



MINUTES

Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition Board Meeting

Jan. 20, 2009

11:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m. MST
Sandhills RC&D, Mullen, NE

The meeting was called to order by chairman Jim Carr at 11 a.m.

Present were:

Jim Carr
Lynn Myers
Bob Broweleit
Sherry Vinton
Michelle Wendell
Dana Larson
Twila Phillips
Tamara Choat

On conference were:

Scott Cotton
Jim Luchsinger
Rod Christen
Mitch Stephenson
Paul Swanson

Minutes of the 12/16/08 Conference Call were previously emailed to the group. Scott Cotton moved to accept the minutes as sent; Michelle Wendell seconded. Motion passed.

Sherry Vinton provided the Treasurer's Report. Twila Phillips noted that a payment is due from the VAA grant. Tamara noted that the remaining grant balances would be provided in the later 2009 Plan of Action report. Lynn Myers moved to accept the Treasurer's Report. Michelle seconded. Motion passed.

Rod Christen reported on the Southeastern Grazers Association meeting, held Jan. 15 in Tecumseh, NE. Tamara attended. Tamara mentioned she had met the Dow chemical education rep. at a cattlemen's meeting the night before, and he was interested in the possibility of pursuing some test plots with the SE group.

Jim Carr reported that the Ranch Management Club had not held any activities in the past month, but was still a group and had plans for future events.

Tamara reported that the final budget and report for the SARE grant (originally through Lynn Myers for the Cowboy Logic program) had been submitted and the final grant payment of \$2,698.16 had been approved. This payment would mail to Lynn, and he would in turn submit it to NGLC.

Tamara reported that a request had been submitted to the VAA grant program to request an extension of the remaining \$17,830, as the original grant had expired Jan. 10. The extension request contained a proposal for a new study project that would investigate and attempt to quantify the results of multi-species grazing. Original thoughts for the project had included a third year on the Reeves Ranch Project. However, the proposal was submitted using general terms which allowed for options to be kept open as to the location and exact parameters of the project. Discussion followed on the best options for the project. It was suggested that NGLC contact the Riparian Vegetative Management Task Force and the Leafy Spurge Task Force to explore the idea

of possible partnerships with either or both of these groups. General agreement on the project included gathering baseline data on invasive species, using goats or sheep along with cattle to form a true multi-species project, and creating a project that would be completed by Aug. 2009, as requested by the VAA in response to the original proposal (which was written to end Dec. 2009). The possibility of studying multi-species management of cheat grass was also noted. It was also suggested that we continue to look for ways to continue the verbal agreement of a third year with the Reeves Ranch Project, although this agreement was originally established on an "as-funded" basis. It was agreed to discuss the Reeves Ranch Project "go forward" more on the February conference call. Dana was to contact the Riparian Vegetative Management Task Force and Jim C. will contact the Leafy Spurge Task Force. Michelle and Scott will follow up on grazing cheat grass with goats. Tamara will confirm the status of the VAA grant extension request.

The new contract with NRCS was discussed. Three documents have been provided to NGLC from Mike Kuchera with NRCS. These items were reviewed and approved by the board. Tamara will provide final confirmation of them with Mike and will move forward to get the original documents to Jim Carr to sign. Lynn moved to accept the new contract for \$25,000 cash donation from the NRCS. Sherry seconded. Motion passed.

Tamara mentioned she had discussed the possibility of an advance from the NET grant with Lisa Beethe, NET grants administrator, and it she had said that was possible. The board agreed to pursue this option, as it was already voted on at a previous meeting. Twila noted that an advance had been requested from NET in the last grant, and it was not provided, but we will try again. Tamara also noted that the 2009 grant announcements will be made online on Feb. 5, and she will be watching for this announcement.

A grant originally obtained by the NGLC in 2007 from the NET was discussed. This item has several missing items, and Lisa Beethe from the NET had contacted Tamara to request assistance in obtaining these missing items, which include invoices, final match summaries, and a final report. Dana, Sherry and Jim will work to get these items from the previous coordinator, who had handled this grant. Tamara will provide a status update to Lisa Beethe by Feb. 1 on these missing items.

The need to document in-kind hours and mileage was also noted. Twila will provide Tamara with the electronic version of the in-kind form. Tamara will compile a list of all NGLC activities since July 2008 and send this to the board, along with the form for each board member to complete.

The joint bus tour with the South Dakota GLCI was discussed. Tamara, Scott and Dana are on the committee to work with the SD delegation to plan this tour. A tentative schedule has been put together, including two stops in SD and two in NE. The planned theme of the tour is grass-finished operations. The board noted an additional aspect to maybe include would be a round table discussion in the evening, with an assortment of rancher speakers. The possibility of having local speaker "hosts" on each bus was also mentioned. A conference call is scheduled with the SD delegation on Monday, Jan. 26.

Contracting to publicize articles and events with the Range & Pasture Journal was discussed. Tamara provided an email from Kindra Gordon with details of a possible contract. From the email, it appears the cost would be \$1,500 per issue, with the possibility of splitting this cost with the South Dakota GLCI. The publication schedule with South Dakota was Aug/Dec/March. If we pursue this option, we will likely look at a first issue in June, in order to promote the joint bus tour. Providing a means of evaluation of success of the publication, such as a coupon or sign up for the bus tour, was discussed. Tamara will get further information on circulation numbers and content divisions, a firm bid per issue, and info. on obtaining extra copies for distribution at the booth. The money for this project would likely come out of the NET grant. The issue was tabled for future discussion. Tamara will provide summary of data on issue at the February conference call.

