



Rangeland Resources Committee

May 1, 2024
9:00am – 1:00pm
Virtual Zoom Meeting

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

Join:

<https://mt-gov.zoom.us/j/84855433650?pwd=ZGtid1NNa2g4TUJCZWNreGg2VkIvQT09>

Meeting ID: 848 5543 3650

Password: 513789

Dial by Telephone

+1 646 558 8656

Meeting ID: 848 5543 3650

Password: 513789

Find your local number: <https://mt-gov.zoom.us/u/kEXLns2Yv>

- Call meeting to order
- Approve minutes from 2/6/2024
- Welcome, Introductions

- Updates
 - Coordinator update
 - Budget update
 - Committee Updates
 - Advisory members updates

- New Business
 - RILP interest rate discussion
 - Bylaws discussion
 - Intern program updates
 - Report on Host meeting

- 2024 meeting dates
 - May 1 - (virtual)
 - July 17 - (virtual)
 - A fall meeting (including/day/time/location) in September/October will be decided upon at the May 1 meeting.

- Public Comment

- Meeting Adjourned

DRAFT



By-Laws of the Montana Rangeland Resource Committee

I. Name, Purpose, Duties, & Authority

Section 1 – Name: The name of the committee shall be the Montana Rangeland Resource Committee (hereafter referred to as “RCC” or “Committee”).

Section 2 – Purpose: The purpose is to establish a program of rangeland management whereby:

- the importance of Montana's rangeland with respect to livestock, forage, wildlife habitat, high-quality water production, pollution control, erosion control, recreation, and the natural beauty of the state is recognized;
- cooperation and coordination of range management activities between persons and organizations charged with or having the management of rangeland, whether private or public, can be promoted and developed; and
- recognize those who are doing exceptional work in range management.

Section 3 – Definitions:

- 1) “Rangeland” means land on which the native vegetation (climax or natural potential) is predominantly grasses, grass-like plants, forbs, or shrubs suitable for grazing or browsing use.
- 2) “Range management” means a distinct discipline founded on ecological principles and dealing with the husbandry of rangelands and range resources.
- 3) “Committee” means the Montana rangeland resources committee selected as provided in [2-15-3305 \(2\)](#).
- 4) “Users of rangeland” means all persons, including but not limited to ranchers, farmers, hunters, anglers, recreationists, and others appreciative of the functional, productive, aesthetic, and recreational uses of rangelands.
- 5) “Montana rangeland resource program” means the rangeland resource program administered by the conservation districts division of the department of natural resources and conservation in concert with the Montana conservation districts law and the Grass Conservation Act to maintain and enhance the rangeland resources of the state.
- 6) “State Coordinator” means the state coordinator for the Montana Rangeland Resources Act provided for in [2-15-3304](#).

Section 4 – Duties & Roles:

Role of the Committee:

The Committee [76-14-106](#) shall:

- 1) Review and recommend annual and long-range work programs;
- 2) Suggest priorities of work;
- 3) Provide advice and counsel to the coordinator for carrying out the rangeland resource program



- 4) The committee may consult with state and federal agencies and units of the university system as it considers appropriate in performing its duties.
- 5) Provide, coordinate, and disseminate information about economic and ecological aspects of rangeland management practices.
- 6) Promote public support for livestock grazing on Montana's rangelands.
- 7) Recognize those who are doing exceptional work in range management.
- 8) Advocate balanced use of rangeland resources and to promote responsible rangeland stewardship.

Role of the State Coordinator:

The state coordinator [76-14-105](#) shall:

- 1) Serve as an advisor, counselor, and coordinator for and between persons and agencies involved in range management;
- 2) Strive to create understanding and compatibility between the users of rangeland, including hunters, anglers, recreationists, ranchers, and others;
- 3) Promote and coordinate the implementation of sound range management plans to minimize conflicts between governmental agencies and private landowners;
- 4) Participate in zoning and planning studies to ensure that native ranges are adequately represented at sessions for development of zoning and planning regulations;
- 5) Coordinate range management research to help prevent duplication and overlap of effort in this area.

II. Membership

Section 1 – Governor Appointed Members: The RRC shall include 6 voting members. The governor shall appoint the voting members who represent each of the following categories within Montana:

- (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 section (1). This process is defined in MCA 22-15-3302.

