

**CMR Stakeholder Group
November 1, 2010
Malta, MT**

Attendees:

Damien	Austin	American Prairie Foundation
Jay	Weiner	Attorney Gen'l's Office
Dana	Darlington	Big Sandy County CD
Rich	Adams	BLM
John	Chase	Cascade County CD
Scott	Cassel	Cassel Ranch/First Crk Ranch
Don	Woerner	DVM
Bob	Nansel	Eastern Plains RC&D
Paul	Gies	Fergus County CD
Ron	Moody	FWP Commission
Monte	Billing	Garfield County CD
Dean	Rogge	Garfield County CD
Terry	Selph	Hole-In-The-Wall Adventures
Jason	Holt	Horse Ranch
Laurie	Riley	Missouri River CD Council
Patrick	Gunderson	MT Fish Wildlife & Parks, Regl Sup
Melissa	Horabein	MT Reserved Water Rights Compact Comm
Stan	Jones	MT Reserved Water Rights Compact Comm
Mark	Good	MT Wilderness Assn
Carie	Hess	Petroleum County CD
Pat	Anderson	Phillips County CD
Troy	Blunt	Phillips County Commission
Gary	Knudsen	Phillips County CD
John	Schultz	Public Land Council
Linda	Poole	Ranchers Stewardship Alliance
Dale	Veseth	Ranchers Stewardship Alliance
Clyde	Robinson	Ranching Family
Diana	Robinson	Ranching Family
Eva	Robinson	Ranching Family
Nancy	Schultz	Ranching Family
Ron	Garwood	Valley County CD
Dennis	Jorgensen	World Wildlife Fund
Bill	Milton	Meeting Facilitator

The CMR Stakeholder Group met on November 1, 2010 at the First State Bank Building Community Room in Malta, Montana with 31 people in attendance. Facilitator Bill Milton opened the meeting at 10:07 a.m. with introductions and the following grounding

question. ***When was the last time Montana had such a beautiful fall?*** Each person in attendance answered.

Boundary

The group had discussed the boundary at the two previous meetings and this determination was a result of that input ***“The Charles M Russell National Wildlife Refuge and the six counties of which it is a part.”*** The group reached consensus that this boundary was acceptable.

Purpose

The group had discussed this at the two previous meetings but felt it needed some language changes. The planning committee worked out the following:

“A partnership of diverse interests working to ensure the vitality of both the Charles M Russell National Wildlife Refuge and the surrounding communities.”

The group reached consensus agreement on this statement.

Group’s Name

The planning committee had come up with 3 name possibilities which were:

- CMR NWR Regional Partnership
- CMR NWR Regional Working Group
- CMR NWR Community Collation

The group discussed what they liked about each one and what they did not like. After some discussion Dean Rogge suggested the ***“CMR NWR Community Working Group”*** and the group all agreed on the name.

Grounding Rules Bill handed out note cards and asked everyone to list one grounding rule. Everyone was given the chance to share their rule and the cards were collected. Laurie Riley, Jay Weiner, and Pat Anderson categorized everyone’s rules into 5 rules over the lunch hour to be presented to the group in the afternoon.

At 10:45 a.m. the group broke out in to 5 groups of 6 people and were asked to answer the following questions.

- What is the situation with the grazing management in the CMR today?

- SWOT Analysis on CMR Region Grazing
 - ❖ Strengths
 - ❖ Weaknesses
 - ❖ Opportunities
 - ❖ Threats

The group broke for lunch at noon and reconvened at 12:45 p.m. Each group then presented their answers and they were as follows:

Group 1

Q. 1:

- Fewer AUM's over time
 - ❖ 2008 – 24K ~ 19 AUM's used
 - ❖ 2003 – 22K AUM's
 - ❖ 1986 – 40K AUM's
 - ❖ 1976 – 58K AUM's

- Grazing Fee's increase by \$1 per year until reaches the regional average
- Existing Monitoring doesn't relate to ecological conditions

Q. 2:

S- trying to respect families 7 traditions by transferring permits to family members – grazing is essential in new CCP

W- is prescriptive grazing practical – can't work w/ ranchers to come up with their plan- trying things @ this scale that haven't been done before – not a good way to measure ecological health.

O- CCP provides for new science – new refuge manager – willingness to consider community impact.

T- outside influence of people that don't know the land – wolves – E.S. Act – How CMR implements CCP – old guard feuds – loss of cattle grazing.

Group 2

Q. 1:

- How do you manage livestock w/o fences or water?
- Grazing fees increased and AUMs cut
- Freedom of CMR to incorporate concerns of the local landowners is constrained by how the system works and the need to incorporate the input.
- Not enough AUMs on CMR to consider cattle a problem
- The need to develop more water to enhance CMR & spread out wildlife
- Turnover in staff is a problem because ranchers stay and continue to learn while ideas change concerning management.
- Prescriptive grazing is not a viable alternative
- Wildlife move with cattle (one pasture behind)

Q. 2:

S- longer term ranchers that know and care about the land – it is possible within CMR's mandate to permit grazing that could contribute to the economic vitality of the surrounding community & wildlife.

W- CMR's minds are made up (Iron fist) – prevailing attitudes - distrust urban/ rural – practicality/ feasibility of prescribed grazing.

O – create a system that will be feasible & enhance the vitality of the CMR & surroundings – Best, cheapest & safest food supply in the world is made available through ranching.

