

## CMR NWR Community Working Group Meeting Minutes for February 16, 2016 Eagles Club, Lewistown, MT

The CMR CWG met at the Eagles Club in Lewistown Montana on February 16, 2016 with 38 present at the meeting.

Bill Milton (facilitator) opened the meeting with the following question: Please introduce yourself and who you represent, and describe what is your responsibility to a group like this?

Various answers ranging from responsibility to represent constituents (County residents, conservation group members, conservation district residents, producers, participate, listen and learn, work toward collaborative solutions, build relationships, keep others/aquaintances informed of issues.

Rachel provided an update on the Sage Grouse Committee and the Conservation Menu

Diane provided an update on MSGOT- MSGOT is meeting on the 19th, and will adopt the rules and review the final application for projects. The group is hoping to accept the first project application in April of 2016.

John Emmerich (Friends of the Black Footed Ferret), John Hughes (US Fish and Wildlife Service), and Ken Morgan (Colorado Parks and Wildlife) attended the meeting and presented on the CO model of incentive-based efforts to restore black footed ferrets on private land in Colorado. The 3 answered a plethora of questions from the audience on a variety of issues related to prairie dogs and black footed ferrets.

Project History - CO Parks and Wildlife working directly with private landowners to document mountain plover use of farmland and work with landowners to protect nests and prevent a listing of the species.

So, came forward to Colorado Cattlemen's Association (CCA) in conjunction with NRCS to produce an incentive for private landowners to protect prairie dogs, the main prey of Black Footed Ferrets (BFF). CCA worked to develop a plan that supported the reintroduction of BFF under a Safe Harbor Agreement. CCA's position was that that their members should have the opportunity to participate in this program to save the most endangered mammal in North America. Lots of competing interests in CO and ag needs public support.

NRCS incentives funded through the EQIP program. Tax payer funded.....\$14/acres calculated by value of rangeland grazing allotments based on regional payment schedules through NRCS practices. Montana rate is around \$18/acre.

Bill asked if anyone in the group would object to having a discussion about the group supporting this program at a meeting in the near future. No one objected.

Bill went around the room and asked each one here what they have gotten out of this group and what they see as the biggest success.

Answers ranged from success at the water compact, ability to foster relationships with fellow stakeholders, find out the issues of greatest importance to those living on the land, the broader projects born from the group, improved relationships between agencies and landowners, open/honest communication, only venue for this broad a group of stakeholders to gather and exchange views.

Small groups reported on the proposed projects:

**Group 6**

Need for more bison discussions

Conservation incentives for endangered species

Education to bridge the rural urban divide

Branded Beef - premium markets for conservation incentives

**Group 1**

Top priority - Focus on weed control effort

Promote tourism - work with Chambers, etc.

Focus on monitoring aspect of things - what percent of the 6-county area is being actively monitored?

**Group 4**

Use a paid facilitator/third party person who could guide us through the difficult discussions on the at feasibility of dealing with publicly owned bison herd and where and under what circumstances it might occur if at all.

Study on economics - what is a day in the life of a dollar in the 6 counties? how many hands does it go through and what is the process of it moving through the counties, need consultants

Draft and kick-start one of the HMPs.....year-long process to work through an HMP of a select area, help us understand the Services's constraints, would need funding to help work through this process

**Group 3**

1. Priority \*\*Develop 6 County invasive species task force to identify concerns and resources and coordinate across entities.

Become liaisons between the National BFF recovery effort and the 6 local counties to bring in people to share experiences and build trust between national effort and local communities.

Build contact lists of all organizations and entities working in the area and their purpose, resources, and needs.

## **Group 2**

Work on ideas to bring young people back to the communities....maybe use some of the land already owned by FWP and bring a young couple on that land to ranch it and manage it....land performs double duty.

Need a constructive dialogue of future of public lands and private lands managed as a balanced landscape. oil and gas, grazing, etc.

Diversity economy to promote tourism....not replacing ranches, but working with it...tourists staying on ranches in places where there are no hotels.

A short discussion followed on the need to understand the economy of tourism, i.e. is the income to local communities enough to offset the added expense of road and emergency services.

Mark Good and Ron Moody expressed a desire to be on the planning committee.

### **Final Summary of CMR CWG Potential Projects – Lewistown, February 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016**

*The first 5 projects were proposed by at least 2 of the breakout groups at the meeting.*

1. Weed management through the creation of 6-county task force that identifies concerns and matches to available resources. (2 groups)
2. Tourism and promotion of the use of the CMR and surrounding landscape. (2 groups)
3. Increase opportunities to bring young people back to local communities and get more young ranchers on the landscape (2 groups)
4. Incentive-based programs for wildlife such as BFF, be a vehicle to educate folks about these opportunities, and explore ways to put it into practice on the landscape. (2 groups)
5. Bison on the CMR or surrounding area: have a facilitator lead conversation about bison and under what circumstances bison would be accepted in eastern MT. (2 groups)

*The next 5 projects were proposed by a single breakout group at the meeting.*

6. Have the CMR CWG take part in the development of an HMP for an area on the CMR. Be involved in every step of the process and learning about management through the lens of the regulations and laws the refuge must operate under.
7. Conduct a study on the economics of the region by following a day in the life of a dollar in the 6-county.
8. Develop a contact list of all the agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders operating in the 6-county region.
9. Hold a constructive dialogue on the future of public and private lands managed as a balanced landscape with multiple uses such as oil and gas production, grazing, etc.
10. Promote monitoring of sage grouse habitat and determine a metric that indicates impacts of management activities.