

Midwest Perennial Forage Working Group
conference call, 9/08/15

Present:

Terry VanDerPol
Vance Haugen
Kent Solberg
Wayne Monsen
Caroline Van Schaik
Laura Paine
Warren King
Jane Jewett

Session for Upcoming GLBW Conference

(discussion led by Terry VanDerPol)

The Midwest Perennial Forage Working Group will have a 90-minute session during the conference; one of five working-group sessions (the others being Agroforestry, Perennial Biomass, Cover Crops, and Perennial Grains).

People attending the sessions won't necessarily already be part of GLBW. The event brings in new people. Earlier in the year we raised the possibility of a shared session with the cover crops group. Jane floated that idea with cover crops people and had a tepid reception. At the GLBW conference two years ago we had a focus-group type of discussion about research needs, opportunities and barriers to increasing grazing and perennial forage use.

Suggestions for 2015 session:

- Follow up on the points raised during 2013 Conference
- Show & tell of what is available on our website
- Present SARE-PDP draft proposal via slides and bullet points, and get feedback
 - Noted that this feedback would likely be limited and general
- Group composition has changed a lot since the MPFWG formed; have a conversation about what the group can do and what value it adds
- Request from Richard Warner that we include a focus on markets
 - This could be other than beef; for example, bedding for hog production
 - Should discuss not only the value of products for sale, but also the value of perennial forage/grazing in reducing input costs to the system
- Topics raised at in-person meeting in Decorah in April:
 - How animals fit into cropping systems
 - Conservation grazing
 - Riparian grazing (re: buffer zones)
 - Soil health & grazing

Potential speakers who could address the question of value from perennial forage/grazing – including reducing purchased inputs –

- John Westra
- Lance ___ ? (NRCS grazing specialist from Marshall, MN area)

Craft this as a training session for ourselves as well as others who may attend: expand our own horizons, have a speaker address questions that we find difficult. Feedback on framing grant proposals could also be added to the agenda.

Agreed to set up a subcommittee to work on conference agenda. Terry VanDerPol will take the lead in sending out a Doodle poll and setting this up.

SARE Research & Education Grant

(discussion led by Laura Paine)

Laura Paine and Richard Warner have discussed the possibility of a grant proposal to look at grazing of the Kernza™ version of intermediate wheatgrass. Laura would have to take the lead on the proposal. She has organized a conference call with Lee DeHaan, Kernza™ breeder with The Land Institute; Craig Sheaffer and Jake Jungers, forages scientist and grad student with the U of MN, and Stan Shafer (sp?), animal scientist with U of WI to discuss the possibility. This is an opportunity to connect the MPFWG with another Working Group (perennial grains), and to get some regional work going on the ground.

The pre-proposal for the R & E grants is due in mid-October. Participation from others in the MPFWG is welcome, but it's not defined yet what "participation" would mean.

- Richard Warner and Lee DeHaan want to establish plots on livestock farms and look at integration of grazing with Kernza production, and also look at animal performance.
- The plantings would be monoculture Kernza.
- Several MPFWG members know farmers who might be interested in hosting plots.
- Agreed that this would be a great project for the team to take on and good for the Working Group, but everyone is so limited on time. Laura will update the group on the outcome of the conference call.
- Jane will send out info re: MISA's Endowed Chair program, which could be a funding source for someone from the group to be able to focus on a defined project.

SARE Professional Development Program Grant

(discussion led by Warren King)

At the April in-person meeting in Decorah, we discussed potential outcomes of efforts to develop a grazing educator network in the Midwest.

- Discussed outreach to specific groups of educators; for example, agency staff, land managers
- We've seen regional interest in the grazing educator webinars, including from Missouri and Indiana

Warren can take the lead on developing a SARE-PDP proposal, through Pasture Project and with assistance from Richard Warner. He would like to send out notes and ideas, and an invitation to a conference call within the next couple of weeks. The proposal is due in Mid-March.

Ideas on what a grazing educator network would do have been presented on slides in the webinars (the following list is copied from Warren's slide from the webinar series):

- Connect Upper Midwest Educators through discussion and sharing
- Assess education materials-tool; determine what's missing and fill the gaps
- Create a platform to house and access materials and tools
- Share what works and why
- Cross-pollination of staff, students, apprentices and programs
- Involve established grazing education programs
- Access materials-tools no longer in circulation
- Build collaboration that is more "grass-roots" than "top-down"
- Include educators of various types; farmers, academics, agency and consultants
- Establish basic principles of managed grazing that are taught by all

A quarterly webinar series could be continued; that has been pretty successful so far. It would be good to keep the momentum going; keep people coming back. Budget for the webinars has been small; mostly just time; no one has yet requested the honorarium.

Discussion and questions:

- Would the PDP project focus on virtual or on-the-ground education?
 - Virtual = lower cost.
 - On-the-ground education is a different, more visceral experience and may reach people who will not be reached by a webinar.
 - Need to find out what types of projects have been funded by SARE-PDP in the past.
- Who would "house" the grazing educator program? Possibly an established program like the Missouri Grazing School or MOSES could take it on.
- We have proven value with the webinar series. Keeping that and networking with more people could be valuable. Leverage PDP dollars to tie the relatively few grazing educators together better.
- Cap of \$75,000 for the PDP means this has to be a finite body of work.

Grazing Educator Webinar Series

The upcoming webinar on Sept. 11 is in good shape; final slide deck should be ready tomorrow (Sept. 9).

The final webinar in this series will be Oct. 9, and will focus on recommended tools and resources. This will be more of a panel discussion among four to six people, rather than a presentation by two or three. We haven't started gathering presenters yet for this final webinar. Generally protocol has been to draw from the list created by Warren's survey and brainstorming by the MPFWG last March and April; and then convene a conference call with those folks to discuss the topics to be presented and start the process of developing the presentation. We call on more people if needed to find the right presenters for the topics.

<call concluded at 2:30 pm>