

CMR NWR Community Working Group Meeting Minutes for December 9th, 2010 Fort Peck Interpretive Center, Fort Peck, MT

Attendees

Damien	Austin	American Prairie Foundation
Bryce	Christensen	American Prairie Foundation
Jack	Billingsley	Billingsley Ranch and Outfitters Inc
Rich	Adams	BLM
John	Chase	Cascade County CD
David	Pippin	County Commission, Valley
Bob	Nansel	Eastern Plains RC&D
Michael	Cassidy	Fort Peck Lake Association
Mary	Jones	Friends Missouri Breaks Mnmnt
Dyrck	Van Hyning	Friends Missouri Breaks Mnmnt
Monte	Billing	Garfield County CD
Dean	Rogge	Garfield County CD
Jason	Holt	Horse Ranch
Laurie	Riley	Missouri River CD Council
Kelvin	Johnson	MT Fish Wildlife & Parks
Melissa	Horabein	MT Reserved Water Rights Compact Comm
Mark	Good	MT Wilderness Assn
David	Quammen	National Geographic
Kit	Fischer	Natl Wildlife Federation
Carie	Hess	Petroleum County CD
Gary	Knudsen	Phillips County CD
Leonard	Swenson	Rancher
Janelle	Holden	The Wilderness Society
Bill	Berg	US Fish & Wildlife Service - CMR NWR
Matt	Derosier	US Fish & Wildlife Service - CMR NWR
Ron	Garwood	Valley County CD
Dennis	Jorgensen	World Wildlife Fund
Bill	Milton	Facilitator

The CMR NWR Community Working Group held our 5th meeting on December 9th, 2010 at the Fort Peck Interpretive Center in Fort Peck, Montana with 28 people in attendance. Coffee and doughnuts were available prior to the start of the meeting.

Facilitator Bill Milton opened the meeting at 10:00 a.m. with introductions and the following grounding question. ***What is your relationship to patience and progress?*** The participants were seating in a circle and each person introduced themselves and answered the question in turn.

The group then briefly reviewed the 5 guiding meeting principles determined from the previous meeting held November 1st in Malta:

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

Bill Berg, acting Manager of the CMR NWR, gave a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Where Wildlife Comes First" on the history of grazing on the CMR. The presentation covered the public land-management changes and authorizing legislation from 1936 when the Ft Peck Game Range was established until present day when the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The presentation was followed by a question and answer period, although a number of questions were also addressed during the presentation.

Berg noted that this year's AUM price is \$18.00 and he noted that in 1976 the average cow weighted ~ 800 pounds whereas today it is now 1200+ pounds. Berg explained that on the CMR a yearling is 0.7 AUMs, a cow-calf pair is 1.2 AUMs, and a single cow is 1.0 AUM. The CMR grazing plan states that the permittee is to leave 70% residual cover.

From 12:00 to 1:00 the group broke for a lunch made available at \$5 per person. After lunch Milton brought everyone back to the circle and grouped them into 5 small working groups of 5-6 people each. He gave the smaller working groups 15 minutes to come up with one rangeland (health) testing criterion applicable to any grazing plan. The determined criteria were to receive working group consensus and the group could come up with more than one if time allowed.

Group 1 - Measure long term trends of plant community health.

Group 2 - Majority of the represented species present.

Group 3 - Invasive weeds present and monitoring of those weeds.

Group 4 - Determine current range condition relative to the goal using NRCS standards.

Group 5 - Water Quality.

Additional criteria and comments from the working groups included:

- Healthy soils;
- Carrying Capacity of the soils;
- More than 1 source of what the historic range plants were;
- Presence or rate of spread of invaders;
- Age diversity of plants;
- Balancing flora with fauna;
- Species diversity of flora and fauna;
- Adequate capital, economical operations;
- Sufficient landscape.

Milton then asked everyone to reflect on what they thought was learned from the exercise. Comments included that it was easy to come up with ideas that were agreeable, it is important to define terms, a lot of the issues are interrelated, is there a difference on private vs. public (CMR) lands?, and how all 5 groups came up with very similar ideas. It was also noted that everyone had the same ideas on what it takes to sustain healthy rangelands but different views on what to do with the information and how reach desired results.

The group next discussed operations and the process under which communication issues are to be handled. Laurie Riley explained that criticisms were received regarding how the letter inviting USFWS Regional Director and Asst Regional Director to the Dec meeting was signed. The letter was signed by the 3 co-authors (Dennis Jorgensen, Linda Poole, Laurie Riley) who had volunteered for the task at the Nov meeting. It was decided that the group decides as a whole the subject or purpose of correspondence with outside people or entities. Riley should then draft the correspondence and send it out to the group for review and comment. She should then finalize the correspondence and sign on behalf of the CMR NWR Community Working Group (and not the Missouri River Conservation Districts Council).

The group commented that the meetings need better publicity in order to attract participants. They also discussed particular groups in the community to invite to future meetings. It was decided that Riley should prepare a press release following each meeting that also announces the next meeting date, time, and place. In addition to a PSA being sent to the local papers, it should be sent to local radio stations. Riley will try to get radio station contact information from the 6 counties. It was decided that the grazing districts in the 6 counties should be invited to the meetings; Riley will get the grazing district contact information and send invitations to them for the Feb meeting.

The next meeting was discussed and it was the general consensus that the group should meet every other month on the 2nd Thursday but allowing for change when needed. Next meeting will be in Circle February 10th from 10-3. Riley and Carie Hess will work with Jeanne Rae Kirkegard on the logistics. Riley and Hess will see if the Conservation Districts in the 6 counties are willing to work on the meeting logistics when it is their turn.

Topics for the Feb meeting:

- What can the group influence?
- Economics and details of running a ranch that grazes both public and private lands, including the role of wildlife on economics. Dean Rogge and Bill Berg will work together to find a speaker for this topic.

Bill Milton stressed that all groups represented need the opportunity to speak and share their respective points of view. Dave Pippin mentioned getting a woman to speak who gives a talk on the definition of public lands. Someone suggested a talk by County Commissioners to explain what they do. Conservation groups should share their perspective and explain what they do and why. Another suggestion was a speaker on the TNC Matador Ranch and why it failed. Earlier in the meeting it was suggested that the group take a tour of the CMR at some point.

The group adjourned at approximately 3:00 pm.