



---

MISSION:

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

PURPOSE:

To convene a balanced group of stakeholders to discuss natural resource management of the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge, recognize conflicts among user groups and agencies, identify and work collaboratively toward solutions, and provide a discussion forum for increased understanding, cooperation, and partnership among user groups, agencies and other interested parties.

### *2016 Year in Review*

With the passing of yet another productive year of CMR CWG activity, we should all take a moment to think about the group's accomplishments in 2016 as well as your own contributions to these successes. As we were reminded in last December's year-end review, the group has achieved quite a lot in the last few years, and this year was no exception. We must remember that this Community Working Group would not exist without your dedication to participating in the group dialogues which are creating worthwhile projects and partnerships that help drive the continued vitality of the landscape surrounding the refuge. 2017 will bring new people, new ideas, new projects, and hopefully progress. Please join us in looking back on 2016's progress and then look forward to all of the potential 2017 holds for progress within the communities surrounding the Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge.

*Have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!*

*Rachel Frost and Travis Wilson*

*Coordinator / Big Sky Watershed Corps Member*

*Missouri River Conservation Districts Council*

## Meeting Summaries

### 2016 CMR CWG Full Group Meetings

February 16<sup>th</sup> – Lewistown  
April 14<sup>th</sup> – Winnett  
June 23<sup>rd</sup> – Circle  
August 25<sup>th</sup> – Fort Peck  
October 6<sup>th</sup> – Jordan

### 2016 CMR CWG Sage-Grouse Subcommittee Meetings

March 10<sup>th</sup> – Lewistown  
May 12<sup>th</sup> – Lewistown  
July 14<sup>th</sup> – Lewistown  
September 15<sup>th</sup> – Lewistown  
December 14<sup>th</sup> – Conf. call

### 2016 CMR CWG Bison Subcommittee Meetings (New for 2016!)

October 5<sup>th</sup> – Jordan

The full CMR CWG met five times in 2016, and as is tradition, the meeting location rotated within the six-county region.

The February 16<sup>th</sup> meeting in Lewistown hosted presentations by John Emmerich, John Hughes, and Ken Morgan on the Black-footed Ferret reintroduction efforts in Colorado. A breakout session identified potential future projects for the group.

Winnett hosted the April 14<sup>th</sup> meeting, which experienced an enormous turnout possibly due to some social media misinformation (don't believe everything you read on the internet!), but we were glad to have all the extra brains in the room. This meeting was special because Noreen Walsh, Regional Director for the US Fish and Wildlife Service, attended and updated the group on the activities of the US Fish and Wildlife Service in the eight state Mountain-Prairie Region. She also hosted a Q&A with the group and Winnett School students. Additionally, Rachel presented on economic and demographic statistics in the six-county region as well as the Montana Rangelands Partnership. The breakout session groups ranked the future projects identified at the February meeting.

Circle's June 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting revisited the six-county region economic and demographic statistics presentation and the group provided feedback and requested additional research. The World Wildlife Fund's Jesse Tufte updated the group on a cooperative study with MSU exploring community resiliency and landscape geography in the Northern Great Plains grasslands. The breakout sessions began creating a work plan for 2016-2017 based on the highest ranked projects from the Winnett breakout sessions.

At the August 25<sup>th</sup> Fort Peck meeting, Rachel debuted the new [www.cmrcwg.org](http://www.cmrcwg.org) website to the group. The group went over the work plan they had outlined at the previous meeting and made further additions to the task lists. The CMR NWR's Paula Gouse, and Patricia Gilbert of the Army Corps of Engineers, updated the group on the invasive species challenges and control efforts taking place on the refuge and reservoir. Jeremy Sage, a UM researcher working with the National Wildlife Federation, updated the group on Eastern Montana tourism economics research. Finally, Rachel presented the Sage-Grouse Conservation Menu rough draft.

2016's final meeting met in Jordan on October 6<sup>th</sup>. Kurt Alt, a biologist with the Wild Sheep Foundation, presented on Big Horn Sheep conservation in the Missouri River Breaks, and John Vore, the MT FWP Game Management Bureau Chief, presented on the status of Big Horn Sheep conservation within the state. The group's creation and processes were reviewed and commented on, a report on the first meeting of the Bison subcommittee was given, and the work plan was reviewed and revised.

