

CHAPTER 4—Public Hearing Testimony

The Service held seven public hearings after release of the DEIS to gather input and comments from the public on the analysis and management alternatives. Responses to substantive comments from the public hearings are included in the responses to individual comments in chapter 3.

The following pages contain copies of the transcripts from each of the hearings.

- Billings, Montana; September 28, 2010 (see pages 336–353)
- Bozeman, Montana; September 29, 2010 (354–369)
- Great Falls, Montana; September 30, 2010 (370–380)
- Lewistown, Montana; October 12, 2010 (381–394)
- Jordan, Montana; October 13, 2010 (395–412)
- Glasgow, Montana; October 14, 2010 (413–426)
- Malta, Montana; October 14, 2010 (427–437)

Page 1

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS
 U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Charles M. Russell and UL Bend
 National Wildlife Refuges

The TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS at Billings
 Hotel Convention Center, Billings, Montana, on
 the 28th day of September, 2010, beginning at
 7:00 p.m.

PANEL:
 BARRON CRAWFORD Project Leader
 BILL BERG Deputy Project Leader
 LAURIE SHANNON Planner
 MIMI MATHER Speaker Facilitator

Page 2

1	SPEAKERS	PAGE
2	CAL CUMIN	14
3	GRANT BARNARD	15
4	MARGARET WEBSTER	17
5	LESLEY ROBINSON	18, 59
6	SUSAN GILBERTZ	18
7	JEFF HUNNES	19
8	BERNARD ROSE	19
9	ARLYS RIEGER	22
10	JANELLE HOLDEN	23
11	MARK GOOD	25
12	BERNIE QUETCHENBACH	26
13	RANDALL GLOEGE	27
14	DAVE PIPPIN	29, 52
15	KATHY TETER	32
16	SUSAN NEWELL	34
17	MIKE BRYANT	60
18		
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		

Page 3

1 PROCEEDINGS
 2 7:00 p.m.

3 MS. MATHER: So, thanks, everybody, for
 4 coming tonight.

5 The purpose of the meeting is to
 6 collect feedback from you all on the public
 7 Draft.

8 We're going to start the meeting with a
 9 brief presentation that Barron is going to give,
 10 an overview of the CCP and a preview of the
 11 alternatives.

12 And then we're going to turn the floor
 13 over to you. And anybody who has signed up, and
 14 anybody who hasn't signed up, if you would like
 15 to, can have the floor; have the mic. We're
 16 going to limit it to three minutes.

17 We have a court reporter that will be
 18 recording your comments.

19 If you are uncomfortable or would
 20 rather not provide comments by standing up here
 21 at the mic, we have handed out these sheets.

22 You can enter your comment on the back.
 23 There's also information on here where you can
 24 email your comment, or fax it. So, many
 25 different ways to comment. We just encourage

Page 4

1 that you comment in some way, and look forward
 2 to hearing what you say.

3 So, with that, I'm going to turn it to
 4 Barron and let him give a quick presentation.

5 MR. CRAWFORD: Welcome, everybody. My
 6 name is Barron Crawford. I'm the Refuge Manager
 7 for the Charlie Russell Refuge and UL Bend, and
 8 I appreciate everybody coming out tonight.

9 For about, oh, 15, 20 minutes here,
 10 I'll just give you a brief overview of what we
 11 have been doing for the past three years and a
 12 little bit about the alternatives that we've
 13 been formulating here during that process, and
 14 talk a little bit about the comment period.

15 So, we started back in January of
 16 2007. We've held 14 public meetings so far.
 17 The public scoping period, we received about
 18 24,000 comments. We've had numerous meetings
 19 with our cooperators, and through all those
 20 meetings, we're up to this point now where we
 21 have a Draft Plan that's ready for the public to
 22 see and provide comments on.

23 So, this is kind of the timeline. This
 24 shows the steps we have gone through, and where
 25 we are currently, you know, right here. We're

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 5</p> <p>1 releasing the Draft out. We're going to be open 2 for a 60-day comment period. 3 After that, Refuge staff will be 4 spending their time assessing those comments and 5 formulating the Final Plan. 6 So, why do we do a CCP? 7 And basically the National Wildlife 8 Refuge System Improvement Act mandates that we 9 have CCPs for all of our refuges. And in that 10 Act, it said that all refuges will have a 11 completed Plan by 2012. 12 So, that's what we are working towards 13 right now, meeting that deadline. 14 What are some of the key elements of a 15 CCP? 16 It basically provides the management 17 direction and guidance based upon the refuge 18 purposes and the mission of the National 19 Wildlife Refuge System. 20 It outlines the vision statement, 21 goals, objectives and strategies for that 22 management. 23 It is accompanied by some type of a 24 NEPA document, either an Environmental 25 Assessment or an Environmental Impact</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 6</p> <p>1 Statement. For the CMR, and we did an 2 Environmental Impact Statement. 3 And it's to provide that long-term 4 guidance, that long-term management. And our 5 plans cover 15 years. 6 Now, that doesn't mean that they can't 7 be gone back and revisited during that time 8 period. What that means is that at the end of 9 that 15 years, you need to have another plan 10 started. 11 So, this is just another kind of a 12 diagram of the CCP process. And again, you 13 know, we are sitting down here, "Draft Plan", 14 "Draft NEPA document", "Comment Period", and 15 then it goes up here for the preparing of the 16 Final. 17 So, a little bit about the 18 alternatives. 19 We have four alternatives. The first 20 one is Alternative A, and that's the "No Action" 21 alternative. It's basically maintain the 22 existing wildlife and habitat management goals 23 and objectives that we're currently operating 24 under from the 1986 EIS. 25 Continue to provide wildlife-dependent</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 7</p> <p>1 public and economic uses at current levels. 2 We will have a few changes in managing 3 existing wildlife populations and habitat. Some 4 of those, you know, we'll still manage under the 5 '65 Habitat EIS that we have now. 6 We'll gradually implement prescriptive 7 grazing, like we've been doing over the past 10 8 years or so. 9 Big game will still be managed at the 10 levels that were stated in the '86 EIS. 11 We'll still keep, you know, the 670 12 miles of roads that are out there. 13 And we will continue to protect the 14 155,000 acres of proposed wilderness. 15 Alternative B. We call this one the 16 "Wildlife and Habitat alternative". And it's 17 basically manage the landscape in cooperation 18 with our partners to emphasize the abundance and 19 diversity of wildlife populations using both 20 balanced, natural ecological processes, such as 21 fire and wildlife ungulate herbivory and some 22 synthetic methods, such as farming, tree 23 planting, flooding. 24 We'll still encourage 25 wildlife-dependent public uses. That's hunting</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 8</p> <p>1 and fishing and wildlife viewing and wildlife 2 observation, wildlife photography and 3 environmental education and interpretation. 4 And we will limit some of those 5 economic uses when they compete for habitat 6 resources. 7 This is just a map. And we've got 8 these maps scattered around the room here, so 9 when we're done, if you wanted a closer look, 10 you can come up and look at them. They're also 11 in the document, obviously. 12 But this shows the wilderness areas. 13 Where we're proposing to expand some wilderness 14 areas; roads that we're proposing to close. 15 This is the west side of the refuge. 16 This is the east side of the refuge. This is 17 all under Alternative B. 18 Some of the differences in 19 Alternative B is we will actively manage and 20 manipulate habitats to create wildlife food and 21 cover. 22 Implement prescriptive grazing on 50 to 23 65% of the refuge within the next four to seven 24 years. 25 Aggressively restore the river bottoms</p>

Page 9

1 to native vegetation.
 2 Work with Montana Fish, Wildlife &
 3 Parks to provide quality hunting opportunities
 4 and sustain populations of big game and habitat
 5 for nongame.
 6 Close approximately 106 miles of road,
 7 and expand acreage of proposed wilderness by
 8 25,000 acres in six units.
 9 Alternative C is what we call the
 10 "Public Use and Economic Use alternative". And
 11 this is basically manage the landscape in
 12 cooperation with our partners and emphasize and
 13 promote maximum compatible wildlife-dependent
 14 public uses and economic uses while protecting
 15 wildlife populations and habitats. Minimize
 16 damaging impacts to wildlife habitats while
 17 using a variety of management tools to enhance
 18 and diversify public and economic opportunities.
 19 Under this alternative, we're not
 20 proposing to close any roads, and we're not
 21 proposing to expand any wilderness areas --
 22 oops, excuse me. We will be closing one.
 23 That's the East Hell Creek proposed wilderness
 24 area.
 25 There is just a pre-synopsis of that

Page 11

1 Provide for quality wildlife-dependent public
 2 uses and experiences, and limit economic use
 3 when they are injurious to ecological processes
 4 or habitats.
 5 In this one, we are proposing to close
 6 a few roads. We're proposing to expand a few
 7 wilderness areas, and we're proposing to
 8 eliminate a couple of others.
 9 A brief synopsis of this alternative.
 10 Economic uses would be limited when they're
 11 injurious to the processes.
 12 Apply management practices that mimic
 13 and restore natural processes.
 14 Use fire and wild ungulate herbivory
 15 and/or prescriptive livestock grazing on 50 to
 16 75% of the refuge to mimic historic fire/grazing
 17 interaction.
 18 Work with Montana Fish, Wildlife &
 19 Parks to maintain health and diversity of all
 20 species.
 21 Implement permanent or seasonal road
 22 closures on 23 miles of roads.
 23 And, recommend expanding six proposed
 24 wilderness areas, for an increase of 18,500
 25 acres, and eliminate three units, for a decrease

Page 10

1 alternative. Manage habitats to provide more
 2 opportunities for recreation.
 3 Work with the Montana Fish, Wildlife &
 4 Parks to maintain balance numbers of big game
 5 and livestock.
 6 Work with Montana Fish, Wildlife &
 7 Parks to expand and maximize hunting
 8 opportunities.
 9 Improve access to boat ramps; seasonal
 10 closures in other areas.
 11 And, recommend eliminating four
 12 proposed wilderness areas, for a total of 35,000
 13 acres.
 14 And then Alternative D. This is our
 15 Proposed Action alternative, and this is the one
 16 we've called the "Natural Processes", or the
 17 "Ecological Processes alternative".
 18 And again, working with our partners.
 19 Intensively use natural ecological processes,
 20 such as fire and grazing, and active management
 21 to restore and maintain the biological diversity
 22 and biological integrity and environmental
 23 health of the refuges.
 24 Once natural processes are restored, a
 25 more passive management approach is adapted.

Page 12

1 of 26,000 acres.
 2 So, as Mimi was saying, we want to hear
 3 your comments.
 4 We have several ways in which you can
 5 comment. You can get up today, give your
 6 proposed testimony, which will be recorded.
 7 The sheets that were handed out, you
 8 can write a comment on that and drop them in the
 9 envelope that Laurie has over there.
 10 You can send us written comments that
 11 are in the Planning Updates, and you could mail
 12 those to us.
 13 Or, you can send us an email to our web
 14 address.
 15 All of those -- it doesn't matter which
 16 way you use, they're all counted the same. It's
 17 not a voting contest. What we are looking for
 18 is succinct comments that are relevant to this
 19 planning process.
 20 Right now, our comment period is
 21 scheduled to end on November 16th. We have
 22 received a couple of requests to extend that
 23 comment period, and we haven't acted on those
 24 yet. We're going to wait and see how the
 25 commenting goes before we make that decision.

Page 13

1 So, right now, as it stands,
 2 November 16th is the comment period.
 3 So, we're going to open the floor up.
 4 We ask that you be respectful of your time.
 5 It's not going to be a problem here tonight. We
 6 got a small enough crowd that we should have
 7 ample time for everybody to get their comments
 8 in. And, look forward to hearing from you.
 9 Thanks.
 10 MS. MATHER: Okay.
 11 So, here's how Part 2 of the meeting
 12 will run.
 13 I've got the list of everybody that's
 14 signed up that wants to speak. If you haven't
 15 signed up, or you're inspired by somebody else's
 16 comment, go ahead and see Matt and sign up.
 17 We're going to hold people to three
 18 minutes just so we're not here all night, so,
 19 please summarize your thoughts and get it down
 20 to three minutes.
 21 I will be a rather strict timekeeper up
 22 here. I've got a stopwatch going, and I will
 23 give you a flag when you have one minute left;
 24 when you have 20 seconds left, and when you are
 25 out of time, and then I pull you off the mic.

Page 15

1 to the always contentious issues of land use,
 2 environment and property rights that is extant
 3 in Montana, especially eastern Montana.
 4 I'm very familiar with this whole
 5 area. I grew up -- I'm a fourth-generation
 6 Montanan. I absolutely love the "empty corner",
 7 as some people call eastern Montana.
 8 As far as your plan, I like
 9 Alternative D, your last one.
 10 I don't like to see you close
 11 wilderness areas, proposed wilderness areas, or
 12 expand roads. That's kind of a bottom line.
 13 But, in the interest of trying to work
 14 together with other interests that I know feel
 15 just as strongly, I would support Plan D.
 16 Thank you.
 17 MS. MATHER: Grant, and then Margaret.
 18 GRANT BARNARD: My name is Grant
 19 Barnard. I live in Red Lodge. Raised in
 20 central Montana.
 21 I have a question or two that someone
 22 might be able to comment on.
 23 I would like to know about your road
 24 density. What is the road density currently in
 25 the refuge, and what it would be when you

Page 14

1 So, three minutes.
 2 I know some of you mentioned that you
 3 don't have a comment, per se, but you have a
 4 question, so please come up; say your question.
 5 We're going to be recording those, and
 6 then after all the comments are spoken, Bill,
 7 Laurie and Barron will take the time to respond
 8 to those questions.
 9 So, even if you have a 30-second
 10 question, go ahead and come up and say it.
 11 We would like you to withhold any
 12 applause or cheering. Let's just try to move
 13 through this smoothly with one after the other.
 14 So, what I'm going to do is call
 15 somebody up. I'm also going to let you know who
 16 is on deck so that person can be ready to jump
 17 up here.
 18 So with that, Cal.
 19 And then I've got Grant. So, come on
 20 up.
 21 CAL CUMIN: My name is Cal Cumin. Last
 22 name spelled C-U-M-I-N. I'm from Billings.
 23 I would like to compliment the U.S.
 24 Fish & Wildlife Service on its effort to try to
 25 address the -- or to try to bring some consensus

Page 16

1 subtracted some of the roads that you propose in
 2 Alternative B.
 3 I'd also like to have a clear
 4 understanding of who manages river traffic, and
 5 who is the authority and how that is to be
 6 managed through wilderness, proposed wilderness
 7 areas in the Alternative B, and also in D.
 8 And I would like to know how you plan
 9 to manage RV use. I think I have an idea, and
 10 if it is to keep RVs completely on designated
 11 roads, that sounds good to me.
 12 I'd also support any road closures that
 13 are off these -- that you have in
 14 Alternative B.
 15 And I'd like to know a little bit more
 16 about why the proposed wilderness areas would be
 17 dropped from Alternative B.
 18 And those, it seems to be because
 19 there's a road through the middle of each of
 20 those, but in my opinion, that would not be a
 21 significant reason to eliminate that from
 22 possible wilderness designation. After all,
 23 there is more than 5,000 acres of proposed
 24 wilderness on each side of those roads in both
 25 of those areas that are proposed to be dropped.

Page 17

1 Thank you for the time.
 2 MS. MATHER: Thank you.
 3 Okay, Margaret, and then Lesley on
 4 deck.
 5 MARGARET WEBSTER: My name is Margaret
 6 Webster, like the dictionary, W-E-B-S-T-E-R.
 7 I have a comment and sort of a
 8 question.
 9 I support Alternative D. I don't
 10 believe that there should be a reduction of
 11 wilderness area. I think it should at least
 12 stay at the present number of acres, or increase
 13 it.
 14 Also, as part of the mission of the
 15 refuge is to provide habitat for a variety of
 16 wildlife. It seems like most of the discussion
 17 surrounds big game species, but I would like to
 18 know about the plans for the nongame species,
 19 such as the prairie dogs, which are threatened
 20 by sylvatic plague.
 21 Over 100 vertebrate species are
 22 associated with the black-tail prairie dog
 23 habitat, including four species of regional
 24 concern, such as the burrowing owl, swift fox,
 25 ferruginous hawk and mountain plover.

Page 19

1 JEFF HUNNES: Good evening. My name's
 2 Jeff Hunnes. Last name is spelled H-U-N-N-E-S.
 3 I live here in Billings, but I grew up
 4 in Miles City and spent a lot of time at Hell
 5 Creek, and I'm really excited that you guys are
 6 proposing some wilderness in that area because I
 7 know what a special remote and wild area it is,
 8 and I want to commend you for that.
 9 In general, I would support
 10 Alternative B, as in boy. I would be in favor
 11 of increased wilderness, or proposed wilderness
 12 designation in the refuge.
 13 I had a comment -- or a question, if
 14 you are able to kind of explain the difference
 15 in the management priorities between the Fish &
 16 Wildlife Service and, for example, the Bureau of
 17 Land Management or the Forest Service, and
 18 whether any of these alternatives is more in
 19 keeping with the priorities that this particular
 20 agency has?
 21 Thank you.
 22 MS. MATHER: Bernard. And Arlys on
 23 deck.
 24 BERNARD ROSE: Hi. I'm Bernard Rose,
 25 the way it sounds.

Page 18

1 MS. MATHER: Thank you.
 2 Lesley, and then Susan on deck.
 3 LESLEY ROBINSON: Lesley Robinson.
 4 It's R-O-B -- Lesley is L-E-S-L-E-Y. Robinson
 5 is R-O-B-I-N-S-O-N. I'm a Phillips County
 6 Commissioner.
 7 We just had a six-county meeting this
 8 afternoon, and we will be sending an official
 9 request for an extension of 60 days for the
 10 comment period.
 11 And that's all my comments for this
 12 evening.
 13 MS. MATHER: Susan, and then Jeff.
 14 SUSAN GILBERTZ: Hi. I'm Susan
 15 Gilbertz, G-I-L-B-E-R-T-Z.
 16 And conceptually, I like Plan D, as in
 17 dog, with one exception, and that would be the
 18 reduction of acreage of wilderness area.
 19 I am sympathetic to the notion of
 20 changing some areas to kind of capture areas
 21 that are perhaps better suited for that
 22 management style, but overall, I would hate to
 23 see a reduction in the number of acreage.
 24 Thanks.
 25 MS. MATHER: Jeff, and then Bernard.

Page 20

1 I'm concerned that often when we talk
 2 about wilderness, people seem to think that
 3 wilderness has no value to local people; that
 4 somehow or another, if we make it into
 5 wilderness, no one will come.
 6 I know there are studies which indicate
 7 that people value wilderness; that people come
 8 to hunt in the wilderness; that people come to
 9 enjoy the wilderness; that they are a real
 10 amenities values.
 11 I think we see this in the western part
 12 of the state where areas we have significant
 13 wilderness or desirable places for people to
 14 live and to build homes and to do all of these
 15 kinds of things.
 16 And sometimes it seems to me that when
 17 you mention wilderness, it's kind of the "Big W
 18 word", one of those things that you're not
 19 supposed to say, because it takes away from the
 20 value.
 21 And, you know, if there's grazing, and
 22 if we remove grazing, although grazing is still
 23 allowed in wilderness, existing wilderness, such
 24 as existing grazing rights are protected in
 25 wilderness, which I think most people normally

Page 21

1 forget.
 2 But I wonder how much you've taken this
 3 into account? Because I think it really
 4 enhances the value of an area. And I'm not
 5 really sure -- I have been inactive in this kind
 6 of business for quite a long time, and I'm not
 7 sure when it turned to the point where all of a
 8 sudden, wilderness was a negative economic
 9 value.
 10 I have been an economist, sometimes I
 11 think for all my life. But I was trained to do
 12 that.
 13 And there's tremendous value in
 14 wilderness, and I really want to make sure that
 15 you're taking that into account as you think
 16 about wilderness, and not reduce the amount of
 17 potential wilderness, because it's tremendously
 18 attractive to an awful lot of people.
 19 And as I said, you know, it doesn't
 20 take away from some of the traditional uses.
 21 Some of them, it does. People want to
 22 drive vehicles. People want to ride mountain
 23 bikes, and I know that's often a contentious
 24 issue in the western part of the state, and
 25 you'll run into that as you work through this.

Page 23

1 do, and what you are going to allow to do and
 2 what you are not going to allow to do.
 3 And one of my concerns, and one that
 4 I'm sure you've heard many times before is that
 5 you are going to turn bison loose on the Charlie
 6 Russell Memorial, and there has been no
 7 explanation of how that is going to happen.
 8 You know, are you going to put fences
 9 up, or are we going to wake up one day and find
 10 20 buffalo in our wheat fields?
 11 I think this is a real concern of the
 12 local ranchers in Garfield County because we are
 13 not getting very good information about what is
 14 actually going on. So, I would appreciate
 15 information on that.
 16 Thank you.
 17 MS. MATHER: Janelle, and then Mark.
 18 JANELLE HOLDEN: Hi. I'm Janelle
 19 Holden, J-A-N-E-L-L-E; H-O-L-D-E-N, with the
 20 Wilderness Society out of Bozeman.
 21 And I just want to echo a few things
 22 that folks have already said tonight; namely,
 23 that Alternative D has a lot of great points in
 24 it.
 25 We really appreciate the effort to put

Page 22

1 But it's really, really important to
 2 remember that wilderness has a particular
 3 positive value, and I wonder how much you are
 4 taking that into account as you do this
 5 analysis.
 6 Thank you very much.
 7 MS. MATHER: Arlys, and then Janelle on
 8 deck.
 9 Did I have your name correct?
 10 ARLYS RIEGER: Yes.
 11 I'm Arlys Rieger. A-R-L-Y-S;
 12 R-I-E-G-E-R. I grew up in Garfield County. I
 13 live in Billings.
 14 I am concerned about a couple of
 15 things. And I haven't had a chance to review A,
 16 B, C, D, because I couldn't get ahold of it, but
 17 I will do that and hopefully comment later.
 18 But I've heard a lot of complaints --
 19 concerns from the locals in Garfield County, the
 20 ranchers, and I'm sure there's a lot of rumors
 21 going around out there that aren't true, and I'm
 22 hoping that you will be able to do something to
 23 help them understand what is actually going on.
 24 But it is very much of a concern to the
 25 ranchers and what you actually are planning to

Page 24

1 fire back into the ecosystem and to try to
 2 restore some of those ecological processes and
 3 build wildlife habitat. I think that's a really
 4 important thing, and fire should definitely
 5 remain part of the refuge management system.
 6 In terms of the wilderness, proposed
 7 wilderness, we do have some concerns about
 8 reducing proposed wilderness acreage overall in
 9 the preliminary preferred and support
 10 Alternative B, the expansion of proposed
 11 wilderness.
 12 And that's in part because prairie
 13 wilderness experience is fairly rare in this
 14 country. If you think about Montana itself,
 15 we've got 34 million designated wilderness
 16 acres, and only 32,000 are in the prairie, of
 17 which 20,000 is in the refuge already.
 18 So, limiting people's access to prairie
 19 wilderness experience, or taking that away seems
 20 to not be the direction we should be going in.
 21 We really do need to expand wilderness in the
 22 wilderness system.
 23 The other thing that I'm concerned
 24 about that I want to bring up tonight is the
 25 lack of any discussion in your presentation and

Page 25

1 in some of the bullet points that you've used in
 2 terms of planning about climate change.
 3 I've seen it come up in the
 4 partnership's part. And I haven't gotten
 5 through the whole draft yet, so maybe you can
 6 address this in the questions part, but I would
 7 like to know how you are going to use research
 8 on climate change to manage the refuge, and
 9 where that will come into play, and how you plan
 10 to integrate that within your planning process,
 11 because I think that's very important.
 12 So, that's all I have for tonight.
 13 Thanks.
 14 MS. MATHER: Mark, and then Bernie on
 15 deck.
 16 MARK GOOD: Hi. My name is Mark Good,
 17 G-O-O-D. No E, just pure good.
 18 That's a joke.
 19 I work with the Montana Wilderness
 20 Association, and I just want to comment about
 21 what Beauchamp area, that proposed wilderness
 22 area that's being reduced -- or eliminated.
 23 And my experience up there is that,
 24 yeah, it's probably not as dramatic as some of
 25 the other areas in the refuge, but it seems to

Page 27

1 because it's not easy. Q-U-E-T-C-H-E-N-B-A-C-H.
 2 And I also want to express concerns
 3 about reducing wilderness and support as much as
 4 we can have in that area.
 5 But I would also like to ask a question
 6 about grazing, and particularly about range.
 7 Not about cattle grazing necessarily as such,
 8 but a question about the range conditions, what
 9 range conditions do you aspire to for the
 10 refuge? What are you looking to do with the
 11 range, and how has the range condition changed
 12 over the past century of use?
 13 Thank you.
 14 MS. MATHER: Randall, and then David on
 15 deck.
 16 RANDALL GLOEGE: My name is Randall
 17 Gloege, G-L-O-E-G-E.
 18 I come from a long line of
 19 conservationists. And at the outset, I want to
 20 admit that I'm an ardent wilderness nut, and I
 21 think I would be less than candid if I didn't
 22 say so.
 23 I find myself surprised to be in
 24 agreement with a federal agency that the
 25 preferred alternative is the best one that you

Page 26

1 me that it still maintains the wilderness
 2 character, you know, as a big, open grassland
 3 prairie landscape.
 4 And I think part of it is how we maybe
 5 perceive wilderness. But grasslands are just as
 6 worthy for wilderness consideration as some of
 7 the peaks or Breaks, even, that we generally
 8 perceive. So, I hope you will reconsider that
 9 as you work through this process.
 10 Second is really a question, and I was
 11 wondering if before the end of this, you could
 12 talk a little bit more about what prescriptive
 13 grazing and prescriptive use of fire means, and
 14 how that improves habitat for wildlife.
 15 I think that would be helpful because I
 16 think there's a lot of confusion about what that
 17 means and how it might affect a variety of
 18 users.
 19 So, thanks. Appreciate the
 20 opportunity.
 21 MS. MATHER: Bernie.
 22 And I'm having trouble reading this
 23 last one, Randall Gloery?
 24 BERNIE QUETCHENBACH: Hi. My name is
 25 Bernie Quetchenbach, and I'll spell that out

Page 28

1 have listed.
 2 I do have some reservations about it,
 3 but mostly I want you to consider enhancing or
 4 increasing the areas reserved for wilderness.
 5 The fact is, as a couple of
 6 commentators have already mentioned, we have
 7 very little wilderness in eastern Montana, and
 8 being a Miles City boy when I was young, I have
 9 a very real feeling for prairie country.
 10 I think that we need to consider vastly
 11 expanding our notion of what might constitute
 12 legitimate areas for wilderness consideration in
 13 eastern Montana, and the Charlie Russell is an
 14 ideal place to start talking about that.
 15 The other thing I want to observe is
 16 that wilderness designation and the charge of
 17 the Charlie Russell, I feel, are identical. In
 18 other words, the best way to nurture wildlife,
 19 to allow it to promulgate, increase and in
 20 health, I think is to carry out the idea of
 21 wilderness classification for as much of the
 22 area of the Charlie Russell as you possibly can
 23 consider.
 24 And this would include, in my view,
 25 holding a blind eye to two trail roads and just

Page 29

1 simply closing the roads and let them recover on
 2 their own.
 3 So, I compliment you on choosing a good
 4 alternative. I'd just encourage you to carry it
 5 a bit farther.
 6 Thank you.
 7 MS. MATHER: David?
 8 DAVE PIPPIN: My name is Dave Pippin.
 9 D-A-V-E; P-I-P-P-I-N.
 10 I'm a third-generation Valley County
 11 person and also a Valley County Commissioner.
 12 And I formally would like to ask this
 13 commission that Valley County be just as a
 14 coordinator an not a cooperative on our status.
 15 But the first thing I want to ask about
 16 is that 670 miles of road that you would like to
 17 close in one of your plans. Are those
 18 petitioned roads? Are those roads that were
 19 brought into action by a formal petition done
 20 under the Montana constitution, MCA?
 21 Because there's no doubt in my mind
 22 that you need to take and go through due process
 23 on roads like that. You don't have power of
 24 acclimation on that.
 25 The second thing is that, I heard a

Page 31

1 prescriptive grazing on your plan effectively
 2 puts the rancher out of business. These are
 3 cow/calf pairs, and they run on AUMs.
 4 30 years ago, there was 60,000 cattle,
 5 AUMs, on the thing, on the CMR. Today, there is
 6 17, 18,000. Serious cut for a county like
 7 Valley County. So, I think that needs to be
 8 taken in consideration.
 9 And this wilderness that everybody
 10 wants to preserve, you know why it's there?
 11 Because of that rancher. Because he didn't
 12 abuse the land, and he didn't take advantage of
 13 it. He's been an integral part of that, and to
 14 penalize him on this is unfair.
 15 So, there's a lot of things that need
 16 to be talked about on this. And I think the
 17 roads are a big thing, and I think that there
 18 are a lot of things that you need to address on
 19 this.
 20 But, I appreciate the opportunity to
 21 come and talk to you tonight, and I would
 22 welcome any dialogue on any of this.
 23 Thank you.
 24 MS. MATHER: So I have reached the end
 25 of my list.

Page 30

1 Public Service Announcement by Laurie here the
 2 other day, and I want to know -- I'm sure it was
 3 you.
 4 Is there a Public Service Announcement
 5 right on the CCP plan?
 6 MS. SHANNON: I haven't made one.
 7 MR. PIPPIN: Okay. So I just wanted to
 8 bring that right now and ask that forward.
 9 MS. SHANNON: Perhaps we put out a
 10 press release.
 11 MR. PIPPIN: Okay. Maybe that's what
 12 it was.
 13 All right. Thank you very much.
 14 On the fire management, as a neighbor
 15 to the CMR, we are very nervous about your
 16 policy on fires. It's very irresponsible in our
 17 regard.
 18 The other thing I don't like is that
 19 it's a possibility that you would use fire and
 20 not go out and do your homework and check out
 21 for sage grouse leks, and et cetera. And I've
 22 questioned you on that before, that you need to
 23 be very sure that you're not burning out some
 24 sage grouse lek when you do this.
 25 The other thing is that your

Page 32

1 Is there anybody else who has been
 2 inspired to come up and talk?
 3 KATHY TETER: I'm kind of late, so I
 4 feel a little bad about this.
 5 MS. MATHER: That's fine.
 6 MS. TETER: My name is Kathy Teter. I
 7 am a member of Yellowstone County Farm Bureau.
 8 We had a pretty lively discussion about
 9 some of these proposals, some of the rumors,
 10 some of the facts.
 11 I looked on -- there was like
 12 400-and-some pages to read, which is obviously
 13 something that I didn't get done last night. I
 14 doubt a whole lot of folks have gotten that part
 15 done yet.
 16 And my comment, Farm Bureau is going to
 17 make formal comments on all of these plans. But
 18 one of the things that I wanted to bring forward
 19 is that we basically oppose any plan that closes
 20 roads, that decreases grazing, that does not --
 21 we would like to maintain access to maintain the
 22 livestock.
 23 The producers need to be able to get to
 24 do what they need to do to care for their
 25 livestock because they are good stewards of

Page 33

1 their livestock and of the land.

2 That is -- I agree with the gentlemen
3 ahead of me. This is why the land is still
4 there, because there have been very good
5 stewards of that land previous to now.

6 I think one of the other comments was
7 made about the "Big W word" being scary. I
8 don't think it's the "Big W word" that scares
9 people. It's "Big Government" that scares
10 people.

11 And I think that when you make a big
12 wilderness area, the ability for people to
13 actually enjoy that when you close roads and
14 limit access and do not allow folks that can get
15 there to actually get there, who actually gets
16 to enjoy it?

17 I think the "Big W" is just too much
18 "Big Government", and I think big government
19 scares everybody.

20 And it should. It should scare
21 everybody in this room when we have too much
22 regulation on our lands, on our basic freedoms.

23 And I guess that's about as far as I'll
24 take this. I'll let Farm Bureau go ahead with
25 some professional comments.

Page 34

1 But just kind of wanted to make it
2 clear that we're not afraid of wilderness. We
3 like it. We like seeing the animals out there
4 like anybody else, like good plants, like the
5 whole area. We love it. We love what we have.
6 We don't need to have somebody regulate it to
7 tell us how we need to like it.

8 Thank you.

9 MS. MATHER: Okay, if nobody else has
10 any comments -- oops, one more.

11 SUSAN NEWELL: I'm Susan Newell,
12 N-E-W-E-L-L.

13 And I like your Alternative D because
14 it looks at the ecological processes and the
15 interweavings of the whole country out there.

16 I would like for you to look at
17 reducing road density a bit, and I would like no
18 net loss of wilderness acres, and I think more
19 emphasis on restoring and increasing the
20 cottonwood bottoms and the cottonwood galleries,
21 and continue the ban on mineral activity,
22 consider continuing that.

23 Thank you.

24 MS. MATHER: Anybody else?

25 MIKE BRYANT: Are you opening the floor

Page 35

1 to comments, is that what you --

2 MS. MATHER: Well, I'm going to keep
3 you up to the mic, and then we'll let these guys
4 answer the questions.

5 MR. BRYANT: I've just got some
6 questions, so I'll wait.

7 MS. MATHER: Okay.

8 Barron, Bill, Laurie, you want to
9 tackle questions?

10 MR. CRAWFORD: I'll tackle the easy
11 ones.

12 Ah, some great questions.

13 Grant, your question on road density,
14 and what would it be if we closed roads in
15 Alternative B?

16 I don't know, to be perfectly honest.

17 There's 670 miles of road on the refuge
18 now. We're proposing to close 106, so that's
19 roughly -- help me out with some math here. I'm
20 from Tennessee. I have got take my shoes off.

21 But, it's what, probably about 20%?

22 MIKE BRYANT: Yeah, pretty close.

23 MR. CRAWFORD: We estimate right now
24 with the 670 miles of roads, and with the river
25 and the lake, that 80 to 85% of the refuge is

Page 36

1 accessible within one mile of some type of
2 motorized access.

3 So, if you closed that 106 miles of
4 road, you would probably change that -- and I'm
5 just guesstimating here -- probably where 70% of
6 the refuge would be accessible to some type of
7 motorized access.

8 Who manages the river traffic?

9 Right now, we have got the Upper
10 Missouri River Wild and Scenic designation,
11 which flows through the Monument and into the
12 first 10 miles of the refuge.

13 The BLM has management responsibility
14 for the Wild and Scenic river, so they're the
15 ones that post the motorboat restriction on the
16 river at this time.

17 We had originally, as part of the plan,
18 looked at boat use on the river, and we're
19 looking at what type of impacts may be occurring
20 due to that river use.

21 And what we have put in the plan is
22 that we're going to continue to evaluate
23 motorboat activity on the refuge, and is that
24 activity impacting wildlife in some way. We've
25 got a couple of studies proposed trying to

Page 37

1 figure out exactly what that use is, and what
 2 type of impacts are occurring from that.
 3 Manage RV use?
 4 Yes, the plan states we will continue
 5 to manage RVs as we're doing now. They're
 6 restricted to our numbered routes, which is what
 7 cars and trucks can drive on.
 8 And why are we proposing to eliminate
 9 some wilderness in D?
 10 We looked at it, and you're absolutely
 11 right in your comment about the road going
 12 through Beauchamp. Does that detract from that
 13 wilderness area?
 14 And it's kind of a judgment call, to be
 15 really honest with you. You know, it is small.
 16 It is 5,000 acres on either side of the road.
 17 That road is one of our main refuge roads. It
 18 traverses most of the west end of the refuge.
 19 It does get quite a bit of seasonal use.
 20 So we threw it out there to see what
 21 kind of comments we might get. And obviously
 22 tonight, we heard a lot of comments that people
 23 would like to see that as proposed wilderness.
 24 And those are the exact type of
 25 comments that we're looking for.

Page 39

1 basic inventory and monitoring stuff that we
 2 think is important, especially as it relates to
 3 climate change.
 4 We put quite a bit of emphasis in this
 5 plan on grassland bird species. That's
 6 something that the refuge has not done a lot of
 7 work in.
 8 Beverly Skinner has just moved into a
 9 new position at the refuge, and she's going to
 10 be doing quite a bit of bird work, not only
 11 grasslands birds, but our forest birds,
 12 migrates, breeding birds. So, we're going to
 13 see quite a bit of bird work occurring on the
 14 refuge in the next 15 years, hopefully.
 15 Prairie dogs are definitely an
 16 important keystone species, and we do have a
 17 pretty good section here devoted to prairie dogs
 18 and prairie dog management for the future.
 19 What else do we have here?
 20 Question: Difference in management
 21 priorities between the Fish & Wildlife Service
 22 and the BLM? Great question, Jeff.
 23 The Fish & Wildlife Service is the only
 24 federal agency that has been mandated to manage
 25 for fish and wildlife resources, okay. That is

Page 38

1 The East Hell Creek wilderness area,
 2 there are two private in-holdings in that area
 3 with the road that runs all the way up through
 4 the middle of it. Does that detract? It's a
 5 huge wilderness area. I think it's 26,000
 6 acres.
 7 You know, great comments again. I
 8 think that's something we should go back and
 9 look at.
 10 What else do we have here?
 11 Margaret was talking about nongame
 12 species management plans.
 13 Yes, we did address nongame.
 14 There were some things that we did
 15 drop. We had to look at staffing and funding -
 16 how much can we -- physically think we can
 17 accomplish given the current resources that we
 18 have, or the projected resources that we think
 19 we may have over the next 15 years?
 20 And there were some small game stuff
 21 that we dropped out. We had some fur bearer
 22 stuff in there. We scaled that back. We had
 23 some amphibian stuff in there. We scaled that
 24 back.
 25 We kept some things in there, some

Page 40

1 our sole purpose, fish and wildlife habitat.
 2 The Forest Service and the BLM have a
 3 multiple-use mandate. So they have to strike
 4 that balance between recreational opportunities,
 5 economic opportunities, wilderness, wildlife and
 6 habitat, and they get stretched pretty thin.
 7 There's no doubt about it.
 8 And I feel very fortunate that we have
 9 that very direct mission that tells us that you
 10 guys only have to worry about fish, wildlife and
 11 their habitats. So, that is one of the big
 12 differences.
 13 Now we also, as part of the Improvement
 14 Act, did identify those six wildlife-dependent
 15 recreational uses. And that's the hunting, the
 16 fishing, the wildlife observation, the wildlife
 17 photography, the environmental education and
 18 interpretation.
 19 So, we throw those out there as also
 20 being important for managing a natural wildlife
 21 refuge. However, they cannot conflict with the
 22 purpose of the refuge and what you're trying to
 23 accomplish from a wildlife and habitat
 24 management standpoint. So, there is a little
 25 bit of a balancing act there.

Page 41

1 Which alternate supports the mission
 2 best? Another great question.
 3 We feel that like looking in National
 4 Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act, and
 5 those 13 things that are outlined in there as
 6 what the Secretary shall do, we feel that
 7 Alternative D best fits what's outlined in the
 8 Improvement Act and the mission of the Fish &
 9 Wildlife Service the best.
 10 What other questions did we have?
 11 MS. SHANNON: Grazing.
 12 MR. CRAWFORD: Grazing. Yeah, I'll get
 13 to that in a minute.
 14 A great question from Arlys concerning
 15 helping folks understand the plan.
 16 The bison reintroduction one. We've
 17 been obviously addressing the bison issue for
 18 the past three years, and the language has not
 19 changed in three years.
 20 We are not proposing to reintroduce
 21 bison on the CMR. Bison are a state trust
 22 responsibility. They are not a federal trust
 23 responsibility.
 24 A federal trust responsibility are
 25 threatened and endangered species, migratory

Page 43

1 right now on climate and what are the impacts
 2 going to be, and what can we do as far as a land
 3 management agency to maybe make sure that fish
 4 and wildlife have adequate habitats, have
 5 corridors so that they can move as these
 6 landscapes change. And so that is something
 7 that we did take into consideration.
 8 And scattered throughout the uplands
 9 and the riparian, we also have stuff in there
 10 that talks about building resilience. Habitats
 11 that are resilient can accommodate change much
 12 better than those habitats that are kind of
 13 extremely stressed, and so we kind of built that
 14 into this plan as well.
 15 What is prescriptive grazing and
 16 prescriptive fire, and how is it going to
 17 improve habitat on the wildlife? Mark asked
 18 that question. Another great question.
 19 Prescriptive grazing is basically using
 20 grazing as a wildlife and habitat management
 21 tool, okay.
 22 This area evolved with fire and grazing
 23 as those two primary ecological processes that
 24 drove this landscape.
 25 What we're looking to do in

Page 42

1 birds and anadromous fish.
 2 Now, if bison become listed, does that
 3 put a new spin on it? Maybe. Hard telling.
 4 You know, we have a lot of listed
 5 species right now that we're not proposing to do
 6 any reintroductions on the refuge.
 7 The grey wolf and the grizzly bear is a
 8 prime example. Those are currently two listed
 9 species, and there is no mention in our plan of
 10 reintroducing either of those species to the
 11 refuge.
 12 So, does changing bison's
 13 classification to a threatened species change
 14 potentially reintroduction on the refuge?
 15 Probably not, you know. I can't say for
 16 certain, but probably not.
 17 All I can say is, they're not a listed
 18 species right now. They are a state trust
 19 species, and there's nothing in the plan that
 20 the Fish & Wildlife Service plans to do any
 21 reintroductions on the refuge.
 22 Climate change research. There is a
 23 section on Page 85, Janelle, that goes into
 24 pretty good detail about climate change.
 25 Obviously there is a huge emphasis

Page 44

1 Alternative D is to restore those processes.
 2 Obviously, we can just let fire run across the
 3 landscape like it did 200 years ago. You know,
 4 Dave brought up a great point about that. We
 5 have to be extremely cautious as how we use and
 6 manage fire so that we don't impact our
 7 neighbors.
 8 So, what we're looking at doing is
 9 through this combination of restoring prescribed
 10 fire out there, that will reduce wildlife
 11 occurrence across the refuge, restore
 12 prescriptive grazing. And basically what I mean
 13 by prescriptive grazing is using those animals
 14 to achieve a specific wildlife and/or habitat
 15 management objective.
 16 And a classic example would be, if you
 17 have an area, and you want to manage it for
 18 mountain plovers, now mountain plovers like to
 19 nest in those areas with prairie dogs towns.
 20 Prairie dogs like to have very short
 21 grass. So that's a place where we could go in
 22 there, use a little prescriptive fire, reduce
 23 the grass cover. Put livestock in there. Let
 24 livestock graze it down. Encourage prairie dogs
 25 to expand, which would encourage mountain

Page 45

1 plovers to expand.
 2 So, that's how you use fire and grazing
 3 to achieve a very specific wildlife and/or
 4 habitat management tool.
 5 MS. SHANNON: Do you want to give
 6 another example of that?
 7 MR. CRAWFORD: Do I want to give
 8 another example of that?
 9 Another example would be some of these
 10 fire-dependent plants. They basically need fire
 11 in order for them to continue their survival.
 12 And there's several places on the
 13 refuge where fire has been excluded, and so
 14 basically these plants are being severely
 15 impacted through continuous grazing or
 16 continuous browsing.
 17 And so by putting fire back into those
 18 areas, they're fire-adaptive. They respond very
 19 quickly. They resprout. They grow quickly.
 20 And as you continue to move those
 21 patches of fire around, you continue to move
 22 those animals around, and therefore reduce that
 23 overall pressure on that plant, and it allows
 24 the plant to grow up, reach maturity, fruit,
 25 reproduce, and the cycle starts all over again.

Page 47

1 reaching fruit-producing age? Are they
 2 expanding in density, expanding in cover?
 3 So that's how we are going -- that's
 4 the technique that we're going to use to
 5 determine whether our management actions are
 6 meeting our stated objectives for what we have
 7 outlined under the Upland section of plan.
 8 A lot of folks equate range condition
 9 and habitat condition as being the same. From
 10 my standpoint, I look at them as very
 11 different.
 12 Range condition relates to primarily
 13 grass cover, and is the grass cover out there as
 14 what you would expect it to be at the end of the
 15 grazing season.
 16 Whereas wildlife habitat conditions,
 17 depending on the wildlife species that you are
 18 talking about, varies tremendously.
 19 You could have great habitat conditions
 20 for elk but have very poor wildlife habitat
 21 conditions for sage grouse.
 22 So, when you're looking at habitat
 23 conditions, you first have to look at the
 24 wildlife species that you're trying to provide
 25 habitat for. And you can't just go across and

Page 46

1 So, a good example of that would be
 2 like a chokecherry or a buffalo berry that's
 3 extremely important to like sharp-tail grouse.
 4 I should have had Bob here for that.
 5 Another question from Bernie. Range
 6 conditions, and what we aspire to.
 7 In Alternative C, we focus on range
 8 condition as being our primary measuring tool as
 9 to looking at whether we're meeting our wildlife
 10 and our habitat objectives.
 11 In Alternative D, we're looking to use
 12 what's called the sentinel plant approach. And
 13 these are basically plants that are extremely
 14 important to wildlife. They are plants that are
 15 currently in decline across the refuge.
 16 They're those ice cream plants.
 17 They're the plants that whenever an elk, a deer,
 18 a cow, a rabbit walks by, that's the first thing
 19 they eat. You know, it's very delicious, very
 20 nutritious.
 21 So what we're looking in Alternative D
 22 is to restore again those natural processes, and
 23 then measure our success by looking at these
 24 sentinel plants, and are those plants
 25 increasing? Are they growing? Are they

Page 48

1 paint this broad paintbrush and say the habitat
 2 across the refuge is good, fair or poor.
 3 Well, is it good for elk and poor for
 4 sage grouse, or is it good for everything?
 5 And in Alternative D, we're hoping to
 6 make it good for everything; promote that
 7 diversity.
 8 What other questions did we have?
 9 I had a comment concerning sage grouse;
 10 do our homework.
 11 We did go through the plan, and when
 12 we're talking about fire and talking about
 13 restoring that fire, definitely looking at sage
 14 grouse habitat.
 15 The last thing we want to do is do some
 16 type of management action that's going to affect
 17 a species that's now been listed as a species
 18 that's warranted for including on the threatened
 19 and endangered species list.
 20 So definitely as we're developing our
 21 prescribed fire plans, working with our wildlife
 22 biologists, working with the state, identifying
 23 those core areas that are sage grouse habitat,
 24 not only leks and breeding grounds, but also
 25 that winter habitat that's extremely important,

Page 49

1 and in the plan, identify those areas and make
 2 sure that we protect them from wildfire
 3 occurrence so that we do not have an impact on a
 4 sage grouse for the future.
 5 What else?
 6 MS. SHANNON: Roads.
 7 MR. CRAWFORD: Roads.
 8 What am I supposed to say about roads,
 9 Laurie?
 10 MS. SHANNON: There seemed to be some
 11 question, I think, about how many roads were
 12 actually -- or I think I heard a question that
 13 we're closing 670 miles of road. I think that's
 14 -- and our ownership of roads, and whether we
 15 have looked at roads that are petitioned or
 16 not.
 17 MR. CRAWFORD: Okay.
 18 Alternative B, it talks about closing
 19 106 miles of roads.
 20 Alternative C, I don't believe we
 21 proposed any road closures in that.
 22 MS. SHANNON: Right.
 23 MR. CRAWFORD: In Alternative D, it is
 24 23.
 25 Did we look at petitioned roads? No,

Page 51

1 Anything else?
 2 MS. SHANNON: I think that's all.
 3 MR. CRAWFORD: I think I caught all the
 4 questions.
 5 Was there anything that I missed?
 6 MR. BERG: I guess the one thing that I
 7 would like to add, and I took it to be somewhat
 8 of a question from Bernard, you talked little
 9 bit about the positive value of wilderness.
 10 And we do address a little bit of that
 11 in our economic analysis. But also, as part of
 12 this planning process, we're charged with going
 13 back and looking at those proposed wilderness
 14 areas and evaluating those, as we did in the
 15 late 1970s, to determine if they still maintain
 16 those wilderness values. So, that's what we
 17 have done in alternative D.
 18 The three areas that we're proposing to
 19 not include as proposed wilderness areas, we
 20 felt those didn't meet the criteria as well as
 21 they could. But again, that's somewhat
 22 subjective, and that's why we're looking for
 23 comments from folks like you out there.
 24 So, yes, we do consider that as part of
 25 the process, and that's kind of evaluation

Page 50

1 we did not.
 2 Basically we sat there, and we went
 3 through it, and we said, what are roads that we
 4 need to consider in order for us to meet our
 5 wildlife, our habitat objectives, provide for
 6 quality public use, boom, boom, boom, boom.
 7 Now, what I look at petitioned roads is
 8 that's a process that is outside the CCP, okay,
 9 and that will need to be addressed through a
 10 separate planning process, whether it's through
 11 a transportation plan that will be developed
 12 after the CCP, or whether it's through some type
 13 to have court documents.
 14 And I'm not an expert when it comes to
 15 Montana law and sitting here and going, "Yeah,
 16 that's a valid petition. We need to accept it."
 17 We're going to need somebody that
 18 that's their area of expertise to sit down and
 19 say, "Okay, Barron, you've overstepped your
 20 boundary here. That's a valid petition. You
 21 can't close that road."
 22 So we decided that we weren't going to
 23 address the petitioned road issue as part of
 24 this plan. So that's going to have to be
 25 addressed separately.

Page 52

1 process that we have to go through for each
 2 one.
 3 MS. MATHER: Any other questions for
 4 these guys?
 5 MR. PIPPIN: You guys got me inspired.
 6 But the original Fort Peck Game Range,
 7 which is the CMR now, had a management practice,
 8 and grazing was part of that.
 9 And what I wonder is that when you look
 10 at this new plan, are you going back and
 11 realizing that grazing and those things were
 12 there?
 13 The people that were on that land were
 14 there 40 years before they even thought about
 15 doing this, before they became a game range.
 16 They had been there for 75 years.
 17 And so that's why your prescriptive
 18 grazing really has me kind of concerned because
 19 that is a break from tradition, 150 years of
 20 tradition. Why would you change that now,
 21 because these ranches are built on that
 22 inception.
 23 So, are you managing this in a
 24 consistent manner with the original Executive
 25 Order? And have you taken time to sit back and

Page 53

1 read what the Executive Order asked and
 2 promised?
 3 Just a question.
 4 MR. CRAWFORD: I'll go first, and then
 5 you can add what I forget. How's that?
 6 MR. BERG: Good.
 7 MR. CRAWFORD: Yeah, Dave's right.
 8 Refuge was originally established in 1936 as a
 9 game range.
 10 There were several refuges established
 11 in that mid-30s, you know, right when the dust
 12 bowl was occurring, as game ranges, and the
 13 Executive Order was written.
 14 And the Executive Order has several
 15 points to that. And if you read through it
 16 point by point, you know, first it talks about
 17 400,000 sharp-tail grouse and 1500 pronghorn
 18 antelope.
 19 And then it talks about range
 20 condition. And then it talks about what's left
 21 should be equally split between wildlife and
 22 livestock, okay.
 23 And so we've met with our lawyers, the
 24 Solicitor's Office, and have gone through the
 25 Executive Order word by word.

Page 55

1 wildlife out there, and the Bureau of Land
 2 Management having responsibility for the
 3 grazing. And that's how it operated for those
 4 40 years.
 5 And then in '76, Congress decided that
 6 all of the game ranges in the United States
 7 would be managed solely by Fish & Wildlife
 8 Service, would be managed under the National
 9 Wildlife Refuge System, and so that the laws and
 10 the policies of the Fish & Wildlife Service and
 11 the National Wildlife Refuge System would apply
 12 to those game ranges.
 13 So, that was the National Wildlife
 14 Refuge System Administration Act back in 1966,
 15 and then it was the National Wildlife Refuge
 16 System Improvement Act in 1997.
 17 So we've got the Executive Order
 18 mandate; We've got the Refuge Administration
 19 Act; and, we've got the Improvement Act.
 20 And those were all the things that we
 21 looked at as we were lining out this plan. And
 22 as we presented it to our lawyers, the lawyers
 23 said, yeah, you are meeting not only your
 24 original mandates, but also all the other laws
 25 and policies that have been set forth that guide

Page 54

1 We have been to court three times --
 2 four times? Four times now over this issue, and
 3 each time the courts have said, yes, the U.S.
 4 Fish & Wildlife Service is meeting the mandates
 5 as outlined in the Executive Order.
 6 There is a priority established for
 7 those forage resources on the refuge, and the
 8 priority is, sharp-tail grouse and pronghorn
 9 antelope first; secondary wildlife to provide
 10 for a balanced ecosystem out there, and then
 11 third, what's left over is to be equally shared
 12 between wildlife and livestock, okay.
 13 So, you know, yeah, there has been a
 14 long tradition of interaction between the local
 15 ranchers and grazing on the refuge.
 16 With the passage of the Improvement Act
 17 in 1997, even before that, when the Fort Peck
 18 Game Range was converted and changed to a
 19 Natural Wildlife Refuge, it fell under the sole
 20 jurisdiction of the U.S. Fish & Wildlife
 21 Service.
 22 From 1936 to 1976, it was co-managed
 23 between the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the
 24 Bureau of Land Management, with the Fish &
 25 Wildlife Service having responsibility for the

Page 56

1 management on a National Wildlife Refuge
 2 System.
 3 Anything you want to add, Bill?
 4 MR. BERG: I was just going to touch on
 5 prescriptive grazing.
 6 There seems to be quite a bit of
 7 confusion and concern about the prescriptive
 8 grazing that we're proposing to do.
 9 And actually, we have been involved
 10 with prescriptive grazing not only on CMR for
 11 several years, but also refuges throughout the
 12 country.
 13 In a nutshell, what it is, we're using
 14 livestock to manage habitat for wildlife. And
 15 if you look at some of the permits we currently
 16 have on CMR, the permits are issued annually for
 17 the same time period, for the same number of
 18 livestock year in year, out year every year.
 19 So if you think back about some the
 20 plant issues that Barron mentioned where those
 21 animals are seeking out the same plants year
 22 after year, same time of year, there's a
 23 tendency for those species to decrease on the
 24 landscape.
 25 Those same species are the ones we're

Page 57

1 trying to manage for the benefit of wildlife.
 2 So, what prescriptive truly is, is
 3 going in and treating that landscape or pasture
 4 or allotment, or whatever you want to call it,
 5 in such a manner to where you get a flush of
 6 growth afterwards.
 7 So, what would happen, rather than us
 8 issuing a permit year in year out for the same
 9 pasture, we might set it up where one year, this
 10 pasture is grazed, probably a little bit heavier
 11 than it would have normally. The next year
 12 would be in a different pasture. And we would
 13 make that rotation to get those benefits out of
 14 that grazing treatment that we prescribed.
 15 Granted, that's going to be a change in
 16 how some of our permits are managed.
 17 In my opinion, there's still going to
 18 be opportunities for people with a cow/calf
 19 operation to utilize grazing privileges on CMR.
 20 There will be instances where a
 21 yearling operation might be more conducive to
 22 what we are trying to accomplish out there.
 23 There might also be units that are
 24 better managed by fire, where we've got those
 25 boundaries and capabilities to use fire in a

Page 59

1 So, we're at 35% right now. So just
 2 another 15% gets us to that 50% that we have
 3 outlined in Alternative D.
 4 And basically the way we have been able
 5 to move to prescriptive grazing on the refuge
 6 now is as ranches sell to a nonfamily member, we
 7 take that permit, and we take that habitat unit,
 8 and we roll it into the Prescriptive Grazing
 9 Program.
 10 That's how we have it outlined right
 11 now in the Draft Plan, is to continue to use
 12 that process as ranches sell to a third party.
 13 We're continuing to transfer permits
 14 within the family. So, if a rancher wants to
 15 transfer his ranch to a son or daughter, we are
 16 still doing those generational transfers of that
 17 permit. We're only talking about those ranches
 18 that sell to a nonfamily member.
 19 MS. MATHER: Lesley?
 20 MS. ROBINSON: Lesley Robinson.
 21 I was just wondering, how are you
 22 planning on handling, then, the private lands,
 23 the private AUMs that are in the CMR and then
 24 the privately held state leases within the CMR?
 25 MR. BERG: This plan only applies to

Page 58

1 situation, and then maybe following that with
 2 more of a prescriptive grazing later on.
 3 So, it sounds pretty, you know, I guess
 4 intrusive to current operations, but that will
 5 be one of our challenges after this plan is
 6 formalized, where we will sit down and actually
 7 do habitat management plans for a smaller unit
 8 of the refuge, and it will probably encompass
 9 several permittees that we have currently, and
 10 we'll sit down and try to figure out how we can
 11 best manage that habitat out there with the use
 12 of livestock, where we're going to use livestock
 13 as that tool.
 14 So, I'm not sure if that clears it up,
 15 but that's a little bit more of a definition of
 16 how we plan to use prescriptive grazing.
 17 MR. CRAWFORD: And just to follow up
 18 with what Bill is saying. You know, we're
 19 currently prescriptively grazing 35% of the
 20 refuge now.
 21 Alternative D says move to 50 to 75%
 22 over the next seven to nine, I think.
 23 MS. SHANNON: You're right.
 24 MR. CRAWFORD: Yeah, seven to nine
 25 years.