(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 22-15-121.

Section 2 – Nonvoting Advisory Members: Nonvoting advisory members must possess sufficient knowledge and authority within the position to inform rangeland and natural resource decisions made within the Committee's purpose and duties. Regional administrators, rangeland management specialists, or natural resource personnel of the following agencies or organizations may each designate a nonvoting representative to the RRC:



- 1) MT Department of Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MT FWP)
- 2) University of Montana (UM)
- 3) Montana State University (MSU)
- 4) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- 5) U.S. Forest Service, appointed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA FS)
- 6) Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
- 7) Montana Stockgrowers Association (MSGA)
- 8) Montana Association of State Grazing Districts (MASGD)
- 9) Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)
- 10) Montana Department of Agriculture (MDA)
- 11) United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- 12) United States Agricultural Research Service (USDA-ARS), Fort Keogh
- 13) Montana Farm Bureau Federation

Section 4 – Terms: Members of the RRC shall serve staggered 2-year terms.

Section 5 – New Appointments: At least two months before the expiration of appointed member terms, the Chair, State Coordinator, and Office of the Governor shall invite nominations for new members or renewal of appointees who are eligible for an open seat. There shall be no term limits for members willing to serve.

Section 6 – Term of Office & Vacancies: The term of office of each committee member is 2 years, however the term of appointed chair and vice chair is 4 years. These terms will be staggered to avoid replacing all board members when terms are exhausted.

(1) Committee members who are appointed by the governor must be designated to serve for terms of 2 years from the date of their appointment. The appointed chair and vice chair shall serve a term of 4 years. An appointed chair holds office until a successor has been selected by the governor. To initiate staggered term years, half of the RRC members will term in 2024 and the other half will term in 2026. Members to term in 2024 those are (b), (c), (f). Members to term in 2026 are (a), (d), (e).

- (a) a presiding officer who is a rancher; 2026
- (b) a vice presiding officer who is a rancher; 2024
- (c) a rancher from the eastern area of the state; 2024
- (d) a rancher from the northern area of the state; 2026
- (e) a rancher from the area of the state west of the continental divide; 2026
- (f) a rancher from the southern area of the state. 2024

(2) A vacancy is created when any of the following events occurs before the expiration of the term of the incumbent:

- (a) death;
- (b) a determination pursuant to Title 53, chapter 21, part 1, that the incumbent is mentally ill;
- (c) resignation;
- (d) removal from office; (1) (2) 76-15- 312.
- (e) unexcused absence from three consecutive regular meetings of the board of supervisors;
- (g) conviction of a felony or a violation of official duties; or
- (h) the decision of a court declaring void the incumbent's appointment.



For the purpose of subsection (2)(e), the RRC committee chair may excuse a committee member from attending a meeting if prior notice (at least 24 hours) of an absence has been given.

Resignation: Resignation from the RRC must be in writing and received by the Chair or State Coordinator. An appointed member may be removed for excess unexcused absences or other reasons by a majority of the voting members. There will only be (3) unexcused absences allowed to committee members per year. If more than (3) unexcused absences occur, the committee chair will reach out to the committee member to inquire their interest to continue as a member of the committee. An unexcused absence is an absence where a committee member has not alerted the Chair or State Coordinator within at least 24 hours of being absent from a set RRC meeting.

Section 7 – Incomplete Terms: When an appointed member vacancy occurs through resignation or removal before the term expires, the State Coordinator shall provide public notice of vacancy, solicit potential new members, and refer interested parties to the Governor’s Office or the relevant designated appointing organization to begin the appointment process. RRC members may recommend a new member for the open seat; recommendations will be forwarded to the governor for consideration of appointment.

III. Administration

Section 1 – Administration: The RRC is attached to the DNRC for administrative purposes as prescribed by law.

Section 2 – Officers: The officers of the RRC shall include a presiding officer (hereafter “Chair”) and a secondary presiding officer (hereafter “Vice Chair”). The Chair and Vice Chair shall be voting members appointed by the governor. The Chair and Vice Chair shall serve 2-year terms.

Section 3 – Duties of the Officers: The Chair shall work with the State Coordinator to plan RRC meetings. The Chair shall preside over meetings of the RRC. The Chair shall also sign on behalf of the RRC such documents and communications as the committee may authorize. The Vice Chair shall assist in the completion of the Chair’s duties and assume the duties of the Chair in their absence.

