

# Montana GLCI Quarterly Newsletter



## Montana GLCI Steering Committee Gathers in Billings for Spring Meeting

### Montana GLCI Steering Committee

- Lon Reukauf, Chairman, Terry, MT
- Dean Wang, Vice-Chairman, Baker, MT
- Bob Lee, Judith Gap, MT
- John Hollenback, Gold Creek, MT
- John Anderson, Alder, MT
- Chase Hibbard, Helena, MT
- Jim Willis, Buffalo, MT
- Ben Lehfeldt, Lavina, MT
- Hayley Shipp, Miles City, MT
- Ron Stoneberg, Hinsdale, MT



The spring meeting of the Montana GLCI steering committee was held March 11th at the downtown Stockman Bank in Billings, MT. Chairman Lon Reukauf welcomed participants and new steering committee member, Ron Stoneberg, who is replacing Terry Haughian, representing the Northern Great Plains section of the SRM.

The meeting started with the business portion of the agenda, which included reviewing the budget and annual plan of work, the by-laws, and the election of officers. Lon Reukauf was re-elected to serve an additional two year term as Chairman and Dean Wang was re-elected to serve an additional two year term as

Vice-Chairman.

The steering committee was able to approve funding for Montana Range Days, the North American Envirothon, (hosted by Montana), and the Carter County Mob Grazing Project.

Most of the funding available for projects was set aside for the GrazeKeeper. The steering committee met with Phillip Agye-man-Budu and Ben Tre-rise, Authentic Imaging, INC. to discuss and review the progress of the GrazeKeeper prototype which, when fully developed, will be available as an APP.

Ben Lehfeldt provided an update from the National GLCI steering committee meeting he attended in

February held in Washington D.C. (for more information, see pages 2 and 3 of this newsletter).

Jerry Schaefer, NRCS, provided an update on the sage grouse initiative (for more information, see back page of this newsletter), as well as the NRCS budget.

The radio ads and the educational campaign, "Cowboy up with Conservation-it can save your grass" was discussed, and participants were allowed to provide updates from the organizations they represent as well as activities they are involved in.

Thanks to all members that were able to attend.

### *Calendar of Events:*

- *MT Envirothon, April 22-23, Lewistown, MT*
- *Earth Day, April 22*
- *MSGA Mid-Year Meeting, June 7 - 8, Missoula, MT*
- *Montana Range Days, June 24-26, Havre, MT*

## National GLCI Steering Committee Meets in Washington D.C.—Ben Lehfeldt

### **5NCGL Conference**

-John Peterson then gave a report on the success of the 5th National Conference on Grazing Lands.

John went over past attendance numbers from prior conferences:

1. NCGL (Las Vegas) - over 800
2. 2NCGL (Nashville) - over 1200
3. 3NCGL (St. Louis) - over 1000
4. 4NCGL (Reno) - over 700
5. 5NCGL (Orlando) - about 500

-John said that this was the lowest attended conference we have ever held, but he still feels it was one of our best conferences and our strongest program. There were several factors that affected our registration numbers including travel restrictions for Federal employees and the economy. Despite our low registration numbers we had success in our Trade Show and our Sponsorship committees. We had nearly 40 exhibitors in our trade show which brought in more money than we had budgeted for our trade show income. Additionally, our sponsorship committee brought in a great deal more than we had budgeted, and these two factors made the conference a financial success. Additionally, we ended up under budget on several of our expenses such as conference administration, food and beverage and trade show expenditures.

-John said that Monti has been working diligently on the conference proceedings and we are on track to have them out in April sometime. They will be mailed to all registered conference attendees.

-Bob Drake said he has been talking with some members of the committee and discussing a possible 6th National Conference on Grazing Lands. Salvador Salinas, State Conservationist from Texas, has spoken with Bob and the TX NRCS would gladly assist with the 6NCGL with staff support and promotional assistance. John has said that he will work with GLCI and do another conference. Bob said that we most likely would look at Ft. Worth or San Antonio. Chad Ellis, from the Noble

Foundation, said that Noble would be able to help more with a 6NCGL if it were held in Texas.

-Bob said that national conference would be something the committee would decide at our Fall GLCI Steering Committee Meeting in Wichita, KS in September.

### **The GLCI Strategic Plan**

Pat Pfeil wanted to review the Strategic Plan and reassess where we are in the completion of our goals.

