



Chair:

Diane Ahlgren

Vice-Chair:

John Hollenback

Members:

Sigurd Jensen

Jim Anderson

Leah Lewis

Ron Devlin

State Coordinator:

Stacey Barta

Program Specialist

Shantell Frame-Martin

## Rangeland Resources Committee

October 9, 2024

9:00 am-noon

US Bureau of Land Management Office  
920 NE Main Street  
Lewistown, MT 59457

- Call meeting to order
- Approve minutes from 7/31/2024
- Welcome, Introductions
- New Business-
  - Discussion: EPA Climate Reduction Pollution Grant- Measure 6- DoAg Ranchland Stewardship Program
- Updates
  - Coordinator's Corner:
    - Events & Activities report
      - Stacey
      - Shantell
    - Budget & RILP updates
    - Status of LCA, 406 & MRT
    - WLIP end of season debrief
  - Committee member expiring terms
  - MT Happenings
    - Committee member updates
    - Advisory member updates
- RRC 2025 meeting dates
  - January - virtual
  - March 26-Helena (Rotunda day)
  - July - virtual
  - October – Site visit/field tour hosted by an RRC member
- Public Comment

Meeting Adjourned

# **Rangeland Resource Committee Meeting**

## **Event Schedule**

October 8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Grass Range/Winnett/Lewistown, Montana

### **October 8<sup>th</sup>- Tuesday**

- 12:30 pm: Presentation by Winnett ACES  
~Petroleum Co. Comm. Center, 209 W Main St, Winnett, MT 59087
- 1:30-1:45 pm: Restroom break
- 1:45-2:15 pm: Consolidate vehicles, travel to Cat Creek
- 2:35-3:15 pm: Tour of Cat Creek Town
- 3:15-5:00 pm: Petrolia Bench & Irrigation
- 5:00-6:00 pm: Back in Winnett & Travel to Ahlgren's
- 6:00 pm: BBQ Dinner @ Ahlgren's  
~3146 Elk Creek Rd, Grass Range, MT 59032
  - Outcome based Grazing- King's
  - Jennifer Saunders

### **October 9<sup>th</sup>- Wednesday**

- 9:00 am-12:00 pm: RRC Business Meeting  
~US Bureau of Land Management Office, 920 NE Main St., Lewistown, MT 59457

**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 are bad, 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,
  - \$320,000 out in loans,
  - \$396,000 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.

## Rangeland Resources Committee

**2-15-3305. Rangeland resources committee.** (1) The governor may select a committee of six members in accordance with subsection (2) that is composed of:

- (a) a presiding officer who is a rancher;
  - (b) a vice presiding officer who is a rancher;
  - (c) a rancher from the eastern area of the state;
  - (d) a rancher from the northern area of the state;
  - (e) a rancher from the area of the state west of the continental divide;
  - (f) a rancher from the southern area of the state.
- (2) The governor shall select the members described in subsection (1) from a list submitted by the executive committee of the association of conservation districts and the board of directors of the Montana association of state grazing districts.
- (3) The committee members shall serve without compensation.
- (4) All persons appointed to the committee shall serve at the pleasure of the governor.
- (5) The committee is allocated to the department for administrative purposes only as provided in [2-15-121](#).

<u>Area</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Start</u>	<u>Term expiration</u>
Chair	Diane Ahlgren	2008	2026
Vice Chair	John Hollenback	1977	2024
West of Divide	Sigurd Jensen	2017	2024
Southern	Leah Lewis	2021	2026
Northern	Jim Andersen	2021	2026
Eastern	Ron Devlin	2021	2024

## **MONTANA FOREST, COMMUNITY AND WORKING LANDSCAPES CLIMATE RESILIENCY PROJECT**

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Measure 6 - Ranchland Stewardship Program - Regenerative grazing employs a four-tiered strategy for ranchland management, leading to enhanced soil health and a potential ten-fold surge in soil carbon storage.

- Emphasizing sufficient rest/recovery periods that generate ground cover (plant debris in contact with the soil surface) to help curb erosion potential, conserve moisture, buffer against compaction, and enable plants to regularly produce seeds.
- Pledging to shorter grazing periods with high livestock density (non-selective grazing, avoiding grazing of regrowth, trampling uneaten plant material, even distribution of manure and urine).
- Grazing forage upwards during the growing season (as opposed to downwards); plants grazed swiftly by large moving herds experience stimulated growth if allowed to fully recover postgrazing.
- Implementing planning and adaptive management, which depends on observation, adapting/evolving practices, and monitoring.

Measure 7 - Manure management strategies and technologies can:

- Facilitate the addition of manure- and food-waste-based carbon to the soil.
- Enhance efficiencies of transportation and land application.
- Separate phosphorus and nitrogen for more strategic uses and transportation efficiencies.
- Decrease or compensate for GHG emissions from the crop and soil fertility supply chain.
- Integrate with the strategic use of commercial fertilizers.
- Simultaneously improve water quality and climate outcomes.

*Table 4. Measures Alignment with State of Montana's PCAP*

### **MT DOAg Subaward**

**5** Fertilizer Use Innovation for Improved Soil Health 22-24

**6** Ranchland Stewardship Program 24-27

**7** Incentivize Innovation in the Cattle and Beef Industry 27-30

### **DEMONSTRATION OF FUNDING NEED**

CPRG implementation funding is necessary to fully implement the proposed measures. The State of Montana has applied for related grants; however, these grants are not sufficient to fully implement the proposed measures. Table 5 lists federal and non-federal funding sources that the State of Montana has explored, applied for, or received related to the proposed measures.

*Table 2*

Measure 6 – Ranchland Stewardship Program - Regenerative Grazing is a planned, adaptive approach to managing livestock that puts the animal, vegetation, and soil into a reciprocal, mutually beneficial relationship, closely mimicking the synergistic relationship between grazers and grasslands that has evolved over millennia prior to human

involvement. Montana alone has over 8.75 million acres of rangeland, most of which is in fair to poor condition. This means that most of those soils may contain less than 1% soil carbon, whereas historically they contained 8-12%. To return to these levels, ranchers must bunch cattle more densely, for shorter periods of time, on smaller plots of land; followed by longer recovery periods for plants to grow both above and below ground (sequestering carbon). 0.5 tons CO<sub>2</sub> per year is a conservative average given a progressive grazing system prioritizing rest, implemented on degraded rangelands in the West.

#### Measure 6 - Ranchland Stewardship Program -

- Quantity of participating ranches through reporting of data-driven rangeland health metrics, including increased stocking density, decreased pasture size, decreased graze period length, increased number of pastures, greater water source availability, and longer recovery periods
- Outputs: distinctive number of outreach and education efforts, meetings and work groups. Training materials and outreach measures. Number and amount of subawards. Data collection and monitoring reports.

Outcomes: This measure supports increased adoption of regenerative agricultural principles that sequester atmospheric carbon dioxide. Overgrazing causes soil to be exposed, which leads to the release of carbon. Rotational grazing systems allow the soil and plants to recover between grazings, keeping the carbon in the soil. The proposed project leverages data-driven management tools that help landowners improve grazing plans and track carbon storage outcomes across Montana's native grasslands. Work under this grant will increase soil carbon sequestration through natural regenerative processes on Montana's expansive and diverse grasslands. Benefits to LIDAC communities