

# CMR Community Working Group Meeting Summary

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**Where:** Eagles Club Lewistown

**Opening:** 10: 15 AM

**Attendance:** 28

**Self-Introduction & Grounding Question:** Should the CMR Working Group be paying attention to legislative issues and create a venue for discussion of issues that would affect our communities? Most participants felt that the issues should be followed, especially on an individual member basis, but that it would be very cumbersome to comment as a group and would take away from more productive work that the group could be accomplishing.

## CMR CWG Committee Reports:

- **Montana Saltcedar Team:** Finished up the treatment of the Lower Missouri in October. 114 river miles from Wolf Point to the border. 1244 individual plants treated 15% of Missouri in Montana and 5% of the entire Missouri. Will meet in January (9-11<sup>th</sup>) during the Montana Weed Control Associations meetings in Great Falls, to explore potential projects for 2018. The group is also expanding to cooperate with other local groups focused on Russian Olive and Salt Cedar management in riparian areas.
- **Winnett ACES:** Held a Communities, Conservation, and Collaboration workshop on August 29<sup>th</sup> that was attended by about 35 people. They are entering the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of donated beef being served in the local school. The group also works on a host of other community based projects such as plans for a community enter, an elk management study, a range monitoring group, and a Land sub-committee that meets monthly exploring the potential to purchase land to be managed by the local community.
- **Rural Community & Economic Research in Six County region:** **Julia Haggerty, MSU Professor** – Rachel is helping her put together an advisory board for the project, which is progressing.
- **CMR Water Compact:** There were four objections filed to the Compact. Following face to face meetings with CMR staff and Paul Santavy, those objections were recalled at the end of September. Down to just waiting for the process to complete the legal cycle.
- **Ranchers Stewardship Alliance Conservation Committee:** They received a \$300,000 through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to fund work on establishing grazing infrastructure on CRP, and grasslands restoration. They have allocated all the money and most of the matching funds in the first year in Phillips, Blaine and Valley Counties. They will apply for more funding in hopes of extending the project.

**BLM Sage Grouse Plan Scoping Session:** John Carlson BLM; Mark Bostrom DNRC

John Carlson gave some history about Secretary of Interior's review of the BLM Sage Grouse plans. A series of public meetings have been held where the BLM gathered public comment. The final comment date is December 1, 2017.

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Mark Bostrom, DNRC shared a handout with frequently asked questions on the Secretarial Review that is available on the website.

Lunch was served

**Fire Ecology in the Northern Great Plains:** Dr. Lance Vermeire, Rangeland Ecologist, USDA ARS Research Scientist. Dr. Vermeire presented results from multiple years of research conducted on:

- Summer fire and Post-fire grazing
- Fire season and return interval
- Weedy species management post fire
- Lethal heat dosage
- Bud response
- Fire effects on forage quality

Results were summarized into the following conclusions for the mixed prairie ecosystem that was studied:

- Productivity is not reduced by fire
- Preferred native forage species are generally favored
- Fire effects are species-specific
- Moderate grazing after fire is safe
- Fuel load and heat dosage are good predictors of fire effects
- The bud bank of the vegetation may be the key to fire response
- Increased forage quality following a burn is short-lived

**Wildlife Populations & planned population surveys:** Scott Thompson, Region 6 Wildlife Manager with MT FWP provided an update on wildlife populations in Region 6. Mule Deer numbers in Region 6 are well above the Long Term Average population numbers. Antelope numbers are slowly rising after the brutal winter of 2010. Elk numbers are above target in all the surveyed hunting units. Sage grouse, sharp-tailed grouse, and big horn sheep population trends were presented, with all populations holding steady.

**Next Meeting:** February 27<sup>th</sup>, in Fort Peck.

**Closing Remarks:** Time did not allow for closing remarks.