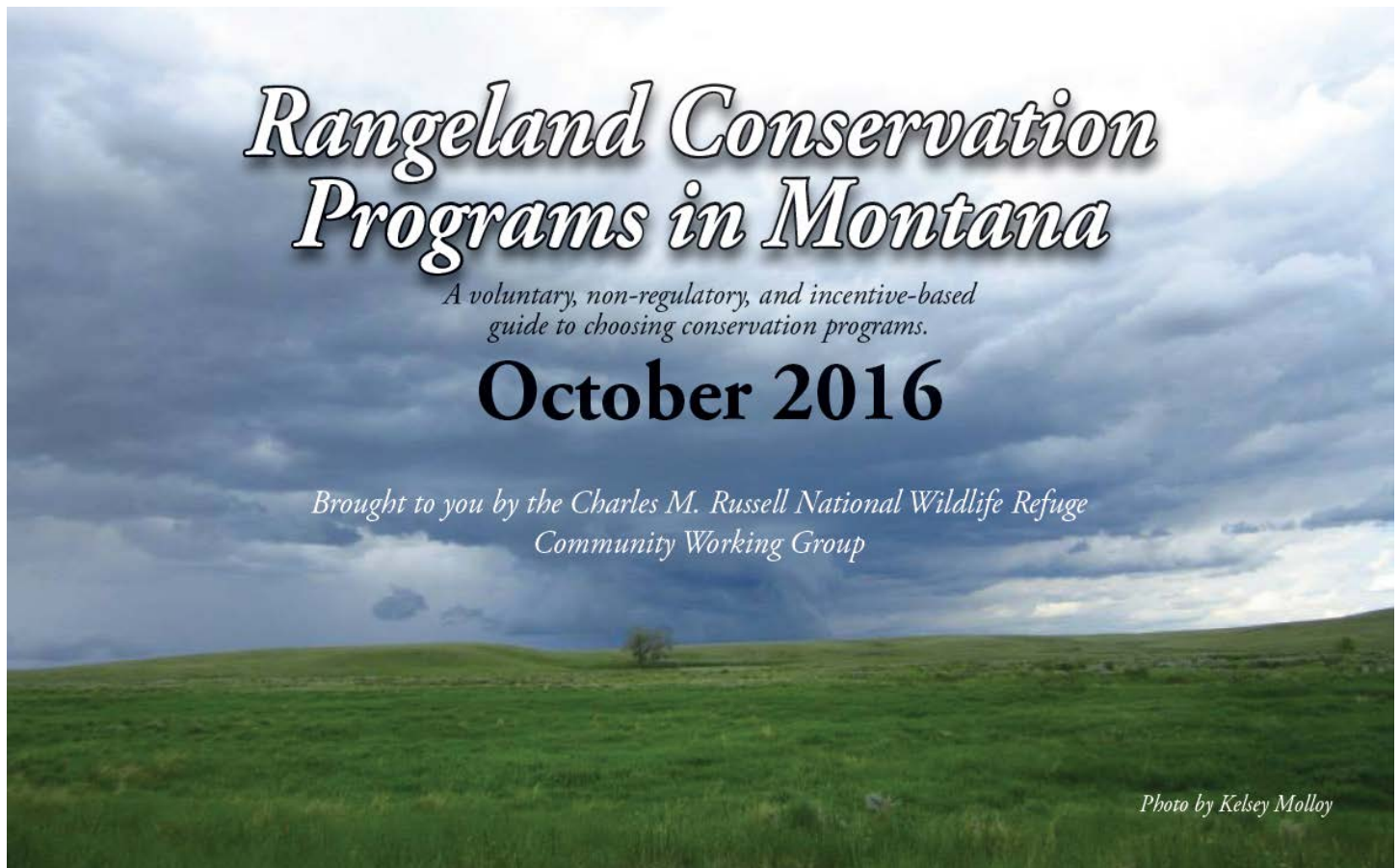
Due to the busy nature of December and the holiday season in general for most folks, the planned December meeting, which would have taken place in Malta, was cancelled.

## Group Projects and Accomplishments

It is often easy to lose sight of the tangible accomplishments and deliverables that this group continues to produce, but when you see it all laid out in front of you, you begin to realize how much actually gets done to affect real change and influence on the conservation practices in the six-county region. Below is a summary of some of these accomplishments:

### *Conservation Menu: Rangeland Conservation Programs in Montana*

Perhaps the most anticipated product of 2016 for the CMR CWG, the Conservation Menu is a voluntary, non-regulatory, and incentive based guide to choosing conservation programs. This menu was created to provide landowners with a list of conservation programs provided through federal, state, local, and private sources to help meet management and conservation needs on their land.



