

CMR Community Working Group Meeting Summary

Where: Hybrid meeting, McCone County Fairgrounds, Circle, MT and Zoom

Date: May 19, 2022 from 10:00am-3:00pm

Attendance: 9 in-person and 8 virtually

Self-Introduction:

Everyone introduced themselves and answered the grounding question, “What are the conditions like where you are? How is the moisture in your area?”

People in attendance included:

Bill Milton – Producer and Facilitator

Paula Gouse – USFWS at CMR Refuge

Paul Santavy – USFWS at CMR

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

Josie Hammond – helping Molly

Molly Masters – MRCDC Coordinator

Tom Woolf – AIS Bureau Chief with FWP

Steve Wanderaas – McCone CD and Rancher

Monty Billing – Garfield CD and Rancher

Emily Moran – DNRC MISC, MSGOT, and MT Rangelands

Veronica Grigaltchik – DNRC Conservation District Specialist

Liz Lodman – MISC Coordinator

Landon Holte – Valley County Weed District

Corrie Williamson – Senior Outreach Coordinator with American Prairie

Morgan Marks – Montana Wildlife Federation

Attila Felnagy – DNRC Compact Implementation Program

Jane Mangold – MSU Extension

Conner Nelle – MSU research assistant

More in-depth partner and organization updates were shared by participants who wanted to. Items and projects mentioned included:

- CMR: spring is progressing. There was a large demand for paddle fish licenses, but actual anglers coming are low due to the low water. Fort Peck Lake is way down so some of the boat launches are not operational. Are pretty well done with their prescribed burn season. Are gearing up for the fire season, with additional fire fighters compared to previous years. Roads are in pretty good shape because of the dry conditions. Sage-grouse lek attendance was about two-weeks earlier than normal when surveying and the number of males attending any leks was down compared to the long-term average. USACE run traffic counters into recreation areas estimating visitation numbers. They approximate 600,000 visits per year. For the CMR they use this plus additional hunting traffic to be about 800,000 visits per year to the CMR.
- Garfield County: Equipment has been coming in for repairing roads. These repairs are also being used as training grounds. All 51 wind towers are put in in Garfield County. They plan to turn them on this fall. First phase is a total of 130 towers across the counties, with second phase included there will be a total of around 300 towers. They should start bringing in tax money this fall to the Counties.
- American Prairie: getting ready for visitation season. They are preparing for drought as many are and will be harvesting a few more animals compared to usual.

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- Montana Wildlife Federation: are planning some riparian restoration work through NFWF grants at Rose Coulee and Reed Coulee again outside of Winifred. They are helping support a couple other groups with additional low-tech restoration work. They are planning a hunting film tour event to bring people together on July 7 in Great Falls.
- DNRC Rangeland Resources Committee: May 31 is their quarterly meeting in Miles City. Kicking Grass tour on June 1 at Haughian Ranch. 406 Grazing Academy happening June 7-9 in Lewistown.
- DNRC Montana Sage-Grouse Oversight Team: They opened the grant cycle February 11 and applications are due by August 12. May 27 they are having a meeting.
- DNRC Conservation District Bureau: Are working on some strategic planning. Their purpose is to help Conservation Districts fulfill their missions. They had a few different grant deadlines due recently, so they are going through and having hearings on these. Accepted ones will be sent out in June for signature. Moving forward they are exploring a FEMA opportunity for disaster mitigation funding. Environmental Quality Council will be meeting next week. During this meeting Conservation District funding will be discussed.
- McCone County CD: They are busy running the watercraft inspection station at Nashua and things are going well there.
- Missouri River Conservation Districts Council: Working on getting the Montana Saltcedar Team up and going again. The next meeting for this is scheduled for June 22 in Lewistown. There is talk about expanding the Saltcedar Team to include Russian Olive and Common Buckthorn. 2022 River Rendezvous is being planned for July 22. We will be touring sites in Petroleum County. We are still working on Fort Peck Test Flow stuff. Earlier this week we presented to the Water Policy Interim Committee.
- Garfield County Conservation District: They are busy running two watercraft inspection stations. New this year they have bought a piece of equipment for cleaning weeds out of fences. Weeds coming from hay that came from all over during the drought is a big concern.

Presentation Summaries:

Jane Mangold, Montana State University Extension Invasive Plant Specialist (1:21:07 - 2:07:12)

Mangold discussed invasive annual grass distribution, identification, biology, and management, specifically looking at Cheatgrass, Japanese Brome, Ventenata, and Medusahead. A good video resource that summarizes identification of all four species can be viewed at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=if2wKRfdWYY>.

Tom Woolf, Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks Aquatic Invasive Species Bureau Chief (3:04:56 - 3:54:05)

Woolf presented information on FWP's AIS program. In 2021, there were 61 mussel fouled vessels. So far this year there have been 14 mussel fouled vessels. Purchased boats from the mid-west that are hauled commercially are a much higher risk for being mussel fouled. Tiber Lake has been delisted after five years of no-detection of mussels. The most up to date information can be viewed on the AIS Dashboard found at www.CleanDrainDryMT.com. Beyond mussels, there are several other aquatic invasive species that are looked for at inspection stations and scouted for in water bodies across Montana. Some of these include New Zealand mudsnails, Southern plains crayfish, Asian clam, curlyleaf pondweed, and Eurasian watermilfoil.

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Liz Lodman, Montana Invasive Species Council Coordinator (3:55:40 - 4:31:20) and closing questions
Lodman shared information on the history, vision, and mission of MISC. Ultimately, they want to foster cooperation and communication across partners and stakeholders. Education and outreach is a large component of what MISC does. They are hosting a MISC Summit this fall on October 25-26 in Helena. For the most up to date information on MISC their website is www.invasivespecies.mt.gov.