

**RANGELAND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES**  
**Wednesday July 31, 2024**  
**8:30 AM-10:00 AM**

**PRESENT**

***Members:***

***Chair, Diane Ahlgren***  
***Vice Chair, John Hollenback***  
***Member, Leah Lewis***  
***Member, Ron Devlin***  
***Advisory Member, Mark Bostrom***  
***Advisory Member, Sky Losleben***  
***Advisory Member, Marissa Sather***  
***Advisory Member, Rachel Frost***  
***Advisory Member, Kelvin Johnson***  
***Advisory Member, Brenna Reitman***

***Staff:***

***Stacey Barta, DNRC State Rangeland Resources Program Coordinator***

***Public:***

***Kasey Lewis, Western Montana Conservation Commission***

**Call to Order**

Chair Diane Ahlgren called the meeting to order at 8:40 am. Everyone in attendance introduced themselves.

Diane asked for approval of the meeting minutes from the May 1, 2024 meeting. Ron motioned to approve the minutes, John seconded. Diane called for discussion and Kelvin noted a minor change in the minutes. The motion passed unanimously.

**NEW BUISNESS:**

Stacey provided a Coordinator Update that included reporting on 406 Grazing Academy (GA) which had 23 attendees in Miles City. Grazing Academy 2025 will be held in Havre at the Northern Ag Research Station the first week of June. Stacey mentioned that a Level 2 GA is being investigated and a survey has been sent out to past attendees to gauge interest and determine topics. Montana Range Tour (MRT) took place in Stanford and had 160 people attend, which was record attendance for the program. Stacey noted the format change from having lunch/dinner to breakfast/lunch and it went very well. Surveys received back from attendees indicate that both GA and MRT went very well. Stacey also outlined events that she and Shantell have attended since the last RRC meeting.

**John Hollenback**

FWP has funds for virtual fencing. Very dry there, it's the driest John ever remembers.

Stacey shared a link to a webinar done by the University of Arizona that talks about virtual fence. This webinar compares vendors and details will come out in the newsletter as well.

Leah Lewis

It's very dry and their water has been shut off. No second cutting.

Ron Devlin

Noticed temperatures were lower than normal. Same as others—very dry. Grasshoppers bad in spots.

Diane Ahlgren

Grasshoppers, had spring rains and it was cool. Hay didn't do great—very light. Quite a bit leftover hay from last year. Calf/cattle prices are good.

Kelvin Johnson-FWP

Noted that he's been seeing cows get through the virtual fence and going to water. Which emphasizes the need for water developments in upland areas.

Marissa Sather- USFWS

USFWS got a \$1.3million for sagebrush conservation for grazing projects.

Mark Bostrom-DNRC

MSGOT gearing up listening sessions for September. DNRC awarded \$50million from EPA. There's \$9million to mitigate coal seam fires. Two subawards for MT Dept of Ag. one of which is mitigation of methane in feedlots.

Rachel Frost-MSU

New recruitment video for rangeland ecology that was produced through Western SARE funds. Priority to get more students into that pipeline of range majors that can be fed into the industry and agencies that are looking for those students.

Brenna Reitman-MACD

Riparian grazing seminar in Big Timber and mentioned Soil Health Symposium in February 2025.

Sky Losleben-FWP

First conservation lease will go through since it was under 500 acres which will be the first official one. Hoping for another application period this fall.

Casey Lewis-WMCC

Received a \$7million EPA grant, open 30-day comment period.

**New Business:**

- Same budget as before, in second year of biennium.
- Wickens Salt Creek Ranch was the winner of the 2024 LCA Award. MRT will be in Hilger/Lewistown area.

- RSA, ACES, BLM to put in a grant with BLM under Good Neighbor Authority and just under \$5million was awarded. These funds will mainly go back through RSA and ACES for on the ground use—most of the money will go toward fence removal or modification.
- NRCS Agreement expires in 2025-these funds have been used to support LCA, Working Lands Internship program, education/outreach events. New agreement is for \$164,000 and largely supports the same programs except the intern program as funds for that has been appropriated through the legislature through the program's budget.
- Approached by BLM for a low-tech subaward for funds to be used near Fort Peck.
- Rangeland Improvement Loan Program-
  - No new loans,
  - \$320k out in loans,
  - \$396 cash balance available.
  - John asked about using funds from the program to install virtual fence and Stacey said yes, funds can be used for that as virtual fence is fence and its infrastructure.
- Working Lands Internship Program Update-
  - 3 interns, some hiccups, but for the most part it went well.
  - 3 week stays will be determined by hosts.

**Meeting Dates:**

Dates and locations will be brainstormed on by the group and sent to Stacey for finalization. Looking at September/October.

**Public Comment**

No public comment.

**ADJOURN**

Diane asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. John made the motion and Ron seconded. No discussion and the motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:35 am.