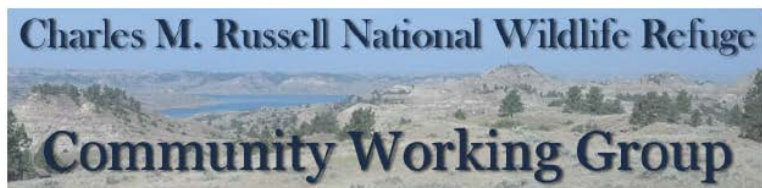
Although great effort was made to ensure the list is complete, it is not exhaustive and will continue to be updated as needed. The list is not an endorsement of the programs, nor is it meant to provide all the necessary information to enable landowners to make a decision between programs. What the Conservation Menu provides is a shopping list of the available programs for different conservation needs, and the contact information for those responsible for the programs.

It is the desire of the CMR Community Working Group that this resource be an advocate for voluntary, incentive-based conservation for the enhancement of the rangeland ecosystems of Montana.



## CMR NWR CWG 2016-2017 Annual Work Plan

A product of the brainstorming and efforts of the entire group over the course of all five full group meetings this year, the Annual Work Plan for 2016-2017 identifies and outlines the goals, tasks, discussion topics, desired outcomes, and action items for the six projects deemed most important/feasible for the group to tackle over the next year.



# Annual Work Plan

# 2016-2017

## [WWW.CMRCWG.ORG](http://WWW.CMRCWG.ORG) Website

At the request of the group, we bought a dedicated domain to house all information pertaining to the CMR CWG. It was debuted at the August meeting and was well received. Please visit the website to view meeting announcements, agendas, summaries, and presentations. **THIS IS YOUR WEBSITE** so we welcome and encourage any feedback or suggestions regarding what you want to see here.

### **CMR Community Working Group**

Community forum for vitality of the 6-county CMR region

[HOME](#)

[UPDATES](#)

[EVENTS](#)

[COMMITTEES](#)

[PROJECTS](#)

[MEETINGS](#)

[PHOTOS](#)

[CONTACT](#)

[LINKS](#)