Tamara reviewed the feedback and response from the December NE Farm Bureau convention and NE Cattlemen's Association convention. The NE Farm Bureau Convention was held Dec. 7-8, 2008 in Kearney. Attending from NGLC were: Jim Carr, Sherry Vinton, Ross Garwood and Tamara Choat. The Farm Bureau Convention and Trade Show was a value venue for information distribution for NGLC. Surveys completed = 39; Request Cards for Information = 6. The NE Cattlemen's Convention was held Dec. 10-11, 2008, also in Kearney. Surveys completed = 26; Request to Add to Mailing List= 28.

Comments on the listing in the Federal Register titled "Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; 90-Day Finding on a Petition To List the Black-tailed Prairie Dog as Threatened or Endangered" are due Feb. 2, 2009. Discussion on the issue was initiated at the last NGLC conference call in December; item was tabled for further discussion at this meeting. Discussion concerned the issue of NGLC taking a political stance. Is it appropriate to comment? Are we going to comment? Jim L. stated that we are a loose net coalition of organizations, and we should be careful about taking a stance. Not convinced we can come up with an agreed upon solution among all groups we partner with before Feb. 2. Jim C. noted that we would like to see comments made on sound sciences, gather numbers of populations and impact on grazing lands. Did initial comments state that grazing cattle was a threat to the population? Scott C. mentioned in some of the earlier comments in support of the listing, they did list grazing as one of the threats. Need strong data.

Other comments included: Don't want to do anything that may stir a pot, drive people away from coalition. Is the coalition's purpose to represent private landowners and grazers, or to represent a coalition of agencies? Michelle: base the decision on sound science, but leave mechanisms in place to allow landowners to manage their grazing lands as they see fit. What will our decision today result in? Lobbying? Comments will simply be on the record. Role of this organization is to gather the opinion and position of families and organizations; aggregate the feedback from our constituents. Could be a different issue next time? We need to implement a process to aggregate opinions on various issues. The issue of endangered species often starts to infringe on private property rights. Our role is to encourage people to change to a certain type of management. If we are going to start making comments, we need to be consistent on all issues related to grazing management. Need the web site as a tool, get input from people. Could have some of our networking groups turn in a statement or a position. Tough to make a statement representing all constituents.

Ross moved that that we submit comments from the NGLC with the following provisions:

1. Support only actions based on sound science;
2. Oppose any actions that would be detrimental to grazing lands;
3. Maintain landowners' rights to manage their property in the way they see fit;
4. Goal is improved grazing lands and pasturelands;
5. ~~Oppose any actions that would be detrimental to private property rights;~~
6. ~~Landowners should maintain the right to participate in control mechanisms or not.~~

Sherry seconded. Discussion followed with alterations made to the original position, including:

"NGLC submits the following comments concerning prairie dogs being listed as a threatened or endangered species. Through working with numerous stakeholders, we have documented the need for landowners to maintain flexibility in management to meet the following objectives, which are:

1. Stimulate, encourage and seek assistance to conserve and improve tribal and private grasslands and grazing lands.
2. Coordinate assistance to grazing lands managers with cooperation from colleges, universities, organizations, and federal, state, and local agencies.

3. Promote stronger understanding of the value of grasslands and grazing lands as part of our environment, our communities and our economy.”

Lynn made an amendment to alter the motion as follows and allow Tamara to wordsmith as needed. Rod seconded. Sherry called question on amendment. Motion passed. Tamara will submit the comments to the Federal docket by Feb. 2.

Tamara stated that she now has the application for the National Grazing Conference in Reno in December 2009, and will work to complete speaker applications for the name listed during the Nov. meeting. Anyone else interested in submitting an application, or having her write one for them, should let her know.

Tamara discussed her office supply needs, including note cards, potential gift cards, envelopes and business cards. Michelle moved to get note cards and envelopes as needed by the coordinator. Lynn seconded. Motion passed.

Suggestion was made for Tamara to compile data that would go into an annual report, but to not have it professionally designed.

The list of remaining stewards who do not have bios submitted were reviewed. It was determined that Tamara will continue to work with these stewards to obtain bios.

Tamara reviewed the NGLC Steward Reimbursement Form she drafted. She also provided updates on the Arthur Drought Meeting (Jan. 29), SE Cattlemen’s Association meeting (Jan. 19) and NRCS Technical Subcommittee meeting.

Discussion on Nebraska grazing awards followed. ESAP award has soonest deadline (Feb. 25). Future idea would be for funding to be set aside money for the coordinator or other contractor to work with suggested nominees to complete application. Tamara will create a suggested bid amount to contract to do this work.

Tamara mentioned she is planning to attend the Buffalo Bill Show Feb. 4-5 in North Platte to fulfill requirements for the VAA grant. It was also suggested NGLC look at attending the Sandhills Cattlemen’s Association convention in May. No one was able to attend the Feb. 6 Cattlemen’s Day at the Gudmundsen Ranch, so NGLC will not have a booth there.

Tamara provided a 2009 Budget and Plan of Action. The board agreed they would like to review this budget and discuss it at the Feb. conference call.

Dana will put together matrix on evaluation for coordinator. An evaluation form will be sent out to all board members. Dana, Sherry and Lynn will serve on coordinator evaluation committee.

A conference call was scheduled for Monday, Feb. 9 at 10 a.m. CST, with a physical meeting planned in March.

Dana reported on the EQIP Invasive Plant Special Initiative program. Employee training will be the first week of Feb. Public meetings will follow on objectives and cost share.

Meeting was adjourned at 3:05 p.m. by Chairman Jim Carr.

Respectfully submitted,
Tamara Choat
Coordinator, Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition