Midwest Perennial Forage Working Group
Minnesota discussion of SARE R & E – Grazing Pre-Proposal
September 15, 2014

Present on the call:
Dean Thomas
Troy Salzer
Terry VanDerPol
Kent Solberg
Jane Jewett
Richard Warner

Terry reviewed the notes from the 9/2/14 call of the whole Working Group.

**Discussion of mentoring component.**

How important is this for Minnesota, and can we do it as part of this grant?

Mentoring is a continuum:

Short-term, limited, defined: e.g. phone call on specific topics with experienced farmer

Long-term, established relationship, not well-defined topics to cover

Points made re: mentoring:

* Farm Business Management program maybe a possibility
* Are we looking at mentors just on grazing, or on contract grazing?
	+ May need several experts who can help with different aspects of this
	+ Lots of topics to be covered; it would be hard for one person to deal with them all as a mentor
	+ Need a team of people with expertise in the various topics, plus local people who can assist hands-on
	+ Similar to Dairy Initiative Teams; we have that model already operating in the state.
* Workshops could be used to get team members acquainted with each other and with farmers
	+ Have breakout sessions on specific topics; give team members a chance to build their skill sets and learn from each other

**Discussion of potential to work with non-farming landowners.**

* Important audience
* Should focus on geographic areas where partner organizations are already doing work.
	+ LSP is already working with landowners in the Chippewa River and Root River watersheds
	+ Work in the Chippewa could possibly be used as a match.
	+ Other areas of the state also have issues and opportunities; need to make it valuable to other regions.

**Grant logistics**

* $200,000 total is being requested; $50,000 in MN.
* R & E grants can go up to 3 years
* If 2 years, then we have $25,000 per year to work with in MN
* Evaluation and monitoring costs; is that part of the $100,000 requested for SW Badger RC&D?
* Pilot project would be a good fit with review criteria

**Discussion of how to focus**

Options:

* Bring in farmer or landowner involvement, using existing groundwork in specific regions
* Focus on graziers and people interested in grazing as an enterprise
	+ Primarily focus on how to work with landowners, develop a contract, etc.
* Relationship focus – important to be very hands-on with people trying new things to make sure that it works, that people exit the process satisfied.

There was general agreement that the relationship and hands-on aspects are critically important, so discussion turned to how to accomplish that within this grant.

**Training Teams to be Hands-On and Make Things Work**

* First year: Training teams. Second year: Go out and mentor.
* Recruitment of farmers to be involved in mentoring teams
	+ Important to meet the R & E requirements – it’s not a Professional Development Grant, so farmer focus is needed
	+ Many farmers are doing some components of contract grazing without realizing it; would likely be willing to serve as mentors if it were explained that their experience is valuable.
* Discussion of whether to include NGOs, public land managers, other related groups?
	+ Concluded that we can have them at the table, but the focus will be on privately-owned farmland.
	+ Terry’s work with LSP has connections to the Women, Food, and Agriculture Network. Outreach could be done through this group but don’t make it a distinct component of the grant.

**First Year activities**

Discussion of whether to hold a single event or multiple workshops. This discussion converged on:

* + Single workshop at a central location (St. Cloud)
	+ Two-day
	+ Have a really good program so people are willing to commit to attend
	+ Have good resource people who can help team members build skills and be more efficient in their work in this area
	+ Hold off on fixing dates at this point. Pre-holidays or spring are both possibilities.
	+ Input will be needed from folks in this group re: program, presenters, and who to invite.

**Second Year activities**

* Can we fund the teams to travel around the state, get things going on the ground?
* Lots of outreach capacity is available in different regions of the state; several on the call have listservs, newsletters, or other outreach tools.
* Could hold some low-cost local meet-and-greet events to build contacts between teams and farmers.

**Next Steps:**

* Get meeting notes out to Minnesota members of the Working Group
* Do some round-robin discussion via email
* Set a date for another conference call before the Sept. 30 call with the whole Working Group