Page 60

1 federal lands within the refuge.
 2 If a permittee has a state section or a
 3 private inholding, so to speak, those would
 4 still be at the discretion of the landowner or
 5 the leaseholder owner.
 6 And we have got several examples of
 7 those, but we've also got examples where, say a
 8 permittee currently has a state lease or a
 9 private parcel that's outside the normal grazing
 10 units, oftentimes we'll transfer those AUMs into
 11 the one that's being grazed, you know, with
 12 their herd, so to speak, so it's not an
 13 inconvenience to stick 20 head in for two months
 14 or something like that.
 15 I'm guessing that's the way it's going
 16 to occur in the future.
 17 You know, there's a little bit of an
 18 effort going on to maybe shift around some of
 19 those state lands so they are better situated
 20 within the refuge, or adjacent to it, which
 21 might accommodate some of those changes also.
 22 MS. MATHER: Yes.
 23 MIKE BRYANT: My name is Mike Bryant,
 24 B-R-Y-A-N-T, right here in Billings.
 25 Actually I have a couple of questions

Page 61

1 for you guys.
 2 In your Draft Plan, you state that
 3 currently there are 11 commercial hunting
 4 operations on CMR.
 5 And I'd like to know if you have a plan
 6 in place, or recommend that maybe you put a cap
 7 on it?
 8 I don't know what that would be, and
 9 that's not up to me to decide. But 40 seems
 10 like it might be too much.
 11 You know, 11, if we're all happy now,
 12 that's fine.
 13 Also, I wonder if you have any
 14 projection for what ecotourism might be coming
 15 down the pike?
 16 In the next few years, APF, your
 17 neighbor to the north, so we know that that's
 18 going ramp up in some fashion.
 19 Also, I think I noted that 90% of the
 20 suitable bighorn sheep habitat on the south side
 21 in Garfield County is on CMR. I'm sure that's a
 22 hot potato, but have you addressed that in the
 23 plan?
 24 You know, strictly as a sportsman
 25 and a hunter, I would like to see it. If I

Page 63

1 MR. BERG: We'll start out with the
 2 outfitting question.
 3 First of all, any commercial activity
 4 on a National Wildlife Refuge requires special
 5 authorization or a Special Use Permit.
 6 So whether it's outfitting, cattle
 7 grazing, commercial paleo activities, those kind
 8 of things all require a permit.
 9 Regarding the hunting outfitting on the
 10 refuge, in 1988 -- up until 1988, we did not
 11 permit any outfitting on the refuge, but we knew
 12 it was going on.
 13 So what we did is open it up to people
 14 that could historically show some use on the
 15 refuge. And at that time, in '88, we issued 36
 16 permits to hunting outfitting. Today, we have
 17 11.
 18 Probably two-thirds of those have
 19 dropped out because of game type violations
 20 where we've canceled permits for inappropriate
 21 hunting activities. The other third have
 22 probably just gotten out of the business for one
 23 reason or another, so we're down to 11.
 24 Whether or not that's the right number,
 25 lower or higher, we're kind of evaluating that

Page 62

1 was a rancher up on the Bench, I probably
 2 wouldn't. So, I don't know where Garfield
 3 County ranchers or Commissioners stand with
 4 that.
 5 And the other one is a Catch-22,
 6 depending literally on which side of the fence
 7 you are on. Bison is either livestock, or it's
 8 wildlife. And I think the courts are going to
 9 take that into consideration.
 10 But, if you are issuing livestock
 11 permits, then I think you need to be aware
 12 somebody's going to say, well, I'm going to
 13 bring my livestock bison down here and try and
 14 get a grazing permit out of it.
 15 I don't know what -- what's Glenda? Is
 16 she BLM? Is she wildlife or livestock or what?
 17 MR. CRAWFORD: She has a livestock
 18 permit.
 19 MR. BRYANT: And before I spend a lot
 20 of money on a jet boat, I'd like to know if you
 21 guys are going to restrict the river use or
 22 not.
 23 So, thank you.
 24 MR. CRAWFORD: Those are your
 25 questions.

Page 64

1 right now.
 2 Our sense is, like with the limited
 3 archery permits, limited nonresident permits in
 4 the state licenses, it seems to have stabilized
 5 pretty good.
 6 If people from out of state want to
 7 come to Montana and hunt the Breaks, there's
 8 ample opportunity for them to find an outfitter
 9 that can supply those services.
 10 And we kind of look at that as, you
 11 know, reaching that whole audience. There are
 12 some people who like to hunt that way, like the
 13 opportunity to have somebody help them out with
 14 the hunt, versus the individual who might come
 15 in and do it on his own, so to speak.
 16 So, that's why we are at 11. We've got
 17 no plans to increase that to 40 or set a cap,
 18 but that will be something that's kind of
 19 evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
 20 We've probably got 15 or 20 that have
 21 asked if they could get a permit. If we sense
 22 that there is a vacancy, for example, in a
 23 hunting district where there's no outfitting
 24 opportunities available for the general public,
 25 it might be that we would go out and advertise

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 65</p> <p>1 to see who be interested in that. But, that's 2 kind of in the future a little bit. 3 We haven't addressed the fishing 4 outfitting. We're working with the Corps of 5 Engineers on that issue. 6 Right now, it appears that they will be 7 the administrating agency regarding fishing on 8 the reservoir, which is getting to be a bigger 9 thing. 10 They have similar rules and regulations 11 regarding commercial activities on the lake, so 12 we hope to address that in the near future from 13 a commercial standpoint. 14 The question about sheep. You are 15 correct that there is extensive sheep habitat in 16 Garfield County. 17 We went through a pretty lengthy 18 process here a couple years ago to evaluate that 19 and determined that it was suitable as probably 20 some of the better sheep habitat that we have on 21 CMR. 22 We worked with the state, and at the 23 same time, the state was developing a Bighorn 24 Sheep Conservation Plan for the whole state. 25 They plugged in some criteria that suggested</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 66</p> <p>1 that we not -- or anybody, whether it's them or 2 us -- not reintroduce sheep within approximately 3 14 to 15 miles of a domestic sheep operator. 4 The reason for that is disease transfer 5 problems with wild sheep getting in with ewes 6 and stuff like that. 7 The area we're looking at in Garfield 8 County historically has some sheep permit 9 holders close to that area. We did kind of a 10 cursory review of the sentiment in Garfield 11 County. Both us and the State talked to several 12 landowners over the course of a year, and it's 13 probably not the right time to do that, just 14 based on the current attitudes about putting 15 sheep in the refuge. 16 Not to say that it won't happen in the 17 future. Our hope is that they get there on 18 their own, but they haven't done that yet. 19 Occasionally we'll see sheep east or south of 20 the river, but they haven't taken hold in that 21 area, so we're kind of on hold a little bit 22 there with that proposal. 23 The comment about bison being livestock 24 or wildlife. Glenda Reynolds, an active 25 permittee in Garfield County, currently has a</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 67</p> <p>1 permit on the refuge to run bison as livestock. 2 She's the only one. But that's just considered 3 a class of livestock, no different than what BLM 4 does in similar situations. 5 MR. CRAWFORD: Should he buy a jet 6 boat? 7 MR. BERG: Oh, a jet boat, yeah. 8 That's been an off-and-on topic for 9 years. I question that, too, whether or not I 10 should buy one, because there's a lot of great 11 opportunities on the river. 12 You know, there was a time when -- 13 again, when permits for archery elk hunting, 14 there was no cap on them; they were unlimited. 15 We started seeing some conflicts with 16 jet boats on that river; elk leaving islands, 17 being pushed out of those river bottoms because 18 of the dust bowl level of some of the boats that 19 were being used. 20 We considered it based on what we were 21 seeing upstream with some of the wildlife use in 22 the river bottoms there. What we fell back to 23 here a couple years ago, because it was kind of 24 a hot button topic issue, and again because the 25 permits got limited, and we're not seeing the</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 68</p> <p>1 negative impacts we saw earlier, is we're going 2 to monitor the use that goes on. 3 We're doing that with both like at boat 4 ramps and cameras on the river itself to kind of 5 get a handle on what's actually occurring out 6 there. 7 Personally, it's increased 8 significantly in the last 15 years, you know. I 9 have been the CMR for 20 years, and the first 10 couple of years I worked law enforcement on that 11 river, you'd maybe see three or four boats on 12 opening weekend. Now you're talking 30 to 40 13 boats on that same stretch of river. 14 So, you know, it's an access tool for 15 hunters to get into those river bottoms. 16 Whether or not it's too much or not an issue, 17 that's something we will evaluate in the 18 future. 19 MS. MATHER: Okay. Let me tell you the 20 next steps. 21 We are taking this road show on this 22 road, or this show on the road. We go to 23 Bozeman tomorrow and then Great Falls on 24 Thursday, and then we come back two weeks from 25 now to hit Lewistown, Jordan, Glasgow and Malta.</p>

Page 69	Page 70
<p>1 And then we will be receiving comments, 2 as we mentioned, until November 16th. So, you 3 have plenty of time to review the document and 4 submit comments. Again, we encourage you to do 5 so. 6 And then the winter will really be 7 spent with Laurie and her team compiling the 8 comments, responding to them, and then making 9 needed revisions to the plan. 10 Anything else? 11 (No response.) 12 MS. MATHER: Thank you all very much 13 for coming, and thanks for the great comments. 14 (Whereupon, the hearing was concluded 15 at 8:25 p.m.) 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25</p>	<p>1 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE 2 3 CASE TITLE: CMR & UL Bend Refuges 4 HEARING DATE: September 28, 2010 5 LOCATION: Billings, Montana 6 I hereby certify that the proceedings 7 and evidence herein are contained fully and 8 accurately on the stenographic notes reported by 9 me at the hearing in the above matter before the 10 U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and that this is a 11 true and correct transcript of the same. 12 13 DATE: October 5, 2010 14 15 16 Frances L. Mock 17 Big Sky Reporting 18 2308 Interlachen Circle 19 Billings, Montana 59105 20 21 22 23 24 25</p>

DRAFT COMPREHENSIVE CONSERVATION PLAN
AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
FOR THE CHARLES M. RUSSELL NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
AND UL BEND NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PUBLIC HEARING

Held at the Holiday Inn
5 East Baxter Lane
Bozeman, Montana

September 29, 2010
5:42 p.m.

REPORTED BY: CHERYL ROMSA
CHERYL ROMSA COURT REPORTING
P. O. BOX 1278
HELENA, MONTANA 59624
(406) 449-6380

I N D E X

	PAGE
Overview of alternatives by Barron Crawford.....	3
Public Comment/Questions:	
1. Roger Jenkins.....	14
2. Kerry White.....	15
3. Catherine Nelson.....	18
4. Teri Ball.....	18
5. Janelle Holden.....	19
6. Larry Barnard.....	20
7. Mark Good.....	21
8. Ben Erickson.....	24
9. Steven Hunts.....	26
10. Glenn Hockett.....	28
11. Robert Bayley.....	30
12. Dave Stevens.....	32
13. George Baldwin.....	34
14. Rod Jude.....	35
15. Dawn Montanye.....	36
16. Lesley Robinson.....	37
17. Peter Aengst.....	38
18. Kit Fischer.....	40
19. Nicki Stevens.....	42
20. Keith Aune.....	43
21. Paul Griffin.....	45
22. Chip Gibbs.....	47
Responses to questions by Barron Crawford and Bill Berg.....	47

1 WHEREUPON, the following proceedings were had:
2 (Mimi Mather opened the meeting and made
3 introductions.)
4 MR. CRAWFORD: I'm just going to give you a brief
5 overview of the CCP process, how we've gotten to where
6 we're at today, hit the highlights of the alternatives,
7 and then we'll open it up to comments.
8 So we started this back in January of 2007. We've
9 done 14 of these meetings. We've received about 24,000
10 comments during our public scoping, a couple hundred when
11 we went out and talked about the alternatives. We've had
12 numerous meetings with our cooperators. And we've taken
13 all that information and kind of thrown it together into
14 this draft CCP/EIS that has been turned out to the public.
15 This is kind of the timeline that we've been through,
16 and we're right here (indicating), with the draft going
17 out onto the street. After the comment period, basically,
18 the staff will be sitting down and wading through all the
19 comments and addressing those comments for about the next,
20 oh, year and a half or so and then hopefully release the
21 final in the fall of 2012 --
22 MS. SHANNON: No.
23 MR. CRAWFORD: Oh, summer of 2012 -- spring,
24 summer, fall.
25 MS. SHANNON: Winter of 2012, we'll have the

1 final.
2 MR. CRAWFORD: So why did we do a CCP?
3 Basically, the 1997 Refuge Improvement Act, that was one
4 of the provisions in the Act, that all refuges will have a
5 comprehensive conservation plan by 2012. And so that's
6 what we're shooting for, is to get the CMR and the UL Bend
7 plan finished by that time frame.
8 But it also provides a management direction and
9 guidance that's based upon the refuge purposes and the
10 mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System. It
11 outlines the vision statement, goals, objectives, and
12 strategies for achieving those. It's accompanied by some
13 type of a NEPA document, either an environmental
14 assessment or an environmental impact statement. For CMR,
15 we did an environmental impact statement, just because of
16 the complexity of issues that we're dealing with. And
17 then it provides that long-term guidance, so basically as
18 managers come and go, there's basically a plan in place
19 that has already been through this public process that the
20 new manager can just pick up and continue to implement
21 instead of coming in and having their ideas as to how they
22 think the Refuge should be run. So it provides some of
23 that management consistency over that time period.
24 So, again, this is just another chart showing how the
25 CCP process works. And, again, you know, we're right down

Page 5

1 here (indicating) about step 5, with the draft document.
 2 You know, after public scoping -- or after public
 3 comments, there's a chance that we could go back to this
 4 stage (indicating) and then go back through. Hopefully,
 5 we've got some good alternatives out there that's covering
 6 the full range of stuff that we've heard during our other
 7 meetings and we've captured all that, and so we've got,
 8 you know, four really good alternatives that cover all
 9 that.

10 So I'll give you a brief rundown on each of the
 11 alternatives. We have Alternative A, which is basically
 12 the no-action alternative. It's where we keep operating
 13 like we're currently operating under the 1986 EIS. So
 14 we'll have just a few changes. We'll continue to manage
 15 the habitat on the Refuge within those 65 habitat units
 16 that we currently have. We'll still gradually implement
 17 prescriptive grazing like we've been doing. We're
 18 currently prescriptively grazing about 35 percent of the
 19 Refuge. We're doing that as ranchers sell that have
 20 grazing permits on the refuge; if they sell to an outside
 21 party, a non-family member, we hold those permits and
 22 enroll those units into prescriptive grazing. We'll keep
 23 managing big game under the population objectives that we
 24 identified in the '86 EIS, 2.5 elk per square mile and
 25 10 mule deer per square mile. We'll keep the 670 miles of

Page 6

1 roads and we'll continue to protect the 155,000 acres of
 2 proposed wilderness.
 3 Alternative B, we're calling this the wildlife
 4 emphasis alternative. And this is where we're working in
 5 partnership with our cooperators and partners to basically
 6 provide this diversity of wildlife across the Refuge.
 7 This is kind of like the wildlife species emphasis, where
 8 we'll be focusing on big game, non-game, maximizing those
 9 populations, maximizing diversity, and then we would limit
 10 economic uses if they're having a negative impact on
 11 either those wildlife populations or those habitats that
 12 support them.
 13 We've got these maps scattered around the room of the
 14 various alternatives. So this (indicating) is
 15 Alternative B, the western part of the Refuge. We show
 16 where we're expanding wilderness areas and proposed roads
 17 to possibly close. This (indicating) is the eastern half
 18 of the Refuge.
 19 So kind of the main themes of Alternative B are, we're
 20 going to do a lot of active management of the habitats
 21 that are out there to really produce that optimum wildlife
 22 food and cover. Again, implement prescriptive grazing on
 23 50 to 75 percent of the Refuge over the next four to seven
 24 years; get an aggressive habitat restoration program going
 25 on the river bottoms; work with Fish, Wildlife & Parks to

Page 7

1 provide a quality hunting program; sustain populations of
 2 big game and habitat for non-game; close about 106 miles
 3 of roads; and expand acreage in the proposed wilderness
 4 areas by 25,000 acres.

5 Then we move on to Alternative C, and this is the one
 6 we kind of titled the public use and economic use
 7 alternative. This is basically where, again, we're
 8 managing the landscape in cooperation with our partners
 9 and cooperators to promote maximum compatible wildlife
 10 dependent uses. And wildlife dependent uses are hunting,
 11 fishing, wildlife observation and wildlife photography,
 12 environmental education and interpretation. And those
 13 come straight out of the Improvement Act. We're still
 14 going to still protect wildlife populations and habitats
 15 to the extent possible. We're going to minimize damage
 16 impacts to wildlife habitats by using a variety of
 17 management tools to enhance diversity and to promote
 18 public and economic opportunities.

19 And, again, this is the map. You won't see any
 20 expansion of wilderness and you won't see any proposed
 21 roads to close under -- Well, excuse me. There are a
 22 couple wilderness areas that will be closed. There is no
 23 expansion of proposed wilderness areas.

24 So kind of the main points of this alternative:
 25 Again, provide opportunities to maximize those

Page 8

1 recreational opportunities; maintain balance numbers of
 2 big game and livestock on the Refuge; expand and maximize
 3 hunting opportunities; improve access to the boat ramps;
 4 and eliminate four of the proposed wilderness areas which
 5 total about 35,000 acres.

6 Then we move to Alternative D, and this is our
 7 proposed action alternative. This is what we're calling
 8 the natural process or the ecological processes
 9 alternative. This is where we're going to, again, in
 10 cooperation with our partners, kind of use natural dynamic
 11 ecological processes. And when we say "ecological
 12 processes," what we're referring to is fire, grazing,
 13 flooding. Those are kind of the three things that shape
 14 the habitats out there on the Refuge. We're also going to
 15 do some active management to restore some of the degraded
 16 habitats on the Refuge until we get them to the point
 17 where we can let the natural processes take over. We're
 18 going to promote, restore, and maintain biological
 19 diversity, integrity, and environmental health. And then
 20 once those processes are restored, then we're going to go
 21 to more of a passive management approach. In this
 22 alternative, we propose to close a few roads, propose to
 23 eliminate a couple of wilderness areas, propose to expand
 24 some others.
 25 The main points of this alternative are, economic uses

Page 9

1 will be limited when they're injurious to ecological
 2 processes; apply those management practices that mimic and
 3 restore that natural fire/grazing interaction that
 4 occurred for thousands of years in the short-grass
 5 prairie; using fire and wildland herbivory, elk and deer,
 6 or prescriptive livestock grazing on 50 to 75 percent of
 7 the Refuge, similar to Alternative B; again, maintain
 8 health and diversity of all species; do some road closures
 9 on about 23 miles of roads; and then the proposed
 10 wilderness will expand six of those units for 18,000 acres
 11 and eliminate three which totals 26,000.
 12 Some of the hot-button topics that have been a
 13 recurring theme throughout this process is the
 14 prescriptive grazing. We've gotten a lot of questions:
 15 What is prescriptive grazing? And, basically, it's using
 16 grazing as a management tool. So you're going into a unit
 17 and you're saying that grazing naturally occurred in this
 18 unit, and this is the benefits that you get from a habitat
 19 standpoint for these species.
 20 A good example of that is mountain plovers. Mountain
 21 plovers like to nest in prairie dog towns, and prairie
 22 dogs like to occupy areas that have very short grass. And
 23 so if we identified an area where we wanted to expand
 24 mountain plover populations, we would write a management
 25 plan that basically used fire and grazing that would allow

Page 11

1 alternative was; and, if we were wanting to meet a
 2 specific wildlife objective in there, we looked at the
 3 road densities and evaluated whether we felt they were
 4 having an impact on those wildlife and if we could achieve
 5 some different population objectives by maybe closing a
 6 road permanently or closing it seasonally, and so that's
 7 what we did there.
 8 And then another topic that we've heard quite a bit
 9 about is bison restoration. Anybody that's been following
 10 the news in Montana, as you know, there's quite an
 11 interest in bison, both from a restoring of wild
 12 population in another part of the state and also the
 13 concerns that go along with that. And what we've said all
 14 along for our planning process is that we recognize the
 15 interest in bison. Bison are a Montana trust wildlife
 16 resource species, they're not a federal trust resource
 17 species at this time. Federal trust species are those
 18 that are classified as threatened or endangered migratory
 19 birds or anadromous fish.
 20 A lot of folks have asked, well, what happens if bison
 21 become classified as threatened or endangered; does that
 22 then change what you're proposing in your management plan?
 23 And my response is, not really. You know, we've got gray
 24 wolves and grizzly bears right now that are listed, and we
 25 don't have any proposals in the plan to reintroduce those

Page 10

1 prairie dogs to hopefully expand into new areas, which
 2 would then open up more habitat for mountain plovers. So
 3 that's an example of how prescriptive grazing will be
 4 used. It's basically used as a management tool to meet
 5 very specific wildlife and/or habitat objectives.
 6 Prescriptive fire, the same thing, how will it be
 7 used? We've been working with fire ecologists from around
 8 the country and looking at the historic fire frequency on
 9 the Refuge. And what we would like to do is use that GIS
 10 information that's been developed to restore that natural
 11 fire return interval onto the landscape, restore that
 12 grazing interaction, and so that these plants that are
 13 fire adapted have the opportunity to grow, reproduce, and
 14 expand and provide those important foods for a whole bunch
 15 of different wildlife species.
 16 As part of the CCP process, we're mandated to evaluate
 17 all of our proposed wilderness areas and make sure they're
 18 still meeting those wilderness characteristics which they
 19 were set aside for. And so we've done a comprehensive
 20 review of those wilderness areas, and that's how we came
 21 up with our recommendations under the various alternatives
 22 as to which ones would be expanded and/or which ones we'd
 23 recommend for eliminating.
 24 The same thing with the closing of roads. We looked
 25 at the alternatives and kind of what the theme of that

Page 12

1 species to the Refuge either. So I really don't see that
 2 changing the bison classification would really have an
 3 impact on what we're proposing to do in the plan at this
 4 time. What we said in the plan is that we support Montana
 5 Fish, Wildlife & Parks in moving forward with development
 6 of a bison conservation plan or a bison restoration plan,
 7 and if they choose to look at areas around the Refuge,
 8 we'll support and work with them in any way that the
 9 Refuge can contribute to that proposal.
 10 So, we're here to hear from you guys, to hear your
 11 comments on our plan. We ask that you address items that
 12 are specifically in the plan. We ask that you speak
 13 clearly and stick to your allotted time frame so that we
 14 have an opportunity to hear from everyone. We have
 15 numerous ways of commenting. You can give your public
 16 testimony today, you can write your comments on the form
 17 that we're handing out in the back and drop them off as
 18 you go, you can send us an e-mail, you can send us a
 19 letter. All of those, you know, are ways you can comment.
 20 There is no one comment that's weighted more than
 21 another; we treat all comments the same. And it's not a
 22 voting contest. So we're not going to sit there and keep
 23 score of how many people support expanding wilderness and
 24 how many people support eliminating wilderness. What
 25 we're looking for are those succinct comments that we

Page 13

1 might have overlooked in this planning process that will
 2 help make this a better plan. The comment period is
 3 scheduled to end November 16th.

4 And that's about all I've got, so we'll open the floor
 5 to comments. I appreciate everybody coming out today.

6 MS. MATHER: So like I said, I'll be calling
 7 folks up. I've got the list, we'll go in order. I'll
 8 also call who is on deck so you can be ready to come up.

9 Just a few rules: We'd like you to keep to three
 10 minutes. I'm going to be kind of a strict timekeeper. I
 11 have some cards when you're down to one minute,
 12 20 seconds, and then when time is up. And then I just
 13 come over and nudge you. But this wasn't a problem last
 14 night; most people kept to under three minutes. Please,
 15 we're recording all the comments, so if you wouldn't mind
 16 stating your name, and, if it's a tricky spelling,
 17 spelling it for us, that would help our court reporter.
 18 And then finally, just in order to keep things running
 19 smoothly and respect one another's opinion, we're asking
 20 that you refrain from cheering or applauding someone's
 21 comments.

22 So I'll go through the list. Again, if you'd like to
 23 sign up, there's another list in the back with Mike. And
 24 like Barron mentioned, on the back of this sheet
 25 (indicating), there's opportunities where you can write

Page 15

1 pass -- you cannot make wilderness itself. So I guess
 2 that would be some worthwhile clarifications.

3 I think that's about a minute and 20 seconds.

4 MS. MATHER: Thanks, Roger.

5 And I should mention that if you do have a question
 6 and not a comment, come on up and let us know the
 7 question. Barron, Bill, and Laurie are taking notes, and
 8 after everybody is done commenting, they'll respond to the
 9 questions.

10 MR. WHITE: My name is Kerry White, 4000
 11 Blackwood Road in Bozeman.

12 Is it then to write down our questions and hand them
 13 in or can I verbally ask and then you could answer those?

14 MS. MATHER: Verbally ask.

15 MR. WHITE: Okay. The first question is, will
 16 you be complying with the President's Council on
 17 Environmental Quality and actually doing some economic
 18 analysis on the effect of the loss of the grazing that
 19 will be within those new areas?

20 And, also, it's my understanding that there's going to
 21 be roads and water containment facilities, fencing, and
 22 that type of human structures within those new wilderness
 23 areas that are going to be required to be removed. I
 24 know, being up in that area, that 95 percent of the
 25 prairie dog towns are next to the water containment

Page 14

1 comment. And, again, on the table with Mike back there,
 2 there's a comment folder where you can stick that in.

3 So first up is Roger Jenkins, with Kerry White on
 4 deck.

5 MR. JENKINS: I've never hardly ever needed a
 6 microphone before, but that's fine. And having worked
 7 with court reporters, I have a great deal of respect for
 8 your efforts.

9 My name is Roger Jenkins, and I guess I have -- I have
 10 some questions and some requests for clarification.

11 In Montana here, we're blessed with all kinds of
 12 different sorts of lands. I mean, we have national forest
 13 land, national park land. My understanding is that the
 14 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service manages our wildlife
 15 refuges. So I guess I'd really like to hear from the
 16 staff, what sort of is the overriding management
 17 philosophy of a wildlife refuge compared to, say, a
 18 national forest, for example? That's one question I have.

19 Another request for clarification is that when you
 20 talk about elimination of wilderness or we want these new
 21 wilderness areas, my understanding is that you're talking
 22 about how you want to manage that land. There's really no
 23 elimination of congressionally designated wilderness; I
 24 guess that would be the case, right? Because you cannot,
 25 in and of yourself, take away wilderness, you know, or

Page 16

1 facilities, those reservoirs. And I want to make sure
 2 that if you're going to remove those water reservoirs,
 3 you're going to consolidate or put more of that wildlife
 4 down on the river in a more concentrated area and take
 5 them away from those watering facilities, and along
 6 with -- you know, it's going to be destructive to the
 7 prairie dog habitat.

8 I noticed in here, I don't think you've done any study
 9 on air quality for your prescribed burns. And, also, you
 10 know, the Federal Government doesn't have a real good
 11 history on prescribed burns getting out of control. So
 12 you might want to put something in there to -- you know,
 13 justification on those prescribed burns versus grazing.

14 Roads in the new wilderness, will they be removed?
 15 Will roads that are in the old wilderness that's going to
 16 be removed from wilderness, will they be reestablished?
 17 Will we be able to have multiple-use access in there as in
 18 the motorized? Because that's a big area, and to walk
 19 around out there is quite a task without having some type
 20 of motorized transportation.

