

## WERA1008: Rangelands West Partnership

**Date of Annual Report: 05/26/2010**

### **Report Information:**

Annual Meeting Dates: 03/14/2010 to 03/16/2010

Period the Report Covers: 10/2008 to 09/2009

### **Participants:**

Present: Norman Harris-AK; Barbara Hutchinson-AZ; Sheila Merrigan-AZ; Jeanne Pfander-AZ; Corrie Knapp-CO; Mark Thorne-HI; Lovina Roselle-ID; Walter Fick-KS; Jenny Oleen-KS; Rachel Frost-MT; Dana W. R. Boden-NE; Cindy Watkins-NM; Amy Shannon-NV; Sherman Swanson-NV; David Kruger-WY; Rachel Meador-WY; John Tanaka- WY; Colin Kaltenbach, Administrative Advisor (AZ)

Online/Virtual Participants: John Kawula –AK; Allison Level-CO; Karen Launchbaugh-ID; Kathie Richardson-ND; Scott Cotton-NE; Rex Pieper-NM, Brad Shultz-NV; Mike Borman-OR; Roger Gates-SD; Susanne Clement-UT; Patsy Palacios-UT; Mindy Pratt-UT; Jim Dobrowolski-USDA (DC)

### **Brief Summary of Minutes of Annual Meeting:**

#### Business Meeting

Discussion of WERA status. Official WERA status expires September 2011. WRP needs to develop new proposal to continue WERA status for first review by September 15 and finalized by December 15. Drafting of new objectives (change in objectives is key for approval). WERA Renewal Writing Committee – Karen Launchbaugh, Rachel Frost, Mark Thorne, Allison Level, Barbara Hutchinson.

WERA 2010 Business Meeting Minutes and Progress Report to be completed within 60 days (May 16, 2010) and submitted to Colin (Task assigned to Mark Thorne and Jeanne Pfander).

Discussion on WRP committees and communications. Virtual meetings increasing. Steering Committee will meet via Go To Meeting arranged by Mark Thorne. Anyone is welcome to participate in the monthly steering committee meetings. Technical Committee will meet at a regularity TBD; Committee will use Go To Meeting or some other method as available - Members: Allison, Amy, Sherm, Norm, Mark, Jeanne, Sheila, Barb.

Discussion on partner commitments – How can we help the state sites meet their commitments. John Tanaka asked whether we were committed to keeping the state sites look the same or is that desirable. Sheila – asked how many states would like a template to help design their site; or the help with a transition to Drupal. Amy – noted that in Nevada they need to see what the options are. Barb – go around the room to determine site needs. Most would like to keep their current sites, however, several want more information about Drupal and how it will help or affect them. Alaska and New Mexico expressed interest in working directly with Arizona to create Drupal sites for their states.

Report on response to WRP letter requesting financial support from Library and Extension Directors/Deans. Positive reply for \$1000 in support from: Oregon State Univ. Library; Oregon State Univ. Dept. of Rangeland Ecology and Management; Kansas State Univ. Library; Colorado State Univ. Library; Washington State Univ. Extension; Montana State Univ. College of Agriculture. Discussion about using Dean's support for Annual Business Meetings. Colin cautioned about using too much of the funds for meetings. Expectation by Deans is that they are supporting work not meeting attendance; Dave and Rachel noted that it is good to have the funds available to make deposits when planning meeting activities.

Governance/Executive Team: Norm Harris rotated to Past-Chair; Amy Shannon rotated to Chair; Mark Thorne rotated to Vice-Chair. Jeanne Pfander was welcomed as newly elected Secretary. Karen Launchbaugh has agreed to serve as SRM financial liaison re: tracking the meeting funds in the SRM account (reporting to Secretary/Treasurer and Partnership).

Next Meeting: May 2011 Bozeman, Montana (to be confirmed later); David and Rachel to provide assistance and checklist for local arrangements. Steering Committee in charge of setting agenda.

### General Meeting Notes

Presentations:

Update by Jeanne Pfander on Rangelands West Business Plan and Needs Assessment results.

