

MINUTES
RANGELAND ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING COMMITTEE
February 7, 2010 Meeting ~ Denver, Colorado

(Preliminary Draft; Minutes to be Reviewed and Approved by the Committee at the 2011 Meeting)

The 2010 Rangeland Assessment and Monitoring Committee meeting was held on Sunday, February 7, 2010 in the Spruce Room of the Denver Downtown Sheraton, during the annual Society for Range Management meeting in Denver, Colorado.

Quinton Barr serves as the 2010 RAM Committee Chair. Terry Booth serves as the Vice-Chair, and will Chair the committee in 2011, starting at the 2011 annual meeting. Scott Lusk was elected as the incoming Chair-Elect and will serve as Vice-Chair in 2011 and Chair in 2012.

These preliminary minutes were prepared by Chairman Barr on February 8, 2010 based upon his notes from the meeting, and updated on June 30, 2010. They will be subject to corrections when they are circulated via e-mail to the committee members for review, for final approval at the 2011 annual meeting. Upon final approval, the minutes, as corrected, will be uploaded to the SRM's webpage assigned to the RAM Committee, along with the 2009 meeting minutes (attached) that were approved at the start of the 2010 meeting. The preparer takes full responsibility for any errors or omissions herein.

Attendance

Quinton Barr [2010 Chair], Terry Booth [Vice-Chair (2011 Chair)], Scott Lusk [Chair-Elect (2012 Chair)], Matt Reeves, John Mitchell, Lamar Smith, Pete Sundt, Doug Johnson, Mike "Sherm" Karl, Janette Kaiser, Tom Roberts, Dennis Thompson, Pat Clark. See attached "Attendance Roster."

All the above attendees expressed their desire to serve as RAM Committee members through the 2011 annual meeting.

Rick Orr (BOD Representative) attended the meeting from 10:00 to 12:00 to brief the committee on recent Board activities and brief the Board regarding committee activities.

Old Business

- 1) Sustainable Rangelands Roundtable John Mitchell provided an update on the activities of the Sustainable Rangelands Roundtable (SRR). The SRR is now headquartered at the University of Wyoming in Laramie. The Roundtable has completed a monograph that is undergoing review for online publication by the SRM. It has also published a conceptual model that provides a social, economic, and ecological framework for evaluating the sustainability of rangeland uses.

The SRR is working to adapt their national scale indicators for use to address local scale issues. They helped organize a symposium addressing sustainable rangelands to be presented during the 2010 annual SRM Meeting. They are drafting a *Bioscience* publication to identify ecological goods and services that are derived from rangelands.

<http://sustainable.rangelands.org>

- 2) Multi-Agency Oregon Pilot Project (NRI & FIA) Janette Kaiser provided an update on the Oregon pilot project. The project has completed a comparison of information collected using the National Resources Inventory (NRI) and Forest Inventory and Assessment (FIA) sampling grids, and has subjected that comparison to outside review. They are drafting a publication to report upon the comparison and subsequent review. The FIA process is being expanded to address more rangeland areas, and to include carbon sequestration and cycling into its framework. Progress on the Oregon project has been impeded by the BLM's intense focus on the sage-steppe project regarding sage grouse, which is relying entirely upon existing data sources.
- 3) NRCS Rangeland CEAP Project No update on the Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP) was made because Leonard Jolley was unable to attend the meeting due to severe winter weather in the Nation's capital region.
- 4) ARS Monitoring Research (Remote Sensing) To be more time efficient, the update on ARS remote sensing research was combined with agenda item 9.
- 5) Multi-Agency Ecological Site Classification Dennis Thompson and Janette Kaiser updated the committee on the status of work to establish a uniform, multi-agency ecological site classification protocol and develop ecological site descriptions based upon that protocol. Both a Handbook and a Manual establishing a uniform ecological site classification protocol are in the final approval stages and will likely be signed within a month or so. These documents include a crosswalk framework to bridge this classification system with other prior classifications.

Also in the final stages of development is a centralized, web-based location to track and disseminate Federal policies regarding resource management, which is expected to reduce policy overlap and contradictions, encourage more uniform policies regarding particular issues among various Federal resource management agencies, and improve communication between policy makers, administrators, and those entities that work with or are impacted by such policies.
- 6) Invasive Species Symposium Chairman Barr opined that the 2010 joint meeting of the Society for Range Management (SRM) and Weed Science Society of America (WSSA), with its plethora of symposia, workshops, and presentations addressing invasive species, was an indication that Rita Beard and Terry Booth had been more than successful in their task of organizing an Invasive Species Symposium for the 2010 meeting.

John Mitchell expressed concern that one of Rita's primary concerns discussed in the 2009 RAM meeting did not seem to be addressed at all by the technical program of the 2010 meeting, the need for a better system to quickly identify invasive plant infestations and communicate their presence to the appropriate folks for a timely response.