21 I noticed here on page -- I think it's page 17:
 22 Habitat and wildlife. The draft CCP and EIS addresses the
 23 following habitat and wildlife issues. It states in here:
 24 Species reintroductions and management of species that
 25 could move into, onto the Refuge. American bison, you

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 17</p> <p>1 addressed that. Gray wolf, grizzly bear, Rocky Mountain 2 bighorn sheep. I just want to remind you that if you're 3 going to remove water containment facilities, concentrate 4 that wildlife down on the river, introduce grizzly bear 5 and gray wolf to the area, you'll probably end up like in 6 the Paradise, where we went from a 19,000 elk herd down to 7 maybe 2500. No more elk hunting in the Gallatin because 8 of the wolf depredation.</p> <p>9 So if you're going to start putting these predators in 10 there, keep that in mind. You've got predator management 11 in that list, and understand that with it on the federal 12 engaged species list, if the grizzly were ever to go back 13 on there, you have a real hard time, with our judges and 14 court system and the environmental groups tying this up in 15 litigation, to be able to deal with that. And I just hate 16 to see that healthy elk herd, you know, disappear up 17 there.</p> <p>18 You've got several roads in there on Preferred 19 Alternative D. I list here about 12 or 13. 23 or 20 26 miles closed, but these are all these little spur roads 21 that take you, you know, in to the water that last half 22 mile. And for those that have bad hips and the elderly 23 and stuff that want to hunt, that's quite an effort for 24 them to go that extra half a mile. So keep that under 25 consideration.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 18</p> <p>1 And my last point is, under what process are we under 2 this for the appeal? Is this a 219, 215; what process are 3 we under for appeal on this? 4 Thank you.</p> <p>5 MS. MATHER: Catherine Nelson, with Teri Ball on 6 deck. 7 MS. NELSON: Catherine Nelson, here in Bozeman. 8 I would like to follow up on some initial questions 9 that Roger raised, and they have to do with the 10 fundamental purpose of a wildlife refuge. And my 11 understanding is that the mission of a wildlife refuge is 12 to manage and restore fish, wildlife, and plant resources 13 and their habitats. In order to do that, it would seem to 14 me that wilderness areas -- designated wilderness areas 15 would be prime and critical to any kind of wildlife 16 refuge. And my concern is, as I understand it, that I 17 believe several proposed wilderness areas are going to be 18 eliminated. And I would really like to hear more to 19 explain how that meets the goals of a wildlife refuge. 20 So that, I think, is my fundamental question. 21 Thank you.</p> <p>22 MS. MATHER: Thank you, Katherine. 23 So Teri, and Janelle on deck. 24 MS. BALL: Hi, my name is Teri Ball, like a 25 baseball. And some of my questions have already been</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 19</p> <p>1 asked, but I'd just like to ask a few more.</p> <p>2 One is, I would like to voice my support for 3 prescriptive burning within the Refuge for the benefit of 4 sage grouse, sharp-tail grouse, mountain plovers, and 5 hooved animals. I'd like to ask that the final plan 6 reduce or at least not increase the number of roads in the 7 refuge areas. And I'd also like to ask that it increase 8 the wilderness areas and not reduce. I think the plan 9 says now we actually are going to reduce the amount of 10 wilderness area.</p> <p>11 And then one other one is, I like birds a lot. I 12 understand there are about 236 species of birds on the 13 Refuge, and I'm wondering how you're planning to meet 14 their needs, since there's such a diversity, which we 15 would like to keep. And are there any conflicts that 16 exist in the plan for the birds? 17 Thank you.</p> <p>18 MS. MATHER: Thank you. 19 So Janelle Holden, and Larry Barnard on deck. 20 MS. HOLDEN: Hi, my name is Janelle Holden. I 21 work for the Wilderness Society here in Bozeman. 22 As I said last night, we're fairly happy with the 23 proposed alternative, except for the fact that there is 24 this decrease in wilderness acreage, which we think we 25 should be going the opposite direction, especially in our</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 20</p> <p>1 prairie ecosystems.</p> <p>2 But tonight I had a couple questions, one in 3 particular, about roads. It seems like Alternative B and 4 Alternative D have a pretty significant difference, 5 106 miles of road versus 23 miles of road. And I was 6 wondering if you could address sort of what criteria you 7 used in terms of ecological processes versus wildlife 8 habitat to come up with those numbers or what were some of 9 the reasons why you decided to reduce roads in each of 10 those alternatives, so that we can get a better 11 understanding of what our range of alternatives are.</p> <p>12 Then the other question I have is about Alternative B, 13 in terms of manipulating habitats. I'd like to know a 14 little bit more about what kind of crops you would plant 15 in Alternative B and synthetic methods for increasing 16 wildlife habitat and what that might look like 17 specifically to the CMR Refuge. 18 That's it. Thanks.</p> <p>19 MS. MATHER: Larry Barnard, with Mark Good on 20 deck. 21 MR. BARNARD: My name is Larry Barnard. I've 22 lived in Montana for 60 years, and I hope to live here 23 another 60 years. I love this place, and I want to remind 24 everybody in the room that this is not Nevada, this is a 25 very unique place. Everybody in the world knows who we</p>

Page 21

1 are and what we're doing.
 2 Alternative B -- I'm not a person with specifics.
 3 Alternative B addresses the need for wilderness and
 4 conservation. And if we look at it from an economic
 5 standpoint, which you people have to, it's a lot easier to
 6 manage a wilderness area or minimum impact criteria, you
 7 know, such as off-road vehicles and whatnot, than it is --
 8 You know, let's just make it simple. Wilderness is easier
 9 to manage compared to all these other complicated
 10 situations. This land belongs to everybody in the United
 11 States, not to the people that were born here, like
 12 myself. There's been a big change through the years. The
 13 people interested in the public lands out in northeastern
 14 Montana, certainly the people in Valley County, have a big
 15 stake in it, but times are changing and they need to be
 16 part of the change.
 17 Thank you.
 18 MS. MATHER: Ben Erickson, and Steve Hunts on
 19 deck.
 20 Did I skip Mark?
 21 MR. GOOD: You did, yes.
 22 MS. MATHER: Okay. Sorry, Mark.
 23 MR. GOOD: That's all right.
 24 My name is Mark Good. I work with the Montana
 25 Wilderness Association.

Page 23

1 clarify again the authority that you have in terms of
 2 managing use on Fort Peck and the Missouri River and use
 3 in some of the riparian areas and, you know, talk about
 4 some of the trends in terms of jet boat use and its
 5 potential impacts. And I don't know that that was real
 6 well addressed in the Environmental Impact Statement.
 7 The other has to do with the economy. Again, this
 8 might have been explained in the EIS, but there was a
 9 study on wildlife refuges that came out a couple of years
 10 ago. I think it's called Banking on Nature. And in
 11 that -- you know, maybe I'm wrong, but I believe that it
 12 said with the CMR, that it generated upwards of about
 13 \$14 million, and I think most of that from nonresidents,
 14 but I assume a lot of it associated with hunting; and that
 15 there was also -- created upwards of 200 jobs or more. So
 16 I just wondered, is that correct, or if I misread that.
 17 And, again, I don't know that that was included in there.
 18 The other thing, I think in the EIS, it would be
 19 helpful to address kind of these indirect benefits of the
 20 protected public lands. I think most of the comments
 21 generally agree that protected public lands benefit local
 22 communities and to look at that more closely, I think. In
 23 areas where you're losing population, I think this is
 24 something to consider and that these protected public
 25 relations are features that make communities attractive

Page 22

1 I have not read through the entire EIS, and so some of
 2 this stuff is, I'm sure, spelled out in that, and I
 3 apologize for -- So I'm going to ask this more in terms of
 4 questions, I think, than comments. I had several.
 5 One is looking at the couple of areas that, or the
 6 three areas that are being proposed -- wilderness areas
 7 that you're proposing to eliminate. The Beauchamp area, I
 8 understand it's partly because of the -- there's a
 9 two-track that runs through. And I know it's, again,
 10 probably not as dramatic as what some people think
 11 wilderness areas ought to look like in terms of mountains
 12 or even the rugged Breaks, but I think probably in terms
 13 of its wildlife value, it's probably more valuable than
 14 some of those other areas. But it seems to me, in terms
 15 of the criteria of wilderness, that it meets those, just
 16 in terms of size, naturalness, sense of solitude, and it
 17 seems to me the imprint of man is unnoticeable there. So,
 18 again -- I mentioned this before, but if you would look at
 19 that criteria and reconsider those areas. And I think the
 20 Hill Creek one, I know there's an inholding in there. I
 21 think that might be one of the issues, but, you know,
 22 wilderness doesn't apply to that private land, but private
 23 lands also shouldn't disqualify it from being considered
 24 as a proposed wilderness area.
 25 Another issue that I wanted to bring up is just to

Page 24

1 and figure out how to benefit from that.
 2 Thanks.
 3 MS. MATHER: Thanks, Mark.
 4 Ben, with Steve on deck.
 5 MR. ERICKSON: Good evening, I'm Ben Erickson.
 6 I currently reside in Belgrade, Montana. I spent my grade
 7 school years in Lewistown, Montana, and my junior high and
 8 high school years in Miles City, so I'm a bit familiar
 9 with the country you folks are talking about doing some
 10 revisions to.
 11 I also happen to have had some great-uncles that lived
 12 on the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation. My mother is a
 13 Chippewa Cree Indian, and those were her uncles. If
 14 anybody here is from the Hi-Line and you know any of the
 15 Doney's, Richard or Clifford, those were my great-uncles.
 16 So I've got a little bit of a stake in what's going on up
 17 there, too, from a family viewpoint.
 18 A couple points of concern that I have with what's
 19 going on: Any time we get into wanting to expand more
 20 wilderness area, one of the things I noticed about
 21 Alternative D was, several of the small roads, which I
 22 think Kerry White pointed out, were slated for closure.
 23 What concerns me about that is, those roads -- almost all
 24 of those roads lead down to the water. The few roads that
 25 are left remained open are going to cause -- or have the

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 25</p> <p>1 potential to cause user conflict. In other words, you're 2 going to have more people using the fewer roads. So what 3 you're going to have then is, you are going to have some 4 resource damage. In working with the Forest Service on 5 some of the travel management plans, we've coined a term 6 called the cram-down effect. When you cram enough people 7 down into a small enough area, you truly will damage the 8 resources there, and then that just opens the floodgate to 9 close that off permanently to people. So that's a big 10 concern of mine.</p> <p>11 The other concern I have, of course, is grazing. As I 12 said, some of my family has ranched, some of my family 13 still does, and some of my family farms. I know how 14 difficult it is for the ag producers to make it in today's 15 world. Part of the reason why federal grazing permits are 16 so important to the rancher, which I think is overlooked 17 way too often, is that due to past tax practices -- 18 originally, we called it the estate tax, but now it's 19 commonly referred to as the death tax -- forces a farmer 20 or rancher to sell off part of his property to pay for his 21 taxes or his inheritance to pay for the land he inherited 22 from his father or to pay the inheritance tax his children 23 are going to have to come up with when he passes on. So 24 what that leaves the farmer or the rancher the alternative 25 with is picking up grazing leases from federal property.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 26</p> <p>1 I think it's important that those grazing leases are 2 protected, and I think that these people have a right to 3 their way of life, too. Earlier, another gentleman said, 4 hey, these guys gotta get used to the changing times. 5 Well, it's true, times do change, but, at the same time, 6 it's never ceased to amaze me that with some of the things 7 that are going on in northeastern Montana right now, that 8 people in southwestern and western Montana are the ones 9 that are proposing the changes in northeastern Montana. 10 They don't live there. They don't have to deal with the 11 day-to-day life, the day-to-day expenses and hardships 12 that these people do.</p> <p>13 So I guess in closing, I would just like to say, 14 thanks for letting us have an opportunity to comment on 15 this, and I'm not in favor of any additional wilderness in 16 this area.</p> <p>17 Thank you.</p> <p>18 MS. MATHER: Steve, with Glenn on deck.</p> <p>19 MR. HUNTS: Hello, my name is Steven Hunts. I'm 20 a 15-year resident of Bozeman, a hunter and a fisherman, 21 as well as a lifelong conservationist.</p> <p>22 I'm going to confine my comments to Alternative B, 23 because I consider that to be the best alternative. In 24 regards to evaluating habitat by target species, I'm 25 concerned with the way that this is being done right now,</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 27</p> <p>1 the selection of these target species and lack of public 2 involvement. I understand that biologists are often used 3 as the primary source for picking target species. I think 4 the picking of target species has a great effect on 5 management practices down the road, and I think the public 6 involvement -- Some of these situations, I see target 7 species that I just don't quite understand why they're 8 being picked.</p> <p>9 I would like to see a greater emphasis in upland bird 10 species management. It seems like they always take a back 11 seat to big game management. I like habitat-based 12 wildlife management. I think all public lands should be 13 habitat-based managed. I think there should be a drop in 14 the prescriptive grazing to no more than 10 percent of the 15 Refuge. I think we can give grazers some opportunity. I 16 think that the recommended percentages are too high, 35 to 17 50 percent are too high. And I'd also like to see a study 18 and timeline for reintroducing bison. I think it's an 19 important wildlife species. I don't think it's a 20 livestock animal, and I think that it's time that we move 21 forward.</p> <p>22 And thank you very much for the opportunity.</p> <p>23 MS. MATHER: Glenn Hockett, with Corey on deck.</p> <p>24 MR. HOCKETT: Hi. My son's Corey, he won't be 25 talking.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 28</p> <p>1 MS. MATHER: Okay.</p> <p>2 MR. HOCKETT: I'm Glenn Hockett, and I volunteer 3 for the Gallatin Wildlife Association.</p> <p>4 First off, I'd like to say thank you for coming down 5 here, and well done, from what I've read so far, but with 6 the caveat that I would hope that you would extend the 7 comment period. Because it is hunting season right now 8 and we're right in the middle of it, and I have not been 9 able to immerse myself in this thing like I'd like to, so 10 I haven't been able to read it all, and I'd like a little 11 more time, if possible.</p> <p>12 I would also like to get a hard copy, if I could, 13 because the online version that I've been looking at is 14 missing a lot of figures and photographs and things. So 15 it would be nice if you could send me a hard copy.</p> <p>16 Regarding bison, I'm disappointed in the position that 17 the Refuge has taken, and I'm confused, too, because it 18 says that you guys are taking the position that you won't 19 consider reintroducing bison on the Refuge unless the 20 Fish, Wildlife & Parks initiates the effort to restore 21 bison as a wildlife species on a larger landscape, and, 22 indeed, they have done that with the U.S. Fish and 23 Wildlife Service in terms of the quarantined bison. They 24 had a committee asking for a home for these quarantined 25 bison that they quarantine from Yellowstone Park, and the</p>

Page 29

1 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is part of that. It just
 2 seems like you guys are pointing fingers at each other,
 3 saying, You go first, you go first. I mean, we realize --
 4 everybody realizes it's a very controversial issue, but
 5 somebody needs to step up and do this, and I think this is
 6 the time for the Refuge to step up and do it and say, this
 7 is a landscape that's suitable and we should seriously
 8 consider it. It is interesting, I read that the domestic
 9 bison can be grazed on the Refuge. I think that's sort of
 10 ironic, that domestic bison can be grazed, but we can't
 11 consider restoration of native wildlife; and that's not
 12 appropriate.
 13 I do support the movement to prescriptive livestock
 14 use on the Refuge, and I do think, to the degree you can,
 15 you should remove fences and livestock water developments.
 16 I've read a little bit in there where you did clearly
 17 articulate that they do fragment habitat and significantly
 18 affect different aspects of the Refuge, and I think that
 19 would be a good idea, to the degree you can, to remove
 20 those things and incorporate prescriptive grazing where it
 21 is appropriate.
 22 As far as roads go, I'm concerned if -- It sounds like
 23 there's roads across private property and then go onto the
 24 Refuge, and sometimes those get closed. What I'm
 25 wondering is, if any roads are exclusively to certain

Page 31

1 Bozeman was, I went quickly to the website. In the
 2 history section, I read something that just resonated with
 3 me so nicely, and I'm just repeating -- I'll just read one
 4 line, or, actually, three lines, because I think it sums
 5 up what I think the emphasis should be.
 6 This is from the Executive Order which established the
 7 Refuge. And what you say on your website in the history
 8 section is, you say that the natural forage resources
 9 therein shall be first utilized for the purpose of
 10 sustaining in a healthy condition a maximum of 400,000
 11 sharp-tailed grouse and 1,500 antelope, the primary
 12 species, and such non-predatory secondary species in such
 13 numbers as may be necessary to maintain a balanced
 14 wildlife population.
 15 Well, clearly, to do that, the land needs to be
 16 preserved in as pristine and natural state as possible.
 17 And the only way I see that really happening to its
 18 fullest is to have the maximum amount of roadless area
 19 designated wilderness and as few roads as possible. I
 20 mean, most of us who love Montana and travel widely know
 21 that roads are just about everywhere. And if you look
 22 statistically at wilderness, we only have 3.7 percent of
 23 the state designated wilderness. And in the eastern part
 24 of Montana, where the Charlie Russell Wildlife Preserve
 25 is, there is less than, I believe -- I wrote this down,

Page 30

1 private landowners that go onto the Refuge, those should
 2 be closed or there should be open access for all, it seems
 3 to me. And I don't know the situation, so maybe you could
 4 clarify that.
 5 I've provided the wildlife biologist a paper on sage
 6 grouse that I think will help with some of the concerns
 7 about sage grouse.
 8 And then at this point, I like both Alternative B and
 9 D, and I'm still not sure which is best, but I'm leaning
 10 towards B. But they're both very good. And I compliment
 11 your staff; in terms of what I've read so far, it's
 12 excellent.
 13 Thank you.
 14 MS. MATHER: Robert Bayley, and then Dave Stevens
 15 on deck.
 16 MR. BAYLEY: My name is Bob Bayley, I live in
 17 Ennis. And it's a pleasure to be here, and I thank the
 18 group for coming to Bozeman so that those of us in this
 19 whole area can come and comment.
 20 From what I've heard tonight -- And, unfortunately, I
 21 don't know too much of the detail, but I did try to pay
 22 good attention to what I heard tonight, and I think that
 23 Alternative D speaks to the values that I think the Refuge
 24 was established to make sure happen. And one of the
 25 things I did this morning before I left home to come to

Page 32

1 it's just incredible. There is literally only
 2 32,000 acres of wilderness. And with that in mind, it
 3 just seems so obvious to me that what is needed in this
 4 Refuge is the maximum amount of untraveled area that
 5 wildlife can prosper in, and, as well, those who want to
 6 hunt, fish, hike, horseback ride are free to do so.
 7 I compare -- I use one example here which I'm very
 8 familiar with, and that's the Red Rock Wildlife Refuge.
 9 That refuge, which is in the very southern part of our
 10 state on the Idaho border, the majority of the land in
 11 that refuge is wilderness, and, yet, there's ample
 12 hunting, there's canoeing, there's hiking, there are roads
 13 that circle the refuge, and it works very well. I ask you
 14 to think about that.
 15 Thank you.
 16 MS. MATHER: Thanks, Bob.
 17 Dave Stevens, and George Baldwin on deck.
 18 MR. STEVENS: I'm Dave Stevens. I'm a wildlife
 19 biologist with Stevens Wildlife Consulting.
 20 I am very much concerned that the Fish and Wildlife
 21 Service is losing their way in what the refuges are for.
 22 Refuges are for the preservation of wildlife species and
 23 management of wildlife species. I support Alternative B.
 24 The CMR is a national treasure, and it should be
 25 maintained like that. The proposed wilderness is too

Page 33

1 small. I think all areas that qualify as wilderness
 2 should be wilderness. I hate to see any being reduced.
 3 The prairie ecosystem is not well represented in
 4 wilderness, and it should be.
 5 The road networks are important to get people into
 6 areas, but they also are very hard on wildlife species.
 7 During hunting seasons, people patrol the roads, and the
 8 wildlife, especially species like elk, it's very
 9 detrimental to their population and existence.
 10 I think the grazing should be better managed. I think
 11 that this prescribed grazing is a good idea, because I
 12 think that does more or less represent what the bison did
 13 in the early days, and I think that probably is good, and
 14 I know prescribed burning is good, both of which should be
 15 utilized to the greatest extent possible.
 16 I think fencing, and especially sheep-proof fencing,
 17 should be eliminated. Some fencing is necessary as drift
 18 fences to keep your livestock in the right places, but
 19 that should be a minimum.
 20 I do support the restoration of bison. I think bison
 21 need to be in a wild situation in some places, and CMR
 22 seems to be one of the places it should be.
 23 So with that, I do have some questions as to why the
 24 Fish and Wildlife Service is not concentrating on wildlife
 25 like they are in Alternative B. I assume that you already

Page 35

1 two guides which help people understand the territory
 2 they're walking through, and these are always free. So I
 3 would encourage the staff to look very carefully at how
 4 you really intend to use this refuge and these wilderness
 5 areas. I would second those who say the expansion of
 6 wilderness seems like the right direction.
 7 Thank you for all your labor. I see you've been at it
 8 for months. I will study this some more. Thank you.
 9 MS. MATHER: Thanks, George.
 10 Rod, and Dawn on deck.
 11 MR. JUDE: Rod Jude, Gallatin Canyon.
 12 I haven't waded through this entire document yet, but
 13 I will do that and I will send you some written comments.
 14 But I would like to come down on the side of this is all
 15 about wildlife. And so I think more wilderness is a good
 16 thing, less roads is a good thing, prescribed burns is a
 17 good thing, prescriptive grazing is a good thing, and,
 18 clearly, less fencing is a good thing.
 19 With that mind, I thank you for coming down here and
 20 spending your time, and I think you're doing a pretty good
 21 job. I think if you take all these comments at heart, we
 22 can come up with a great, you know, piece of work. And
 23 with that, thanks again for coming. I'll get those
 24 comments to you.
 25 MS. MATHER: Thanks, Rod.

Page 34

1 have your preferred alternative, which is D, as I
 2 gathered, and I hope that doesn't mean that you're on that
 3 and there's not going to be any adjustments to it in the
 4 future.
 5 Thank you.
 6 MS. MATHER: Thanks, Dave.
 7 Rod, and then Dawn on deck.
 8 MR. BALDWIN: My name is George Baldwin. What
 9 drew my interest in tonight's meeting, in part, was the
 10 Charles M. Russell name. My father sat and watched
 11 Charles M. Russell paint, which was okay with the painter
 12 as long as the boys were quiet and behaved themselves. My
 13 father's name is Kenneth Baldwin, my mother's name is
 14 Florence. They were the founders of the Montana
 15 Wilderness Association. So I stand here in that
 16 tradition.
 17 I would like to say that some of the goals here seem
 18 very important, and one of the goals is the preservation
 19 through a refuge, but through wilderness; wilderness which
 20 has a more distinct sense of heritage. And so one of the
 21 things that my father especially emphasized was once you
 22 designate a wilderness, find ways to do public education
 23 and get people to use the wilderness. The Montana
 24 Wilderness Association has an amazing program of
 25 wilderness walks, all of which are educational. They have

Page 36

1 Dawn, and then Lesley Robinson on deck.
 2 MS. MONTANYE: I'm Dawn Montanye, with World
 3 Wildlife Fund, based here in Bozeman. Thank you for the
 4 opportunity to comment.
 5 We see, as I think many people in Montana, the CMR as
 6 a treasure, not only for this region, but for the country
 7 and the world. It is a globally significant protected
 8 grassland area that is and has a high number of grassland
 9 endemic species, entire grasslands and, in places, limited
 10 road development, and, because of that, has been
 11 determined as a really key and important grassland area
 12 globally. So we support this effort. We're very much in
 13 favor of the proposed alternative, the focus on
 14 maintaining and supporting ecological processes and
 15 looking at wildlife management and habitat management from
 16 that perspective. Our interest is that we ensure this is
 17 a place where native species do thrive and can thrive in
 18 great numbers.
 19 There was a suggestion earlier for looking at some of
 20 the economic issues related to the loss of grazing. I
 21 don't think that that's a bad idea. I think some of the
 22 economics have been looked at. But I would also encourage
 23 the refuge managers and administration to talk about what
 24 are the economic benefits that come from having abundant
 25 wildlife, having people be able to come onto the Refuge,

Page 37

1 what that brings into local communities. And I think it's
 2 important to also look at the -- what are the effects of
 3 delivery of ecosystem services for keeping intact
 4 resources, both for the region and then also for the
 5 larger nation; for example, protecting water resources
 6 that flow into the Gulf of Mexico from proper management.
 7 And even those aspects could be looked into further. So I
 8 think that's an important aspect to look at in more depth
 9 and to also be explicit about when in some of these
 10 meetings and talking to communities, as well.
 11 And then I would also echo the interest of extending
 12 the comment period. I think that could be important for
 13 people that, for whatever reason, whether they're hunting
 14 or otherwise, might not be able to comment during the
 15 period that's given. So if that's a possibility, I would
 16 encourage that, as well.
 17 Thank you.
 18 MS. MATHER: Lesley, and Peter on deck.
 19 MS. ROBINSON: I'm Lesley Robinson, Phillips
 20 County Commissioner, and I'm also the chairman of the
 21 Montana Association of Counties Public Lands Committee.
 22 I just want to put into the record the policy that
 23 MACo passed at our convention: Montana Association of
 24 Counties supports livestock grazing on the Charles M.
 25 Russell Wildlife Refuge at levels that sustain

Page 39

1 I've only read the summary here and have not delved into
 2 the EIS yet, but I'm not seeing much reference at all to
 3 climate change. And, specifically, nationally the
 4 Fish and Wildlife Service, of course, even I think as
 5 recently as today, has announced whole initiatives dealing
 6 with assessing climate change and planning on a large
 7 landscape level, incorporating science more into kind of
 8 thinking about adaptation. And so my question is -- with
 9 the preferred alternative, which I certainly support its
 10 goals of restoring greater biological integrity and
 11 ecological processes and moving it first from an active
 12 management to more of a passive management, my question
 13 is, how is that being allied with these more national
 14 goals and initiatives that the Fish and Wildlife Service
 15 has around climate change? So I think it would be helpful
 16 for the public to better understand the intersection
 17 between these national climate change programs and
 18 initiatives that are going on with the decisions being
 19 made for management of the CMR.
 20 And third and last, I guess, is having to do with
 21 roads. I guess not so much a question, but I think
 22 there's some confusion that I think some people I've heard
 23 voice: The areas that are being -- they've been kind of
 24 combined or felt like the areas being recommended for
 25 additional wilderness are happening because of roads being

Page 38

1 economically sound livestock operations and maintain the
 2 ecological health of the resource.
 3 Thanks.
 4 MS. MATHER: Thanks, Lesley.
 5 Peter, and then Kit on deck.
 6 MR. AENGST: Hi, Peter Aengst, with the
 7 Wilderness Society here in Bozeman.
 8 Thanks for the great work I've seen so far in terms of
 9 the draft.
 10 I had, I guess, three questions. The first, as I
 11 think you've heard from several speakers tonight, relates
 12 to the preferred alternative and the net reduction of
 13 8,000 acres in terms of recommended wilderness. And we
 14 have a concern about that, and I guess my request or my
 15 question is whether or not the Service did any sort of
 16 analysis looking across prairie grassland ecosystems to
 17 see how much wilderness is actually represented, whether
 18 as designated wilderness or as recommended or potential
 19 wilderness, to get a sense of how important the CMR is in
 20 terms of its potential recommended wilderness in terms of
 21 upping the representation of prairie and grassland
 22 ecosystem types in the National Wilderness Preservation
 23 System. So I would encourage you to do that if that was
 24 not done, I guess.
 25 The second has to do with climate change. I'll admit

Page 40

1 closed. But when I read your map for the preferred
 2 alternative, what I see is that, almost in every case, the
 3 areas for road closures are not at all connected to where
 4 you're talking about wilderness additions. So I think I
 5 would just ask that you make that much more clear, that
 6 the wilderness additions have nothing to do with any road
 7 closures.
 8 And then the question, I guess, about road closures
 9 is -- I think it was what, 23 or 28 miles of seasonal or
 10 permanent miles of road closure. Maybe this is addressed
 11 in the draft. How much -- if there's details provided in
 12 terms of how you're going to be enforcing that, and for
 13 those that are permanent road closures, is that just a
 14 gate or is that ripping out and recontouring roads in
 15 terms of how far you're going to go in terms of dealing
 16 with those permanent road closures?
 17 So thanks, again.
 18 MS. MATHER: Thanks, Peter.
 19 Kit.
 20 MR. FISCHER: Hi, my name is Kit Fischer. I'm
 21 representing National Wildlife Federation and the National
 22 Wildlife Refuge Association. I just had a few short
 23 comments.
 24 First, I'd like to thank the CMR staff and Fish and
 25 Wildlife Service for this opportunity.

Page 41

1 The first comment, relating to prescribed burning, I
 2 am supportive, and our organizations are very supportive,
 3 of Alternative D, and in terms of prescribed burning, we
 4 are supportive of that. I have some questions in terms of
 5 how that would work on the ground. I know that the costs
 6 associated with prescribed burns are very high. It's a
 7 fairly aggressive prescribed burning situation that looks
 8 like it's how this would go in the plan, and exactly how
 9 those costs in terms of -- I know that it's hard, even
 10 now, to get the prescribed burns off the ground. I think
 11 they are very important in terms of ecologically in
 12 relation with prescriptive grazing. I think that is a
 13 very good way to do it, but some specifics of how that
 14 would work.

15 Secondly, I haven't read completely through the plan,
 16 but as far as sage grouse recovery areas, we'd like to see
 17 those; you know, if they've been established and how are
 18 they being addressed in relation to the current and
 19 proposed grazing regime.

20 Thirdly, I think it would be important to note in this
 21 plan that the retirement of grazing leases through willing
 22 seller/willing buyer agreements, providing an economic
 23 incentive to ranchers to retire those leases, should be
 24 noted as a primary means in shifting towards prescribed
 25 grazing.

