

COORDINATED RESOURCES MANAGEMENT MEETING
March 29, 2007

Attendees:

Walter Meyer, U of A
Marlo Draper, BLM
Tim Morrison, AACD
Carol Erwin, BOR
Brett Cameron, AZ Dept. of Ag.
David Goodrich, ARS
Bill Dowdle, State Land Department
Dave Stewart, USFS
Kris Randall, USFWS
Steve Spangle, USFWS
Linda Taunt, ADEQ
Mark Weise, AZ G&F
Doc Lane, AZ Cattlegrowers
Lamar Smith, ACGA
Dan Bell, ACGA
Jim Maynard, ACGA
David McKay, NRCS
Steve Barker, NRCS

The meeting called to order at 9:00 am by NRCS State Conservationist, David McKay.

He stated that the work this group does cannot be understated. The NRCS feels it's very important to have this type of meeting. If things aren't being coordinated, we're not having the interaction, thereby causing conflict when developing plans.

As agency representatives, we are dealing with more issues than just the natural resource concerns. It is imperative to have some forum to determine goals of all the agencies and managing out natural resources in a responsible manner. We have to find some way to compromise some issues to benefit the whole.

Historically, this group met twice a year. That hasn't happened in at least five years. We need to look at how we improve, or regenerate, the process to be beneficial and productive. Every agency in this room signed an MOU to work together and recognize each agency has their own missions and we need to look for overlap areas to reduce redundancy by working together, find areas where we can interact, and work through areas that need attention. There are resource agencies, regulatory agencies, producer groups – a broad range of expertise and representation in this room.

Review of Arizona CRM MOU

Steve Barker led review of the MOU. Motion moved and approved to continue the MOU.

Brett Cameron discussed the need to edit the Arizona Department of Agriculture roles and responsibilities in the MOU. A discussion followed for allowing for edits to the MOU with re-signing.

David McKay suggested a period of time to perform edits. Edits should be sent to Steve Barker or Vicky Bennett at NRCS for incorporation into the current MOU. NRCS will follow up with agencies not attending to ensure they are allowed the opportunity to modify any information that applies to their agency. Edits will be drafted, discussed and approved at the next meeting.

David McKay: For those of you new to the group, this is the CRM Executive Group. We need to assign a staff member to work as a member of the State Task Group member to actually do the day-to-day CRM activities.

Arizona Grazing Lands Conservation Association

Walt Meyer: The Cattlegrowers, U of A and others have been working on things to help us make grazing land decisions, hence, the Resource Evaluation, Assessment and Monitoring Project. Dan Bell, Chair of the AZ Grazing Lands Conservation Association. The corps group is the SRM, AZ section; the AZ farm bureau and the AACD. Purposes were presented.

Doc Lane spoke of the need for Coordinated Management. What many people don't understand is the mixture of land ownership such as that found in Arizona. Ranches need to be managed to fulfill needs of owners. Many ranches are managing their land with State Land Department, Forest Service, and others. It is very evident the need for coordinated management.

Steve Barker discussed how NRCS got involved in the Resource evaluation, assessment and monitoring project. We asked the AZ Cattlegrowers to work with the coalition and agencies to develop a logical, economically viable, ecologically sound approach to making grazing decisions on ranches with intermingled ownerships.

Dan Bell, UofA (CE), discussed utilization guidelines and their being a guide to achieving an objective, not a management objective, that they are site specific, that they should be scientifically linked to desired values, and that they are intended to be averages over periods of time. Need to distinguish true utilization vs. seasonal use. There is a variety of ways of using data estimates and they need to actually compare scientific values. Guidelines and estimation procedures vary among vegetation types. It's crucial that we have an understanding of the role of utilization in adjusting stocking rates.

Lamar Smith: The purpose of the AZ guide to rangeland monitoring is to outline a set of principles and guidelines to provide a framework for making management adjustments. The principles and guidelines are for on-the-ground management. These principles and guidelines are generally applicable in both upland and riparian situations and is not intended to supersede agency policy or established procedures.

The AZ guide is strictly draft. It will help determine what kind of data is needed to develop range management plans, decisions and objectives. Chapters 1-4 refer to basic principles and concepts related to rangeland inventory, monitoring and assessment. Chapters 5-7 guide in selection of best procedures to meet objectives.

Jim Maynard: A lot of this comes down to education. Our goal is to get this on the ground. We spent countless hours hashing through concepts to come to some common agreement. That does no good if it doesn't get on-the-ground. We've developed Range 101, and have provided three sessions thus far with attendance of upwards of 50 people so far.

Walt Meyer: Our goal is to provide all land management agencies a forum to coordinate efforts to protect natural resources on the lands they administer in concert with the efforts of other land management agencies to do the same, as well as the landuser's desire and efforts to sustainability. The state of AZ for the last 25-26 years had field groups involving agency working groups. We sit down and go through the management plans. What I think is wrong in AZ is that we are down to very few working groups. I think it's imperative that this group put together these working groups across the state.