This resulted in a discussion which converted this old business agenda item into **New Business**. A motion was made, seconded, discussed, and passed unanimously requiring the RAM Committee Chair to appoint a member to meet with the SRM's Rangeland Invasive Species Committee and pursue a jointly sponsored symposium during the 2011 annual meeting to address the establishment of a system to more rapidly identify and respond to invasive plant infestations on rangelands. Chairman Barr appointed himself to the task.

- 7) Desert Fire Invasives Workshop John Tanaka provided Chairman Barr with an update regarding this item by e-mail prior to the meeting. Barr read Tanaka's update to the committee. Following the workshop, proceedings were submitted to *Rangelands* and published. The technical papers resulting from the workshop have been submitted to *REM* and are moving through the review process.
- 8) TNC Monitoring Website Matt Reeves reported that a recent web search had led him to the Nature Conservancy's monitoring website, which is up and running. Reeves reported that the site was well laid out, easy to navigate, and contained links to some good information. He felt that the site was a good starting point to learn about rangeland monitoring.
www.landscapetoolbox.org
www.rangelandmethods.org
<http://conserveonline.org/workspaces/cbdgateway>

New Business

- 9) Remote Sensing, a 2011 Symposium? Terry Booth provided an update on ARS research relating to remote sensing technologies, including a New Mexico project to assess Juniper canopy and biomass yield for energy production, as well as Juniper expansion rates along ecotone areas; a Nevada project to monitor changes in willow cover in response to grazing management modifications; and, a project monitoring the effects of coal bed methane extraction on vegetal communities. Booth informed the committee that the ARS would be presenting a poster paper during the 2010 annual SRM meeting discussing the use of ground-based LIDAR (radar) technology to characterize sage grouse habitat structure, and would be presenting papers on monitoring invasive species with various remote sensing technologies. There has also been a paper submitted to *REM* comparing aerial and ground-based measures of cover. Booth reported that there have been several ARS projects considered that would have used Unmanned Aerial Vehicles to gather remotely sensed data, but that high costs due to FAA regulations have literally prevented such projects from ever getting off the ground.

New Business related to the concept of a 2011 symposium addressing very high resolution remote sensing technologies and their applications was discussed. A motion was made and seconded that the RAM Committee pursue a partnership with the SRM's Remote Sensing and GIS Committee to coordinate such a symposium. John Mitchell informed the committee that he understands that current SRM guidelines require that a symposium be science based, result in a published proceedings paper, and include a synthesis component. It was determined that RAM Committee members had the expertise, ability, and desire to sponsor a symposium that would meet such requirements. The motion was voted upon and passed unanimously.

2010 RAM Committee members Terry Booth, Doug Johnson, John Mitchell, Matt Reeves, and Pat Clark volunteered and were appointed by Chairman Barr to take on this task. Other persons mentioned that will likely join the effort were Ray Hunt and Jason Carl.

- 10) 2010 RPA Assessment Update John Mitchell requested that this agenda item be reclassified as **Old Business** because prior Resources Planning Act reports have been summarized in previous RAM Committee meetings. Chairman Barr approved said request. Mitchell informed the committee that the 2000 RPA report is available online, then provided a brief update on the status of the 2010 RPA report. The 2010 report will focus on forecasting resource bases and status, including rangeland productivity, in response to multiple climate change trajectory scenarios envisioned by the IPCC's climate modeling attempts. It will evaluate the livestock "footprint" in a manner similar to the "Rangelands on the Edge" and "Forests on the Edge" projects. With respect to the total livestock forage available on rangelands in the United States, approximately 16 to 20 percent is currently being used.

2000 RPA Assessment ~ <http://www.fs.fed.us/research/rpa/2000rpa/rpaasses.pdf>

RPA Assessment Home ~ <http://www.fs.fed.us/research/rpa>

- 11) SRM Board of Directors Representative Rick Orr briefed the RAM Committee on recent Board activities, including the hiring of a new Executive Vice President, efforts and commitment to fix SRM's software bugs or replace the software with a system that works, appointment of a new *Rangelands* editor, and activities to increase our presence and network connections in Washington D.C. Orr informed the committee of the Board's perspective of the need for, and intent to, amend the SRM's *Strategic Plan* to better address costs, revenue generation, spending, and other fiscal matters. Orr stressed the Board's need for advanced notice regarding any committee actions or needs that might require SRM funding so such expenditures can be adequately evaluated, planned for, and budgeted.

At this time, the RAM Committee does not anticipate the need to request any expenditure of funds from the Board or Parent Society to support committee activities.