Section 4 – Quorum: A majority of the voting members of the RRC constitutes a quorum.

Section 5 – State Coordinator and Staff Duties: A State Coordinator and staff, provided by the DNRC, will administer the operation and functions of the RRC. The State Coordinator and staff shall oversee and facilitate meetings including notice and minutes, financials, travel reimbursements to eligible members, and preparation of a biennial report of the committee that aligns with Legislative years with the report completed the December before the Legislative year begins in January. Specific duties of the staff will be determined by the State Coordinator and activities pursued by the RRC.

Section 6 – Reporting: The RRC shall report on its activities to DNRC and the RRC through a biennial report. Information reported shall include: a summary of information gathered in fulfillment of its duties under this section; information on activities and events attended including trainings and tours administered by the RRC; recommendations the committee considers appropriate for fulfillment of its duties and for the continued preservation of rangeland resources in Montana; and an accounting of all loan monies received and disbursed for the period since the last report. The Chair and Director of the DNRC shall serve as the committee’s liaisons to the Governor’s office.



Section 7 – Payment: The RCC members shall serve without pay from the RRP. Unless otherwise provided by law, Committee members are entitled to be reimbursed for travel expenses (including mileage, lodging and per diem).

Section 8 – Funding of Projects and Partner Efforts: The RRC may endeavor to assist with funding or allocating other resources for partner projects or efforts related to the RRP’s mission and/or statutory duties. All new funding or other resource requests to RRP shall be reviewed and voted upon by the committee depending on the timing of the request.

IV. Meetings

Section 1 – Regular Meetings: The RRC shall meet at least quarterly with two meetings being held virtually and two in-person; locations will be selected by the committee. In the event of an emergency, inclement weather, or other significant barrier to meeting attendance, members may participate and vote on action items via conference call or video conference.

Section 2 – Special Meetings: Special meetings may be called by the Chair or a majority of voting members. Two days prior notice shall be required before all special meetings or conferences.

Section 3 – Public Notice: Notice of each meeting shall be given to each member at least ten days before the meeting. Notice of regular meetings shall also be published on the RRP and DNRC websites. The RRP website will include information on how to contact staff to participate in the committee meetings.

Section 4 – Minutes: Minutes from each RRC meeting shall be provided by the staff to members within a reasonable timeframe after each meeting. Minutes shall include a list of members in attendance, a summary of topics discussed, and accurate statements of all actions taken by vote of the committee. Minutes must be approved, with any necessary changes, by the quorum at the next regular meeting. After the minutes are approved, they will be posted on the RRP website.

V. Decision-Making

Section 1 – Majority Vote: A majority of the voting membership of the RRC constitutes a quorum to do business. A favorable vote of a majority of the quorum is required to adopt any resolution, approve a motion, or make any other decision unless otherwise provided by law. The committee shall seek consensus but will accept a majority vote for decision-making. Nonvoting members shall have no vote.

VI. Amendments

These by-laws may be amended, when necessary, by a favorable majority of the quorum. Proposed amendments shall be submitted with written notice to the Chair who shall share the proposed amendments with members prior to the meeting at which the amendments are to be considered.

VIII. Parliamentary Authority

The rules contained in Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised shall govern the committee in all cases to which they are applicable and in which they are not inconsistent with these by-laws and any special rules of order the committee may adopt.



Certification

The undersigned hereby certifies that the foregoing is in accordance with the Governor's Montana Appointee Handbook and is a true and correct copy of the by-laws adopted on the ____ day of ____ 2024.

Signature of Presiding Officer (Chair)

Date

DRAFT

RANGELAND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MINUTES
Tuesday, February 6, 2024
1:00 pm – 5:00 pm
Billings Hotel & Convention Center, Billings, MT

PRESENT

Members:

Chair Diane Ahlgren
Member Leah Lewis
Member Sigurd Jensen
Member, John Hollenback
Member, Jim Anderson
Member, Ron Devlin
Advisory Member, Rachel Frost
Advisory Member, Reyer Rens
Advisory Member, Mark Bostrom
Advisory Member, Kevin Derzaph
Advisory Member, Marissa Sather

Staff:

Stacey Barta, DNRC State Rangeland Resources Program Coordinator
Shantell Frame-Martin, DNRC Rangeland Resource Program Specialist

Public:

Jason Derz, Torri Colecorse (Sen, Daines' Office), Connie Iverson, Donna Stafford,
Molly Masters, Joey Growell (Rep. Rosendale's Office)

Call to Order

Chair Diane Ahlgren called the meeting to order at 1:02 pm. Everyone in attendance introduced themselves.