- Goal for 400 people trained nationwide; today we are down to about 350. It was suggested that we not reduce that number arbitrarily without determining a realistic target number. We may never be able to get those numbers back up if we do concede on the number of trained grazing lands personnel.

Goal for state GLCI Coalitions; many states still do not have GLCI Coalitions, but many are combining GLCI with other organizations such as AFGC. They serve the same function so to create a coalition for GLCI within the state would be duplication.

### **Partner Reports**

Pat Pfeil said SRM just completed its annual meeting in Oklahoma City. She said that the GLCI Task Force met at that meeting and that Jeff Goodwin is the outgoing chair of that task force. Johanna Pate will be the new chair as Jeff is stepping down after two years. They had close to 100 people in attendance and four states represented at this meeting. During the meeting they covered topics such as "small ranch sustainability", "ranch stewardship: the importance of monitoring", "producing grass fed genetics in North Louisiana", and "ranching in the Kansas tall grass prairie".

Dick McElhaney said that the American Farm Bureau Federation is still in litigation with the EPA over the Chesapeake Bay.

Duane Hertzler, representing the NE Dairymen, said that Chesapeake Bay permitting is difficult. However yogurt plants require a lot of milk and that has been a good to keep the demand for milk high.

Dave Forgey from the American Forage and Grasslands Council said that Jana Malot is now on the board for AFGC, and that their next conference will be in Memphis, Tennessee next January.

Larry Hensley reported for the National Farmers Union. He said that Dr. Larry Butler had produced about a five-minute segment on the 5NCGL during one of his recent out on the land episodes. He suggested that we write a thank you letter to Dr. Butler for highlighting the 5NCGL on RFD TV. Ben Lehfeldt, who recently took Aggie Helle's place on the committee, spoke for the American Sheep Industry. Ben said he just recently returned from San Antonio in January from the ASI's annual conference. He said ASI is strongly focusing on targeted grazing in fire suppression and invasive weeds.

Chad Ellis, from the Noble Foundation, says he is been with Noble for about eight months and has thoroughly enjoyed it. He said that Noble focuses on giving technical advice for farmers and ranchers in Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas. Bill Buckner is the new President of the Noble Foundation.

John Peterson gave a brief report on the National Association of Conservation Districts. Earl Garber is the new president. Lee McDaniel from Maryland is the 1st Vice President, and John Larson is now the CEO. John said that Earl is a very good friend of the GLCI, and he will appoint a replacement for Gretchen Sammis on the committee.

Bob Drake said that NCBA had a very good meeting in Tampa Florida. There were approximately 6700 people at the convention. He also said Bob McCann will be the next NCBA president in 2014. Bob McCann is still an alternate member of the GLCI, so we will have a strong advocate from within NCBA.

## National GLCI Steering Committee Meets in Washington D.C.—Ben Lehfeldt

### State Conservationists Advisory Committee Reports

Salvador Salinas said Texas NRCS is looking to fill vacancies. Currently 145 employees are eligible to retire today which would represent a huge loss of institutional knowledge. He said Texas NRCS has 11 Grazing lands management specialists. Currently there are two vacancies they are looking to fill. The Texas GLC I will be holding a Texas Grazing lands conference in Fort Worth in July to showcase the good things that are going on in Texas. Jeff Goodwin handed out a Texas GLCI report which lists the date for the grazing lands conference is July 15-17, 2013. A link to this handout is also available on the national GLC webpage under upcoming events.

Carlos Suarez said he has made the move from Florida to California and he has heard very positive feedback on the Fifth National Conference on Grazing Lands. Carlos said the California GLCI need to be revitalized and he wants to take it to the next level. NRCS and the CA GLCI will work with other organizations like the California Cattlemen in an effort to investment in more training to keep their range conserva-

tionists technical skills at a higher level.

Gary Lee, Michigan State Conservationist, was representing Don Petit from NY. Gary said there are 11 states in the Northeast region and that eight states have full-time grazing specialists on staff. They perform things such as pasture walks and grazing workshops.

Joyce Swartzendruber, Montana NRCS State Conservationist, said that the Montana GLC is very strong. The MT GLCI is currently working on a Smart phone app which will have grazing applications. Montana GLCI has also been working with Dr. Larry Butler to produce an episode of "Out on the Land" in Montana. The episode will feature Bob Lee and Ben Lehfeldt. Dr. Butler also has plans to visit the Yellowstone River for an episode and part of one episode will highlight sage grouse and how properly managing grazing lands can benefit the landowner and the bird. They have a saying, "What's good for the herd is good for the bird." Montana has 19 rangeland management specialists on staff.

Eric Banks, Kansas State Conservationist, said that he is excited to host the national steering committee this fall, Sep-

tember 5th-8th, 2013, in Wichita, Kansas at the Doubletree Hotel. He said that the committee will tour a couple of ranches that are about an hour to an hour and a half south west of Wichita. One of the ranches will be the Ted Alexander's ranch, who will also host a Friday evening social at his place. Eric also spoke about a couple of activities that the Kansas coalition is hosting. The first one is March 19th-22nd, and is a ranching for profit seminar that will take place in four locations. They are also holding grazing schools this summer. He said the Kansas NRCS has 14 grazing land specialists who spend 100% of their time on Grazing lands activities.

Dana Larsen, the Acting National Grazing Lands Ecologist, said that staffing is a big concern. Currently NRCS has 283 Range Conservationists, 17 Forage Agronomists, and 46 Animal Scientists. There are more than 21 million acres in prescribed grazing. She said we need keep track of the all the good that properly managed grazing lands does for the Nation and the value that grazing lands brings over time.



During his visit to Washington D.C., Ben Lehfeldt had an opportunity to meet with the congressional delegation from Montana. Pictured left to right, Senator Max Baucus, Representative Steve Daines, Ben Lehfeldt and Senator Jon Tester.

## Montana GLCI Co-Coordinators

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Sage Grouse Initiative: Tim Griffiths,  
NRCS sage grouse initiative  
coordinator

Last week, the FWS released a FINAL report from the Sage-Grouse Conservation Objectives Team (COT) that, for the first time, delineates the 'goal posts' for conservation actions needed to maintain viable sage-grouse populations and avert the need for a listing under the Endangered Species Act. This is an extremely important development as it helps clarify how and where conservation efforts should be focused from a regional perspective. The report also validates the 'core area' approach and recognizes the value and importance of voluntary

conservation actions. I have attached the final report and Q/A sheet and encourage each state to compare your state level SGI strategy to the recommendations outlined in the report. You can also view <http://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/species/birds/sagegrouse/> for more information.

Additional useful quotes from FWS Director Ashe in cover letter of Report "Last spring, I asked each state within the range of the greater sage-grouse to join the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) in a first-of-its-kind, collaborative approach to develop range wide conservation objectives for

## New 2013 Report Reveals Why Sage-Grouse Conservation Works

"Sage-Grouse Initiative: Tracking Success," a highly visual 44-page report, reveals the six secret ingredients for bringing back sage-grouse without the need for listing under the Endangered Species Act.

The first ingredient has everything to do with the hundreds of Sage-Grouse Initiative partners – **shared vision**. They agree that what's good for rangelands is good for grouse, and that's why an alliance of groups is teaming up with western ranchers. The results, from 2010 to date, are impressive:

- 700+ ranchers enrolled; investments of \$145 million generate \$70 million in matching contributions
- conservation easements reduce sobusting and subdivision threat on 240,000+ acres
- new grazing systems increase hiding cover for nesting birds on 2+ million acres
- removal of invading conifers restores historic sagebrush on 200,000 acres
- marking or removing 500+ miles of high-risk fences prevent bird collisions

The five remaining secret ingredients round out a model for conservation: Strategic, Accountability, Leverage, Certainty, and Trust and Credibility. The report also highlights success stories from each of the 11 states with sage-grouse habitat, and ends with a vision for the future.

To view the report, visit the Sage-Grouse Initiative website at [www.sagegrouseinitiative.com](http://www.sagegrouseinitiative.com).

the sage-grouse, both to inform our upcoming 2015 decision under the Endangered Species Act and to inform the collective conservation efforts of the many partners working to conserve the species. Recognizing that state wildlife agencies have management expertise and management authority for sage-grouse, we convened a Conservation Objectives Team (COT) of state and Service representatives. I asked the team to produce a recommendation regarding the degree to which threats need to be reduced or ameliorated to conserve the greater sage-grouse so that it would no longer be in danger of extinction or likely to become in danger of extinction in the foreseeable future. The final, peer-reviewed COT report (attached here) delineates such objectives, based upon the best scientific and commercial data available at the time of its release."

