

# CMR Community Working Group Meeting Summary

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**Where:** Great Northern Hotel Banquet Room

**Opening:** 10:07 am

**Attendance:** 32

**Self-Introduction & Grounding Question:** Bill gave an overview of the group and why he does the grounding question. Asked everyone to read the Mission, Purpose, and three part goals then asked everyone if it rings true with them and their respective organizations.

## CMR CWG Committee Reports:

- **Montana Saltcedar Team:** Rachel reported that she is taking steps to identify a project location for 2019 and then funding to support the project. Colin and Andrew revisited the Lower Missouri Project treatment area and only 12 live saltcedar plants were found and retreated this year. Dean informed the group that the Seven Blackfoot Drainage has all been treated and plans are underway for monitoring and follow-up treatments if necessary. It was noted that the Musselshell Watershed Coalition is making plans to treat the sources located in the Musselshell Basin. Paul Santavy is looking to do a uniform agreement between the CMR NWR and the surrounding counties to treat access areas. **(Note: There are numerous weed infestation across the landscape and everyone is dealing with invasive species)**
- **Winnett ACES:** Colin reported that the Winnett ACES received a planning grant for a community center and the land has been purchased. The Beef to School program is in its 3<sup>rd</sup> year with donations providing beef through next year. The group is looking to apply for a NFWF grant to do on the ground conservation work in Petroleum, Fergus, Musselshell, and Garfield counties. Bill updated the group on the land sub-committee and the work that they are doing.
- **CMR CCP-HMP Update:** No additional meetings for HMPs have been held. They will be writing one HMP for the whole refuge that will be pragmatic and reflects what they can do with the resources that they have in possession. Paul noted that through the CCP they have covered the NEPA process so the HMPs will be developed as interagency plans. Paul also reported that there will be some public interface with these HMPs. Leslie noted that the cooperative agencies that had input in the CCP were told that they would have input into the HMPs. Ron Stoneberg thought that the CMR Community working group could be the venue for public input to take place and Paul agrees that this group could be the venue as well.
- **Prairie Communities in Action:** Julia Haggerty gave a brief progress report on the work she and her graduate students have been conducting in the area. She also noted that a group of MSU researchers came to the area in September to look at restoration projects in Petroleum and Garfield counties.

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- **Ranchers Stewardship Alliance Conservation Committee:** Kelsey reported the RSA has been awarded grant funds through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to do on-the-ground conservation. They have done 17 projects, some of which are partner projects with other agencies, and landowners are putting up a lot of match dollars for the projects. RSA is hiring an executive director, and are also looking to hire an intern to do some bird monitoring.
- **Rangeland Monitoring Group:** Bill reported that the group is in its third year and is conducting soil samples on 7 participating ranches to get a base line of soil health for the area.
- **Hay Monitoring project:** Following the Lodgepole Complex fire there was a large influx of donated and purchased hay which could contain invasive species. The Montana Rangelands Partnership technician based in Miles City conducted monitoring of haystacks and feeding grounds on ranches receiving hay from out of the area. To date there have been no new invaders detected.
- **Western Landowners Alliance Symposium:** Bill reported that the conference was eye opening and community was a big focal point of the gathering. Stacey, Rachel, and Steve all reported that the conference was valuable, and that several of the speakers would be excellent for the CMR CWG to invite. Bill Milton received a national award at the conference for his work on sustaining working lands. He donated the gift proceeds to RSA and Winnett ACES.

Lunch was served at 12: 00 pm

### **Wildlife Habitat Ecology Research – MT's working Rangelands, Lance McNew, MSU:**

Dr. McNew provided a summary of research exploring how sharp-tail grouse respond to different grazing strategies in Roosevelt County. He also introduced some preliminary bird research in the CMR NWR area.

### **Break Out Sessions: Break out Question:**

#### **1. Identify the top 3 research needs for the 6 county region in the following topics:**

##### **a. Biology/Ecology**

- i. Inventory to establish a baseline of wildlife populations in the region
- ii. Systems scale wildlife and biodiversity inventory and monitoring across the region to have a shared set of indicators to make decisions. There is so much going on, TNC has a good program, PFWS, others are monitoring? Share the results? Avoid duplications
- iii. Water quality and quantity inventories
- iv. Techniques available to improve native range
- v. Wildlife and livestock interactions
- vi. Grassland restoration efforts
- vii. Advancements in the prevention, detection and control of invasive species

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viii. Biological control for salt cedar and annual grasses

## b. Social Sciences

- i. Population retention, how to measure the desire of young people to return to the community?
- ii. Community/county assessment similar to petroleum county capturing land ownership trends
- iii. Assessment of community health and social cohesion
- iv. Land ownership trends and how that impacts rural communities
- v. How to identify and measure indicators of sustainable or healthy communities
- vi. Continue to support the work that Julia Haggerty is doing through funding and communication

## c. Economics

- i. Tax structure and analysis
- ii. Economic impact of reduced grazing
- iii. Ways to economically sustain family ranching operations

*(Note, many of these items cannot be addressed through a single research project. Some are requests to know what information is currently available on a topic, such as a literature review of the existing research, others are simply issues that are important to the region, but would need more direction before a research project could be developed around those issues, and still others are requests for inventories and monitoring of current conditions and management results)*

## Proposed changes to planning committee, meeting dates and locations

The group decided to return to 6 meetings / year with the following meeting dates and locations set for 2019. These meeting dates will not change unless inclement weather demands. Meetings are proposed for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of the month and the locations will rotated among the 6-counties.

## Bi-Monthly Meeting Date Calendar

Meeting Month	Meeting Day	Meeting Location
January	17 <sup>th</sup>	Lewistown / Roy / Winifred
March	21 <sup>st</sup>	Circle
May	16 <sup>th</sup>	Winnett
July	18 <sup>th</sup>	Fort Peck
September	19 <sup>th</sup>	Jordan
November	7 <sup>th</sup>	Malta

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The Planning Committee received an influx of new members from various backgrounds. Many thanks to those who stepped up to direct this group through the upcoming year. Planning committee calls will be held the month prior to the meeting and will direct the agenda and meeting topics. Current planning members are listed below. If you are interested in participating, please let Rachel know and she will add you to the list.

### **2019 Planning Committee Members:**

Perri Jacobs – RSA, Phillips County Rancher

Paula Gouse (or another CMR staff)

Dean Rogge – Garfield CD Supervisor, MRCD

Kelly Brink – Garfield CD Supervisor

Carl Sielstad – Fergus County Commissioner

Jerry Collins – Garfield County Commissioner

Claire Hood - WWF

Levi Morgan – US FWS

Julia Haggerty – Montana State University

### **Wrap Up:**

Comments of note: Most Like the small group discussions, would like to see results come from the breakout sessions, work towards more action items that can be accomplished

**Next Meeting date: January 17<sup>th</sup> in Fergus County**

**Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM**