

MINUTES  
RANGELAND ASSESSMENT AND MONITORING COMMITTEE  
8 February 2009

1. The RAM Committee met this date in Santa Ana Room, ACC.
2. Present: John Mitchell (Chair), Rick Orr (BOD representative), Mike Pellant, Matt Reeves, Scott Lusk, Janette Kaiser, Doug Powell, David Pyke, Terry Booth, Justin Derner, Dennis Thompson, Cici Brooks, Leonard Jolley, Rita Beard, Heather Swartz, John Tanaka, and Lamar Smith.
3. Mitchell reviewed the agenda and reminded those attending that the RAM Committee has an open membership. Those who were not on the Committee and who wished to join it were asked to signify that on the attendance roster.
4. Rick Orr reviewed emphasis items the Board of Directors were considering. None apply directly to RAM.
5. John Tanaka reviewed progress made by the Sustainable Rangelands Roundtable during 2008. This included completion of an ecosystem services publication, publication of a journal article on an integrated social, economic, and ecological conceptual framework of rangeland sustainability, and implementation of a program to include local monitoring indicators in ranch planning. The Committee moved to continue supporting the work of SRR.
6. Janette Kaiser and Doug Powell reported upon the Multi-Agency Pilot Project to use five SRR indicators to monitor 13 counties in central Oregon using the NRI and FIA sampling grids. The five indicators were extent of rangeland, vegetation of major rangeland community-types, bare soil, infestation by invasive plants, and landscape fragmentation. Also, a number of socio-economic indicators have been evaluated under an agreement with John Tanaka at Oregon State University. To date, the field data have been collected and analyzed, and both internal and external reviews completed. The Committee asked the Board to support continuing the work of the Pilot Project to expand the use of NRI and FIA on federal rangelands.
7. Janette Kaiser, David Pyke, and Justin Derner reviewed monitoring-related sessions that took place at the 2008 International Rangeland Congress in Mongolia.
8. Leonard Jolley reviewed progress being made by the NRCS Grazing Lands Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP). Their web site is [www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/nri/ceap](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/technical/nri/ceap).
9. Terry Booth reviewed monitoring research being undertaken by ARS. This included use of ultralight airplanes for taking low level photography to map vegetation by species. They are having a difficult time in identifying individual grass species from remotely-sensed imagery. The discussion led to a successful motion to partner with the Remote Sensing and GIS Technology Committee to sponsor a workshop under the SRM Center for Professional Education and Development (CPED) on how to use remote sensing technology to understand problems in monitoring and classifying the status and trends of rangelands.

10. The Committee passed a motion to ask the Board to develop and install a formal organizational structure to oversee the work of CPED.

11. Dennis Thompson and Janette Kaiser reported upon the status of the Ecological Site Description and Soil Survey programs. The NRCS, BLM, and FS have signed an MOA to collaborate, and the three agencies are working on handbooks and other documents to achieve the goal of developing ecological site descriptions for all rangelands. The Committee asked the Board to support this work when they meet with agency leaders later in the year.

11. Rita Beard briefed the Committee on efforts to standardize monitoring of invasive plants in the U.S. The North American Weed Management Association have developed monitoring standards; however, there is a need to review both the standards and the ways that the monitoring data can be used. The Committee appointed Rita Beard and Terry Booth to represent RAM at the Invasives Species Committee to see if a concurrent session on the subject can be organized for the 2010 Annual Meeting in Denver.

12. Heather Swartz of TNC reported upon their new website on rangeland monitoring and assessment <http://www.rangelandmethods.org/>. The website allows people to access information about particular monitoring methods. It provides reviews on how well each method performs under specific conditions. It also contains descriptions, relative costs, references to rangeland applications, and contact information for the different techniques. The techniques are rated through expert and user reviews.

13. Quinton Barr is the incoming Chair of the RAM Committee. Terry Booth was elected as the RAM Committee Chair-Elect for the coming year.

Respectfully submitted,

John E. Mitchell  
Chair, RAM Committee