

GLCI Steering Committee Meeting
Billings, MT
Crowne Plaza Hotel - September 11th, 2010

Attendees: Rooter Brite, Dennis Thompson, Larry Hensley, Gerald Jaeger, Chuck Stanley, Chad Ellis, Jeff Repp, Rod Baumberger, Tim Munns, Dick McElhaney, Bob Lee, Astor Boozer, Don Gohmert, Ed Burton, Jeff Burwell, Keith Bartholomay, Aggie Helle, Hezekiah Gibson, Duane Hertzler, Dave Forgey, John Peterson, Howard Straub, Kristie Maczko, Bill White, Gerald Rouse, Carla Lawrence, Sylvia Gillen, Joyce Swartzendruber, Bob Bolton, John Anderson, Ray Beck, Jeff Tiberi, Dean Wang, Jon Siddoway, Larry Bentley, Arlen Lancaster, Gene Fults, Bob Drake, Kim Stine and Monti Golla.

Bob Drake opened the meeting with a welcome to all attendees and a big thank you to the Montana GLCI for being such wonderful hosts! Bob suggested we open with a discussion of hosting a possible 5th National Conference on Grazing Lands.

5th National Conference on Grazing Lands

John Peterson said that he has contacted several possible venues using our good business associates at Conference Direct. Some of the locals contacted include: Hershey, PA; Tucson, AZ; Dallas Ft. Worth, TX; Louisville, KY; San Antonio, TX; and Orlando, FL. From this original list we narrowed it down to three possible locations 1) the Omni Hotel in Ft. Worth, TX 2) the Galt House in Louisville, KY and 3) the Rosen Plaza in Orlando, FL. The other locations were eliminated because of the room costs being well over government per diem and the food and beverage minimum was too high. After some discussion John said he would recommend the Rosen Plaza based on several factors. They are offering a 70% attrition rate and an attractive room rate (at \$105 per night which is government per diem). In addition, Orlando will be easy for conference attendees to fly in and out of, which would be an issue in Kentucky. Florida has a strong GLCI Coalition and the weather will not be an issue like it was in Reno, Nevada. Another strong argument for holding the conference in Florida is that there has not been a conference this far south or east to date. Bob Lee made a motion to finalize the 5NCGL preparations based on John Peterson's recommendations. Rod Baumberger seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously.

John Peterson said that recently a concern has been raised regarding our long time partner in these conferences, Society for Range Management (SRM). They have been our administrators, staff, registration and financial partners for the last three conferences, and they have done an exceptional job. John highly praised Mary Murphy at SRM for the best financial books he has seen on a conference to date. However, they are experiencing some staff changes currently and it appears they plan to outsource much of their daily operations through Allen Press, the company we used to print our 3NCGL proceedings. John suggested that we may want to consider looking into another partner organization for the 5th NCGL. Some suggestions were Soil and

Water Conservation Society (SWCS), American Forage and Grasslands Council (AFGC) and National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD), which we partnered with on the 1st NCGL. Keith Bartholomay, SRM representative to GLCI, asked that before we make any decision to leave SRM as our conference co-host and administrative partner, he wanted to make some phone calls to check things out with SRM and he would give us his thoughts. The Steering Committee agreed. John will be weighing options and will get back with the committee on his recommendations after Keith has had a chance to discuss the situation with SRM.

4NCGL Evaluations

Kim Stine gave a brief report on the evaluations we collected from the 4NCGL. She said that we had only 6 negative comments in Reno, which was a major improvement from the prior conference. The major negative was “too many sessions,” but we had already cut that down to 6 or 8 per session from having nearly 12 per session in the 3NCGL. This time she felt it was a good problem to have. The proceedings went much smoother this time partly due to the electronic abstract collections and diligence on our part about getting the papers turned in prior to the conference. We had many many more prior to the conference this time than we have ever had before.

State Conservationist’s Advisory Committee

Don Gohmert reported on GLCI’s positive affect on the technical assistance provided by NRCS since GLCI’s inception. He said that EQIP and GRP are two good examples. In addition, GLCI has been getting good support and benefit from these two programs as well. It has been a positive reinforcing relationship for both NRCS and GLCI.

Don said that the committee needs to be aware that a new Farm Bill will be written in 2012 and here is where being a part of the NRCS Technical Committees comes in. Public hearing will be held and now is the time to being weighing in on these issues. Don said that the committee needs to go back to the Chief and his staff and share how effective the GLCI is to the nation as a whole.

He also mentioned that producers from around the country need to closely pay attention to what is going on in the Chesapeake Bay area with the EPA.

Don mentioned that we normally have 6 state conservationists who sit on the State Conservationist Advisory Committee to the GLCI and we are down to 4 currently due to retirements. The current three are: Don Gohmert, Ed Burton, Allen Green and Astor Boozer. He plans to fill those positions soon and will get back with Monti.

