

Comment Round-Robin:

Kent Solberg, 9/16/14

Concerning the proposal not looking like a Professional Development Grant:

What we are trying to accomplish is helping the landowner and the custom grazier develop a positive working relationship. A relationship like this is new to many people and there may be some degree of apprehension by one or both parties. Troy suggested, and I concur, that working with farm relationships like these requires quite a bit of "hands-on" effort. Rarely does one person have a skill set to assist in all aspects of ventures like this. We feel that a team approach to assist landowners and potential custom graziers one farm at a time has the greatest potential for success. We need some highly successful examples to move grazing forward on recreational properties and farms without livestock and we feel this will be our greatest chance to develop those.

Teams would be custom designed based on need. Teams may be made up of two or more people. The team approach is based on a model similar to what MDI has been using for years. Identifying who is willing and available to serve on these teams, identifying and building skill sets, and establishing protocol on how the teams will function is the logical first step. Thus the need for the team development workshop. Attracting experienced producers willing and able to participate on teams in this project will be vital to it's success.

Does this line of reasoning work for this RFP?

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Caroline Van Schaik, 9/19/14

Kent and all, I wasn't able to be on the call with you this past Monday but I did read Kent's words below and Laura's draft (sent Wednesday). A couple thoughts to add to the conversation...

1. A body of work that focuses very much on the farmer level certainly could not be construed as a PDP. Surely not! Kent's description of a team effort illustrates a viable approach to farmer education that makes appropriate use of professional resources. Everyone learns something along the way but the focus is really on the farmer, not the educator.
2. Another approach is to capitalize on local peer learning with grazing groups. LSP has initiated such a network in western MN and I'll be starting in my neck of southeast MN. We (LSP) have a long history of helping farmers help each other and members have been asking for this facilitated approach to be rejuvenated. The interest is high. What do you think – would these groups be a tool – another tool - in meeting the proposal's goals of all-things-custom-grazing? One especially good thing about them is that they by definition are locally based, and not confined to any region. I read some discomfort with a Root/Chippewa focus just as Wadena/north-central feels awfully far from me. Mechanisms that work state-wide and according to regional psyches sound right.
3. But – do we need to be doing the same thing state-wide? Could we champion both/many approaches with a coming-together in St. Cloud for sharing and shared learning?
4. After a summer of interviews, I see a big time need for making the case for grazing (financially, ecologically); outreach to farmers, landowners, beg farmers; the logistics of custom grazing; lease

language; and a couple related pieces. Workshops, personal visits, and a grazing group would be logical tools, plus the team approach for them who feel ready and willing for it.

5. We won't have a ton of funds to do any of this so it has to segue with our respective existing works, right? Did anyone muddle through a budget for that St. Cloud gathering? Seems like a big chunk would have to cover it with the rest being divvied out for contributions to X teams, X workshops, X grazing networks ALL focused on the goals of the full proposal...

6. Which needs clarification starting with us – are we spotlighting farmers or do the land owners merit/get quality time here as well? My vote is the latter, that this represent a 2-pronged approach to reaching livestock producers & land owners, both of which need prodding to even think about grazing.