Diane asked if there was a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the October 17, 2023, meeting. Leah motioned to approve the minutes as submitted and Ron seconded. No discussion, motion carried.

NEW BUISNESS:

Stacey provided an update on events, projects, and meetings/conferences she attended November, December and January. Stacey talked about the "Good Neighbor Authority" through Grants.gov. She also mentioned the Western SARE grant and GLCI for this years' 406 Grazing Academy. Stacey also discussed the current NRCS contribution agreement. Ron asked for additional details regarding the "Good Neighbor Agreement" and a short discussion ensued. Stacey noted that the newsletter has 1,700 subscribers and after every month, several compliments are received on it.

Budget update:

Stacey explained the budgetary code breakdown and was excited to share that after 60 years of the RRP being in existence, that it now has organization codes and a budget. Hats off to Mark for accomplishing that feat! Ron asked about the million-dollar fund that was used and Mark explained that was set up from monies provided from the General Fund. Mark also noted that the Rangeland Improvement Loan Program can use more than the set \$1million to get more funds on the ground—there are no limitations. Mark explained that only \$1million was allowed “back in the day” and can be exceeded if a bonding rate could be obtained. Stacey mentioned that there is \$360k in the account so that amount would need to be exceeded before there is a need to bond more for availability.

Shantell provided a brief update on events and tasks she’s completed which mirrored that of what Stacey mentioned.

Diane asked for committee updates.

Leah attended the MSU calving class and said it was a great event. She’s been working on water rights paperwork and filing; she noted that others should have it on their radar if their basin is on the block—she mentioned finding an attorney for advice to do so. Leah also mentioned that the budget for adjudication is 4-6 years.

Ron shared with the group that he’s on the Prairie District Grazing Board and it’s been quiet. His neighbor lost about 25 AUMs due to a new prairie dog town. He noted that in his area that water adjudication is not an issue as there really isn’t any water on private land as most reservoirs are on BLM.

Sigurd shared that he attended the Western Montana Grazing Conference in Missoula at the Missoula County Fairgrounds. He liked that the conference used local foods/products to feed attendees. He mentioned that there were several great topics, and the presenters were good. Sigurd also shared that Lake County has a new Conservation District hire (Caroline) and that she’s mentioned having a range tour of some sorts in Western Montana when the weather is nice. Sigurd noted that his area hasn’t received enough moisture this winter.

John informed the group that his area has been working a lot on virtual fencing in Spotted Dog. The FS out of Helena bought two towers and helped a few of the landowners get a grant for the collars. John noted that he’s seen a lot of interest in virtual fencing in his area and said that ranchers are able to collect all of their cattle off of allotments in timely manner (usually a day) with the collars. He noted that he thinks virtual fencing is phenomenal and it will make great use of public/federal lands.

Jim started off by saying that, “there’s not a lot going on up in his area.” One notable topic of interest however is that the area ranchers are trying to get the USDA government hunter (through a petition) to come and eliminate some coyotes. Jim noted that there has been an increase in large predators including sightings of grizzly bear, and that his area is the driest in the country with little to no snowpack. Jim also mentioned that any excess hay from this past summer has been bought up and sold into Canada.

Diane noted that she didn't have anything to report however she's noticed that her area has pretty good sub-moisture.

Advisory Updates:

Walt Anseth (MDA) mentioned that MDA had a meeting with the Governor recently and that MDA is fully staffed. He noted that he thought this next season will be busy with Ag loans due to the drought/lack of winter moisture.

Reyer Rens (BLM) noted that he has new range staff and he's seeking mentors for those folks. He's been fielding a lot of virtual fencing questions and he's waiting on the Public Lands Rule and then BLM will help implement that; Reyer noted that rule will help to establish programs including the grazing program. The mandate will be to take action on land health standards. Diane asked about virtual fencing from the BLM standpoint and a short discussion ensued.

