

CMR Community Working Group Meeting Summary

Where: Fort Peck Interpretive Center

Opening: 10:00 am

Attendance: 40

Self-Introduction: Bill Milton asked everyone to introduce themselves and what people are experiencing in regards to rainfall this year.

Panel Discussion –Lodgepole Complex Response:

Jerry Collins, Garfield County Commissioners

Paul Santavy, CMR Refuge

Ray Hagemen, Garfield County Fire Department

Dean Rogge, Garfield County Conservation District

Scott McAvoy, Assistant Fire Management Officer BLM

The panel introduced themselves and discussed their experiences surrounding the Lodgepole Complex. Everyone had unique perspectives and discussion moved organically. Later the panel moved to a Q&A with attendees. Overarching topics included: creating partnerships, staying positive, initial response, post fire concerns, social media management.

Initial subject questions included: Who they are, what is their history with fire management, and what were their roles and responsibilities during the fire.

- Dean Rogge opened the panel with a little overview from his perspective and the conservation district's responsibilities immediately post fire. He spoke about the tour that was taken of the area and the weed monitoring program that was initiated due to the needed donated relief hay that came in from all over the United States.
- Ray Hagemen Fire Warden in Garfield County for over 30 years gave a history of fires in the area and the unique response required for a rural area. Discussed how this situation has developed important partnerships with other agencies in order to create a successful firefighting team. He also talked about the Garfield County Fire Foundation and how it works to coordinate the incredible amount of donations during these emergencies.
- Jerry Collins talked about the government process to have the county declared a disaster and how the county and city responded to the emergency. He also discussed how social media created a bit of a problem in the beginning concerning private information being put out to the public. He also talked about how they learned to deal with public information and communications. He also spoke to the interagency cooperation of not only firefighting but with the efforts afterward and post fire restoration.
- Scott McAvoy noted BLM Eastern Montana has 10 engines and 1 helicopter to cover the entire area and that in their response area they had over 400 fires in 2017. The success rate for initial attacks has dramatically increased in recent history, including post 2017. He talked some about the different set of regulations when fighting fire in Wilderness Study Areas (WSA) but how interagency partnerships and communication allow quick response and approval even in those WSA areas.

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- Paul Santavy spoke about the roles within the USFWS he holds and what roles he had specifically in regards to the Lodgepole Complex fire. He noted that he was part of an administrative team for incident command that helped work through the regulations on the agency side. Due to the size of the fire the normal opportunities for fire relief would be depleted quickly and they realized that the refuge could within their authority allow grazing in some areas of the refuge. He quickly worked with local county commissioners and conservation district supervisors to figure out who needed these areas for relief grazing and how to best to manage this opportunity.

The panel concluded after a question and answer session with attendees.

Lunch was served at 12:00 pm

CMR CWG Committee Reports:

- **Ranchers Stewardship Alliance (RSA):** Kelsey Molloy reported the RSA is working on a tour of some of their projects to occur in early-mid September. She also talked about the Low Stress Livestock Handling Workshop being held on November, 13th in Malta. There will be a fundraising raffle with several prizes.
- **World Wildlife Fund (WWF):** Claire Hood presented new, updated print copies of the Conservation Menu. There are also meetings for the Sustainable Beef Pilot in Winnett and Malta.
- **Montana Sage Grouse Oversight Team (MSGOT):** Carolyn Sime reported on the Stewardship grant for the conservation and restoration of sage grouse habitat. There are six projects in this round of applications and four are in the central/eastern part of the state. Noted that in 2020 status of sage grouse will be reviewed with the USFWS.
- **Communities in Resilience:** There will be an MSU based grass lands resilience tour in September to bring MSU faculty, students, and others out in to the community.
- **Agricultural Community Enhancement and Sustainability (ACES):** Diane Ahlgren noted there is a new part time coordinator and that ACES is now a nonprofit through the state of Montana. The land committee is sub-leasing a ranch for use as a grass bank that currently has six young producers grazing about 50 head a piece. If money can be obtained by the ACES group there is an option to purchase the ranch.
- **Montana Rangelands Partnership (MRP):** Casey Gallagher talked about the rangeland monitoring booklet that has been completed. She informed everyone in attendance that she had a few copies on

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hand if they would use them. The program will be finished with its current funding in August and has not yet receive additional funding to continue.

- **Range Monitoring Group (RMG):** Bill Milton reported that they currently have bird monitoring on 15 ranches and lands on the CMR and APR as well as some experiments with remote sensing. Working on how to collect and share data in a broad scale way that will make everyone happy.
- **Western Landowners Alliance (WLA):** Heritage Survey –Amber Smith gave an overview of The Heritage Survey part of the Montana Outdoor Heritage Project and how it will be used. Amber led a question and answer session that inspired answers on what outdoor heritage meant to those assembled. Amber collected answers to report back to the WLA. She encouraged all attendees to participate in the survey online and said that it only takes about ten minutes to fill out. You can find is at this link: <https://montanaheritageproject.com/>

Next Meeting date: October 1st in Jordan

Adjournment: 3:00 PM