

Midwest Perennial Forage Working Group – Minnesota
Sept. 23, 2014

Present on the call:

Caroline Van Schaik (CVS)

Richard Warner (RW)

Kent Solberg (KS)

Terry VanDerPol (TVDP)

Dean Thomas (DT)

Jane Grimsbo Jewett (JGJ)

TVDP began by addressing the issue of whether the Minnesota discussion has been focused more on SARE PDP-type activities rather than R & E activities.

CVS also noted an apparent conflict between would-be graziers vs. landowners as the audience for this work. How to reconcile this? The focus should be producers and landowners both, in a synergistic way. You have to address both sides of the coin.

TVDP responded that bringing contract graziers and landowners together has always been a focus of Laura's work and of this grant proposal.

KS – Agree; need to focus on both producers and landowners. Re: the language of continuing education, and whether the Minnesota discussion edges too far into PDP territory – he views it as team-building, rather than professional development. An initial team-building workshop would identify team members, people who could serve as mentors, including farmers already doing contract grazing.

CVS – Had envisioned the St. Cloud event as an educational forum for farmers and landowners

KS – Had envisioned it much more as a team-building event. What about having a two-day event with team-building for mentor teams on the first day, followed by education for landowners and farmers on the second day?

TVDP – Meetings with landowners probably need to be regional, not in St. Cloud. Would like to bring landowners and graziers together to find out what they need, because it's not clear that we know what they need.

KS – Disagrees; thinks we have a pretty good handle on what the needs are, and may through experience even know that better than the landowners & farmers who are totally new to the idea. There needs to be some hand-holding of people trying contract grazing for the first time; Troy talked about that on the last call; would like to see mentoring and "mediation" (not in a negative sense of resolving conflict but in a positive sense of successfully negotiating contract terms).

CVS – Would be hard-pressed to get people up to St. Cloud.

CVS & DT – Agree that there's lots of informal pasture leasing going on, sans written contract.

DT – Need to broaden the types of livestock production mentioned. The proposal talks about backgrounding, finishing, dairy heifers – should also talk about cow-calf, milk cows, [sheep?].

(Other discussion -- maybe just stop at “livestock” and not state specific types of livestock operations; this would also free up some words to be applied elsewhere.)

TVDP – Need to be inclusive of three types of people: 1) people who own cattle; 2) people who graze cattle; 3) people who own land.

CVS – Yes, I see, not just two sides of the coin – it’s three-sided. Question: would it be strengthening or weakening to the proposal if we said that our in-state dollars were going to build on our existing innovative programs? Build on work that’s already on the ground – but it’s different in different parts of the state. The team-building approach that’s so appealing to Kent and Troy is not so interesting in the SE part of the state. Could we insert that language into the pre-proposal?

JGJ – Thinks we could say something acknowledging within-state differences between regions of the state, and that we’ll build on the existing regional efforts and frameworks.

Discussion of how to appeal to landowners.

DT – Unfortunately, all planting decisions that he sees are made strictly on \$.

TVDP – Her work with LSP involves outreach & discussions with women landowners. People are looking for alternatives to corn & beans.

CVS – We need those conversations with people who are interested in alternatives.

KS – First step would be bringing people together. Out in the regions – workshop, meeting at a local café, etc. – where “teams” come on board is to do the hand-holding to get some successful case studies out there. It’s a two-stage process.

Budget – Version 1 preferred. Funds are limited; have to be strategic about directing in-state funds. In version 2, unclear about the “Planning teams” and travel to in-state workshops; who does the “planning team” consist of? In MN, there is interest in: 1) building those mentoring teams locally or regionally, using the Dairy Teams as a model; and 2) building on the grazing networks that are being developed by LSP in the Chippewa and the Root river watersheds.