Partnership Reports

Richard McElhaney reported for the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF). Dick said that AFBF is still growing and repeated that Montana Farm Bureau alone has over 17,000 members. Dick talked about the EPA pursuit of additional regulations in Harris County, Pennsylvania, and urged the committee to tell their representative to vote against the “Cardon Bill”, which would give EPA unbridled access.

Dave Forgey and Howard Straub reported for the American Forage and Grasslands Council. Howard said he is the next president of the AFGC and they have a new management agency, IAM Solutions. Tina Bowling is the owner and her contact information is on the AFGC website. The next conference will be in French Lick, IN, June 12-15, 2011. The next conference following that one will be held in the winter and not the summer months. They are changing the scheduling.

Aggie Helle reported on the American Sheep Industry (ASI). She talked about wildlife and predation issues as it relates to raising sheep. Also a constant issue is public lands. January 19-24, 2011 is their next meeting. RFD TV is also doing a feature on the Sheep Industry on September 13th, 2010.

Duane Hertzler reported on the Dairy Industry. He said that the Dairy industry took a big hit in 2009. The EPA is a big threat to the entire Dairy industry and now they have also begun targeting Menonites and Amish Dairies. Dave Forgey added that the pricing structure is very outdated considering all the changes the industry has been through in the past few decades. The coops used to protect their producers but now it seems they have become more concerned with protecting their milk processors. He said that major change is needed in the next Farm Bill.

Rooter Brite reported for the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD). He said that Jeff Eisenburg is now at the helm and that NACD is still struggling financially.

Bob Lee briefed the group on the National Cattlemen's Beef Association. Bob said that NCBA continues to be the voice of the Cattlemen in D.C. and that there is a big concern with the EPA. Bob urged everyone to keep good records and that complete documentation is going to be the only way we can defend ourselves. If we have documentation to prove that certain practices increases productivity and is beneficial to the environment then they cannot refute the evidence as easily.

Gerald Jaeger said that National Farmer's Union (NFU) offices were now fully established in Washington, D.C.

Keith Bartholomay said that SRM's next annual meeting will be in Billings, Montana, February 6th-10th, 2011. Jess Peterson is now the new Executive Vice President and he is currently splitting time between D.C. and Colorado.

Tim Munns said that Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) now has Jim Guilliford at the helm and things have improved since Jim came on board.

The Committee then went into Executive Session.

Strategic Action Plan

Howard Straub, Chair of the Strategic Action Plan Committee, reviewed the progress made so far on the Strategic Action Plan. A letter was sent to Dennis Thompson requesting the amount of money spend on Technical Service Providers (TSP's) for grazing lands. Dennis Thompson reported that currently they do not keep track of the amount of money going to specific areas; however, now that they have the request, programmers are able to incorporate these changes and in the future we should be able to get a full accounting. He said that perhaps by the end of the year we might be getting some numbers.

Kim Stine said that we now have a document on the GLCI's website which is an outline on "how to form a GLCI coalition." (this works closely with the objectives of the Strategic Plan). Kim said she found an original 2002 hard copy edition and used it to draft the one we currently have on the website. She requested that the Steering Committee please review it because she is needing feedback so that she can get a new hard copy publication that can be passed out to those wanting to form GLCI coalitions. It will be an NRCS publication. Kim requested that the Steering Committee get suggestions back to her before the February 2011 meeting in Washington, D.C.

Monti Golla gave a brief report on her progress since the last Strategic Action Plan Committee teleconference. She has been diligently working on updating the State GLCI coalition addresses. These change often and it is a constant challenge to keep them updated, but she thinks she has a pretty current listing. She has requested from all state GLCI's links to their own state GLCI website and placed those on the "Links" page on our own GLCI website (www.glci.org). She has also drafted a letter that went out to each state GLCI committee requesting that they inform us, the National GLCI Steering Committee, if they are a member of their State NRCS Technical Committee. Responses thus far are as follows:

Yes, we are a member:

Michigan
Indiana
Colorado
Tennessee
Illinois
Vermont
Kentucky (through the KY Forage and Grasslands Council)
Nebraska
Oregon (through Oregon Cattlemen's Association and Oregon Dairy Farmer's Association)
Texas
Montana

No, Not a member:

New Jersey
Maryland
Delaware
Missouri
Maine
New York
Connecticut
Arkansas
Hawaii

Howard asked Monti to pass around the committee assignment sheet for the Strategic Action Plan. Those who have not yet signed up are requested to do so at this time. (see attachment).

Howard suggested that to help some states form GLCI Coalitions they might be able to use our 501C3 status instead of having to create their own. Rooter Brite said he will check with our CPA to see if that is possible. Howard Straub suggested that we hold two more teleconference calls before the February Steering Committee meeting. Kim said that she has about 3 boxes of the Strategic Plan left and she will edit them another time before we go to press. She plans to do this before the February Steering Committee meeting. Additionally we need to be sure that all future Strategic Action Plan Committee teleconference minutes go out to the entire Steering Committee.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Report- Bob Bolton

Bob said that the major issue affecting the BLM at the National level is litigation. So much of their staff time is now taken up by defending against lawsuits than at any other time in the past.

