department of Ag – has website on pastures for lease; provide more information to the group on how grass banks work (TNC)
- Hiring young people to come back and do the natural resource work. Grant funding available to do this.
- Having people that have roots in agriculture be hired by the BLM, USFWS, FWP, & CMR – Pathways, job shadows, and internships within the agencies, ag training program for existing employees (welcome wagons for new agency staff), additional summer employment opportunities. .
- State of the County meeting held in each of the six counties around the CMR. Incorporate the above ideas into these meetings to stimulate the conversation.

**Funding Discussion:** It was mentioned that the group is pretty much out of funding and that the current legislature has been cutting grant funding. Bill Milton asked what the partners could bring to the table in regards to funding opportunities. The discussion will continue at the next meeting.

**Meeting Dates & Locations:** A survey was sent out to determine how often the group would like to meet. It was agreed to move to meeting quarterly, instead of bi-monthly. The planning committee, Rachel and Bill will work to ensure that the full group does not get disconnected between meetings.

## May Agenda Items:

- Aquatic Invasive Species presentation (specifically mussels found in the Missouri River System)

**Next Meeting:** May 25<sup>th</sup>, in Circle