

**Midwest Perennial Forage Working Group
Conference call, September 2, 2014**

Participating:

Margaret Dunn
Laura Paine
Caroline Van Shaik (Terry VanDerPol unable to connect)
Joe Sellers
Jane Jewett
Jim Paulson
Diomy Zamora
Troy Salzer
Dean Thomas
Tom Quinn

To do list:

- Each state team will work together to set up a meeting or conference call between now and September 30th. The goal of the call or meeting will be to identify some general goals for each state's part of the project. Also need to identify which organization or agency will take the lead and administer the subcontract. **For the purpose of the pre-proposal, a short summary of the livestock industry in the state and how you see the project benefiting it would be very useful!**
- Laura will connect with Tom at WFU and Nadia at the WI School for Beginning Dairy and Livestock Farmers, and determine what roles they're interested in playing and how we want to shape our in-state project. She will also meet with the SWBadger grazing team for their input.
- Laura will begin revising the pre-proposal and budget based on our discussion and will circulate a draft prior to the September 30th conference call.
- On the Sept. 30th call, discuss within-state goals and needs with an eye toward identifying common themes that can be incorporated into the proposal.

Agenda:

SARE R & E Proposal

The Perennial Forage group is planning to resubmit our SARE R&E proposal. The pre-proposals are due on October 23rd. We spent the entire call discussing changes and improvements to the proposal and to our project.

General themes and modifications

We decided that we should make the case for the project on **economics** with the following points:

- The direction the ag economy is heading: as grain prices decline and beef prices remain steady or increase, beef production may become increasingly profitable. Cash rents will be following grain prices down, but more slowly, so land costs may continue to be a barrier.
- Larger beef operations are looking to expand, providing opportunities for landowners to rent land for pasture as well as for beginning farmers to become managers of other peoples' cattle on rented land.

- Bring on an economist to strengthen this argument. Several economists were suggested. Laura suggested that we keep things simple and have just one economist on the team, rather than one from each state. Joe suggested Lee Schultz from ISU.
- Incorporate in nearly completed decision tool for ag production on marginal land that is being developed by ISU (William Edwards, retired faculty member).

Other modifications/themes:

- Reinforce the percentage of land that is controlled by non-farming landowners.
- Increase the focus on beginning farmers and expanding livestock producers, reduce emphasis on non-farming landowners as an audience for the project. The general theme of the proposal will emphasize both beginning farmers and expanding livestock producers, but each state will have the opportunity to choose to focus more on one or the other.
- Incorporate EQIP and other cost share as a means of contributing to the long-term viability of the effort (addressing one of the reviewer criticisms). Mention effort to document govt. programs that support CLC practices.
- Add some wording about Caroline's survey work with contract graziers (we didn't talk about this as a group, but it's important to reference this ongoing work).

Modifications to the 2013 proposal's original five main activities:

1. A regional contract grazing conference

Will stay the same. Emphasize in the proposal that the goal is to bring together those with an interest in contract grazing, many of whom are currently isolated and unaware of the interest in and support available for contract grazing; the conference will foster networking to support further efforts.

2. A workshop series in each state.

Each state will develop its own local educational program reflecting the needs of producers in their communities. We planned for each state to convene a meeting or conference call between now and our next conference call on September 30th and come up with an initial, general plan that can be included in the pre-proposal. Part of the project will be to take these preliminary plans and flesh them out using some of the grant \$\$ for travel, etc. for the planning groups. We will also incorporate a means of sharing and meshing our instate projects across the three states.

3. A farmer-mentor program in each state (experienced farmers mentoring beginning farmers on rented land).

Team members had mixed feelings about doing a mentoring project as part of this proposal. We decided that each state can either develop their own mentoring program or piggyback on existing mentoring programs (PFI, Land Stewardship, etc.) or not do a mentoring program if it is not needed in their community.

4. A research project to gather information about non-farming landowners and how to reach them (\$30,000)

We decided to drop this part of the project altogether and use the \$\$ to support actual outreach to landowners in each state With a goal of getting landowners to attend workshops and conferences where they could easily be surveyed.

5. Products, including lease templates, producer application form, a website, and a report from the research project in #4 above.

We decided to reframe our products discussion in terms of a toolbox of resources, including reviewing and utilizing appropriate existing resources as is, modifying existing resources to

better meet our needs, or creating new materials as needed. Language suggestion: bring together resources and 'put a spotlight on them'.

Budget

The final budget, if we're successful, will have subcontracts for an entity in each state (state will chose who will have this role). The budget for the preproposal is simple, just for the whole project, so Laura will modify to reflect the changes, but keep the major existing categories (other than the research project).

Partners

Discussion was held on whether to keep Thousand Hills Cattle Company and the WI Grassfed Beef Coop as partners. The group was divided on this idea. We decided to leave them off for now, and perhaps ask them for a letter of support on the full proposal, along with other livestock organizations, to reflect a more balanced audience. Laura reserved the right to include the WI beef coop in her in-state part of the project.