Brett Cameron: This guide is draft, when do you expect it to be final?
Lamar stated they were having a meeting come Monday to hopefully have a final draft by the end of summer. Printing (I assume) will be done by UofA. Judging by the way the utilization paper went, it would take about 4 months; hopefully no later than the end of the year.

David McKay: The guide provides a tool to help assess and monitor and help us make decisions in the management of plans. It is a decision making tool, it does not make the decisions for you.

Doc Lane: Funding to do all the work that's been done to date has come from the NRCS, UofA, Cattlegrowers and BLM. If there's any way where we could have a coordinated financial base, it would move our efforts ahead tremendously. We would like all agencies to help fund this effort.

David McKay: The actual decision maker out there is held at a disadvantage if all of you don't accept their objectives up front. The problems arise when different people are making the decisions as to how an area should be managed. We need to have an open line of communication so everyone knows what the trigger is for certain actions. If they have the right tools to work with, it would help us to be active, not reactive. If we can work with producers, we can be more proactive to address issues before they become critical.

Inasmuch as we aim to adopt the principles, I'm very supportive of having a tool we can all use.

David McKay suggested that task members review the information and make a determination regarding adoption of the principles. Then at the next meeting it would be determined whether or not agencies would adopt the paper and would be asked to sign an agreement.

- *Carol Erwin: Motion to endorse the principles and encourage the adoption by land management agencies. Motion seconded. Motion passed.*

Arizona CRM Executive Group and Southwest Strategy Arizona REC Group

David McKay: What happened several years ago, in an effort called Southwest Strategy agencies were charged to initially to work on endangered species issues. That strategy developed into a quasi- beaurocracy in it's own right that included other agencies to address issues within the state as a whole. I wanted to make sure this CRM process is not another redundant effort. If we have issues as a CRM that needs to be addressed at a more executive level, we need to work through the AZ REC. We hope to coordinate these efforts since there are a couple AZ REC members on this team as well.

State Task Group Representatives

There is a form at the back of the right side of the packet to use to designate agency task group members. Please fill that in and fax it back, or provide it to Steve or Vicky as soon as you've had the opportunity to determine the task group member.

Round Robin Agency Updates

David McKay: We spend about 3 times as much on wildlife programs in EQIP as we do on WHIP. The new farm bill will potentially combine the programs. The state technical committee looks at the way we want to proceed and where we want to project our efforts. It's a good opportunity for agencies to help guide us toward spending our money wisely, help us determine where we need to direct our efforts, etc. Meeting will be held next Tuesday in this conference room beginning at 9:00 am.

Carol Irwin: Reclamation doesn't have money to work on conservation efforts, but we do have water money. The organization has now decided we aren't going to do any more water conservation unless it is within our program. That's a policy decision I can't overturn, but I can ask that your agencies speak out and ask that we be able to return to doing water conservation.

David McKay: We need to leverage at the state level, and cooperate throughout agencies in order to continue to get conservation on the ground. If our programs focus changes, agreements must change. Next year, farm bill money won't immediately be available, so you probably won't see agreement money right away in the new fiscal year.

Tim Morrison, AACD: Has been working with BLM in Arizona to evaluate efforts between NRCS and BLM in New Mexico.

Marlo Draper, BLM: BLM has gone through re-organization of offices and is now comprised of four District offices across the State and one State Office. Assessing Grazing allotments against the Standards for Rangeland Health to process grazing permit renewals has been the highest priority workload for BLM AZ. Another major workload for the past few years has been developing new land use plans for our National Monuments and land use plan revisions for several Field Offices.

Michael Taylor is the Acting State Director while Elaine Zielinski is in Washington D.C. on a detail through May. Helen Hankins is the new BLM AZ Associate State Director.

Brett Cameron, AZ Dept. of Ag.: The Livestock and Crop Conservation Grant Program applications are in and are being reviewed. The requests significantly exceed available funding.

David Goodrich, ARS: ARS is working on several tools for the Conservation Effects Assessment Program (CEAP). Initial work was on cropland, but it is now being shifted over to rangeland.

Bill Dowdle, State Land Department: Improper use of off-highway vehicles on State Trust land is a huge management problem for the State Land Department. We have no funding or staff to deal with the issue. There is a Bill in the State Legislature that would create a new type of registration program for newly purchased OHVs and involve a \$20 fee. A portion of the revenues generated by the fee would come to the State Land Department for management and mitigation. The Bill has passed most of the major hurdles and is expected to pass. The State Land Department is looking forward to the assistance the Legislation can provide.

Agenda item for next meeting:

- Getting the CRM Field Groups going.
- If you think of anything else, let Steve know.

Next meeting: October 11, 2007, same time (9:00 am), same place (3rd floor conference room of Federal Building).