

CMR Community Working Group Meeting Summary

Where: Hybrid meeting, Petroleum County Courthouse Basement in Winnett, MT and Zoom

Date: December 1, 2021 from 10:00am-3:00pm

Attendance: 21 in-person and 10 virtually

Self-Introduction:

Everyone introduced themselves and answered the grounding questions, “What is your connection to the CMR and why are you here?”

People in attendance included:

Bill Milton – Producer and Facilitator

Chris King – Producer

Diane Ahlgren – Producer

Mike Assenmacher – US Fish Wildlife Services

Tory Scribner – Senator Daines Office

Jerry Collins – Garfield County Commissioner, Board for MT Association of Counties

Steve Wanderaas – MRCDC, McCone CD, and Producer

Lester Nickels Jr. – Producer and Permit Holder

Morgan Marks – Montana Wildlife Federation

Perri Jacobs – Producer

Ron Stoneberg – Valley County CD and Producer

Laura Kiehl – MRCDC, Petroleum CD, and Producer

Mike Kautz – American Prairie

Mike Lucas – NRCS

Emily Mitchell – MT Fish Wildlife and Parks

Molly Masters – MRCDC Coordinator

Josh Hobbs – Pheasants Forever and Winnett ACES

Paul Santavy – US Fish Wildlife Services at CMR

Senator Mike Lang – SD 17, Chairman EQC, and Chairman Senate Ag Committee

Autumn Holzgren – Montana conservation Corps

Kendall Morgan – Winnett ACES

Eric Clewis – Montana Wildlife Federation

Joel Harris – Montana DNRC

Kara Novakovich – NRCS

Lorrie Huber – Director of Lewistown Area Chamber of Commerce

Paula Gouse – CMR Refuge

Rosie Greener – Meagher County citizen

Seth Murnion – NRCS

Roger Peters – Producer

K.C. Weingart – Producer

Dean Rogge – MRCDC, Garfield County CD, Montana Association of Conservation Districts and Producer

More in-depth partner information and updates including questions, What is on your mind? What are unmet needs and concerns you have? What do you want to learn more about in 2022? Anything else that is on your mind? were answered by meeting participants. Items and topics mentioned included:

- Sage-grouse concerns
- More people enjoying outdoors and its effects on area
- Drought resiliency and rangeland health
- Protecting wildlife and habitat
- Enhancing public access
- Water management and drought on CMR
- Network and advocate for small businesses, including niche markets for producers, public access
- Having conversations and sharing thoughts

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- Good things and work the CMR Refuge is conducting
- Hearing concerns directly from neighbors
- 30x30 discussion, a lot of land is already being conserved, it's already happening, we don't need to be saved – we've been saving it for a long time
- Communication between all the entities has been huge with this group and need to continue
- Wildlife overwintering concerns with drought
- Road maintenance costs to counties, and fire department, ambulance department, etc.
- Relationships within group
- Saltcedar Team has had a great benefit as well as other invasive species potentials for partnering
- Agriculture as a whole is biggest concern, tough decisions that have to be made, mental health and suicide
- What is the USFWS study about? Need to have discussion about this survey that is regarding introducing bison and bighorn sheep on CMR
- Fort Peck test flows below the Dam affecting area greatly, and beyond area as well
- APR purchases concern, most recent in Valley County
- Ranches this year have been treated worse this year than illegals coming across the southern border by our federal government
- Focusing on relationship building
- Want action out of this group, don't want it to become a book club
- CMR resources and understaffing issues
- Need to get rid of the bison threat/issue
- In Valley County, ordinance passed saying all bison in county are domestic
- Ranchers cannot survive with free ranging bison
- Ranchers are losing respect
- Concerned about the people of these small communities
- CWG discussions are very important and want to continue this information sharing occurring
- More people coming to the West, and Montana specifically, how do we work with that
- Understanding local concerns and needs
- Discussion on FWP's Elk Management Plan and information about elk on the CMR
- May need more sportsman representation on CWG, elk hunting issues
- Worried about the future and what is going to happen down the road on the CMR
- Trail use within BLM / other public access lands – vehicle use on 2-tracks verse hiking
- Developing relationships within the group has been the biggest benefit
- Bringing concerns and sharing perspectives is huge part and benefit of CWG
- Current drought conditions are bad, acres that never greened up
- Invasive species control and information including saltcedar and Japanese brome, potential change in habitat as result
- Fire regimes in CMR Refuge area, change in timber areas, fuel treatments

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Everyone was placed into groups of 3-4. Groups were tasked with reviewing the Mission, Purpose, and 3-part Goal of the CMR NWR Community Working Group, and then prioritize a handful of programs/topics for the planning committee to consider at future meetings. Here is the list of topics that the groups came up with (topics with an 'x' were mentioned more than once):

Saltcedar Control, Updates	x	
Grasshoppers		
Sagegrouse	x	
Bison/Buffalo	x	x
Consistency in meeting participants	x	
Road Maintenance - public infrastructure (EMTs, fire, etc.)	x	x
Rangeland Monitoring - grazed verse ungrazed, forb density		
History Lesson - Ft. Peck, Bison/Buffalo Wars		
Elk Management Plan	x	
30x30 - might be more down the road, areas already concerved/preserved in MT	x	
Invasive Species - Japanese Brome, Ventenata, Saltcedar, Mussels, Weed Boards & CMR, weed mapping that was created	x	x
Bighorn Sheep		
Public access on public lands, 2 tracks being used, campgrounds	x	
Grazing on CMR - policy after fires in 2017, loss of grazing fee income?, range monitoring, grazing plan details, ag production verse tourism dollars coming in		
Remote sensing	x	
Central Grasslands Roadmap		
Hydrology restoration projects		
FWP summarize data on key wildlife species		
Surrounding community information		

A call for anyone additional who wants to serve on the planning committee was made.

- Individuals already on the planning committee are Bill Milton (Facilitator), Dean Rogge (Producer), Perri Jacobs (Producer), Julia Haggerty (MSU Earth Sciences), Paula Gouse (USFWS), Molly Masters (MRCDC Coordinator), and Jerry Collins (County Commissioner).
- Individuals who volunteered to be added to the planning committee were Mike Kautz (American Prairie), Morgan Marks (MT Wildlife Federation), and Tory Scribner (Senator Daines Office). If anyone else would like to be on the committee, they need to let Molly Masters know.