

Midwest Perennial Forage Working Group Quarterly Conference Call

July 16, 2018

Present:

Jim Paulson
Kent Solberg
Laura Paine
Vance Haugen
Pete Huff
Meghan Filbert
Gene Schriefer
George Boody

Round-robin updates

Jim Paulson

Has been working with Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship and consulting for Byron Seeds. Saw a lot of nice corn crops through IL and IN.

Kent Solberg

Too many pasture walks to count. Keeps pushing out the message about the intersection of grazing, cover crops, and soil health. Also seeing nice-looking corn.

Laura Paine

Southwest Wisconsin is a little dry, but lots of mosquitoes and deerflies. Helping with lots of Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship and Risk Management Agency grant-sponsored field days. DGA is bringing its instruction classes in-house and is seeking a full-time director of the school. A position description is available. Randy Jackson at UW-Madison is working on a new project focused on perennialization; has applied for a \$10 million AFRI grant.

Vance Haugen

Attending pasture walks; seeing decent attendance of 20 to 30 people. Land Stewardship Project and DFL governor candidates will tour the Haugen farm on Friday; Vance can talk to them about grazing.

Pete Huff

Working with WI-DNR on grazing public lands, site selection for the project. On July 26-27 he'll be working with DNR land managers to integrate grazing as a conservation tool. Conservation Innovation Grant work with Kent Solberg and Meghan Filbert is wrapping up. Pasture Project is looking for an on-farm cohort for grazing cover crops work. PP has sponsored a webinar series; participants include Robert

Bauer, Meghan Filbert, Kent Solberg. The Wallace Center has an online platform to support a community of practice in local food. Pete wants to adapt this for grazing; working on a roll-out to support the grazing community.

Meghan Filbert

Was on a bus tour in June that looked at regenerative grazing on mixed-grass and shortgrass prairie. Iowa beef producers are considering an Iowa Grassfed Beef co-op similar to Wisconsin's; Rod Ofte will attend a meeting on August 9 to discuss. The Nature Conservancy in Iowa has a grant for a pilot project to test grazing with virtual fencing. This could have applications to cover crop and row crop grazing. Meghan has been giving talks about the PFI cover crop calculator. PFI is well into its field day season. The Wedemeier field day on 7/14 had about 81 people in attendance.

Gene Schriefer

Corn in his area looks fantastic, but it's dry. Pastures starting to slow down. Gene worked with Peg Sheaffer on a grazing field day in Brodhead, WI that pulled in farmers from IL and WI. Has a silvopasture workshop coming up with Diane Mayerfeld, and a silvopasture event in Lancaster in October. Looking at use of small grains as a forage for spring grazing. Will have two Gulf Coast fishermen visit to talk about nutrient loading in the Upper Mississippi River Basin and how that affects them in the Gulf of Mexico. It's the 10th anniversary of the Wisconsin Beef Co-op. There will be a FAMACHA workshop in Price County. Robert Bauer is assisting with workshops. Gene is working with Dane County to get confinement dairies to turn heifers out on grass. He's involved with Randy Jackson's AFRI grant.

Doug Gucker

Illinois Forage Expo was June 26. It included a pasture walk and was well attended. The RMA grant field day at Dave and Sue Suprenant's will be Saturday, 7/21. The NE Illinois grazing group will co-sponsor this field day. Southern Illinois has a grazing agronomist now who is working on double cropping with small grains and sorghum.

Steering Committee Report

The MPFWG has two members on the Green Lands Blue Waters Steering Committee: Terry VanDerPol and Meghan Filbert. Meghan gave a report of the last meeting. People on the Steering Committee are coming from a variety of different backgrounds but all have some connection to perennial cover and water quality. The breadth of expertise is impressive. Examples: Ryan with the Delta Institute in Chicago; Alissa with National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition is involved in policy work in D.C.; Fred Iutzi has moved to The Land Institute and is working on Kernza. Erin Meier, the new GLBW director, spoke about coordination of the Kernza work. Development of food-grade product is slower than expected. There will not be a GLBW annual conference this year.