## *Bison Subcommittee Creation*

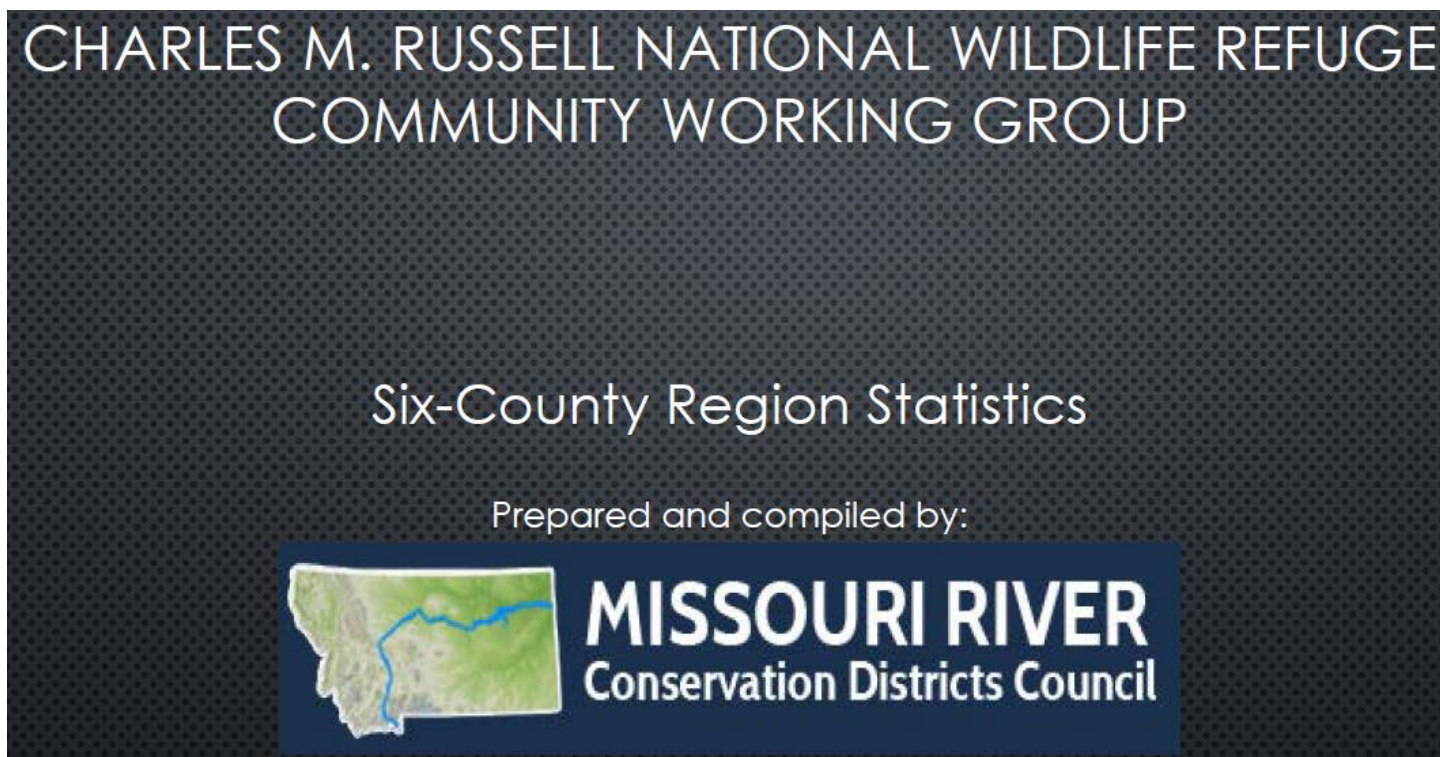
The Bison subcommittee stems from the top project of the 2016-2017 work plan: Discussion on bison and how that looks from a local perspective.

The ultimate goal is to begin talking about something that is uncomfortable in an open / honest way. Through education and having experts come present on bison and their behaviors, folks are better able to participate in discussions at the management level and to provide input on how bison will affect them personal, the local communities, and the interests they represent.

In order to meet this goal, a committee was formed to facilitate a discussion on bison related issues by the larger group. The committee is always open to anyone who wishes to participate and contribute. The first meeting was held on October 5<sup>th</sup> in Jordan.

## *CMR NWR Six-County Region Demographics & Economics Statistics Research*

At the request of the group facilitator, Travis Wilson, the Big Sky Watershed Corps member serving with the Missouri River Conservation Districts Council researched and compiled demographic and economic statistics for the six-county region. This information will hopefully help guide the group's discussions and actions on how to enhance the vitality of the region in the face of ever changing economic and resource concerns.



When all the projects are listed in one place, it becomes quite apparent how much the group got done this year. We hope you will take as much pride in these accomplishments as we do and we should all strive to carry this momentum into the New Year. With so much at stake, we can't afford not to.

## Proposed 2017 Meeting Dates

Since we have cancelled the December meeting for the last two years in a row, we would like your input for the 2017 meeting schedule. The meeting locations will still rotate throughout the six-county region and will be held on the third Thursday of the month (unless major conflicts arise). Please consider the proposed options below and let us know your preference. We will also be distributing a survey via our email list where you can provide your input regarding the 2017 schedule.

Dates			
Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Or suggest a schedule
January 19 <sup>th</sup>	February 16 <sup>th</sup>	January 19 <sup>th</sup>	
March 16 <sup>th</sup>	April 20 <sup>th</sup>	April 20 <sup>th</sup>	
May 18 <sup>th</sup>	June 15 <sup>th</sup>	July 20 <sup>th</sup>	
July 20 <sup>th</sup>	August 17 <sup>th</sup>	October 19 <sup>th</sup>	
September 21 <sup>st</sup>	October 19 <sup>th</sup>	---	
November 16 <sup>th</sup>	---	---	

***THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED DEDICATION AND  
THOUGHTFUL INPUT ON THESE IMPORTANT ISSUES!***

***THIS GROUP WOULD NOT EXIST WITHOUT YOU AND WE ARE  
GRATEFUL TO SERVE AND WORK WITH YOU.***

Let us all enjoy the holidays with our friends and families, and while we do so, let us also think about why this region means so much to us.