Page 43

1 maybe read more, this is a very timid management document,
 2 and it seems like it could be much bolder with respect to
 3 actually doing what the mandate is as far as optimizing
 4 wildlife management on a wildlife refuge. It should look
 5 different than just a piece of BLM that's managed
 6 primarily for cattle grazing. It should be different
 7 management. It should really honestly emphasize wildlife.

8 I think the distinction between B and D is political.
 9 I think that in reality, if you maximize wildlife, you
 10 optimize processes, natural processes. I don't see how
 11 you can have one alternative that supposedly maximizes
 12 wildlife habitat and another alternative that supposedly
 13 optimizes natural processes. To me, those are the same if
 14 you're a biologist, and I think that this is some kind of
 15 political word use, where if you call it natural
 16 processes, you can take out wilderness and leave in roads.
 17 And I don't think you're really doing the job of a
 18 wildlife refuge when you do that.

19 Thank you.

20 MS. MATHER: Thank you.

21 Either of you guys.

22 MR. AUNE: I guess I didn't sign the right sheet
 23 there, so -- I'm Keith Aune. I'm with the Wildlife
 24 Conservation Society, and the Wildlife Conservation
 25 Society works worldwide to preserve wildlife and wild

Page 42

1 And lastly, in relation to bison, I would like to see
 2 Fish and Wildlife Service as a proactive agency in
 3 initiating and participating with the State in restoring
 4 bison population with CMR.

5 I would like to say I would like to see an extension
 6 on this comment period. I have submitted an official
 7 request from the National Wildlife Federation, the
 8 National Wildlife Refuge Association, and the Montana
 9 Wildlife Federation over a week ago and would like to see
 10 where that stands.

11 Thank you.

12 MS. MATHER: So Kit was the last one on my list.
 13 Before Laurie, Bill, and Barron answer the questions, does
 14 anybody else -- Come on up.

15 MS. STEVENS: I'm Nicki Stevens, and just reading
 16 through the summary, I notice that only in the summary for
 17 Alternative B are bighorn sheep mentioned. And that brief
 18 summary indicates that there is suitable habitat for
 19 bighorn sheep on the Refuge, and it would seem like any
 20 alternative that really, truly wants to do a good job of
 21 wildlife management should restore a species such as
 22 bighorn sheep, which is valuable to hunters and is an
 23 important ecosystem component and a very valuable species.

24 In fact, basically, my impression, just reading the
 25 summary and listening to the comments of people who have

Page 44

1 places. We work in 60 countries.

2 I'm going to confine my comments, because I really do
 3 want to say there's been some really good comment that I
 4 can support here. But WCS, in looking at this, is really
 5 supporting Alternative B. It's very consistent with our
 6 mission, and we think it's consistent the title of
 7 national wildlife refuge. And so given that you are one
 8 of the premier national wildlife refuges, I think the
 9 wildlife emphasis makes sense.

10 I do want to emphasize two other things. One is that
 11 we're obviously very supportive of bison restoration. One
 12 of the branches on our tree is the formation of the
 13 American Bison Society over a hundred years ago. And we
 14 are really working hard to look at the ecological
 15 restoration of bison, which I think fits really well with
 16 your theme of emphasizing ecological processes. But I
 17 want to specifically say, I don't know how you can
 18 emphasize ecological processes with the absence of a
 19 keystone herbivore like bison, and so I really want to
 20 encourage you to do that.

21 The second thing is, I want you to really think about
 22 bison and cattle. They are not necessarily an either/or
 23 situation, and there's lots of places, lots of examples
 24 across North America where agriculture and bison
 25 conservation actually fit, and there are ways to do that.

Page 45

1 We should keep an open mind about that.
 2 The third thing I really want to emphasize is that if
 3 you're thinking about ecological processes and really want
 4 to really do a good job of restoring a fully functional
 5 ecosystem, you have to be thinking about impending climate
 6 change. And that was brought up once, but I want to
 7 emphasize it again. From our perspective, bison in that
 8 landscape operating as a keystone herbivore working to
 9 create habitats for other species, building those
 10 important community relationships, actually can enhance
 11 resilience of this really critical landscape, and we can't
 12 lose sight of that. There are very, very, very few places
 13 like this left in the world; not just in North America, in
 14 the world. So this is a very, very special place in that
 15 regard.
 16 So I want to emphasize that we support Alternative B.
 17 We think this is a really critical ecosystem that's still
 18 intact, and you are the heart of that system and, as such,
 19 should be brave and consistent in your messaging about
 20 wildlife.
 21 Thank you.
 22 MS. MATHER: Yes.
 23 MR. GRIFFIN: My name is Paul Griffin. I live
 24 here in Bozeman, and since it seems fashionable at times,
 25 I'm fourth generation in the Gallatin Valley on my

Page 47

1 Anybody else?
 2 Yep.
 3 MR. GIBBS: My name is Chip Gibbs, and I've lived
 4 in the Gallatin Valley for 22 years, but I'm from Malta,
 5 and I think I can safely say that outside of maybe
 6 Lesley Robinson, no one has spent more time in the Breaks
 7 than me. I still have a lot of close ties there.
 8 I'm honestly opposed to B, C, and D. If it's not
 9 broke, don't fix it. 3.7 percent of wilderness is plenty,
 10 and I believe that if we put a vote to the state, people
 11 would want more access to the public lands and not less.
 12 The Refuge has done a great job of preserving the
 13 species. The amount of time that cattle are exposed on
 14 the CMR isn't year around; I think that's a myth that's
 15 out there. And no one is a better steward of the land
 16 than those ranchers who have access to the CMR. And that
 17 would be, I think, lost if it's put in the hands of
 18 someone other than the people who are maintaining it
 19 currently.
 20 MS. MATHER: Thanks, Chip.
 21 Anybody else?
 22 (No audible response.)
 23 MR. CRAWFORD: A lot of great comments and
 24 questions. I'm sitting there jotting notes, going, Let's
 25 see, which ones do Bill get? I'll answer the easy ones,

Page 46

1 mother's side.
 2 I could live with either B or D. I think you've done
 3 really great, especially considering some work we've seen
 4 at other times from other agencies.
 5 I wish you'd expand the socioeconomic data, because we
 6 hear at these meetings that this could be devastating or
 7 harmful. Well, I think your plan mentions only
 8 42 permittees on the whole Refuge, if I remember
 9 correctly. I'm the Paul Griffin that wrote the letter to
 10 the Chronicle, by the way, this morning outlining
 11 Phillips County's economic connection to the Federal
 12 Government. But I wish you would put that in, because it
 13 would enlighten people about -- You said there wasn't
 14 going to be negative effects, and I really don't think
 15 there are. You've spent your money up there, like you
 16 said, on your plans. Your people that live up there, they
 17 spend money. But as a taxpayer, we federal taxpayers are
 18 pouring money into a region of declining population. Just
 19 in 2009, the six counties that border the Refuge or have
 20 property in the Refuge received \$54.4 million in USDA
 21 subsidies. So what you guys do or don't do isn't going to
 22 have any effect.
 23 So I like B and D, and have at it.
 24 Thank you.
 25 MS. MATHER: Thanks, Paul.

Page 48

1 Bill can answer the tough ones.
 2 The first one we heard was the management philosophy
 3 of the Fish and Wildlife Service compared to the other
 4 agencies. And that's a great question. We got it last
 5 night, as well.
 6 The Fish and Wildlife Service is the only federal
 7 agency that's mandated to manage for fish, wildlife, and
 8 their habitats, as compared to, say, the Forest Service or
 9 the BLM, which has a multiple-use mandate, where they're
 10 to try to balance all of the uses, economic uses, such as
 11 grazing, mineral exploration, off-road vehicle travel,
 12 hunting, fishing, you know, all that sort of stuff. So
 13 that's basically the primary difference, is, we are here
 14 for wildlife and wildlife habitats. It's a very clear,
 15 distinct mission that we have, and it was emphasized or
 16 strengthened with the passage of the National Wildlife
 17 Refuge System Improvement Act in 1997. That's basically
 18 our organic legislation.
 19 A clarification of wilderness elimination versus
 20 proposed wilderness. As part of the CCP process, we are
 21 to evaluate all of our proposed wilderness areas to make
 22 sure that they still meet those wilderness characteristics
 23 that were identified back when they were proposed, and so
 24 that's what we did, and we also looked at them as compared
 25 to the theme of the alternatives. And it is subjective.

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 49</p> <p>1 It's basically -- you know, we're using our best hats, as 2 managers, as stewards of the land, to make a judgment call 3 as to are these areas still meeting those characteristics, 4 and sometimes it was a very difficult decision. We threw 5 some of those areas out there to get public comment from 6 folks and to get your thoughts on them, and I greatly 7 appreciate that. And from what we have heard these past 8 two nights, we definitely need to go back and look at some 9 of those areas closely.</p> <p>10 We did contract out the economic analysis. We 11 contracted with USGS out of Boulder. They've been used by 12 several national wildlife refuges and other federal 13 agencies to do economic analysis. They are economists. 14 They did look at the loss of grazing or the potential loss 15 of grazing, they looked at the potential revenue that 16 could be generated by expanding public use opportunities, 17 and they plugged it all into their computer models. And 18 I'm not an economist, so I don't understand all of it, but 19 I do feel that they did a very thorough job in looking at 20 the economic analysis of each of the alternatives.</p> <p>21 CMR provides less than one percent of the total 22 grazing that is found in the six counties that surround 23 the Refuge. Obviously, as we make changes to the grazing 24 programs, it could have an effect on the individual 25 rancher, that's no doubt. There are several ranchers that</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 50</p> <p>1 do rely upon that CMR grazing permit for their ranching 2 operation.</p> <p>3 As we move forward, after the CCP is finalized, the 4 next step is developing the step-down management plans, 5 and one of the first ones that will be developed is called 6 the habitat management plan, and that's where the Refuge 7 will look at the CCP and look at what was adopted as the 8 final plan. And in order to meet those wildlife and/or 9 habitat objectives, they will get down and develop a very 10 detailed plan, and working with those ranchers or current 11 permittees in order to implement a prescriptive grazing 12 program, so that we can fulfill our mission and hopefully 13 still meet the needs of our neighbors, as well.</p> <p>14 When we were looking at expanding at the wilderness 15 areas, we did not eliminate any roads to expand wilderness 16 areas. We basically confined them so that we wouldn't be 17 eliminating roads if we expanded areas. The roads that we 18 did propose to eliminate, again, it's another subjective 19 call. It was a best management looking at the area and 20 looking at fragmentation, looking at disturbance, and, 21 again, did it meet the overall theme of the alternative.</p> <p>22 Let's see, how did we come up with the roads that 23 would be eliminated and not eliminated between the 24 alternatives? Bill, you want that one? 25 We gave Bill a red pen.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 51</p> <p>1 MR. BERG: It wasn't that easy.</p> <p>2 A couple things we looked at. Under B, you know, with 3 the wildlife emphasis that we had under that alternative, 4 we looked at roads more from a standpoint of creating 5 secure areas for populations or groups of elk, kind of 6 scattering them more across the landscape. And we've done 7 this to some extent already in a few areas on the Refuge, 8 but under Alternative B, we expanded on that to create the 9 security areas where they're not disturbed via motor 10 vehicles and things like that. So we took a real 11 aggressive approach to that management tool under B.</p> <p>12 Under D, we tried to compromise a little bit; still 13 closed some areas to provide more security habitat for 14 different species, including pronghorn antelope and elk 15 and deer. There's kind of a common theme out there that 16 if we can reduce the visual and traffic impacts, mainly 17 during hunting season, by closing some roads, create some 18 valleys or coulees in between where those animals aren't 19 getting disturbed, we can keep those animals spread out 20 over a larger landscape. So that was kind of what we 21 looked at. There's several studies, you know, nationwide 22 where that's been shown to impact use of certain areas, by 23 big game species especially.</p> <p>24 Again, some of the road closures were also dependent 25 on the type of land ownership that was involved. I'm</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 52</p> <p>1 guessing about five miles was closed because of the fact 2 that the private land ownership that wasn't refuge lands 3 did create that exclusive use situation where a private 4 landowner closed that road. And that was one of the 5 questions Corey's dad had. We've tried to do that over 6 the past several years, not allow for an exclusive use, 7 but where a road does access either state land or private 8 land, by law, we can't close that road; you know, we can't 9 deny historical access to that. So in some of those 10 situations, there is somewhat of an exclusive use. But, 11 say, where we had a road that was totally on the Refuge, 12 but there was a private parcel off the Refuge that created 13 that exclusive use, we then did close the road so that, 14 you know, it was the same for everybody, so to speak.</p> <p>15 I'm not sure that answered question. 16 Should I go on here? 17 MR. CRAWFORD: Give the authority for managing 18 the lake and the river and the jet boats.</p> <p>19 MR. BERG: A question came up last night also 20 about jet boat use and our authority to manage that on the 21 river, and it came up earlier during the scoping process 22 also, if we were to determine or evaluate the impacts of, 23 say, large jet boat use or large boats that have 24 high-decibel motors on them that affects the use of those 25 river bottoms by wildlife. If we were to determine or</p>

Page 53

1 came up with the fact that those areas were not being used
 2 as much as they should be because of that motorized use,
 3 we could limit that activity in certain areas, no
 4 different than we do a road. There's some joint
 5 jurisdictional issues there that we would have to
 6 coordinate with the other agencies, mainly the Corps of
 7 Engineers, the State of Montana, not much unlike what's
 8 being done on some of the rivers where they restrict
 9 motorized use during certain times of the year. So that
 10 would be a coordinated effort between several groups.
 11 What we chose to do after the scoping process was to
 12 monitor some of the use on the river itself. We're in the
 13 process of doing that, just to get a handle on it. Over
 14 the years, we have noticed a pretty significant increase
 15 in motorized use on the river, and also on the lake, but
 16 mainly on the river where those river bottoms are so
 17 important to wildlife, especially later on in the season.
 18 MR. CRAWFORD: Some of the other stuff that we
 19 heard today.
 20 Glenn, make sure you see me before you leave.
 21 One thing that a couple of people resonated on was
 22 Fish and Wildlife Service losing their way, species
 23 management versus habitat management. And I can tell you
 24 that as a staff, we wrestled in formulating Alternative B
 25 and Alternative D. All of us went to school, got our

Page 55

1 area; and the Mickey-Brandon Butte/Timber Creek area is
 2 really good for bighorn sheep, and the Service should
 3 concentrate on bighorn sheep management here; and the
 4 southern part of the Refuge and the western part of the
 5 Refuge is really good mule deer habitat, and the Service
 6 should emphasize that; and the Service needs to expand
 7 sharp-tail grouse management over on the eastern side. So
 8 that was kind of the basis that we used to form
 9 Alternative B.
 10 When we went to do Alternative D, we decided to take a
 11 little different spin, saying, yes, wildlife is very
 12 important, but what drives the wildlife species? You
 13 know, it's those ecological processes and it's the
 14 habitat. So we wanted to put more emphasis on habitat,
 15 monitoring habitat, management, implementing processes,
 16 and basically "build it, the wildlife will come" kind of
 17 approach.
 18 So, you know, as biologists, we're conflicted between
 19 those two, which one's best kind of a thing. And what we
 20 tried to do was try to strike a balance. We went through
 21 one phase of the plan, where we had no wildlife objectives
 22 in Alternative D, it was all habitat objectives, and we
 23 said, No, we really can't do that; we need some wildlife
 24 objectives in D, we need some plant objectives in B. And
 25 so that's kind of how we ended up at that point. So I

Page 54

1 wildlife biology degree; you know, that's what it says,
 2 wildlife biology. It doesn't say habitat biology. And
 3 so, obviously, you go on to get an advanced degree,
 4 99 percent of us study big critters with fur and teeth,
 5 you know. I studied coyotes and wolves, okay? So I'm a
 6 large carnivore guy. Very few of us go out and study
 7 plants. And so it's a lot easier for us to relate to
 8 things with fur than it is to winterfat and saltbush and
 9 chokecherry and buffaloberry, except for people like Bob.
 10 Bob is the exception to the rule.
 11 And so as we're formulating this plan, it was like,
 12 okay, do we concentrate on wildlife? Do we concentrate on
 13 habitat? When you're forming objectives and strategies,
 14 if you increase winterfat and buffaloberry on the Refuge,
 15 are you doing good things for wildlife? Well, maybe we
 16 should measure wildlife and make sure that by increasing
 17 though those plants, we are doing good things. Well, it's
 18 a lot easier to count plants than it is to count wildlife.
 19 And so we kept wrestling back and forth, and what we
 20 decided on was, Alternative B would have this wildlife
 21 concentration twist to it. And we were basically using
 22 what Olaus Murie had identified when he came out here in
 23 1935 and did his original biological survey, where he said
 24 the western part of the Refuge was really important for
 25 elk and the Service should concentrate on elk in this

Page 56

1 hope that -- It's kind of a long, roundabout way to
 2 address that point, but I hope that helps to clarify
 3 B and D.
 4 Let's see, did we look at analysis of prairie
 5 grassland ecosystems and wilderness and how much is
 6 protected? No, we did not, to be perfectly honest. We
 7 looked only at our areas inside the Refuge and based those
 8 decisions on, in our minds, were those areas still meeting
 9 their wilderness characteristics?
 10 Climate change, we heard that last night. We do have
 11 in the document, on page 84 and 85, some objectives for
 12 climate change. A lot of research-type projects, looking
 13 at building resilience. Resilient habitats are better
 14 adapted to dealing with climate change than habitats that
 15 aren't resilient. We are looking at prescribed fire, the
 16 effects of prescribed fire and smoke, what does that
 17 contribute, versus wildfire and smoke. And there's a
 18 couple of pretty good studies out there that shows that
 19 through prescribed fire, you actually sequester quite a
 20 bit of carbon. And so, yeah, you're putting smoke into
 21 the air, but you're also sequestering lots of carbon into
 22 the soil that it's bound up for a long time. And we would
 23 like to expand that research and do more of it.
 24 MR. BERG: There was a question raised about
 25 bighorn sheep, and I thought maybe I'd just give the group

Page 57

1 a little bit of a summary as to where we're at.
 2 Approximately two years ago, we went through a pretty
 3 in-depth analysis of sheep habitat in the Breaks on
 4 CMR Refuge, looked at the slope, some of the grassy
 5 knolls, the roughness characteristics of the area,
 6 especially south of the river in Garfield County. At the
 7 same time we were doing that, State Fish, Wildlife & Parks
 8 was developing a conservation plan for bighorn sheep in
 9 the state of Montana that put together some criteria for
 10 reintroductions, things like proximity to domestic sheep,
 11 potential impact to private lands, things like that. We
 12 proposed to do a reintroduction in Garfield County, early
 13 stages of that. There wasn't a formal proposal on the
 14 table that was supported by all groups. We did a little
 15 bit of an analysis with the landowners in the area. At
 16 the same time, Fish, Wildlife & Parks conducted their own
 17 analysis.
 18 At this time, it doesn't appear that there is support
 19 for that from the landowners that live in that area. I
 20 think potentially in the future that could happen. If
 21 you'll look at the sheep industry -- domestic sheep
 22 industry, it's kind of decreasing as far as numbers of
 23 sheep in that part of Montana, so the potential is there.
 24 If sheep were to move in there on their own, that would
 25 probably be the best-case scenario, versus doing an actual

Page 59

1 unrelated party and is used for a different purpose,
 2 whether it's recreational or paleo or just the fact that
 3 they want a scenic place to build a cabin, we do not
 4 transfer that permit to the next owner. So what we would
 5 do, then, is put it in the prescriptive grazing regime,
 6 like we talked about. Then that pasture or that unit or
 7 area would then be used as kind of a rotational system
 8 with existing permittees.
 9 So a little bit different policy on how we handle
 10 those kind of permits.
 11 MR. CRAWFORD: I think we had one more question
 12 that was looking at possible food plots in some of our
 13 river bottom restorations. In B, where we're talking
 14 about synthetic methods, we're looking at using farming to
 15 help restore those areas; basically, go in and clean them
 16 up of weeds, and then after a couple of years we could go
 17 in and plant native vegetation. So we'd consider some
 18 type of alfalfa or cereal grain crop that refuge staff
 19 would plant under Alternative B, basically so we could go
 20 in there and clean up the weeds and then put it back to a
 21 native grass/shrubland mix after that.
 22 Under Alternative C, we'd basically be doing the same
 23 thing, except we'd use cooperative farmers. And,
 24 basically, cooperative farmers are permittees that come in
 25 under a special use permit, plant an identified crop that

Page 58

1 reintroduction. But we're hopeful that that will occur at
 2 some point in the future.
 3 There was also a question regarding, I believe,
 4 selling or transferring grazing permits. And just so
 5 people understand, one of the tools that we will use on
 6 the Refuge in the future to manage habitat will be
 7 livestock, so it's important that we have livestock
 8 operators in and around CMR. For those permittees that
 9 choose to, say, maintain a family ranch or continue to
 10 keep the ranch in ownership, by policy, we transfer that
 11 permit to a son, daughter, grandson, granddaughter,
 12 spouse, or whatever, if that permittee so chooses. That
 13 gives them the privilege of grazing on CMR when that
 14 grazing is available. So that's one thing we're doing to
 15 try to continue that tradition, but also provide that
 16 opportunity for that family to basically stay on the
 17 landscape.
 18 Where we don't transfer the permit is a situation
 19 where, say, a longtime rancher doesn't have a family
 20 member that wants to continue the business or, which is
 21 more likely to happen, that ranch value is higher as a
 22 recreational property, so the prices that are being paid
 23 are no different than around this area. You know, a
 24 rancher couldn't afford to buy it for that price,
 25 basically. So in those cases where it sells to that third

Page 60

1 they then harvest, but they're putting all the time and
 2 energy into planting and maintaining that crop. Their
 3 return is basically harvesting that crop. And at the end
 4 of the contract period, we have a field that's weed-free
 5 that we can then go back and restore native plants to.
 6 In Alternative D, we're not proposing to use food
 7 plots. We'd just basically go in and, through the use of
 8 fire and herbicides, reduce the weeds in those areas and
 9 then go back in and follow up with a native planting.
 10 So that's the difference in B, C, and D in the river
 11 bottom restorations.
 12 I think we've covered most of the questions.
 13 Again, we appreciate everybody coming out, and we'll
 14 be here if you want to talk one-on-one with any of the
 15 staff members. Several of our folks are in the back.
 16 Randy is the wildlife biologist, Mike's the fire
 17 management officer, Matt DeRosier is the station manager
 18 at Sand Creek, Dan Harrell is the biologist out at
 19 Sand Creek, and Bob Skinner is the habitat biologist in
 20 Lewistown. So we're all here to address any questions
 21 that you may have.
 22 Thanks.
 23 (The proceedings were concluded at 7:13 p.m.)
 24 * * * * *
 25

Page 61

COURT REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

STATE OF MONTANA)
 ss.
COUNTY OF LEWIS AND CLARK)

I, CHERYL ROMSA, Court Reporter, Notary Public in
and for the County of Lewis and Clark, State of Montana,
do hereby certify:

That the foregoing proceedings were reported by
me in shorthand and later transcribed into typewriting;
and that the -60- pages contain a true record of the
proceedings to the best of my ability.

DATED this 19th day of October 2010.

s/Cheryl A. Romsa
CHERYL A. ROMSA

Page 1

PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE CMR NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
CONDUCTED BY THE US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Great Falls, Montana
September 30, 2010
7:00 o'clock p.m.

PANEL:

Barron Crawford, Bill Berg, and Laurie Shannon

PUBLIC SPEAKERS:

Dyrek VanHyning, Dan Bennett, Wes Murray, Aart Dolman, Bob Nicholson
Mark Good, Laurie Riley, Janelle Holden, Jim McCollum, Randy Gray,
Joanne Bernard

Page 2

1 BE IT REMEMBERED that on Thursday, the 30th day of September
2 2010, at the hour of 7:00 o'clock p.m. of said day, at the Best Western
3 Heritage Inn, 1700 Fox Farm Road, Great Falls, Montana, pursuant to
4 notice, and before Anne Perron, RPR, Court Reporter and Notary Public
5 for the State of Montana, the public hearing for the Charles M. Russell
6 National Wildlife Refuge was had.

7 MIMI: We have a sign-up sheet. And there's a number who have
8 signed up, and if you are inspired by somebody else's comments and
9 you want to sign up later on.

10 Let me introduce Barron Crawford, the Project Leader, and also
11 up at the front of the table is Bill Berg, the Deputy Project
12 Leader, and Laurie Shannon, the Planning Team Leader.

13 MR. CRAWFORD: I feel like a rock star traveling around the
14 state, and we're starting to get a following here, kind of like an
15 entourage. See a lot of the same faces night after night, so,
16 welcome everybody. Thanks for coming out tonight.

17 We'll start off here tonight with a brief overview of the CCP
18 process where we started, how we got to where we're at today, and
19 kind of what's going to happen in the future.

20 So we started basically in January of 2007. We held 14 public
21 meetings. We received a little over 24,000 public comments during
22 the scoping. We've held numerous meetings with our cooperators and
23 partners, and that's pretty much how we've gotten to where we're at
24 today. We released the draft CCP back on the 7th of September.

25 So this is right here. Open it up for public comment. We'll

Page 3

1 spend the next year and a half or so looking at those comments that
2 we received during this period, and addressing those comments, and
3 making changes to the document as appropriate.

4 So why do we do this? Why do we spend years and years and year
5 and thousands of dollars to go through this process? And the first
6 is basically it's a requirement that was a part of the 1997 National
7 Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act that basically said all
8 refuges will have a completed CCP by 2012.

9 The next, it's just a very important document. It's set up to
10 provide management, direction, and guidance that's based upon the
11 refuge purpose and the mission of the National Refuge System.

12 It also outlines the vision statement, goals, objectives and
13 strategies to achieve those purposes of mission, and to guide that
14 future management.

15 It's accompanied by some type of NESA document, either an
16 environmental assessment or Environmental Impact Statement.

17 For CMR and UL Bend, just due to the complexity of issues that
18 we're dealing with, we did an Environmental Impact Statement.

19 And then, again, it provides that long-term guidance. Most
20 plans are good for 15 years, and so as managers come and go, and the
21 staffer changes, basically that road map has already been prepared
22 for the future staff members that come on-board, and so instead of
23 having a new manager come in and basically saying, Well, I don't
24 like that. We're going to do something different. We've basically
25 have got something in place for them to follow.

Page 4

1 So, again, this is just another diagram of CCP process. And we
2 started up here, public scoping, draft visions, developed
3 alternatives, held more scoping. And that's how we got to the draft
4 document.

5 After comments, there's a chance that we could go back here and
6 revisit the alternatives. Hopefully, we have done a well enough job
7 in selecting our four alternatives that we'll be able to move on to
8 this next step here.

9 So I'll give you a brief overview of each of the alternatives.

10 We have Alternative A, which we call the no action. It's basically
11 well, we're going to continue the management that we've been doing
12 since the 1986 EIS was published. We'll have a few changes in
13 there. We'll continue to manage the refuge based upon the 65
14 habitat units that were established when the refuge was co-managed
15 with the BLM up until 1976.

16 We'll still gradually implement prescriptive grazing as those
17 ranches sell to an outside family member or hold that permit and
18 roll that unit into a prescriptive grazing program.

19 And we'll talk a little bit more about that in a minute.

20 We'll continue to manage big game to achieve the target levels
21 that were identified in the '86 EIS, and we'll continue to keep the
22 approximately 670 miles of roads open, and we'll continue to protect
23 the 155,000 acres of proposed wilderness.

24 Alternative B, we kind of call this one the wildlife and habitat
25 emphasis alternative. And the basic theme behind it is manage the

Page 5

1 landscape in cooperation with our partners to emphasize abundant
 2 and diversity of wildlife using a combination of natural ecological
 3 processes, such as fire and grazing, but also some of those
 4 synthetic methods, such as farming, tree planting, flooding.
 5 We'll encourage wildlife dependent public uses. And those are
 6 hunting and fishing and wildlife observation, wildlife photography
 7 environmental education and interpretation.
 8 And we'll limit economic uses when they compete for habitat.
 9 And economic uses are stuff like commercial outfitting, grazing,
 10 anything that generates kind of an income.
 11 So we got some maps. Hopefully, people had an opportunity to
 12 look at them when they came in, but this is basically what the
 13 refuge would look at you under Alternative B with closing some
 14 roads, expanding some wilderness areas.
 15 This is the west half of the refuge. This is the east half of
 16 the refuge.
 17 Some of the common points that are in Alternative B is actively
 18 manage and manipulate habitats to create productive wildlife, food
 19 and cover.
 20 Implement prescriptive grazing on 50 to 75 percent of the refuge
 21 within four to seven years.
 22 Taking an aggressive approach to restoring the river bottoms.
 23 Work with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to provide quality
 24 hunting opportunities and sustain populations of big game and
 25 habitat for non game.