Bob also outlined six policies the BLM is currently working on:

1. Renewable Energy - is focused on solar and wind energy. Wind energy doesn't appear to affect grazing use of public lands like solar energy does. The panels are simply too big and close to the ground to allow for grazing underneath like wind turbines. A public lands grazing permittee is required to be given two years notice before any livestock grazing will be removed.
2. Sage Grouse - BLM is developing a sage grouse and livestock management policy that will focus on using grazing as a management tool for sage grouse habitat.
3. Relinquishments- some grazing operations have been approached by environmental groups and purchase the ranch with the BLM grazing permit. Then the environmental group attempts to relinquish the permit in an attempt to close the allotment to grazing permanently. However, BLM is updating an existing relinquishment policy that describes a process which does not automatically close the allotment and prevent grazing based on receipt of a relinquishment.
4. Bighorn Sheep and Domestic Sheep- they are working closely with the Forest Service on issues that affect the domestic and bighorn sheep.
5. Livestock Protection Dogs- many sheep herders utilize guardian dogs to protect their livestock; however recently some hikers were attacked by such an animal when they got too close to the flock. The BLM is trying to educate the public about these animals and will be issuing a policy with practices to reduce potential conflicts with recreationists..
6. Grazing Permit Renewal- the BLM is trying to streamline this process.

Bob Bolton mentioned that the video "Hope on the Range" has been made into a full 28 minute documentary and will hopefully be airing soon on a PBS affiliate. The 9 minute short video is still available for viewing on the BLM's website. He will get more

information to Monti to distribute once it is determined when and what channel the full version will air upon.

Sustainable Rangelands Roundtable (SRR) - Kristie Maczko

Kristie passed out a guidebook which incorporates monitoring work done at the regional level and applies it on a ranch level. It helps readers get into the socio-economic side of planning and helps put conservation planning into a business plan. She said that the current version is still a draft and will need one more edit before it is really ready, but that anyone interested should contact her.

Regional NRCS Reports

East Region

Kim Stine gave the East region report since Kevin Ogles was unable to attend. Kim reported that Rhode Island is inquiring about starting a GLCI Coalition and has met with Kevin Ogles. Four other New England states have just started or are reviving GLCI coalitions. About 5 years ago only 1 state have a real GLCI coalition. Kim also talked about the Alabama GLCI and their statewide forage conference. About 300 people attended this event this year. Tennessee GLCI has supported a high density/tall grazing workshop for farmers and ranchers from 8 different states. New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania GLCI's sponsored workshops and pasture walk training "Horse Owners to be Pasture Managers." Kim also touched on the Ohio NRCS and Ohio State University Extension Pasture Management Project, which is a unique project that has been ongoing for 6 years and has found that "grazing and management differ from the traditional growth curves that the land grant universities published years ago." For additional information please contact Kevin Ogles.

Central Region

Chuck Stanley said that NRCS has a planning tool that is being used to get staff out in the field. Currently 20% of their time is spent in the field and they want to increase this. Reggie Blackwell reported that 15 central states all have GLCI Coalitions and that several of these including Oklahoma, Nebraska and Iowa all have annual conferences. Grazing schools occur in Kansas, South Dakota and Illinois. Many states host 1/2 day workshops. Chad Ellis noted that Don Gohmert, State Conservationist from Texas, recently added 5 new GLCI positions to the state.

West Region

Jeff Repp said he and Gene Fults have been diligently working on the National Resource Inventory (NRI) with US Fish and Wildlife. In addition, they have also been working on other things including the Sage Grouse Initiative. Both he and Gene have been working with Oregon and Washington to develop their GLCI Coalitions, and Jeff has been working with several states putting together guidelines for Riparian Ecological Site Descriptions.

National GLCI Program Report -Dennis Thompson

Dennis said he has officially taken over Tom Sommer's position as Program Manager for the GLCI. We are now under the Deputy Chief for Science and Technology.

Currently the Senate has recommended a budget of \$10 million for the GLCI but for the last several years GLCI's funding has come directly out of NRCS's CO budget at the direction of the Chief of NRCS.

The meeting adjourned.

Action Items:

1. Rooter Brite will check with the GLCI's CPA to see if our National 501C3 status can be used by State GLCI's to form their own coalitions.
2. All future Strategic Action Plan Committee Teleconference minutes will go out to the entire GLCI Steering Committee meeting.
3. Bob Bolton will get Monti additional information on "Hope on the Range" video which will be aired on a PBS affiliate. Monti will distribute this information to the committee.