Sheila Merrigan distributed a handout and facilitated discussion on the relationship between Rangelands West, eXtension Rangelands and RW state partner websites.

Technical Infrastructure: Barbara Hutchinson gave a presentation "Rangelands West: Bigger and Better". Why we need to change; What are the opportunities. Presented mock-up of proposed new, expanded "3.0" RW web portal: the Global Rangelands Online Knowledge System (GROKS). Discussion on pros & cons of whether to develop Harvest/search first or Basic RW Drupal site first? Decision is to take the time to build the system right – Harvest/search first; use the next year to complete the move to Drupal. Arizona will continue toward Drupal build, leaving RW mostly as is meanwhile due to limitations in logistics and funding for IT work; the RW 3.0 build is expected to take about a year. Technical Committee volunteers: Allison Level, Amy Shannon, and Norm Harris (plus the AZ Technical Team: Sheila, Jeanne, and Barb). Technical Committee to provide report at monthly Steering Committee meetings.

State updates: Alaska; Hawaii; Nevada; Montana; New Mexico; Kansas; Nebraska, South Dakota; Oklahoma, Arizona; Colorado; Washington; Oregon; Idaho; Utah; North Dakota; Texas; Wyoming; California (by Barb Hutchinson). State reports revealed different experiences in maintaining the sites; several states have problems while others have very functional sites.

Related project updates: Grazing Effects Info System Project – Karen Launchbaugh and Rachel Frost; Rangeland – USDA Higher Education Challenge Grant – Karen Launchbaugh; International Science Education Grant Application – Barb Hutchinson.

Presentation on Building Extension's Public Values by Laura Kalambokidis of University of Minnesota – CES. Discussion about writing Public value messages for Rangelands West. Agreed that WRP should

develop a set of Public Value Statements; this could be done during a Virtual Meeting mid-year (October-November).

Presentation by Sheila Merrigan on Drupal: What is Drupal; Who can add to site; Set-up options.

eXtension Rangelands update and overview given by John Tanaka. Content Development Updates: OK on pages/content (need 200 plus content pages); Short on Frequently Asked Questions, need at least 150. Review of Content development team membership. Break-out sessions followed for work on content development.

Closing comments by Amy Shannon, incoming WRP Chair.

### **Accomplishments:**

High points of the past year: Created new technical support team at AZ to address issues with current portal architecture and to begin to design of the next version. Edited metadata and fixed broken links to improve relevancy of search results. Compiled summary reports on needs assessment and focus group sessions. State sites continued to update and add new content. Developed eXtension Rangelands Community of Practice (CoP) structure and content. Initiated collaborative relationships with partners in the United Nations (the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations specifically), relevant institutes in the CGIAR, and with rangeland associations around the world to move towards development of a global rangelands repository.

Challenges of the past year: Keeping membership engaged and active; Transitions in WRP members (people leaving project); State budget crises.

In process activities: Grazing Effects Info System Project – Karen Launchbaugh and Rachel Frost; Rangeland – USDA Higher Education Challenge Grant – Karen Launchbaugh; AZ team work on technical infrastructure maintenance and 3.0 development.

Follow up: WERA Writing Committee will begin work on proposal for renewal of WERA status. Executive team will schedule virtual regular Steering Committee meetings and a mid-year WRP virtual meeting. AZ team and Technical Committee will move forward on planning for RW 3.0/GROKS. eXtension Rangelands CoP participants will continue to develop content for eXtension site.

**Impact Statement:** The Western Rangelands Partnership has been a model of inter-disciplinary and multi-institution collaboration. The Partnership continues to grow and develop deeper levels of cooperation and expanded outreach products. The Rangelands West portal began as a simple website but continues to evolve as new advances in information technologies have become available and make it possible to create enhanced user tools. Usage statistics vary considerably in past years due to changes in the portal's technical infrastructure and incomplete data when the system was moved to a new content management system and statistical package. However, in general, site statistics demonstrate consistent usage over time with the average number of visits per year averaging about 100,000.