Page 7

1 processes alternative. This is our proposed action as well.
 2 And this is basically we're again working with our partners.
 3 We're going to use these natural ecological processes. And those
 4 ecological processes are primarily fire and grazing, and some active
 5 management. So we're mixing in a little bit of Alternative B to
 6 restore and/or maintain the biological diversity, biological
 7 integrity and biological health. And that comes right from the
 8 Improvement Act.
 9 And then once these natural processes are restored, we'll take
 10 more of a passive management approach. And we'll still provide for
 11 a quality wildlife-dependent public uses and experience. And we're
 12 going to limit those economic uses when they're injurious to either
 13 the habitats or to the processes.
 14 So this is what a map looks for Alternative D. And we've got
 15 some proposed expansion of some wilderness. We've got some propose
 16 eliminating of some wilderness. We have some roads that we're
 17 proposing to close.
 18 Again, on the east half, same thing.
 19 The summary of Alternative D, economic uses will be limited when
 20 they're injurious to ecological processes. Apply management
 21 practices that mimic and restore natural process. Again, that's
 22 mostly fire and grazing.
 23 Use fire and wild ungulate herbivory and/or prescriptive
 24 livestock grazing on 50 to 75 percent of the refuge to mimic that
 25 historic interaction; and work with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks

Page 6

1 And close approximately 106 miles of roads, and expand acreage
 2 of proposed wilderness by 25,000 acres in six existing units.
 3 Alternative C, we call this the public use and the economic use.
 4 And this is basically, again, managing the landscape in cooperation
 5 with our partners to promote maximum compatible wildlife,
 6 dependant-public uses, and economic uses while still protecting
 7 wildlife populations in their habitats to the extent possible.
 8 And we'll minimize damage to impacts, such as wildlife habitats,
 9 while using a variety of management tools to enhance and diversify
 10 public and economic opportunities.
 11 So this is basically saying that we're going to continue running
 12 our grazing program very similar to what we're doing today.
 13 Gradually move to a prescriptive grazing program. Put more of an
 14 emphasis on range condition instead of habitat condition.
 15 We'll touch on that a little bit more in a minute.
 16 So this is the map for Alternative C. No road closures. Couple
 17 wilderness areas have been identified for recommendation to be
 18 removed.
 19 Main points of C: Manage habitats to provide more opportunitie
 20 for recreation. Work with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks to
 21 maintain a balanced numbers of big game and livestock; expand an
 22 maximize hunting opportunities; improve access to boat ramps; and
 23 recommend eliminating four proposed wilderness areas that total
 24 about 35,000 acres.
 25 And then we come to Alternative D. And this is our natural

Page 8

1 to maintain health and diversity of wildlife species; do some road
 2 closures on about 23 miles of roads; and expand six of the proposed
 3 wilderness areas for a total of 18,000 acres, and eliminate three
 4 for a total of 26,000. So we'll have a little bit of a net loss
 5 there in proposed wilderness.
 6 So some of the hot button topics -- this is our third night as
 7 Mimi said. Some of the common themes that we've heard is
 8 prescriptive grazing, what is it? And basically when we're talking
 9 about preventative grazing, we're talking about using livestock in
 10 order to meet a very specific wildlife and/or habitat objective.
 11 And an example that I like to use is, say, we go in and we
 12 identify an area that's got some prairie dogs. There's a potential
 13 that we could expand that prairie dog town. By expanding that
 14 prairie dog town, we could possibly get some more ferrets to move in
 15 there. We could create opportunities or burrowing owls and mountai
 16 clovers to nest.
 17 And so we would want to go in there and graze that area heavily
 18 to reduce that overall grass cover to encourage those prairie dogs
 19 to expand. Once the prairie dogs expanded, then those other
 20 wildlife species are going to come, and then promote, you know, the
 21 expansion of the habitat for those species.
 22 So that's one use where we would use prescriptive grazing to
 23 meet a specific wildlife and/or habitat objective.
 24 Another could be to reduce the threat of wild fire. Might be a
 25 spot where we can't use prescribed fire due to in-holdings or very

Page 9

1 difficult to get into the area and control it. We could go in there
 2 and use livestock to graze that area and reduce the overall grass
 3 cover and reduce the threat of wild fire.

4 Prescriptive fire. We've had a lot of questions about that.
 5 How will it be used. We've talked a lot about the ecological
 6 processes of fire and grazing historically.

7 Fire would come through the area. As the plants burn, you've
 8 got that flush of lush growth. You have the bison and deer and the
 9 elk will kind of follow these fires and move from patch to patch to
 10 patch. So we've been working with some fire ecologists and doing
 11 quite a bit of research, looking at the historic fire frequency, and
 12 trying to restore that natural fire frequency back onto the
 13 landscape, and then restore that natural movement of those animals
 14 from patch to patch.

15 And to go there is to benefit those plants that are fire
 16 adaptive so that they have a chance to grow up, reach maturity,
 17 produce fruit, reproduce and expand.

18 Wilderness. As part of the CCP process, we're to look at
 19 evaluating our wilderness areas, and make sure that they still meet
 20 those wilderness characteristics which were identified when they
 21 were originally proposed. Our areas were proposed in around the mi
 22 70s.

23 And so as part of this process, we wanted to evaluate those
 24 areas and make sure they were still meeting those wilderness
 25 characteristics. It is subjective. You know, there's some things

Page 11

1 species.

2 So those are kind of what we've heard for the past couple of
 3 nights.

4 Now we're going to turn it over to you guys. Let you guys give
 5 us some feedback.

6 We would ask that you address items that are specifically in the
 7 plan. Speak clearly. Stick to your allotted time frame. There are
 8 numerous ways to provide comments: Providing on oral comment is
 9 just one way tonight. You can also write down your comment on a
 10 piece of paper that was handed to you as you came in the door, and
 11 leave it on the table as you leave. You can send us a written
 12 comment to the address that is in the planning update.

13 Laurie said, please, do to the send them to her personal email
 14 account because it will get full in a hurry. There's a special
 15 email account to send those comments to. And that way, they will
 16 get properly cataloged and put in there. If you send it to Laurie's
 17 email, she'll probably delete it.

18 This is not a voting contest. There is no one form of comment
 19 that gets more weight than others. We consider all relevant
 20 comments the same. It doesn't matter whether we get one comment c
 21 we get a hundred thousand. They're all treated based upon their
 22 merit.

23 The comment period is scheduled to end November 16. We have
 24 received numerous requests to extend that period. And we're taking
 25 that under consideration at this time. And we have not made any

Page 10

1 we can look at look. We can look at guidance in the actual
 2 wilderness law itself. We can look at our policy. But a lot of it
 3 is a subjective call.

4 And so that's why, you know, we throw these alternatives up
 5 there. We're talking about expanding and/or eliminating. And we'r
 6 looking for comments from you, the public, to give us your input
 7 because I'm sure there's stuff that we missed when we were looking
 8 at those areas.

9 It's the same thing with the closing of roads. Some of the
 10 roads that we proposed to close are in areas where the public
 11 doesn't have access to those roads. And so it creates an exclusive
 12 use for the neighboring landowner to come in and use the refuge,
 13 which is not fair to the public.

14 And so some of our road closures are hoping to alleviate that
 15 situation. Others are to expand continuous blocks of habitat to
 16 allow wildlife to move freely from area to area.

17 And then the other comments we've heard quite a bit about is
 18 bison and bison restoration.

19 And what we chose to do in the plan is say that we would suppor
 20 Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, if they brought forth a proposal
 21 to reintroduce bison somewhere in and around the refuge, that we
 22 work cooperatively with them in seeing in what role the Fish and
 23 Wildlife Service could assist in that process. But we weren't going
 24 to initiate a bison restoration project on our own. We feel that we
 25 need the State to step up and to do that as a State-managed wildlife

Page 12

1 decisions. So I would please plan to have your comments submitted
 2 by that November 16th.

3 So that's it. We're going to take a few minutes and set up the
 4 podium here, and then turn to over to Mimi to call the speakers up.
 5 (Recess taken.)

6 MIMI: So here's how Part Two is going to work. We're going to
 7 limit everybody to three minutes. I'm going to call folks off the
 8 list. We will go in order. I'll call the next person, and also
 9 announce who's on deck, so you can be ready to go.

10 We're going to be strict about the three minutes. I have some
 11 timecards here, so I will let you know when you have one minute
 12 left, 20 seconds left, and when time's up.

13 We just ask that you refrain from applause or cheering, so
 14 things can run smoothly and respect one other's opinions.

15 If you do just have a question, we urge you to come up and ask
 16 your question. These guys back here: Bill, Laurie and Barren will
 17 be taking notes.

18 And then we'll need about 15 minutes at the end and they will
 19 respond to all the questions that they have received.

20 So with that -- and the first name I can't read very well -- I
 21 think it's Derrick -- Dyrck VanHyning with Dan Bennett on deck.

22 One more thing, will you please state your name. And if it's a
 23 tricky spelling, spell it for our recorder.

24 MR. VanHYNING: My name is Dyrck VanHyning from Great Falls
 25 I'm a food broker -- spelled D-y-r-c-k VanHyning.

Page 13

1 Now that will be your toughest name for the evening. So thank
 2 you for coming to Great Falls. I have basically two questions and
 3 they revolve around -- the first one prescriptive grazing and the
 4 second one is the wilderness study areas.
 5 And I'm an interested public in the Upper Missouri River Breaks
 6 National Monument on grazing. And I -- in the monument, I work o
 7 grazing issues and oil and gas.
 8 And if I was a permittee, I guess, at this point, I do not
 9 understand prescriptive grazing because if I'm running so many head
 10 of cattle, and I have a plan -- this plan always will be changed
 11 based on the rainfall. But when I put cattle in a certain pasture
 12 and when I pull them out and so forth, and I know that long in
 13 advance, but it's still based on the rainfall.
 14 But on prescriptive grazing, I understand your example, but I
 15 don't know that I'm going to put my cattle on a particular piece of
 16 land, I would think, until after the rainfall.
 17 So that's my first question: How would I know in advance that
 18 I'm not going to have to find additional pasture.
 19 And the second question is on the WSA's. And I have read
 20 through page 139. I think it's written well. I think it's very
 21 easy to understand. And I love your photos.
 22 These WSA's were set by Congress. How is this process going to
 23 eliminate and add to certain areas?
 24 And that's the end of my questions.
 25 MIMI: Dan Bennett with Wes on deck.

Page 15

1 And for grassland birds, that would be about the last straw.
 2 So I would appreciate if someone could address at the end of
 3 this what the thinking is on how we're going to benefit grasslands
 4 bird here and keep them alive.
 5 Thank you.
 6 MIMI: Wes and Art on deck.
 7 MR. MURRAY: My name is Wes Murray, M-u-r-r-a-y.
 8 And I come to you tonight as a sportsman who has been in the
 9 CM Russell for 40 years. I've been there when CM Russell cow rang
 10 was administered by the BLM, and one of those individuals that
 11 fought hard to see that the US Fish and Wildlife Service would take
 12 control of it, and it would be manages as a wildlife area. And this
 13 is very important.
 14 Also, one of those people that back in the 70's sat down with
 15 the maps and looked at it, came up with these wilderness areas, and
 16 I cannot support any proposal that would remove any of the areas.
 17 I do really appreciate the additions that have been made. We
 18 looked and studied to see what would be the best. Part of that came
 19 from the tremendous pressure that has been put on the area. In the
 20 50's an elk herd was transferred from Glacier, from Seeley, from
 21 Yellowstone in the Gardiner area into the CM Russell. It was done
 22 by private individuals with the hope of -- it would flourish in that
 23 area.
 24 Today we have a flourishing elk herd, but that elk herd is
 25 seeing tremendous pressure off and on. And part of the reason we

Page 14

1 MR. BENNETT: My name is Dan Bennett. Common spelling: two N
 2 and two T's.
 3 I'm the conservation chair for the Upper Missouri Audubon
 4 Society in Great Falls.
 5 I want to confine my comments tonight to the state of grassland
 6 birds which the whole world's become a population state for those,
 7 and they're starting to drop into the threatened and endangered
 8 process, which has gotten them nowhere because there's no room for
 9 them in that process.
 10 So there's a couple of factors that look good to us in this
 11 plan, that will affect grasslands habitat. Those are the grazing
 12 and prescriptive burning, which we were thrilled to see those, and
 13 never thought we'd use a word like that in a place like this, but it
 14 is something new and just great.
 15 The factors that bother us is that it doesn't seem like the
 16 preferred alternative is going to do much for rodent citizens.
 17 We're baffled by the lack of inclusion of all of the wilderness
 18 study areas. That seemed to be to us a no-brainer as far as keeping
 19 them as far as habitat goes. It's cheap and easy to keep
 20 fragmentation out of it.
 21 And the last is oil and gas development, which would be a
 22 disaster. I know that that decision is not being made now. But
 23 we've been in enough places where that's gone through, and listened
 24 to all the mitigation stuff from the industry -- never yet have we
 25 seen any way to mitigate against the fragmentation that this causes.

Page 16

1 went with the wilderness study areas, trying to relieve some of the
 2 road pressure that was on there.
 3 In the 70's in the early 70's there were 200 bow hunters in the
 4 state of Montana. And within a couple years that became 2,000. I
 5 think we have 14,000 bow hunters in the state of Montana now.
 6 The pressure from the open roads -- prior to what the Fish and
 7 Wildlife Service -- has caused those elk herds to shift. There
 8 never used to be elk on the south side of the river. There was not
 9 a sustainable herd in the Bear Paws. Those elk were put out of the
 10 range by pressure.
 11 So anything -- I totally support the road closures in Plan B.
 12 It's a tremendous asset to the wildlife range if we can continue and
 13 support that.
 14 You know, prescriptive grazing is great if we can work it out.
 15 I know it's still an economical factor. And it will have an
 16 economical impact on the area.
 17 I am very concerned on the issue of the prescriptive burning.
 18 There are certain pockets in the refuge that if you were to destroy
 19 that area and those travel ways, you would cut the movement of th
 20 elk.
 21 There was a fire in the early 2000's on the CK Ridge coming ou
 22 the Nicholls Coulee. Prior to that fire, there were elk everywhere
 23 on that area.
 24 Since that fire, there's no elk on that area -- never seen an
 25 elk in that ridge.

Page 17

1 So I would like to say if we can't, you know, go with something
 2 like Plan B, that we at least get to Plan A where we are right now.
 3 Thank you.
 4 MIMI: Aart and Bob Nicholson on deck.
 5 MR. DOLMAN: Good evening. My name is Aart Dolman. A-a-r
 6 D-o-l-m-a-n. And that's -- I'm Dutch and an American citizen.
 7 But, also, I'd like to have some questions because -- pertaining
 8 to water use and watercraft. I did not see too much of this in the
 9 plan.
 10 But I would like to be clear that I floated the Missouri River
 11 from Fort Peck all the way here into Great Falls and different parts
 12 since 1969.
 13 And when I first came to this area, I was a young professor of
 14 history so I'd like to identify myself on that point.
 15 And the question that I have pertaining to the uses of water
 16 craft is that I've noticed over the years the multiplication, you
 17 know, the tripling or quadrupling, what it is, of water usage and
 18 also boats that are getting faster and faster, and creating,
 19 therefore, a greater wake, and interferes certainly with not only
 20 with the river integrity, but also with the neighboring vegetation
 21 integrity of its shore.
 22 So, therefore, my question is directed this way: Does the US
 23 Fish and Wildlife Service, you know, have a management
 24 responsibility on the river?
 25 And if so, you know, where does it go from Fort Peck, and how is

Page 19

1 MIMI: Mark with Leurie on deck.
 2 MR. GOOD: My name is Mark Good. No E on the end, just plar
 3 Good -- not that Good.
 4 Anyway, you know, I talk to people. It seems like there's
 5 always a lot of confusion about what -- how National Wildlife Refug
 6 is different from other public lands, or how they're managed
 7 differently.
 8 And I think, in listening to you, and reading, it seems like it
 9 is pretty clear. The guiding principal, management, and that is
 10 that it's in about enhancement and protection of wildlife. And that
 11 mission seems pretty clear.
 12 While commercial and recreational use is allowed on the refuge,
 13 prior uses include hunting, fishing, wildlife observation,
 14 photography, environmental education, and interpretation.
 15 And other uses such as camping, outfitting, livestock grazing,
 16 bicycling, horseback riding, and motorized vehicle use are all
 17 secondary, and only allowed where they are compatible with the
 18 primary mission of the refuge.
 19 Now I know that there are some who wish it were otherwise, who,
 20 I think, there's a few who probably wish the whole refuge would just
 21 go away. But that's not going to happen. And that's the way it is,
 22 so I think it's through that lens, that mission, that you've got
 23 that those decisions ought to follow.
 24 So let me go on and say something about wilderness. I think
 25 it's often that our high plains are characterized as being boring or

Page 18

1 it related to the riparian areas.
 2 My second question is are there any statistics that is recorded
 3 on the usage of river boats on the river? Do you keep a head count
 4 or watercraft count? Is that increasing or is that decreasing?
 5 And my final question is Did the draft plan address the impacts
 6 from motorized watercraft? Because this is also the type of
 7 watercraft -- is also changing very drastically as our technology
 8 changes.
 9 And when I first started out, a person was really glad to do
 10 this with a screw propeller. And now we have jet boats, which not
 11 only increasing the speed, but also the size of the watercraft that
 12 they carry, ATV's on, and landing on the shore, and use that land,
 13 also. And that has a great impact.
 14 I thank you very much for the time and for my questions.
 15 MIMI: Bob and Mark on deck.
 16 MR. NICHOLSON: I'm Bob Nicholson, N-i-c-h-o-l-s-o-n, and I'n
 17 a member of the Missouri Wilderness Association.
 18 I didn't get a chance to read the environmental impact statement
 19 or the draft plan, but part of my question has been answered, but
 20 it's been mentioned in there about the road density in the refuge,
 21 which I gather is 670 miles. And then Plan B, I see they're going
 22 to eliminate 106 miles.
 23 The rest of my question is How do you plan to manage off-road
 24 vehicle use.
 25 Thank you.

Page 20

1 no monotonous or empty, but I think anybody that spends time in the
 2 refuges, certainly knows that they're not boring, not monotonous, in
 3 fact, quite diverse.
 4 And I know with the dam, certainly it is not the landscape that
 5 Lewis and Clark saw. And it's not teeming with wildlife in the same
 6 way it was when they came through, but that landscape is still vast
 7 and so impressive. And I think with the restoration of wildlife
 8 that has occurred over the years, decades, that there just isn't
 9 anything like it in, I think, the eastern half of the state.
 10 And I know people generally don't associate wilderness areas
 11 with prairies, but -- and they are under-representative in the whole
 12 wilderness system. But I think as writer Wallace Stegner said, "The
 13 vanishing prairie is as good a place as any for the wilderness
 14 experience to happen;" and "is as worth preserving for the
 15 wilderness idea as the alpine forest."
 16 So I just want to make the point that I think designating
 17 wilderness within the refuge reenforces that mission of the refuge
 18 by providing blocks of undisturbed land and quality of habitat.
 19 And I think it also provided security for big game and helps to
 20 keep wildlife within the refuge.
 21 I know there have been concerns by some of the landowners about
 22 the wildlife going outside the refuge.
 23 I think all the areas that -- within the refuge that are
 24 proposed are -- they are all small, and they're all -- most all
 25 pretty equally accessible. At least the ones I have been to.

Page 21

1 But I am concerned, though, as I mentioned this before about the
 2 three proposed areas that be being eliminated because I think they
 3 all fit the criteria, in size and naturalness and primitive
 4 character, and human activities are there -- are pretty negligible,
 5 and certainly want to provide that sense of solitude.
 6 So I just ask you to reconsider, and I think it's -- think about
 7 how to make this plan work for the communities and for the people
 8 using them, but I think that the wilderness part of it fits that
 9 mission. Thanks.
 10 MIMI: Laurie. Mel on deck.
 11 MS. RILEY: My name is Laurie Riley. Laurie is spelled
 12 L-a-u-r-i-e. Riley is R-i-l-e-y.
 13 I'm representing the Missouri River Conservation District
 14 Council.
 15 First of all, I'd like to say congratulations on a huge effort.
 16 It certainly is a very comprehensive document. And it's -- clearly
 17 has required thousands of hours of work and research. And we're
 18 very appreciative of the work that's gone into the plan.
 19 I have not read the entire document. I'm only, I would say,
 20 well into Chapter Four.
 21 And tonight I have more of a question than I do a comment. And
 22 it could be that the question is answered later in the document and
 23 I just haven't gotten there yet.
 24 My question involves the discussion and use of sentinel plants
 25 and monitoring. And the Council has some concerns about monitorin

Page 23

1 legitimate comment here, is that the CMR is the only area of public
 2 land that are managed for wildlife in this region, and we don't want
 3 to see the CMR become an island. But it's a possibility that it
 4 could become an island because the BLM does manage for multiple
 5 uses, and it is possible that oil and gas development could come
 6 close to the CMR and affect the wildlife in the CMR.
 7 So the point that I wanted to make is that the CMR is an
 8 absolute gem. It's a gem for Montana. It's a gem for the United
 9 States. And it's a gem world-wide in terms of prairie conservation.
 10 And I hope that in your planning efforts you consider the
 11 impacts that other land management agencies and private landowner
 12 may make that would affect the resource down the line.
 13 So, thanks again for all your efforts on this work and for
 14 bringing me to Great Falls.
 15 MIMI: Thanks Janelle. Jim with Randy on deck.
 16 MR. McCOLLUM: My name is Jim McCollum, M-c-C-o-l-l-u-m
 17 And like several of these folks, I don't have any comments. I
 18 have some questions.
 19 I guess one comment, I think it would be good if you would
 20 address this oil and gas issue. Although it's not a part of the
 21 CCP, if you can explain to folks here what the status is of that
 22 because this article in the paper today made it look like it's
 23 something that needs to be worked on, and maybe you can clear that
 24 up.
 25 The other things I've got are sort of minor issues, but just in

Page 22

1 using sentinel plants. And some of these concerns involve who
 2 developed the protocol and where else is it being used. Are there
 3 results of the protocol and are those results long-term. Has the
 4 system of using sentinel plants for monitoring been peer-reviewed.
 5 And is there a scientific basis for understanding the historical
 6 presence of the selective plants -- listed sentinel plants -- in the
 7 document.
 8 And there are widely accepted monitoring protocols and practices
 9 developed by the NRCS and the Society of Range Management. And I'm
 10 not familiar with whether or not the way sentinel plants are being
 11 used in those plan are consistent with those protocols. And I'm not
 12 a range specialist, and I could be wrong.
 13 So these are questions more than comment.
 14 And thank you for your time.
 15 MIMI: Janelle with Jim on deck.
 16 MS. HOLDEN: Janelle Holden, J-a-n-e-l-l-e H-o-l-d-e-n,
 17 Wilderness Society.
 18 And I'm tour with these guys, too, so they've heard me -- this
 19 is the third time. So bear with me.
 20 So today I had an editorial in the newspaper, and I'm a little
 21 worried that the headline might have confused some folks about oil
 22 and gas involvement in the refuge, so I want to make sure we
 23 understand that the mineral withdrawal until 2013 is a separate
 24 process and is not part of the CCP.
 25 The point that I was trying to make, which I think is a

Page 24

1 thumbing quickly through the EIS here the last few days -- I haven't
 2 had time to read it in detail -- but these are sort of technical
 3 details that I'm interested in finding out.
 4 There's one place on page 153 where it talks about shed and/or
 5 collecting being prohibited under Alternative A, but is not
 6 mentioned in any of the other alternatives.
 7 And I would like to know whether -- whether this is going to be
 8 continued as it is now. And if it is, what is the justification for
 9 prohibiting antler collecting on the refuge.
 10 What advantage or -- for wildlife -- or disadvantage for
 11 wildlife do you garner by prohibiting antler collecting.
 12 On page 155 there is a comment about the use of ATV's. And if
 13 their use becomes -- if there's increasing use, you'll begin
 14 monitoring that use for possible changes.
 15 And I wasn't -- I'm interested in learning what your thinking is
 16 in that regard. ATV's are legal motor vehicles on public roads, on
 17 most public roads, in the state of Montana. And I'm wondering how
 18 you're talking about addressing some change possibly in the future
 19 regarding ATV's.
 20 I didn't mark down the page number, but anyhow, in the section
 21 where you talk about refuge operations and how many staff you think
 22 you'll need in the future to carry out the plan, I didn't see any
 23 mention, like I said I haven't read the whole EIS, but didn't see
 24 any mention of the use of volunteers.
 25 And this is a personal perspective. But I think that over the

Page 25

1 next several years, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and all federal
 2 agencies, are going to be facing extraordinary pressures from a
 3 budgetary standpoint.
 4 And I think you need to consider how you would use citizen
 5 volunteers to accomplish some of your work in the future, what kin
 6 of things the public could help you on, and to get more volunteer
 7 involvement on carrying out refuge programs.
 8 And I may have some more questions once you start answering
 9 these that have been given to you.
 10 Thanks.
 11 MIMI: Thanks, Jim. Randy?
 12 MR. GRAY: My name is Randy Gray. That's with a G-r-a-y as
 13 opposed to -e-y.
 14 I'm a retired lawyer from Great Falls here. Was former mayor of
 15 the Great Falls. Served several terms on the BLM RAC for North
 16 Central Montana. I'm currently a member of the National Advisory
 17 Board for American Prairie Foundation.
 18 Tonight I'm wearing a hat on behalf of myself and my kids. I
 19 don't represent any of the previous mentioned affiliations. And
 20 maybe representing my as yet unborn grandchildren if I'm lucky.
 21 I guess I commend the Agency for coming up with the process
 22 you've come up with, and certainly the Preferred Plan B.
 23 I echo Mark Good's comments about the importance to note that
 24 the Agency, this Agency, Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Refuge
 25 Service of the United States, the mission of that agency and those

Page 27

1 more bison being on that landscape.
 2 I think the importance of this whole concept here, as I think
 3 the Agency has it right, I see the refuge in this case using cattle
 4 rather than cattle using the refuge. And I think that should be a
 5 motto that you should take a look at your future management with
 6 because I think you're on the right track doing that.
 7 I do note, and I've not gone through with a fine-tooth comb, but
 8 I would sure like there to be some comment about aggressive weed
 9 management should be part of what's being looked at in the overall
 10 management plan for the next 15 years.
 11 And on a personal note, I do note that this last, well, about
 12 ten days ago, my wife and I went out to the Slippery End for the
 13 third year in a row, slept in my camper in the back of our pickup,
 14 and listened to that wonderful elk bugling occurring all night long.
 15 Over the course of my time with the American Prairie Foundation
 16 I have literally taken hundreds of visitors from this country and
 17 elsewhere to this landscape out there. And the gem that we have,
 18 the unbroken prairie that you are the heart of out there, is
 19 important for future generations of all Americans.
 20 Thank you.
 21 MIMI: Thanks, Randy.
 22 Randy was the last one on my list, but does anybody else have a
 23 comment? Yeah, come on up.
 24 MS. BERNARD: My name is Joanne, J-o-a-n-n-e Bernard,
 25 B-e-r-n-a-r-d.

Page 26

1 refuges is to protect and enhance wildlife. And they're not
 2 conflicted with the problems that conflict the US Forest Service and
 3 BLM, which are multiple-use agencies. I think that's an important
 4 ground rule for the public to understand what's happening here.
 5 I generally support the overarching concept of reintroducing
 6 prescriptive grazing, so long as it's coupled with prescriptive
 7 fire. And I think over time, that those two tools, used in
 8 conjunction, can mimic the process that occurred geologically and
 9 historically out there of the ungulate species of bison, a split
 10 hooved critter, in conjunction with fire, on that particular prairie
 11 landscape.
 12 So over time, I think as cattle are managed with more
 13 prescriptive use and as fire is managed with more prescriptive use,
 14 those two tools can be a proxy for what natural conditions were out
 15 there.
 16 And I mention that in particular because over time -- this plan
 17 will be in effect for 15 years -- but we have to look out beyond 15
 18 years, whatever the plan might be now -- over time I would encouragi
 19 the reintroduction of bison species. I certainly agree that the
 20 state Fish, Wildlife and Parks should be principal involved with
 21 that, probably should be even the agency reintroducing those.
 22 But over time, over the next four or five generations, or excuse
 23 me, decades, I think there should be bison back on that landscape,
 24 and using ungulates and cattle right now in conjunction with fire
 25 can proximate -- can be the proxy for preparing that landscape for

Page 28

1 And I'm a little short so I'll hold onto this. Anyway, I just
 2 want to thank you for coming, and putting so much effort into this,
 3 because it is, as many others have said, a gem. So I want to say
 4 that I am for Alternative B because of the very title of this
 5 management area, which is wildlife refuge.
 6 I do have a question. And you did kind of touch on it a bit
 7 earlier, but most of us think of wildlife as the game animals or
 8 birds. And I know that the refuge is way more than that.
 9 So I am hoping, as you have said, that we also include other
 10 species, other non-game species, in particular the prairie dog
 11 areas.
 12 I don't know how many of them are there now or how many ther
 13 might be, but it would certainly contribute to the health of the
 14 wildlife refuge.
 15 I also want to make a comment about the difference between
 16 cattle grazing and buffalo grazing. I'm not totally familiar with
 17 this on hand, but I have heard that buffalo do a whole lot more
 18 seeding of grass than cattle do, just because of their hoof shape,
 19 and also their activity. Cattle are very slow moving and buffalo
 20 can tear things up a bit, which seeds grass a lot easier.
 21 So anyway, I just wanted you to know that I'm interested in both
 22 of those things.
 23 Thank you.
 24 MIMI: Anybody else? Okay. I'll turn it to Barron and Bill to
 25 respond to questions.