Kevin Derzaph (NRCS) stated that NRCS is looking for range specialists. He also noted that virtual fencing is gaining ground at NRCS and the State Conservationist is encouraging TIPS and standalone practice. Bell Grazing is available for financial assistance. Kevin mentioned that National GLCI has monies available for grants with funds supplied by NRCS; \$16million is available with a \$300k and \$1million cap and either can be applied for. RRP and MT GLCI did not get funded last year, and Kevin was unsure of when that application process opens up.

Rachel Frost (MSU) shared that Stacey is the newly elected Dept. of Animal and Range Advisory Committee member. MSU Rangeland Ecology Major is now accredited by Society for Range Management. A short discussion ensued regarding class size, etc. Rachel also noted that the Dan Scott Program had a program review, and recruitment is a huge focus. Rachel also shared that MSU hired a precision AG faculty member.

Molly Masters (MRCDC) provided dates for events that they are hosting.

Marissa Sather (USFWS) briefly discussed that the DOI is making historic investments in conservation; investing in projects through partnerships to leverage funds and resources.

Mark Bostrom (DNRC) mentioned that DEQ is putting in for a climate pollution reduction grant for coal seam fires and a discussion ensued regarding this topic.

Stacey mentioned that she also serves on the Montana Ag Experiment Station and that she would like to bring research to producers and other parties who would benefit from research findings for on the ground use.

Diane discussed MSGOT and the duties associated with being a committee member. Jim Anderson noted that he would be willing to fill Diane's spot on MSGOT, Ron made a motion to have Jim fill the RRC spot behind Diane and Leah seconded. Motion carried.

OLD BUISNESS:

Strategic Plan-

Members reviewed the Strategic Plan. Jim made the motion to adopt the Strategic Plan, Leah seconded and motion carried.

Bylaws-

Term limits-Section 4. The committee decided that (3) seats will serve on a 2-year term and (3) will serve a 4-year term. The group decided that Stacey/Shantell should look at a map to determine with seats are to be 2-year terms and 4-year terms. Seats will be reappointed in 2025. Ron noted that the Bylaws should contain this information.

Unexcused absences-

The group discussed unexcused absences and it was noted to consider having the chair reach out to the member to discuss the absences and have an outline to replace the person if there are more than the allotted unexcused absences. Diane suggested (3) unexcused absences and Jim agreed. It was suggested to tailor the language after the Conservation District's Bylaws. **Shantell will obtain a copy of these to craft this language for inclusion.

Proxy voting-

Consensus was to not allow this. **Shantell will remove this verbiage from the Bylaws for the next draft.

Diane requested that Stacey/Shantell clean up the Bylaws to include discussion items/edits talked about at the meeting and resend out to the RRC. The goal is to approve these at the next meeting.

Diane briefly discussed MSGOT lease terms, and a short discussion ensued.

NEW BUISNESS:

Working Lands Internship Program (WLIP)-

Stacey informed the group that there were 11 applications and 6 of them fit the criteria. The plan is to do interviews around March 1. Stacey discussed Turner Ranches collaboration, and the opportunity for partnership with Pat Fosse in the Dillon area to host an intern for monitoring. A discussion ensued about the intent of the program and keeping it as educational and not "just paid summer help" to fill worker shortages. The committee requested Stacey get additional information from Pat Fosse to see if that opportunity aligns with the goals and mission of the WLIP.

2024 Meeting Dates:

The RRC will meet the following days/times in 2024:

- May 1 (virtual) to adjust RILP interest rate
- July 17 (virtual)
- A fall meeting (including day/time/ location) in September/October will be decided upon at the May 1 meeting.

Public Comment

No public comment.

ADJOURN

Diane asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Jim made the motion and Leah seconded. No discussion and the motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 3:44pm.

Action Items:

- 1. Update Strategic Plan to reflect edits discussed at this meeting.**
- 2. Update Bylaws to reflect edits discussed at this meeting.**
- 3. Determine 2-year appointments and 4-year appointments—update Bylaws with this information when decided.**
- 4. Stacey will get additional details from Pat Fosse to share with the RRC regarding the opportunity in Dillon for an intern.**