T – complete loss of cattle grazing in the CMR or the establishment of a system that will fail because it is not feasible for cattle ranches and for wildlife management – removal of water can threaten wildlife – removal of fences & water development will make cattle management difficult if not impossible.

Group 3

This group answered the two questions together as follows:

S-

- Current cattle grazing
 - Decrease fire risk, weeds
 - Increase income to USFWS, community, state, & county and rangeland health
- Wildlife management too
 - Ex: maintains elk/ deer habitat

W-

- Permits not transferable (outside of family)
- NGOs can pay permittee to retire permits
- Lack of rangeland science used in management of CMR
- Not including local knowledge & history in CMR management
- Lack of adaptive management regarding things that matter
- Lack of effective monitoring
- Don't cooperate w/ local partners
- Bypass full success on CMR because operate like island
- Rx grazing very labor intensive

O –

- Engage community
- Use local knowledge
- Implement meaningful monitoring
- Use good rangeland science & scientists
 - John Lacey
 - Clayton Marlow
 - NRCS
 - Rod Heidschmidt
 - MSU Extension
 - CDs
- Outcome based management
- Adaptive management
- Better meet habitat/ wildlife goals

- Better cost effectiveness of stewardship

T –

- Mind-set that bison are good & cattle are bad
- High fuel loads
- Weeds
- Wildlife damage to private lands
- DOI plans for free- roaming bison
- Lack of wildlife sue to CMR management
- State lands wasp- from inside CMR to outside CMR – possible loss of tax revenue to counties
- NGO buy out of grazing leases
- Not enough understanding of how CMR impacts community
 - EX: \$40 M + reduction in revenue to communities
- Decrease access due to closed roads
- Once a permit is retired, it is gone permanently.

Group 4

Q. 1:

“Un-resolvable”

- CMR pulled many directions
- Forage conflicts
- Weed management concerns
 - How to
 - Herbicides etc.
- Unable to come to terms with grazing science
 - EX: Ft. Keogh – Miles City
- Fences gone
- Wildlife is priority

Q. 2:

The group answered this question as one answer

- Refuge for wildlife
- Concerns about Buffalo as wildlife
- “dual classification “ of bison must be addressed
- Cattle as fire prevention tool
- Losing tax base on livestock
- What are the reasons Ag is changing?

Group 5

Q. 1

- Very under utilized
 - Wildlife following grazing of domestic livestock:
 - ie: Mount Haggin, Fleecer, Beartooth WMA, other WMA’s
- Financial value to local communities & USFWS

- 1 mil AC/ 40 AC/cow = 25K *\$18 * 7 months grazing= \$3.15 M on annual basis.
- Need professional Range Management expertise on staff w/ USFWS
- Control fuel loads to reduce wildfire
- Grazing Management to manage to control noxious weeds
 - i.e: Cheatgrass, Canadian thistle, on riparian Leafy Spurge, Salt Cedar
- CMR AUM's are too expensive for viable community to remain sustainable.
- Need to have managed grazing to enhance biodiversity.

Q. 2

S-

- Lots of biomass

W-

- There is a weakness in the transition of grazing permits from one generation to another.

O-

- Improve wildlife habitat w/ managed grazing
- Maintain economically viable grazing permits to stabilize tax base, land use, and communities.
- Maintain CMR permittees', transfer permits to future generations and if permits are vacant to adjacent ranches be given the opportunity to graze livestock.
- Grass banking with local ranches to enhance wildlife habitat off the refuge.

T -

- Free roaming bison and unvaccinated domestic Bison.
- Misinformation about managed domestic livestock grazing to public.
- State land within the CMR must be maintained as cattle grazing lands for wildlife habitat, state revenue and tax base.
- Internal negative culture of USFWS toward Agriculture will reduce wildlife habitat opportunities. (beyond the White signs)

The group that had collected the grounding rules reported back with the following 5 rules/ principles:

- ***Listen***
- ***Speak & listen with respect***
- ***Try to understand***
- ***Be direct***
- ***Strive for compromise***

The entire group then discussed the next steps, and who they should talk to. It was noted that the group needs to have a clear idea of what is in the CCP. This discussion also brought out other suggestions such as:

- How to get the CMR to hold off on implementation of the CCP until the group can have a voice and at what level of the CMR – USFWS should the group engage.
- Who should the group invite to speak to the group such as experts to share their information on certain areas at a time?
- Original agreement forming the CMR and the agreements that govern our interaction with USFWS.
- The step- down plans and what is the ability within these to affect management.
- Coordination vs. cooperating status in relation to influencing the CCP and it was noted that the CMR CCP included more cooperators than other USFWS long range planning efforts.
- In general who should the group be talking to within legislature, and who other similar groups have had success in talking with?

The group discussed and agreed to have the next meeting December 9th, 2010 in Glasgow and that Carie Hess would work with the valley County District Administrator Pat Johnson to get a place and lunch arrangements made.

The group discussed and agreed to write a letter to the Regional Supervisor and Asst Regional Supervisor of the USFWS asking them to our Dec meeting of the CMR NWR Community Working Group, on December 9th, 2010 in Glasgow. This letter is to be out to the whole group by 11/2/10 and replies were due by 11/5/10, the final letter would be sent to the Service the week of 11/8/10 – 11/12/10.

The group adjourned at 3:10 pm.