Page 29

1 MR. CRAWFORD: We tag team these question and answers. I tal
 2 the softball ones, and Bill takes the hard ones. So that's the
 3 privilege the being manager.
 4 Prescriptive grazing. Do not understand how it could impact
 5 permittees need to know in advance.
 6 That is something that we're definitely aware of. And as part
 7 of this CCP process, we're going to be developing kind of this
 8 umbrella document that introduces this broad concept for how we're
 9 going to manage the landscape. And we actually get down to putting
 10 actions on the ground. We spell that out in what's called a Habitat
 11 Management Plan. And right now under the '86 EIS, we have 65
 12 individual habitat management plans. And those management plans
 13 were developed in concert with the permittees that were grazing on
 14 those 65 habitat units. So basically the refuge sat down with those
 15 permittees and said, you know, the reductions that we feel we need to
 16 make in order to benefit wildlife, how can we fit this into your
 17 operation, or how can we accommodate you in your operation.
 18 We will go through this same provides once this CCP is finalized
 19 and we start developing those individual habitat management plans.
 20 We'll sit down. We'll look at the area -- it won't be 65 units. It
 21 will be something larger. So we'll have multiple permittees that
 22 we'll be working with. And we'll basically say, you know, in this
 23 area, this is what we want to do. This is how we see using cattle
 24 as a management tool to accomplish that. How can you guys help us
 25 do that.

Page 30

1 And there's going to be some folks that are very locked into
 2 that cow/calf operation that are going to have a very hard time
 3 adapting and meeting, you know, maybe our needs. And there's going
 4 to be other folks that are going to have the flexibility that may be
 5 running a yearling herd that can have a lot more flexibility and
 6 bring animals in for some period of time and take them out.
 7 So that's going to be a real challenge for the staff as we start
 8 developing those HMP's to be working with those individuals and
 9 making sure that we're not impacting them.
 10 The one method that we have been using here for the past ten
 11 years, as those ranches sell to a non-family member, we're holding
 12 those permits, so we have about 35 percent of the refuge right now
 13 that we have enrolled in a prescriptive grazing program.
 14 And we're using that to move some permittees around to help
 15 benefit the habitat in those areas that have been grazed the same
 16 way year after year after year.
 17 And so that's probably a strategy that we'll continue to employ
 18 as these ranchers sell to a non-family member. We'll be holding
 19 those permits, creating those vacate habitat units, rolling those
 20 into prescriptive grazing. And so it won't be so much of an impact
 21 on the current permittee -- that we'll have areas available.
 22 Heard a comment or question how are we going to benefit
 23 grasslands birds.
 24 We have a new position on the refuge. We have an individual
 25 that has moved into kind of a bird biologist's position. She has

Page 31

1 done quite a bit of bird work in Alaska, is very interested in
 2 birds, works with the Audubon group quite often. Is kind of
 3 formulating how she's going to fulfill her new role. We did look at
 4 grassland bird species as being an important part of this plan.
 5 A lot of the fire and grazing was developed to try to restore
 6 biological diversity, not only of the plants, but also the insects
 7 that rely upon those plants, and then they will also attract the
 8 various bird species.
 9 You got a whole suite out there. You've got birds that prefer,
 10 you know, bare ground to birds that prefer very thick cover.
 11 And so the idea is to try to create that gradient of habitat
 12 types across the refuge so you meet the needs of all the various
 13 bird species.
 14 We're also going to look at not only the breeding birds, but the
 15 migrant birds as well. That river corridor provides important
 16 habitat for a lot of migratory bird species. We don't have a lot of
 17 information on that, so we're going to spend quite a bit of time
 18 looking at those corridors and determining, you know, how importar
 19 they are to birds moving up and down that river.
 20 Management responsibility on the river, how it relates to
 21 riparian. Does the plan address impact on boat use.
 22 MR. BERG: I told you. I could use a little forewarning.
 23 This came up during our scoping meeting. And it's one of the
 24 things we considered as part of this plan. We're not quite to the
 25 stage where we can flat out say that there are impacts occurring

Page 32

1 from boat use on the river.
 2 But we have seen that same increase that the one gentleman
 3 referred to in the last 15, 20 years. The boat size has increased
 4 significantly. The river is not any kind of a deterrent anymore to
 5 boat use. It used to be upper end of reservoir was kind of a delta,
 6 where it was shallow and things. Now with the jet boats that they
 7 have, it's not a deterrent.
 8 So what our plan is to do, and we'll probably have to do a
 9 little bit better job of explaining this in the document, is not
 10 having the data to make that determination, not only from a use
 11 standpoint, but also the impacts it might have on wildlife.
 12 We're proposing in the future to adopt a monitoring system to
 13 see what kind of use we do have. We've done some preliminary wor
 14 with cameras, trying to put those in strategic locations so we can
 15 identify not only the numbers of boats, but the size, and things
 16 like that.
 17 We've heard a few complaints from hunters that hunt the river
 18 bottoms, camp on the river bottoms, those kind of things, where
 19 these big jet boats will actually disturb game at times when they're
 20 being hunted, that they notice. So it's a use that we're going to
 21 look into so -- we're just not there yet as far as documented impact
 22 so --
 23 MR. CRAWFORD: Page 232 talks about boat use if you're
 24 interested in the plan.
 25 MR. BERG: I thought I'd go right on to the mineral withdrawal.

Page 33

1 MR. CRAWFORD: Management of ATV's and then oil and gas.
 2 MR. BERG: Currently on the refuge, ORV's are allowed on
 3 numbered routes only. And they have to be street legal. So it's no
 4 different than in the town of Great Falls here. And I assume that's
 5 a legitimate or similar law where if it's street legal, as a
 6 motorcycle would be, with a license plate, brake lights, I think
 7 some form of signal for left and right, and I think rearview mirror,
 8 those vehicles are also allowed on numbered routes, as are pickups,
 9 two-wheel drive and four-wheel drive, and so forth.
 10 Fifteen years ago or so, we saw a tremendous amount of off-road
 11 use, not only from ATV's but pickups. Over the years we've been
 12 fairly aggressive at managing that kind of use. We enforce our
 13 off-road regulations pretty hard. And we think it's in check pretty
 14 good right now. We don't have any areas where ATV's or ORV's can be
 15 used anywhere off-road. It's all the numbered trail system.
 16 The only exception to that is on the ice at Fort Peck Lake in
 17 the wintertime. We do allow snowmobiles and four-wheelers to travel
 18 anywhere on that lake surface, and most of it's related to ice
 19 fishing.
 20 So even though we see an increase in number of ATV's that
 21 hunter's and recreationists use in the Breaks, most of it's
 22 replacing what they would have used in a pickup or, you know, in the
 23 past. So we haven't seen the impact from it like some of the other
 24 agencies have, you know, in the mountains, or, like, off-road use on
 25 BLM.

Page 35

1 will be made whether or not from a government agency standpoint we
 2 should go in and develop those minerals so they're not being taken
 3 by a private entity on the outside.
 4 And we have that occurring on some refuges, especially in
 5 Louisiana, North Dakota, and some of those places. But one of the
 6 things that's helping us is the ability to indirect drill nowadays,
 7 so there's a potential if, say, for example, somebody came right up
 8 to our boundary and sunk a well on a private land that was tapping
 9 an oil field that extended out onto the refuge, but they were
 10 actually draining federal minerals off the federal estate, the
 11 potential or the technology is there to where we could probably
 12 develop those same federal minerals off-site and not impact the
 13 refuge itself.
 14 But getting back to Janelle's comment that the BLM is
 15 considering leasing federal minerals immediately adjacent to CMR an
 16 the surrounding area, you know, that's a valid concern.
 17 If you look at Phillips County, it's probably the hottest gas
 18 and natural gas field in Montana right now. Huge number of wells.
 19 It's not in the southern part of the county where it affects the
 20 refuges as much as it is in the north. But it could come that way.
 21 The one thing we have seen is probably five years ago, the BLM
 22 was proposing to lease several thousands acres in Garfield County.
 23 There's kind of a potential vein that runs northwest/southeast, kind
 24 of towards Hacksbee Point/Hell Creek to the southeast. And at that
 25 time, the BLM chose not to lease those potential minerals because of

Page 34

1 But the thing that we're seeing, even with those agencies, you
 2 know, they're realizing or starting to see the impact of unregulated
 3 use and, for example, the ORV regs that the BLM is enforcing in the
 4 state here now is kind of addressing a similar problem to what we
 5 had 15 years ago so --
 6 And the next one I had down was the mineral withdrawal issue or
 7 the oil and gas development that Janelle brought up.
 8 In 1992, we went through a formal mineral withdrawal process.
 9 And that addressed locatable minerals specifically, which aren't oil
 10 and gas. It's more like mining type operations: Gold, diamonds,
 11 gravel, things like that. That's a formal process that agencies
 12 have to go through to withdraw the availability of those public
 13 domain lands to somebody coming in and developing those minerals.
 14 It basically takes the refuge off the table when it comes to
 15 somebody applying for a mineral withdrawal permit on the refuge. W
 16 are going through the renewal process as we speak, and my thought is
 17 it isn't as much of an issue as some people would think it is.
 18 It's a process we went through before and didn't have a whole
 19 lot of controversy with it. And bottom line is there isn't a whole
 20 lot of potential locatable minerals in those soil types out there --
 21 even way deep in the horizon. So we don't think that's going to be
 22 an issue in the future.
 23 In regards to oil and gas, my understanding of the policy today
 24 is if the federal government determines that there's drainage
 25 occurring on federal minerals, that we own oil and gas, the decision

Page 36

1 the proximity to the refuge, and some of the other resource values
 2 that are there, paleo, the Breaks habitat, things like that, so --
 3 Once in a while we have an ability to influence those decisions,
 4 even know it doesn't directly affect the lands we manage.
 5 So I think that kind of hit where you are coming from.
 6 MR. CRAWFORD: Do the shed antlers.
 7 MR. BERG: Shed antlers. All right. I wasn't where you're
 8 coming from there, Jim, but --
 9 MR. McCOLLUM: I'm not an antler picker, but I know a lot o
 10 people who are.
 11 MR. BERG: Yeah, It was our mistake not putting it in all the
 12 alternatives.
 13 If you're familiar with refuges, they're more restrictive than
 14 other public lands. And part of the reason is because we've got a
 15 real definitive mission. There isn't anything that you can pick up
 16 on a refuge legally, whether it's a piece of driftwood, an antler,
 17 paleo, you know, dinosaur bone, or something like that.
 18 On refuges, all those things are owned by the government. And
 19 it's not legally -- legal to pick those up, unless specifically
 20 authorized.
 21 We treat antlers the same way. Why do we think antlers are
 22 important to the ecosystem out there? And I'm sure a lot of you
 23 have seen it, but it's one of those things that's hard to quantify,
 24 but you ever find an antler that's been on the ground for a year or
 25 two, pretty obvious what's going on with that antler. Critters are

Page 37

1 chewing on it, whether it's mice or squirrels, or whatever. So
 2 we've kind of taken the position that that stuff cycles back through
 3 into the ecosystem, and it's good for it.
 4 But the other, probably bigger reason we don't allow it, is the
 5 timing of the year when most of that activity occurs. Springtime,
 6 the animals are stressed already, coming out of the winter. You've
 7 got some calving going on or fawns being born, so it's something we
 8 don't allow, and don't plan to in the future.
 9 Some refuges do. Some game management areas allow it, as we
 10 all know. But they time it so it doesn't impact, you know, the main
 11 purpose of the place.
 12 MR. CRAWFORD: Bob, I'm going to put you on notice and I'm
 13 giving the microphone to you next, you're going to answer sentinel
 14 plant questions, so get your thinking cap on.
 15 We had one other comment concerning proposed wilderness areas
 16 set by Congress, and how can we add and eliminate.
 17 There's two types of wilderness on CMR. We have designated
 18 wilderness, which is the UL Bend, and that's designated by Congress.
 19 Congress passed a law that says this area will be set aside as
 20 wilderness and brought into the wilderness preservation system.
 21 The remaining 15 areas on the refuge are called proposed
 22 wilderness areas. Okay. Proposed wilderness areas are those areas
 23 that have been identified by the Agency, in this case the Fish and
 24 Wildlife Service, that they meet the wilderness characteristics as
 25 outlined by the Wilderness Act.

Page 39

1 then it goes to the Secretary; and the Secretary again says, I agree
 2 or I disagree.
 3 So that's how the process works. Congressionally designated
 4 wilderness, only Congress can take that away.
 5 Proposed wilderness, the Agency makes recommendations, and
 6 the Secretary has the final say. So I hope that clears up that
 7 point.
 8 The other question that we had was concerning sentinel plant
 9 monitoring, the peer-review, the science behind it, and its relation
 10 to some of the other range monitoring techniques.
 11 And so this is Bob Skinner. Bob's our habitat biologist, and
 12 has been working on this for the past several years, so --
 13 MR. SKINNER: I guess the first thing to clear up about that
 14 would be that we are a single-purpose agency, and it is wildlife
 15 habitat and management. And so, we aren't necessarily -- don't feel
 16 like we should manage the land the same way a multiple-use agency
 17 range lands or ranch managed lands for.
 18 So we are looking at plants. We called them sentinel plants --
 19 was our name -- they are also called indicator plants and other
 20 terms for these.
 21 But these are plants that are first to vanish when ecological
 22 processes change from their evolutionary combination.
 23 So this is like the historic fire/grazing interaction that
 24 occurred, and this has changed. And certain plants are among the
 25 first to vanish. And they're sentinels or indicators.

Page 38

1 We went ahead and we proposed them to our agency in
 2 Washington, D.C., our director said, yes, I concur these areas
 3 should be considered for adding into the wilderness preservation
 4 system.
 5 It then went to the Secretary of the Interior, the Secretary
 6 then said, yes, I concur these areas should be added into the
 7 wilderness preservation system.
 8 And that's where they sit until Congress then acts on it by
 9 passing a law, bringing them into the wilderness system.
 10 So during that time when they've been approved by our Agency
 11 and by the Secretary's office, they're to be evaluated every now and
 12 then. And what the Service has decided is we'll evaluate those
 13 areas every 15 years when you do a CCP to make sure they're still
 14 meeting those wilderness characteristics.
 15 So these areas that we're proposing to add, we'll have to go
 16 through that process again, and we'll send the recommendation to our
 17 director; our director will either say yes, I approve, or, no, I
 18 deny; if they say that they approve, it then goes to the Secretary's
 19 desk; the secretary will then say, yes, I agree or I disagree; if
 20 they agree, then they sit there as proposed wilderness waiting on
 21 Congress to take action.
 22 The same process will be used if we decide to eliminate a
 23 proposed wilderness of the area. We'll send that recommendation to
 24 the director; the director will say yes, I agree, or I disagree; if
 25 they disagree, then it stays as proposed wilderness. If they agree,

Page 40

1 And if you can restore those processes to the point they're
 2 doing well again, then other plants tend to follow.
 3 And so we don't necessarily feel that range practices are
 4 appropriate in all cases for us. And we are working on this with a
 5 team of people that includes some range folks to publish our
 6 particular version of this indicator plant.
 7 It is an old concept. Alda Leopold called them diagnosis plants,
 8 said every area has plants that are diagnostic. And that would be
 9 another good name for them. And this is a long topic so that's all
 10 I can say at the moment.
 11 MR. CRAWFORD: I think we covered all the questions. I will
 12 turn it back to Mimi.
 13 We'll be sticking around if folks want to come up and talk to us
 14 one-on-one.
 15 You heard from Bob, our habitat biologist. We've got Randy
 16 Matchett in the back. He's our senior wildlife biologist. Dan
 17 Harold's next to him. He's a biologist out of Sand Creek. Matt
 18 deRosier is a station manager at Sand Creek. Nathan Hawkaluk is
 19 station manager at Jordan.
 20 Who else is here? Joanne, in cognito. Joanne is a biologist in
 21 our Lewistown office. So quite a few folks here. Grab one of them
 22 if you've got questions.
 23 And thanks again for everybody coming out.
 24 MIMI: That's all I have, too.
 25 (Meeting adjourned)

1 CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

2 BE IT KNOWN that I, Anne Perron, RPR, a duly appointed, qualified and
3 acting Court Reporter and Notary Public in and for the State of Montana,
4 do hereby attest as follows:

5 That I was duly authorized to and did report the public hearing of in
6 Great Falls for the CM Russell Refuge CCP;

7 That the foregoing pages of this transcript constitute a true and
8 accurate transcription of my stenotype notes of the comments of said
9 meeting.

10 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 19th day of
11 October, 2010.

12

13

14

15

16

Anne Perron, RPR
Agamenoni & Frank
603 Strain Building
Great Falls, MT 59401
(406) 727-7272

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

BEFORE THE
 U. S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE
 UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

PUBLIC HEARING
 DRAFT COMPREHENSIVE CONSERVATION PLAN
 AND
 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR
 CHARLES M. RUSSELL NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE
 AND
 UL BEND NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

Yogo Inn - Sapphire Room
 Lewistown, Montana
 October 12, 2010

HARRY G. RAUCH, COURT REPORTER
 105 Hawthorne Avenue
 Lewistown, Montana 59457
 (406) 535-3995

ORIGINAL

Page 2

I N D E X

1		
2		
3	Speakers:	
4	Bob Fink	16
5	John Jensen	16
6	Carl Seilstad	19
7	Mark Good	21
8	Laurie Lohrer	23
9	Janelle Holden	24
10	Roger Lohrer	25
11	Lee Iverson	26
12	Dave Snyder	27
13	Joe Eckhardt	28
14	Kirk Dugbach	30
15	Tim Faber	30
16	Mary Frieze	33
17	Clint Loomis	35
18	Kit Fischer	56
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		

Page 3

1 PROCEEDINGS

2 MS. MATHER: Thank you for coming this evening,

3 everybody. Can we get started?

4 This is our first public meeting of--of this week.

5 We were up here two weeks ago, had--had three big days for

6 that segment, have three more.

7 The purpose of the meeting is really for the Fish

8 & Wildlife Service to collect your comments on the Draft

9 CCP, so the way it's going to work is that I will turn the

10 floor over to Barron who will give a brief presentation

11 about the CCP and CMR, and then there is an opportunity for

12 you all to comment.

13 There was a list in the back where a number of you

14 signed up. I will be calling you who are on that sign-up

15 sheet, invite folks to come up here and--and offer their

16 comments. I will tell you more about that after Barron's

17 presentation, so let me just introduce the folks that will

18 be sitting on this panel--Barron Crawford, who is the

19 project leader, his deputy, Bill Berg, and then Laurie

20 Shannon is the CCP planning team leader.

21 Could we have the lights.

22 (A discussion was then had off the record.)

23 MR. CRAWFORD: Well, since everybody decided to sit

24 in the back I hope you will use this microphone. I took a

25 shower this morning so I don't have to worry.

Page 4

1 I would like to welcome everybody here tonight. I

2 know it's bad planning on either our part or Pheasants

3 Forever. I am not sure who scheduled their meeting first.

4 We will say that we did and that they should have changed

5 theirs, but I thank everybody for coming here tonight and

6 missing the Pheasants Forever banquet.

7 We are going to do a real quick power-point

8 presentation--it will be about twenty minutes--and then I

9 will give it back to Mini and she will go ahead and call

10 folks up to go ahead and give their public comments.

11 I am going to give you a little bit of an overview

12 of the CCP process, where we started, where we are at now,

13 and where we go from here, so we basically started in

14 January of 2007. We started holding public scoping meetings

15 at that time, and we held fourteen of those meetings, and we

16 collected over 24,000 public comments.

17 We have had numerous meetings with our

18 cooperators, and our cooperators are the U. S. Army Corp of

19 Engineers, the Bureau of Land Management, Department of

20 Natural Resources and Conservation, the six counties, county

21 commissioners, that surround the refuge, the Missouri River

22 Conservation Districts, and Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks,

23 so this is kind of the time line of where we started and

24 where we are at, and so basically, you know, we are right

25 here with the release of the Draft.

Page 5

1 After this we come to the Final and then the
 2 record of the decision, so we have been doing this for now
 3 the past three years, and some people may be wondering,
 4 well, why are you spending so much time on this, and there
 5 is several reasons, the first being, is, that it's mandated
 6 by Congress.
 7 Congress passed the National Wildlife Refuge
 8 System Improvement Act in 1997 and everything that's in
 9 there. They said all refuges will have a comprehensive
 10 conservation plan by 2012, then, so there is about 548
 11 refuges and there are several of them that are in the same
 12 boat as CMR--trying to finish all these plans by the
 13 deadline.
 14 The other key part to the CCP is that it provides
 15 management direction and guidance based upon refuge purposes
 16 and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System. As
 17 managers come and go, as we do, this basically provides a
 18 road map for incoming new managers. That's in there to say,
 19 okay, this is what the public has provided as far as
 20 comments into this planning process, and so they basically
 21 have a road map outlined for them.
 22 It outlines the vision statement, goals,
 23 objectives, and strategies for future management, and,
 24 again, this plan covers a fifteen-year time period, and it's
 25 accompanied by some type of additional document, either

Page 7

1 We managed big game under the target level of the
 2 '86 EIS which is 2.5 elk per square mile and ten mule deer
 3 per square mile. We maintain access on approximately 670
 4 miles of roads that are out of there, and we have continued
 5 protection of 155,000 acres of proposed wilderness, so then
 6 we get into our action alternatives, and we have three of
 7 those, and the first one is what we kind of coin the
 8 wildlife-habitat-emphasis alternative, and this is basically
 9 where you are managing the landscape in cooperation with our
 10 partners for the abundance and diversity of wildlife
 11 population using both natural and ecological processes, and
 12 some people--they say what's that mean, and the free-
 13 ecological processes that kind of shape the Missouri Breaks
 14 are fire, grazing, and flooding, so those are what we talk
 15 about in natural processes.
 16 Then we talk about syntactic methods and there we
 17 are referring to farming, tree planting--that sort of stuff.
 18 We continue to allow wildlife plan and public uses. Those
 19 are hunting and fishing, wildlife photography, wildlife
 20 observation, environmental education and interpretation, and
 21 we limit economic uses when they compete for habitat
 22 resources.
 23 In the back we got some maps and if you want to
 24 spend some time afterwards talking to the staff we will be
 25 here, but they basically show what the refuge might look

Page 6

1 environmental assessment or environmental impact statement,
 2 and due to the complexity of this unit that we are dealing
 3 with here on the CMR we went ahead and did an EIS, and then
 4 again this provides that longterm guidance, again, fifteen-
 5 year plan.
 6 It doesn't mean that you have to wait fifteen
 7 years to go back and revisit. You can, if something new
 8 changes, go back, revisit the document and go through this
 9 process again, so this is just another draft that kind of
 10 shows how the CCP process works, and, again, we are down
 11 here at the bottom, the public comments.
 12 The next phase, moving on up, to preparing the
 13 Final. That is not to say that if we don't receive a bunch
 14 of comments on something that we might have overlooked that
 15 we can't go back to Step No. 4 here and revisit it.
 16 So basically we had four alternatives, and the
 17 Alternative A, which is the no-action alternative, and this
 18 is basically keep doing what we have been doing since 1986
 19 when our last EIS was prepared with some minor
 20 modifications, but basically we continued to manage the
 21 refuge under the sixty-five established habitat units. We
 22 gradually moved toward prescriptive grazing as we are doing
 23 now. If a ranch sells to a non-family member we would take
 24 that habitat unit and roll it into the prescriptive grazing
 25 program.

Page 8

1 like under the various alternatives, and here where we have
 2 the lighter color tan that's where we hope to expand
 3 wilderness. The red we will be proposing to close roads, so
 4 that's the west half of the refuge, and this is the east
 5 half of the refuge.
 6 Quite a few wilderness expansions, quite a few
 7 road closures, under Alternative B, so.....as we
 8 continue to act, we manage the wildlife habitats to create,
 9 predict, and track the wildlife food and cover, and that's
 10 using those various ecological processes or synthetic
 11 methods.
 12 We are getting really aggressive in moving towards
 13 prescriptive grazing so we want to prescriptively graze
 14 about fifty to seventy-five percent of the refuge within
 15 four to seven years, so right now we are prescriptively
 16 grazing about thirty-five percent.
 17 We do an aggressive restoration on the river
 18 bottoms. We work with Fish, Wildlife & Parks. We provide
 19 quality hunting opportunities and habitat for non-game.
 20 We closed about 106 miles of roads and we expand
 21 wilderness, promote wilderness, about 25,000 acres in six
 22 units, and in Alternative C we find this is another public-
 23 use and economic-use alternative, and again it's manage the
 24 landscape with our partners to emphasize maximum compatible
 25 wildlife plan and public uses, hunting and fishing, wildlife

Page 9

1 photography, observation, da, da, da, and economic uses
 2 while we protect wildlife population and habitat and we
 3 minimize damage impacts to those habitats while using a
 4 variety of management tools to enhance diversity, public and
 5 economic opportunity, so we would basically be expanding
 6 public and economic--public and economic opportunities as
 7 long as they didn't cause serious damage to the habitat out
 8 there, and this is what a map would look like.

9 There is no proposed expansion of wilderness.
 10 There is no proposed closing of roads. There is proposed
 11 elimination of a couple of wilderness areas, and the main
 12 points to this are to maintain balanced numbers of big game
 13 and livestock, try to strike that balance, expand and
 14 maximize hunting opportunities, improved access to boat
 15 ramps, and then eliminate four proposed wilderness areas for
 16 about 35,000 acres, and then we move to Alternative D, which
 17 this is our proposed action.

18 This is what we call the natural processes or the
 19 ecological processes, and, again, we use those ecological
 20 processes in active management to restore and/or maintain
 21 the biodiversity, biointegrity, and environmental health,
 22 and those three things come right out of the Improvement Act
 23 as to what we are supposed to be doing on a national
 24 wildlife refuge, so once those natural processes are
 25 restored we use kind of a passive management approach.

Page 11

1 the nesting area for mountain plovers. Mountain plovers
 2 like very, very short, short grass. They--they love to nest
 3 in prairie dog towns, and so we might go into an area that
 4 has a prairie dog town and we might go in there and use
 5 livestock, graze it heavily, to hope to get the prairie dogs
 6 to expand and then create more nesting habitat for mountain
 7 plovers.

8 Another example is an area where we have a high-
 9 yield buildup where we are unable to use prescriptive fire
 10 due to the risk of it leaving the refuge or causing some
 11 other damage, let's say, to sage grouse habitat. We could
 12 use livestock to go in there and graze that area and reduce
 13 that wildfire risk while still protecting that habitat for
 14 sage grouse.

15 Prescriptive fire--how will it be used? We spent
 16 the past several years working with several fire ecologists
 17 and range ecologists from across the country, they mapping
 18 the historic fire frequency of the refuge, and using that
 19 data that we collected to go into those areas and try to
 20 restore that historic fire occurrence.

21 There are several areas that based upon that fire
 22 mapping we saw that fire should have been in there like
 23 every seven or fourteen years and some places haven't seen
 24 fire well over sixty years and so we used prescriptive fire
 25 where you go in there and you intentionally put fire on the

Page 10

1 We still provide for quality brought in the public
 2 uses and we limit those economic uses when they are
 3 injurious to the ecological processes, so basically when
 4 they are causing harm to the plants or the other habitats
 5 that are out there, and then in this map we try to strike a
 6 balance.

7 We expand some proposed wilderness areas, we
 8 eliminate some others, we close a few roads, so the key
 9 components to this one we are basically using fire plus wild
 10 ungulate herbivory, that's basically grazing by elk, deer,
 11 and by prescriptive livestock grazing on fifty to seventy-
 12 five percent of the refuge the same as Alternative B but
 13 with a move to prescriptive grazing at a slower pace. We
 14 wanted to achieve that in about a nine-year period.

