**Where:** McCone County Fairgrounds

**Opening:** 10:10 am

**Attendance:** 42

**Self-Introduction:** Bill Milton asked everyone to introduce themselves and asked if they have seen or heard a bluebird or meadowlark.

**CMR CWG Committee Reports:**

* **Planning Committee Update:**Next CMR CWG Meeting will be held on May 16th in Winnett. The topic will be discussed at the next planning call.
* **CMR CCP/HMP**: The CMR Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP) plan was completed in 2012. The US Fish and Wildlife Service’s regional office in Denver has been working with the CMR on a Habitat Management Plan (HMP). There are about 6 months left in the planning process. Habitats in the CMR are being identified and categorized into 9 major units with the focus shifting away from managing for large game and into managing for migratory birds.
* **RSA Conservation Committee:**Kelsey Molloy described the Ranchers Stewardship Alliance (RSA) as a nonprofit based out of Malta that works to assist producers sometimes focusing on conservation efforts. The RSA recently received a grant to conduct a pilot project with virtual fencing, a radio collar and shock system similar to above ground invisible dog fences. Cattle are provided with radio collars that alert them as they approach the virtual boundaries set by the producer. The RSA is also working on an internship program partnered with Yale University, Texas A&M, and University of Wyoming to learn about rangelands and monitoring.
* **Range Monitoring Group:**  Bill Milton gave an overview of what the group is and what they are looking at, noting so far that they have gathered range monitoring data on plants, soils, and prairie birds. They are now looking at experimenting with remote sensing. They are continuing with their remote sensing pilot project. It has been three years, but they are making strides in determining the most effective methodology and determining accessible ways to format and present their data.

* **Montana Rangelands Partnership:** Casey Gallagher gave an overview of the multi-tiered Montana Rangelands Partnership program. The program works within several different fields including education and outreach, technical assistance, and on the ground monitoring. Initially MRP had the goal of partnering 250,000 acres of land. By the end of their second year, they were working on almost double that at 405,000 acres. They have been able to extend the program for an additional year past their initial funding and are currently working on securing funding for 3 more years.
* **Working Lands Internships:** Stacey Barta, DNRC Rangeland Resources Program Coordinator reported on the Working Lands Internship program which places college age interns on host site ranches in MT. The interns get to visit and work with several host sites over the summer, giving the interns a wide variety of opportunities and experiences when it comes to working lands. The program has secured funding for two interns per year for the next 2 years. The host site opportunities are taken for this summer but they are already looking for future host sites. Bill Milton also had the opportunity to speak briefly about Western Landowners Alliance apprenticeships which are 8 month internships at a single host site instead of the 2 week commitment of the Working Lands Internships.
* **Aquatic invasive Species**: Steve Wanderaas reported that McCone CD is taking over the Nashua AIS Inspection Station and promoted the new FWP signage that is being placed at boat launches across the state. The employees for the Nashua station will be employees of the conservation district and not of the state. The Flowing Wells station in Garfield County will operate 7 days a week during the 2019 season, an increase from the 3 days per week they operated in 2018. Attempts are also being made to get the Wibaux station up and running.
* **Montana Saltcedar Team:**  The Fergus CD was awarded funding for saltcedar removal work to be done on the west side of the refuge. It will cover two additional Montana Conservation Corps crews working with a CMR Strike team crew and another MCC Crew. The work will be completed in September. The Fergus CD and community members are hoping to host a potluck after treatment is complete to show the effects of saltcedar treatment and introduce the local community to MCC crew members.
* **Status of the Leopold Conservation Award in Montana –** The Leopold Conservation Award is sponsored by the Sand County Foundation. It recognizes working landowners for going above and beyond in their conservation practices. Award recipients have worked to spread collaboration instead of regulation to promote conservation on working lands and educate the public on conservation and what it means to be a conservationist on working lands. The award will soon be coming to Montana. Sponsors such as Montana Stockgrowers, DNRC, NRCS, Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Western Landowner Alliance, and World Wildlife Fund have committed to bringing the award to Montana. <https://sandcountyfoundation.org/our-work/leopold-conservation-award-program>
* **CMR CWG Online Map:** Big Sky Watershed Corps Member Mark Werley presented a draft online map. The map has layers that can be turned off and on allowing the viewer to visualize the 6 county area with a number of different data layers. Input was requested and you can email Mark at petroleumbswctwo@macdnet.org to provide feedback and additional layers.

Lunch was served at 12:00 pm

**Ranchers and the ESA – Guest Speaker Russell Davis :** Russell Davis, rancher from Ordway, CO, gave an excellent talk on his experience as a landowner and producer with the Endangered Species Act and his subsequent winning of the Leopold Conservation Award through his conservation efforts of the Mountain Plover. In the words of Rachel Frost:

 “If you missed Russell Davis last week, you missed a truly excellent presentation. His story was completely raw, utterly honest and provided a unique insight into the workings of a landowner's mind when faced with the possibility of endangered species on their land. I guarantee that everyone in the crowd was on the edge of their seat when he was describing the phone call with the USFWS regarding the listing of the Mountain Plover, even though we already knew the outcome! He was an excellent story teller that completely engaged his audience and opened his life so that we might learn from his experience. I thoroughly enjoyed his presentation, and just being able to visit with him. Meeting and getting to know people like Russell are one of the great rewards of working in conservation and participating in stakeholder meetings.”

Learn more about Russell and his work on his ranch in Colorado: <https://www.partnersforconservation.org/about-us/board/russell-davis/>

Announcements: Stewardship Projects / MSGOT Guidelines - Rangeland Improvement Loans

**Next Meeting date: May 16th in Winnett, MT**

**Adjournment: 3: 00 pm**