Proposed MPFWG Budget and Workplan

After the MPFWG in-person meeting in Decorah in April, Erin Meier requested an “ideal” budget for the Working Group. Jane, Jim, and Laura drafted that budget for Erin. It includes:

- Enhanced in-person meetings; funding for three meetings in two years. These could include some professional development.
- Mini-grants for enhancing the WG’s relevance to existing programs: we could provide funding for small projects.
 - We have a draft protocol written up from a couple of years ago when we talked about mini-grants at an in-person meeting.
- Erin likes it that we are getting things done and working as a team across states.

Enhanced In-Person Meetings

- Could piggy-back on another event
 - Piggy-back concept is good, but it can be hard to shoe-horn a group meeting into an already packed conference agenda.
 - Would have to make sure we have a block of time set aside.
 - Prefer ½-day prior to a larger conference, rather than after a conference.
 - Society for Range Management is having its annual conference in Minneapolis in February 2019. This is a rare opportunity to connect with that group; usually they meet in a Western state.
- Could have an enhanced meeting focused on programming for local, city, county officials re: benefit of grazing to protection of local infrastructure.
 - County engineers are a potential audience.
 - Develop a program/curriculum?
 - PPT presentation that could be given to state-level associations of counties, cities, townships
 - Would have to contact associations and ask to get put on their meeting agendas
 - Create a display to show at these local government events
 - Could we invite other WGs to attend, make this comprehensive across GLBW?
 - Agroforestry: Diomy Zamora, Diane Mayerfeld, Michael Gold, Jeri Neal
 - Biomass: Steve John, Fred Iutzi, Emily Heaton
 - Talk to Erin; have her identify people to participate
 - This fall is an opportune time because we’re not having a GLBW conference.
- Could we tell the grazing story to bankers?
 - Annual conference of lenders
 - Besides local government officials, there are insurance companies that insure local governments. Persuade them to cut a special premium deal for local governments that choose to add perennial acreage.
- How do we come up with an education program that all can access?
 - Webinars
 - Speakers’ bureau
 - Needs to be a “road show” that anyone with MPFWG can pick up and use.
 - Eyes glaze over with charts and data.

- Need visual demonstration. Rainfall simulator – the bigger the better.
 - A rainfall simulator demo was done at the Wedemeier field day on 7/14. It was videotaped by PFI. That could be added to a PPT.
 - Pull together a lot of other visual material about infrastructure damage; overland flooding from large rain events.
 - Big rainfall events are teachable moments.
- This is worth pursuing. Pitch it to Erin Meier; could we get > \$10,000 to put it together?
 - Give Erin a heads-up and put together a detailed proposal
 - Jim Paulson, Gene Schriefer, Vance Haugen are willing to work on a proposal.
 - Keep in mind a quote from Winston Churchill: “If your idea is any good, you’ll have to shove it down people’s throats.”
 - Push people to recognize re: dramatic weather events and damage therefrom: We have tools in the toolbox that we are currently choosing not to use.
 - Seek grant funds in addition to GLBW funds

RMA Grant: Dairy Grazing

Kent Solberg presented information from the project at the 7/11/18 Minnesota Dairy Initiative meeting. Attendees were about 85% receptive, 15% not.

Can we find some other opportunities to present the information?

- Fold this into our MPFWG travel budget
- GrassWorks Conference
- MN Organic Conference
- Apply for no-cost extension to RMA grant
- Pursue next RMA grant cycle
 - Transition what we’ve already started
 - Broaden to other classes of livestock?
 - Beef cow/calf
 - Grass-fed beef
 - Risks: rainfall events, heat events, risk of heat stress
 - There are more cow/calf operators than there are dairy
 - Records to compare to for a beef-focused project:
 - Iowa Beef Center
 - FINBIN
 - North Dakota beef specialist has lots of economic data
 - After drought of 2012, lots of discussion about resilience; how to capture and store water. Silvopasture comes into play.
 - Focus on economics – broaden to other livestock classes – managing climate-related risks.
 - Jane - get a drafty-draft together for discussion.

Presentation by George Boody

George presented his concept for a proposal for the Endowed Chair in Agricultural Systems position, to develop some models of bringing livestock back into heavily row-cropped areas by working directly with farmers to do that. He was encouraged by the group to move forward, and to keep the MPFWG in the loop.

Mini-grants

We discussed some protocols for offering mini-grants at our in-person meeting in Decorah in 2016. These should be re-circulated, re-worked a bit and sent to Erin Meier as a proposal to get GLBW funding to offer mini-grants.

Next meeting – September? Jane will send a Doodle poll.