

Midwest Perennial Forage Working Group
conference call, 2/09/15

Present:

Joe Sellers
Kent Solberg
Vance Haugen
Jane Jewett
Caroline Van Schaik
Meghan Filbert
Warren King
Allison Van
Jim Paulson
Laura Paine
Dick Cates

SARE R & E Proposal:

Our proposal was not funded.

Two grazing-related proposals from Iowa were funded. One dealt with finishing grass-fed cattle; and another with different ways to do stockpiled grazing.

Reviewers' comments suggested that they had some assumptions about our proposal that were different from our assumptions. It sounded like they thought we were assuming the presence of permanent fencing on a large scale, and may not have been aware of all of the temporary fencing options that are in use now.

Other questions that came up based on attempts to interpret reviewer comments:

- Was this too big of a project?
- Should we have included demonstration sites?
- Perhaps we should have named actions in each state?
- Maybe reviewers didn't read it carefully?
- Concern that you really need to have the full proposal done before submitting the pre-proposal.

Discussion of possibility of pulling together funds to just do a regional contract grazing conference.

- Possible locations: Dubuque, LaCrosse
- Look at in-state SARE funds from IA, WI, MN
- Possibility of \$1000 from Leopold Center
- People in this group have contacts for those in-state sources of small grants.
- Who is the audience?

- Difficult to get people to travel to a conference. Distance is an issue; are there other ways to reach the audience?
- Laura is envisioning a full-blown, 2-day conference along the lines of the Extension Driftless Region beef conference. The audience would be anyone with an interest in contract grazing: educators, graziers, landowners, public lands managers.
- Have it in May, June, or July and include farm visit(s)?

Discussion of other options for reaching audience:

- Traveling presentation; piggy-back on existing structure of conferences and workshops.
- Create a shared message, make ourselves available as speakers for conferences.
- PFI is planning its field day schedule in March and would be happy to incorporate this.
- Pre-conference workshops take place in conjunction with PFI's annual conference and the Minnesota Organic Conference. These could be good places to present materials.

There was interest in moving forward with this and building on existing conference infrastructure; we can put this on the agenda for the in-person meeting.

In-person meeting: preferred location was Decorah, IA. GLBW can cover venue and lunch; and mileage and hotel for people to attend.

Collaboration with Pasture Project – presented by Warren King

Premise:

- Lots of grazing and grazing apprenticeship programs are going on.
- There are some freelance grazing instructors in the region.
- Lots of place-based people are working on grazing.
- There's a lack of common goals and common points of education.

Pasture Project reached out to the MPFWG; looked at two potential approaches to develop a grazing network:

- 1) Develop an "initiative" and bring that to grazing educators and see if they want to join;
- 2) Offer opportunities for educators to access professional development that would add value to their work.

Value-Added Professional Education: What would it look like?

- Low-cost, easy to connect
- Allows us to start building a coalition or network
- Offer high-value topics:
 - PP's grass-fed beef calculator could be one
 - Another 5 to 6 topics
 - Put speakers together with topics

- Do webinars
- Advertise broadly; invite listening and participation
- Materials are already developed and speakers are available; we'd be offering the platform and assembling the audience.
- There are so many programs going on and individual educators with knowledge and passion on topics; this would expose others to those strengths
- That can lead to deeper conversations and strengthen collaborations.
- Example from a successful SARE-PDP project in Wisconsin; face-to-face workshops around the state and exposure of people to different skill sets.
- Assets:
 - U of MN has licensed WebEx.
 - Pasture Project has used WebEx and has a person available to do webinar coordination.
 - Observation: PP-sponsored webinars have worked well; the technology seems good.
 - Low-cost is different from no-cost; where would any \$ needed come from?
 - PP has some internal resources to host webinars
 - There would need to be some staff time to design & build the webinar
 - Remuneration for presenter, possibly?
 - Maybe some other costs; not clear yet.
- Next steps:
 - Develop curriculum or list of topics to present
 - Team approach needed to coordinating this, and topic areas need to be broad: not just grass-fed beef.
 - Pasture Project is prepared to handle coordination of these; suggests planning out a couple of them and then get feedback from participants.
 - Work as a team on planning; do a couple of conference calls and maybe a survey; come to the April 7 meeting with a plan in the form of a serious draft; include speaker list and draft schedule.
 - PP will set up a conference call in March
 - Make an effort to re-engage the entire MPFWG.
 - Want to ensure some leadership involvement from each state.

2016 GLBW Conference to be hosted by SW Badger

- Just an FYI to the group at this point; Laura wants the MPFWG to be involved in planning.
- Some interest from CIAS in being involved and putting together an agroforestry/permaculture segment.
- Perennial grains are another potential topic.

<meeting ended 1:13 pm>