

# CMR Community Working Group Meeting Summary

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**Where:** Mc Cone County Fairgrounds

**Opening:** 10:07 AM

**Attendance:** 23

**Self-Introduction & Grounding Question:** Where you are from and who you represent and how do you feel about your personal healthcare? Answers varied based on age and situation. General consensus was that all Americans should have access to good, affordable healthcare, and that gaining or keeping healthcare and insurance is a major factor in life decisions for many people.

Steve Dalbey, Fisheries Biologist with MT Fish Wildlife and Parks gave a presentation entitled “Montana’s Battle Against Aquatic Invasive Species”. During the presentation, Steve described the current approach by the State to managing aquatic invasive species, with specific emphasis on invasive mussels, and our responsibility as citizens and water users to protect our resources. Invasive mussels have not been detected within the 6-county region surrounding the CMR NWR at this time. For more information on this issue visit

[www.musselresponse.mt.gov](http://www.musselresponse.mt.gov)

## **CMR CWG Partner and/or Committee Reports:**

- **MSGOT:** The last meeting of MSGOT was in December 2016, and the next meeting is scheduled for June the 2<sup>nd</sup>. The group will be focusing on mitigation and further developing that framework. The program funding was extended through the next biennium, but the source of the funding has changed slightly. Due to legislative amendments, there will be several new members on the committee. The next grant cycle will be in late 2017 after the habitat assessment tool is complete.
- **Montana Saltcedar Team:** Treatment will occur in McCone, Richland and Roosevelt counties. Group is working to identify the next treatment area, possibly the Milk River. Bill Milton mentioned the Musselshell Basin and their ongoing Saltcedar projects in Musselshell and Golden Valley counties.
- **Legislative Update:** Many bills are still awaiting a signature from the Governor, so the legislative update was postponed until a more complete picture of the 2017 Legislative Session can be presented.
- **LEK Count:** Preliminary update shows good numbers for 2017, with possible minor population impacts from the storms of 2016. Paul Santavy and Levi Morgan mentioned that numbers in areas that they survey appear to be very high. Need to have a conference call of the sage grouse subcommittee to determine future direction. Levi will work on some map layers to facilitate future discussions, particularly any information on weather patterns that might affect sage grouse survival.
- **Winnett Working Group:** Group is officially called the Winnett ACES. The group was awarded a NFWF grant to hire a coordinator for a feasibility study to develop a local grazing cooperative. The group is

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exploring a land-purchase to keep people on the land and to be able to bring young people back into the community. The group will host a Ranching for Profit workshop with David Pratt in late August 2017. Bill also mentioned his landscape monitoring project, where members are developing a large song bird monitoring project in Musselshell, Petroleum, and Garfield counties. Next Meeting of the Winnett ACES is June 6<sup>th</sup> at 1 pm.

### **Prairie Communities in Action Project:**

Dr. Julia Haggerty with Montana State University was funded with a seed-grant for a research project focusing on sustainability and community wellbeing. Much of her research is centered around ranches and how the transition of ownership of those lands affects community viability. Dr. Haggerty presented the preliminary goals of the project, a plan for CMR CWG involvement, a call for interested individuals to participate in the project, and a preliminary timeline for the project.

- Regional profile & 6-county survey Winter '18
- Petroleum County 'deep dive' March '18
  - 2-day data collection on quality of life through local focus groups
- 6-county 'ground truth' & comparison
  - May or June '18 field trip
  - Report: community resilience assessment & strategy suggestions to CMR CWG June '18

Rachel will work to recruit landowners to participate in Julia's project.

**Monitoring/ Inventories of Resources:** Ron Stoneberg brought up getting college students or others assist the CMR NWR with resource inventories and other monitoring data collection. Paul Santavy was favorable to the suggestion, but would like to explore it a little further before committing.

**Next Meeting:** Date and location will be determined by the Planning Committee

**Closing Remarks:** Bill asked people what they really want out of CMR CWG meetings. Responses varied from a clear work plan with deliverable projects, to a place for information sharing and updates. The group will continue to seek out professional presentations, but will work on specific projects through the committees.

**Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 3:05 PM**