Orr answered committee questions regarding the Board's involvement with, and oversight of, the Center for Professional Education and Development (CPED). Orr indicated that the Board was very active in facilitating, reviewing, and approving the Wild Horse CPED event held in Reno, Nevada. He stated that the Board is planning to sponsor/approve three (3) Ecological Site Description workshops under the CPED in the near future. Orr reported that to his knowledge, all CPED activities to date have been coordinated through the Executive Vice President and Linda-Cotes Markle, with full awareness by the Board. The RAM Committee renewed its request of last year that the Board develop a formal, written policy regarding its oversight role and responsibilities with respect to all CPED activities. Orr reported that he would relay said request.

- 12) RAM Committee Purpose and Function Chairman Barr shared with the Committee that he had received several e-mails prior to the meeting asking what the RAM Committee's purpose and function was, and questioning if the Committee had been fulfilling its stated purpose. He read the Committee's purpose from its assigned webpage on the official SRM website. He began a discussion regarding the stated purpose for the RAM Committee, and asked whether its activities in recent years had met its duty to provide "leadership" regarding the development and implementation of rangeland assessment and monitoring, or had simply taken on a messenger role to report upon the new assessment and monitoring techniques, protocols, and policies being developed by other entities? John Mitchell raised a point of order, and asserted that as a new business item, it was not appropriate to move the discussion forward as there was no motion currently on the floor. To avoid getting bogged down with procedural questions, Pete Sundt moved that the Committee take a vote that it disband. Lamar Smith seconded the motion.
- 13) Vote on Recommendations to Deactivate RAM With a motion on the floor to vote to disband the RAM Committee, Barr reinitiated discussion on the Committee's purpose statement and fulfillment of it. There was broad agreement that the current purpose statement was a fair and accurate declaration of the intended purpose of the RAM Committee at its inception, that there was still a need for an entity to provide that function within the Society, and that it was not necessary or desirable to rewrite the purpose statement at this time. There was general agreement that the Committee traditionally fulfilled its stated purpose through written recommendations to the Board, or written works produced at the direction of the Board.

Barr expressed his concern that the RAM Committee could not fully exercise its leadership role in the development of rangeland assessment and monitoring so long as agencies withhold their draft assessment and monitoring manuscripts as internal work product until they are finalized and signed. He postulated that in such scenarios, the RAM Committee's expertise is limited to an after-the-fact show of support or opposition, rather than productive input to help shape and direct the assessment and monitoring product.

There was considerable discussion that while the Committee may have fulfilled its stated purpose through more formal mechanisms in the past, it had not failed to fulfill that purpose in recent years, although it may have done so in a more amorphous, informal way that was more difficult to track. It was generally agreed that after the Committee structure took on the “Open” format,¹ its actions became highly dependant upon individual committee members working within the spirit of RAM Committee discussions in their spheres of influence, rather than through formalized written recommendations of the Committee to the SRM Board of Directors for intended audiences. It was also broadly agreed that whenever the Committee takes the initiative, or is directed to do so by the Board to respond to a particular issue, it can again fulfill its duties through a more formal process.

There was a call for the question, and a vote was taken on the motion to disband the RAM Committee. The motion failed unanimously.

- 14) Election of RAM Chair-Elect (2011 Vice-Chair and 2012 Chair) Lamar Smith requested that the Committee vote for a new Chair-Elect and adjourn. Chairman Barr called for nominations for a Chair-Elect to serve as Vice-Chair in 2011 and Chair in 2012. Scott Lusk nominated himself. No other nominations were received. A motion to elect Lusk as the new Chair-Elect was made, seconded, voted upon, and passed unanimously.

attachments: MINUTES (2009 RAM Committee Meeting, 2 pages)

ATTENDANCE ROSTER ~ FEBRUARY 7, 2010 RAM COMMITTEE MEETING; DENVER, COLORADO (1 page)

AGENDA ~ RAM COMMITTEE MEETING (2010, 1 page)

ADDENDUM: Chairman Barr attended the Rangeland Invasive Species Committee (RISC) meeting later on during the afternoon of Sunday, February 7, 2010. The concept of a jointly sponsored symposium to address establishment of a rapid invasive plant identification and response system during the 2011 annual meeting was presented to the RISC, discussed, and acted upon. It was agreed that RAM Committee and RISC would work together to develop either a symposium or a CPED workshop addressing “Early Detection and Rapid Response” to invasive plant infestations on rangelands. It was agreed that the target meeting for said symposium or CPED workshop should be the 2012 annual meeting, rather than the 2011 meeting. At least 3 RISC members committed to work on this proposal, and Barr agreed to solicit members from the RAM Committee to commit to the task.

¹ Chairman’s note: the “Committee Structure” statement from the February 2000 RAM Committee Handbook currently posted on the RAM Committee’s assigned SRM webpage does not appear to reflect the “Open” structure under which the Committee has operated in recent years.