

**CMR Stakeholder Group
Planning Meeting
July 7, 2010
Jordan, MT**

Twenty-five people gathered at the Hilltop Café on July 7th to discuss potential plans to form a stakeholder group specific to the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge. Participants were: Vicki Marquis with MRCDC; Karl Christian with DNRC; Jim Beck with MRCDC; Linda Poole with RSA; Jeanne Kirkegard with the McCone CD; Amanda Lammers with the Garfield County CD; Ron Garwood with MRCDC; Bob Nansel with Eastern Plains RC&D; Monte Billing with the Garfield County CD; Laurie Riley with MRCDC; Steve Hedstrom with MACD; Carie Hess with MRCDC; Rod McClure with the Fort Peck Game Range Committee; Brett Dailey with the MT Farmers Union; Bill Milton; Terry Selph with Hole in the Wall Outfitters; Dennis Lingohr with APF; Bryce Christianson with APF; Kit Fischer with NWF; Janelle Holden with TWS; Mary Jones with Friends of MBM; John Chase with MRCDC; Dean Rogge with MRCDC; Don Woerner, DVM; and one other from APF (Damien?) whose name I cannot read.

Vicki Marquis gave a brief overview of efforts by the Garfield County Conservation District, MRCDC, and the Eastern Plains RC&D to bring the stakeholders together. The group then discussed the potential size, structure, decision-making, organization, membership, facilitation, and funding for a stakeholder group.

The group agreed that a stakeholder group should encompass the entire refuge and not be limited to just one county or one specific area. It was noted that sub-committees could be developed later that could deal with area-specific issues.

Regarding the structure of the group, it was agreed that for now the group should be informal with open membership and consensus based decision-making. Participants noted the following:

- Good facilitation is necessary
- Some clarity is needed regarding how the group will interact with the agencies
- Consider starting with smaller issues first and find common ground (In Janelle Holden's words: work toward the 1st down not the touch down).
- Could the group have a role in the CCP process and/or the Habitat management plans?
- There is a lot of value in people getting together and getting to know each other better, common ground can be found
- Basic ground rules for interaction will be necessary
- If the group starts informally, they can build structure as they go
- Some structure will be necessary to establish credibility with agencies, Congressional offices, and others
- Conservation by consensus and open membership

- At some point the group will need to establish how they support issues or take positions in a manner that does not subject national or state organizations to criticisms or problems based on their participation in the group
- Perhaps a first order of business could be for the CMR staff to present refuge information

Regarding membership, the group agreed that it should be open to whoever wants to participate. Specific invitations and outreach must be done to ensure the user groups know about this effort. All the parties at the table would continue to receive information. Additional groups that should be notified are: Montana Wilderness Association, World Wildlife Fund, Montana Wildlife Federation, Rod and Gun Clubs, Northern Ag Network, Rex Phipps at the Garfield County Bank, Montana Farm Bureau, Walleyes Unlimited, Cabin owner associations, Chambers of Commerce from the surrounding communities, Montana Department of Fish Wildlife and Parks regional offices, Marian operators, County Commissioners, County Extension Agents, Conservation Districts, permit holders – ideally one from each county, adjacent landowners, grazing districts, Fort Peck tribes, Fort Belknap tribes, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Weed Districts, Missouri River Country Tourism, Montana Audubon, Native Plant Society, The Nature Conservancy, Montana Stockgrowers, and Woolgrowers. Additionally, public outreach through news media should be used to advertise the group and the next meeting.

Potential funding for the group was discussed. Bob Nansel with Easter Plains RC&D explained the NRCS mini-grant for \$5,000 that is in process. The grant may be impacted by recent NRCS budget deficits. The local Conservation Districts agreed to work on a DNRC Education mini grant for \$500 to help fund the beginning of the process. Additionally, participants noted:

- It is sometimes unhealthy for 1 agency to fund a group entirely as it may cloud the true grassroots intent of the group
- Each member or member organization could provide \$50 or so to kick start the group, this provides ownership, demonstrates a willingness to participate, and provides a base for “in kind” funds for future grants. The option could be pursued later, after the group is better established
- PPL Montana may have funds available
- Fiscal sponsorship for the group will have to be considered and set up
- Linda Poole with the RSA offered to handle meeting notes and meeting arrangements in the beginning
- Bill Milton offered to facilitate the next meeting for the cost of expense reimbursement only

Regarding facilitation, the group agreed to have Bill Milton facilitate the next meeting to lead the group in a discussion of how to hire a facilitator. It was also noted:

- A facilitator who knows the area and knows the issues and people involved might be preferable
- The facilitator would need to see all the sides of the issues and be unbiased
- To begin with the group should choose someone trusted and experienced who they feel safe with
- Provisions should be made for groups or individuals who may want to have input but not be active members
- The group may find value in having two facilitators for balance and new perspectives

The next meeting will be in Winnett on August 30, 31, or September 1 depending on Bill Milton's schedule. The Missouri River CD Council will find a meeting location, continue to develop the outreach list and work with Linda Poole on meeting invitations. All participants are encouraged to provide input and forward invitations to others as they deem appropriate.

Many thanks to the meeting participants for taking the time to come to the table and figure out a way to get this started!!!