15 We have worked with Fish, Wildlife & Parks, again,
 16 to maintain the health and diversity of all species. We
 17 close about twenty-three miles of roads and we expand six
 18 wilderness areas for a total of 18,000 acres but we
 19 eliminate three for a loss of 26,000, so it's, Mimi said, we
 20 did three meetings three weeks ago and kind of hot-button
 21 topics that we heard at those meetings were prescriptive
 22 grazing, what is it, and a short answer is you basically use
 23 livestock in order to meet a very specific wildlife and/or
 24 habitat objective.

25 One example is that is say you wanted to increase

Page 12

1 ground under ideal conditions, basically under a condition
 2 where you write a plan. It's just like a prescription you
 3 get from your doctor, and, again, it's to achieve a very
 4 specific objective.

5 Wilderness--again, we are mandated under the
 6 Improvement Act to look at our proposed wilderness areas and
 7 evaluate those every time we do a CCP so it is kind of
 8 subjective. We basically go in there and look and make sure
 9 our areas are still being the wilderness characteristics
 10 which they were set aside for.

11 We are using this period to solicit comments from
 12 folks to see, you know, did we make the right calls in some
 13 of those areas. Are there some things that we overlooked
 14 that we need to go back and reconsider? The same thing with
 15 the roads. We have to look at the roads out on the refuge
 16 and determine whether they are impacting our ability to meet
 17 our wildlife and/or habitat or public-use objectives.

18 We are seeing several comments concerning county
 19 roads or--or county-petitioned roads and what we have chosen
 20 to do is to not address the petition issue as part of the
 21 CCP. It's a bigger issue that is really outside the scope
 22 of the CCP and needs to be addressed separately and so as we
 23 start developing our transportation plan, which will be done
 24 after this is signed off, that's where we will look and see
 25 if there is any issues, and it's basically going to come

Page 13

1 down to a legal interpretation as to does this road meet all
2 the requirements to be a county-petitioned road and, if so,
3 then move on from there.

4 We did receive several comments both during public
5 scoping and throughout concerning bison. If anybody has
6 been reading any of the local newspapers everybody knows
7 that bison is a hot topic. I will say it as I have said for
8 the seventeen other meetings so far we are not--not
9 proposing to reintroduce bison. We do have in the plan that
10 if Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks puts forth a proposal
11 to reintroduce a free-ranging bison herd somewhere around
12 the refuge we will work cooperatively with them to see what
13 role the Fish & Wildlife Service may play for those animals
14 being on the refuge, but as far as the Service is concerned
15 we are not going to take the lead and we are not going to be
16 bringing bison in.

17 So we are here tonight to hear from you. Mimi
18 covered a little bit. We ask that you address items
19 specifically in our Plan. You know, we like very detailed
20 comments. To sit there and say I am opposed to expanding
21 wilderness that really doesn't help us. If you say I am
22 opposed to expanding wilderness into Antelope Creek because
23 da, da, da, da, da, that is very specific and that helps us
24 considerably.

25 There are numerous ways for you to provide your

Page 14

1 comments to us. One is by giving your public statement
2 today. Another one is that you were handed a comments sheet
3 as you came through the door and you can write your comment
4 on that and leave it at the back table as you leave. You
5 can send written comments to the address that's in our
6 planning update, or you can send those to the E-mail
7 address.

8 This is not a public contest. Okay? If we get
9 10,000 comments to two comments the 10,000 comments don't
10 win, so we treat all comments equally. There is no one form
11 or another that weighs more heavily than others, so, again,
12 they are all treated equally, and we have a sixty-day
13 comment period that ends on November 16th.

14 We have received several requests for extending
15 that. I have not taken action on that. Several requests
16 have requested a sixty-day extension. I can almost
17 guarantee you there will not be a sixty-day extension, so we
18 are asking folks to please go ahead and get your comments in
19 in a timely manner.

20 That's all I got--turn it over to Mimi.

21 MS. MATHER: Okay. It's your turn to take the
22 mike. Let me show you quickly how this will run, the latter
23 part of the meeting. I have a list of everybody that's
24 signed up so far and I will call the names off the list. I
25 will call who is next and who is on deck so you can be

Page 15

1 ready. We would like you to come up here and speak into the
2 mike.

3 We are--do have a court reporter so if you can
4 state your name so he can get that for the record that would
5 be great.

6 Some people have said I just have a question.
7 That's fine. If you just want to come up and ask one
8 question please we encourage you to do it.

9 Bill, Barron, and Laurie will be up here taking
10 notes so after all the comments today we will take a few
11 minutes to respond to these questions and the comments that
12 --that they heard.

13 If you are inspired by somebody else's comment and
14 your name is not on the list go ahead and sign it in the
15 back or I will just ask if--when we are to the bottom of the
16 list if anybody else has any comments.

17 The other thing is we are limiting you to three
18 minutes and we are going to be strict about that so Brett--
19 Brett will be the timekeeper over here and if you are--when
20 there is only one minute left he will let you know. We will
21 let you know when there are twenty seconds left and when
22 time's up, and then we ask you at that time to sit back
23 down.

24 If you have a letter or something like that feel
25 free to read a portion of it. If you can't get through in

Page 16

1 three minutes please stick it in our comments box.

2 So with that first on our list is Bob Fink with
3 John Jensen on deck.

4 MR. FINK: I will pass for now.

5 MS. MATHER: Okay. Bob is going to pass so John
6 Jensen with Carl on deck.

7 MR. JENSEN: Thank you very much for your time and
8 all these public hearings. They are a very informative
9 process.

10 My name is John Jensen. I am a Fergus County
11 Commissioner.

12 Some very specific comments related to the Draft
13 CCP that was--we have been reviewing in our office.
14 Scientific data. We feel that the Plan lacks some
15 significant scientific data. There is no--there cannot be
16 many decisions made in looking forward.

17 Regarding the water resources on XVII, Page XVII,
18 wildlife population both on and off the refuge are affected
19 by water quality and access to water. How many water
20 sources off the refuge have you studied and so where is the
21 data?

22 Our data shows that you have approximately twenty
23 percent of the habitat area for Hunting Districts 410 and
24 417.

25 Again, you blame livestock grazing for degradation

Page 17

1 of water resources off the refuge for which, one, we believe
 2 there is no data and, two, it is outside of your
 3 jurisdiction.
 4 On Page XXIV, Environmental Consequences, your
 5 degree of effect was based on using quantitative numeric or
 6 modeled estimates or qualitative or relative estimates using
 7 literature. We would like to see the actual scientific data
 8 and not estimates from the literature.
 9 We would also like to see a qualified range
 10 manager interpret any data that's available.
 11 On Page 83, under Weeds, we would like the word
 12 continue removed as you have not worked with our weed board
 13 on invasive species. If you--we would like the document to
 14 state work with weed boards, strike continue, et cetera.
 15 On Page 99 under Wolves we oppose--no hunting
 16 season for wolves on the refuge. Should wolves inhabit the
 17 CMR you should work with Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks in
 18 setting up appropriate numbers and use a hunting season as a
 19 management tool.
 20 We believe that you are again, excuse me, we
 21 believe that you are again looking at exterminating our
 22 ranchers. You know what will happen if you have no hunting
 23 season on a refuge. The whole CMR becomes a safe haven for
 24 the wolves as it does for your no-hunting areas for elk, not
 25 to mention the wolves will be a detriment to the cattle and

Page 19

1 deck.
 2 MR. SEILSTAD: How long did that take?
 3 MR. JENSEN: Did I talk too fast?
 4 MR. SEILSTAD: No. I didn't hear you so--just real
 5 quickly, from 1986 to the present we have basically gone
 6 from 60,000 AUM's down to 18,800.
 7 As John mentioned earlier, roughly fifteen percent
 8 of the hunting district in 410 is habitat and five percent
 9 in Hunting District 417 is on the CMR. Since 1999 the
 10 numbers that I have gotten from the CMR, elk and deer
 11 numbers, have relatively remained consistent with the
 12 exception of possibly mule deer because it has its valleys,
 13 peaks, ups, and downs, so when we talk about going for our
 14 prescriptive grazing you are talking about basically five
 15 percent of the habitat in 417 and fifteen percent in 410.
 16 I didn't look up all the other counties but in
 17 your rationale on--on D, and Barron said it here in the
 18 slide show, that it goes from fifty to seventy-five percent,
 19 the prescription grazing, but if you will look in the
 20 rationale on the evolutionary forces of fire and preparatory
 21 grazing--grazing the Service estimates that converting
 22 seventy-five percent of the refuge to prescriptive grazing
 23 and if funding and resources permitted more than seventy-
 24 five percent over fifteen years, so it looks to me like we
 25 have got a conflict there from the fifty to seventy-five

Page 18

1 wildlife both on the CMR and off.
 2 On Page 85, under Climate Change, we want--we
 3 want to know if all the climate resource objectives came
 4 from one publisher and the publisher's name was Karl, et al,
 5 2009.
 6 Last but not least Roads. The big issue with
 7 roads in this Plan is the fact you are ignoring the legal-
 8 petitioned county roads in this document and the fact that
 9 there is very little mention of RS2477 roads. Also, on Page
 10 54, we request that you remove the red mark at the river's
 11 edge on Road 201. As we understand, that was a printing
 12 error. We want to make sure that gets removed.
 13 Okay. I know Barron in his comments, in his
 14 opening comments, stated that roads would be part of the
 15 transportation plan. We feel that this is not strong
 16 enough. There needs to be mention of who do we petition--
 17 county roads--as well as RS2477 recognized in this CCP.
 18 In closing, we will present all of our
 19 aforementioned topics along with some additional comments in
 20 writing. We oppose this Plan as it lacks scientific data
 21 and the apparent driving factor in not managing for multiple
 22 use including livestock grazing as well as access through
 23 duly-petitioned county roads.
 24 Thank you for your attention.
 25 MS. MATHER: Thanks, John. Carl. Mark Good on

Page 20

1 percent versus seventy-five percent and above.
 2 We deal with this Plan today that removing all
 3 livestock from within the CMR boundaries. When you remove
 4 livestock AUM's as you did this year on the north side of
 5 the river and tell those people, yes, we have got livestock
 6 grazing available for you in Jordan they are not going to
 7 pack up their cows for thirty days and go down there and
 8 graze. You are going to a system that we feel has not been
 9 proven for any length of time and are setting goals that
 10 will be unachievable. You are going to remove livestock and
 11 then experiment to see if your Plan will work.
 12 In visiting with range techs and wildlife
 13 biologists they think you will never get to the amount of
 14 some forbs and shrubs back to the 1935 days when your Murie
 15 I guess it was who you document several times in the or you
 16 mention several times in the document.
 17 Another issue that we have--so therefore we oppose
 18 the aggressive approach to permissive grazing in Alternative
 19 D.
 20 Another issue that we have in the fact that there
 21 is very little mention of State and private lands within the
 22 document. On Page 191 you mention the present grazing on
 23 DNR lands but mention nothing about private.
 24 Bison. I am glad to hear Barron's comments. In
 25 fact, I brought an article here from the Great Falls

Page 21

1 Tribune. One of my concerns was the Service reintroducing
2 bison. The Service has no intention of restoring bison on
3 the refuge either free-range grazing or fenced herding, but
4 then we have a document dated October 28th of 2008 from the
5 Department of Interior that in just a couple quick lines out
6 of there--

7 MS. MATHER: Time is up.

8 MR. SEILSTAD: What's that?

9 MS. MATHER: Time is up.

10 MR. SEILSTAD: Is it really? I guess we will--I
11 will get all these comments in a written form to you.

12 (A discussion was then had off the record.)

13 MS. MATHER: Mark Good and Laurie on deck.

14 MR. GOOD: Hi. I thank you for the opportunity to
15 make comments.

16 Let me start by saying I--I think there are little
17 things that you go over here and I have sat in on some of
18 the other meetings. I think there is some confusion about
19 how the national-wildlife-refuge lands are managed typically
20 from lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management and the
21 Forest Service and maybe at the end you could clarify that,
22 but, if you could look at a minor thing, the guiding
23 principle of a refuge is enhancement and protection of
24 wildlife and all other uses are secondary.

25 I know some people who don't like that. They wish

Page 22

1 the refuge could maybe return to the way it was in the
2 1970's, but I don't--I don't think that's going to happen,
3 and--and the reason they have got refuges national wildlife
4 refuges are popular. They are popular with the American
5 people and I think they are popular with--with Montanans, so
6 let me also say a word about wilderness.

7 I think Montana's high plains are too often cast
8 in kind of negative terms, as sort of boring and bland and
9 sort of empty, but I think anyone who has spent some time on
10 the refuge knows the refuge isn't boring and would mention
11 the fact it's quite the reverse, and I know with the dam
12 it's maybe a different kind of landscape than maybe Lewis
13 and Clark saw but it's still a landscape that's vast and
14 impressive.

15 I think with the restoration of wildlife which has
16 occurred over the years there isn't anything like it in the
17 eastern half of the United States. It's something we ought
18 to be proud of.

19 I just want to make the point that I think
20 designating wilderness within the refuge reinforces that
21 mission, mission of the refuge, by providing large blocks of
22 undisturbed and quality habitat. It also provides security
23 for big game and helps to keep wildlife within the refuge.
24 I know that disturbs some of the adjoining landowners.
25 All of the proposed areas are relatively small and

Page 23

1 I know some are hard to get to because of access issues with
2 some of the adjoining landowners, but the three proposals
3 that you are proposing to eliminate all fit the criteria
4 that they were there in the first place or designated or
5 suggested in the proposal in the first place in terms of
6 size, primitive character, activities is negligible, and
7 they provide a sense of solitude. They are all under-
8 represented in the Natural Wilderness Preservation System,
9 so I guess I would like to ask that you reconsider
10 eliminating East and West Beauchamp, what I wrote down,
11 probably not as dramatic as what some people think of in
12 terms of a wildlife refuge. It's probably grazing. Take
13 the Hell Creek access. There isn't any access right now.
14 There may be in the future.

15 The point is that that land still--still maintains
16 its wilderness character, it hasn't changed, and I would
17 hope to keep--keep that as recommended.

18 Thanks.

19 MS. MATHER: Thank you, Mark.

20 Laurie with Janelle on deck.

21 MS. LOHRER: Hi. My name is Laurie Lohrer. I have
22 a couple of questions regarding the prescribed burns that
23 are recommended in I think Alternative B.

24 First how does this process improve the wildlife
25 habitat and what would be the optimum result of--of using

Page 24

1 this process, and I am not sure if it's in conjunction with
2 the prescriptive grazing or prescriptive burns itself.

3 Second, what would be the impact of--of the
4 prescribed burns on grazing, on recreation, and then also
5 what would be the impact on invasive weeds, and then,
6 finally, have these proposed burns techniques and the
7 grazing been used successfully in--in other wildlife-
8 management areas?

9 So those are my concerns and questions. Thank
10 you.

11 MS. MATHER: Thank you, Laurie.

12 Janelle with Roger on deck.

13 MS. HOLDEN: I am Janelle Holden with the
14 Wilderness Society out of Bozeman and I am going to echo
15 things that Mark Good said.

16 I think it's really important that the smaller
17 proposals in this area are kept as proposals in this area.
18 A couple of years ago I went on a trip with some other folks
19 who are here in this room to look at the Burnt Lodge
20 Wilderness Study Area and some other proposals in this area
21 that adjoins the CMR, and all of us who were on that trip
22 hiked into that area and really found that it has a lot of
23 solitude.

24 It provided all the wilderness character that we
25 looked for, and I noticed, I think, in Alternative C it's

Page 25

1 recommended for removal, so I wanted to make sure that that
 2 remains the proposal in this as well as East and West
 3 Beauchamp Creek. I know there is a road dividing those two
 4 proposals in this area but smaller areas provide people with
 5 more opportunities to get out into--into those areas because
 6 there is some access to those wilderness areas and I think
 7 those should be kept within the Plan.
 8 We will, of course, be providing a lot more
 9 detailed comments in written form but that's what I have to
 10 say. Thanks.
 11 MS. MATHER: Thank you, Jenelle.
 12 Roger. Lee Iverson on deck.
 13 MR. LOHRER: Thanks for the opportunity to speak
 14 here.
 15 I recently read a report, a study, I think it was
 16 called, Banking On Nature, talking about the amount of
 17 money that the various refuges raise for the local economy,
 18 and, if I read the report right, it said that the CMR brings
 19 in \$14,000,000 annually by visitors, many of them out-of-
 20 state visitors, and I think that this should be emphasized
 21 in your decision on what you do to preserve the unique
 22 qualities of the CMR.
 23 I am a fairly recent person living here for just a
 24 few years but I am amazed at what a fantastic place this is
 25 and I just think that everything you can do to keep it at

Page 27

1 big we can control it.
 2 We have had several examples of fires that have
 3 started on the CMR and have gotten so big that they were
 4 uncontrollable. The adjacent landowners are the ones who
 5 really suffer the brunt of having one of these big
 6 wildfires.
 7 Road closing. Road 315 is proposed for closure in
 8 all but Alternative C. On your map it states this road has
 9 some of the most spectacular views of any of the roads on
 10 the CMR. Who is going to be able to travel that road if
 11 it's closed and see that view?
 12 I feel that wilderness is only for a select few
 13 and those that wish to view some of the CMR without having
 14 to hike are left out. For example, what about the
 15 handicapped people? How are they going to see some of
 16 these?
 17 The CMR is spectacular, there is no way of getting
 18 around it, and I would like to be able for everybody to see
 19 it and not just a select few.
 20 Thank you.
 21 MS. MATHER: Thank you, Lee.
 22 Dave Snyder, and Joe Eckhardt on deck.
 23 MR. SNYDER: I am Dave Snyder. I have a question
 24 or two and a quick comment.
 25 Forty-three years ago I began to view this

Page 26

1 least as pristine as it is now or improve it by continuing
 2 to consider these certain wilderness areas to be included I
 3 think it's just going to benefit everybody in the community
 4 in the long run.
 5 Thank you.
 6 MS. MATHER: Thank you, Roger.
 7 MS. SHANNON: Could you repeat your name for--
 8 MR. LOHRER: Roger Lohrer, L-o-h-r-e-r.
 9 MS. MATHER: Thank you, Roger.
 10 Lee Iverson. Dave Snyder on deck.
 11 MR. IVERSON: Thank you. My name is Lee Iverson.
 12 I am a Petroleum County Commissioner.
 13 I feel like I am going to be a voice in the
 14 wilderness. I am opposed to any more wilderness and I have
 15 several reasons. For one thing, I don't understand what
 16 advantage to any of these areas wilderness is going to be
 17 the way you are going to manage it anyway. You are not
 18 going to allow any roads to be built. You are not going to
 19 allow any off-road driving. I don't understand what
 20 advantage it will be to the Service to have a declared
 21 wilderness.
 22 Also as far as the county is concerned if it's a
 23 wilderness area and a wildfire starts and that wildfire
 24 happens to start in a real explosive bad fire situation if
 25 we can get in there and put that fire out before it gets too

Page 28

1 country. My poor wife feels so sorry for me.
 2 I spend a lot of time down there, a lot more time
 3 down on the CMR and the BLM ground, than I do at home
 4 probably but you see a lot of country.
 5 It looks like we have to choose an alternative.
 6 We are looking at four different alternatives, A through D.
 7 One comment I have got is Alternative A is the one I like
 8 out of all of them. I have heard that you are kind of
 9 swaying toward Alternative D. I don't know if that's true
 10 or not.
 11 If that is true one of the concerns that I have
 12 about Alternative D on my sheet here, Page 10, it says,
 13 Predator control with the U. S. Department of Agriculture
 14 would be eliminated and predators would be managed to
 15 benefit the ecological integrity of the refuge. Limited
 16 hunting for mountain lion or other furbearers or small
 17 predators would be considered only after monitoring verified
 18 that population levels could be sustained.
 19 That bothers me a little bit. Limited mountain
 20 lion hunting and--and predator control with the U. S.
 21 Department of Agriculture would be eliminated.
 22 In the last ten years it's hard to find mule deer
 23 populations, bird populations, and elk numbers are pretty
 24 good, but predator control--that--that--that worries me the
 25 most.

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 29</p> <p>1 That's my comments, and I would really like to see 2 some more predator control and more mountain lion hunting 3 opportunities. 4 Thank you. 5 MS. MATHER: Thank you, Dave. 6 Joe Eckhardt. Kirk Dumbach on deck. 7 MR. ECKHARDT: My name is Joe Eckhardt and I 8 appreciate this opportunity to speak tonight. 9 I would like to submit that I am deeply concerned 10 with regard to the refuge using the phraseology ecologically 11 injurious and in doing so not considering the economic 12 impact of that management mechanism to the independent 13 private businesses, primarily livestock producers, who would 14 be likewise injured by the same events of drought or 15 whatever event is going to cause this ecological injury to 16 the CMR, is probably very likely to be sustained on 17 neighboring private land, and the--the reason for my concern 18 over this is that by nature of grazing domestic livestock is 19 rather inconvenient if not economically unviable for that 20 producer to transport those livestock over however many 21 miles it might take to get to someplace that wasn't 22 ecologically injured by whatever the event is and I just 23 think that there can be harmony in using good stewardship 24 practices and in recognizing--I would submit that I 25 recognize that the limitation of domestic grazing is by far</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 30</p> <p>1 the most efficient management tool available but it's also-- 2 its use has deeper repercussions to the viability of this 3 local economy which has been sustained for decades by the 4 local livestock producers. 5 Thank you. 6 MS. MATHER: Thank you, Joe. 7 Kirk. Tim Faber on deck. 8 MR. DUNBACH: Hello. My name is Kirk Dumbach. I 9 am a local rancher out at Roy. 10 (A discussion was then had off the record.) 11 I would like to say that I believe in the 12 ecological value of conservation grazing and I believe that 13 the--the CMR does also, and I--and I think that's shown by 14 what they try to do with grazing, but I would like to 15 suggest that for the CMR's benefit from this type of grazing 16 the rancher must also, and the rancher must clearly not 17 support prescriptive grazing, and my question to you guys is 18 why not come up with the range help that supports your goal 19 and then help the rancher meet that and let the rancher have 20 some stability. 21 Thank you. 22 MS. MATHER: Thank you. 23 Tim Faber, and Mary Frieze on deck. 24 MR. FABER: I am Tim Faber. I am an Eastern 25 Montana native. I just spent a little bit of time in the</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 31</p> <p>1 Scapegoat Wilderness. I have done a lot of observations 2 there, one in particular the regeneration from the 1988 3 Canyon Creek Fire. It's a changed environment. It's--it's 4 a really interesting case study--how the landscape has 5 regenerated and the wildlife population has flourished 6 because of it, but I am always glad to get--get home to 7 Eastern Montana for some reason--I guess the beauty of the 8 landscape, the variety of wildlife species. 9 Maybe--maybe Wallace Stegner here can best sum it 10 up as--as he remembers the Great Plains. 11 Across the empty miles pours the pushing and 12 shouldering wind, a thing you tighten into as a trout 13 tightens into fast water. It is a grassy, clean, exciting 14 wind, with the smell of distance in it. 15 It blows yellow-headed blackbirds and hawks and 16 prairie sparrows around the air and ruffles the short tails 17 of meadowlarks on fence posts. In collaboration with the 18 light, it makes lovely and changeful what might otherwise be 19 characterless. 20 It is a long way from characterless; overpower- 21 ing would be a better word. For over the segmented circle 22 of earth is domed the biggest sky anywhere. 23 There is no haze, neither the woolly gray of 24 humid countries nor the blue atmosphere of the mountain 25 West. Across the immense sky move navies of cumuli, fair-</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 32</p> <p>1 weather clouds, their bottoms even as if they had scraped 2 themselves flat against the flat earth. 3 The drama of this landscape is in the sky, 4 pouring with light and always moving. The earth is passive. 5 And yet the beauty I am struck by, both as present fact and 6 as revived memory, is a fusion: this sky would not be so 7 spectacular without this earth to change and glow and darken 8 under it. 9 Desolate? Forbidding? There was never a country 10 that in its good moments was more beautiful. 11 But also the world is flat, empty, nearly 12 abstract, and in its flatness you are a challenging upright 13 thing, as sudden as an exclamation mark, as enigmatic as a 14 question mark. 15 I guess the point I need--need to make here 16 quickly is that we need to protect this landscape. We need 17 to protect the diversity of animals and wildlife species. 18 It's a changing world out there--climate change, change in 19 economics, change in the use of our land, and I am concerned 20 about the use of our land and how it affects our wildlife 21 species, and I think the CMR has done a good job of 22 managing, in particular, wilderness study areas which are 23 managed as de facto wilderness, and I would like to see that 24 continued management. 25 That's preservation of our landscape and our</p>

Page 33

1 wildlife species.
 2 Thank you.
 3 MS. MATHER: Thank you, Tim.
 4 Mary Frieze, and Clint Loomis on deck.
 5 MS. FRIEZE: Hi. I am Mary Frieze, and I live in
 6 Lewistown.
 7 I will be echoing some of what Tim Faber just said
 8 in that not this summer but the previous summer I had the
 9 good fortune to be with a group who went to the Burnt Lodge
 10 Wilderness area, the wilderness study area, and we needed a
 11 good guide to get us there. We had Dennis Lingohr who
 12 worked for the BLM for many years, and it is an example to
 13 me of so much of what a wilderness area should be.
 14 If a wilderness area is supposed to be natural and
 15 have relatively little home presence it qualifies. It has
 16 unconfined recreational air activities, possibilities like
 17 camping and hiking. It provides solitude.
 18 The group that we were with walked its gentle
 19 slope overlooking this marvelous valley, creek through it,
 20 that ran down to the Fort Peck Reservoir. We saw forty
 21 bighorn sheep there. It was an awesome sight.
 22 It does deserve its designation as--as a
 23 wilderness area.
 24 On the way there we passed some historically-
 25 significant sites. I don't know that there are any there on

Page 35

1 Clint Loomis with Kit Fischer on deck.
 2 MR. LOOMIS: Thank you. Appreciate the opportunity
 3 to talk. I need to say up front I am for maintaining the
 4 wilderness areas, and the diversity of the species is
 5 extremely important. I don't know who else is going to talk
 6 for the species if we don't have some kind of voice out
 7 there.
 8 I also agree that this economy in here is tied to
 9 agriculture and to the rancher and the polarization that's
 10 happened on the part of the Friends of the Missouri Breaks,
 11 the polarization that happened between those for or those
 12 against, if we can find a way to merge some--some ideas that
 13 were made by a rancher to try and bring together best
 14 practices.
 15 I think the CMR is just an amazing piece of land
 16 and it's been managed extremely well. The question that I
 17 would like answered I know your employment is--is stretched
 18 as far as being able to get out there and monitor roads and
 19 access and who punches in a new road and where it goes.
 20 If it requires closing roads to do a better job of
 21 managing then I think we need to close those roads. If they
 22 can be managed and people kept, as--as--as this individual
 23 said, you know, so people can see the beauty of the land
 24 that's one thing, but if it's not manageable then I suggest
 25 that we back off to what is possible to control as far as

Page 34

1 the Burnt Lodge Wilderness Study Area but there are some on
 2 the way, and there are definitely prairie-dog villages on
 3 the way back so--I don't know the rest of the wildlife
 4 that's there but it is certainly a valuable area as a
 5 wilderness, and I think it should be preserved.
 6 I have another question that goes with that in
 7 that--prairie dogs that are there in that area. As I
 8 understand it, part of the mission of the refuge or a refuge
 9 is to provide habitat for a variety of wildlife. Generally
 10 it seems that more attention is given to game species than
 11 non-game species such as prairie dogs.
 12 I know for some prairie dogs--for some prairie
 13 dogs are just considered varmints but well over a hundred
 14 species are associated with black-tailed prairie-dog
 15 habitat, including four species, their original concerns,
 16 such as the burrowing owl, the swift fox, the ferruginous
 17 hawk, and mountain plover.
 18 My question to you is with the increased threat of
 19 this bubonic plague that is wiping out entire towns how are
 20 you planning to manage the continued existence of prairie
 21 dogs, plagues, and plague control?
 22 Again, thank you.
 23 I think the wilderness should be preserved--all of
 24 it.
 25 MS. MATHER: Thank you, Mary.

Page 36

1 public access.
 2 That is my--my thought on the roads, and if you
 3 can comment on how you are going to handle this shift in--
 4 in--in the road concept I would like to hear how that's
 5 going to happen.
 6 Thank you.
 7 MS. MATHER: Thanks, Clint.
 8 Kit Fischer.
 9 MR. FISCHER: My name is Kit Fischer. I am
 10 representing the National Wildlife Federation and the
 11 National Wildlife Refuge Association.
 12 I have been working closely with sportsmen's
 13 groups around the state, meeting with them, talking with
 14 them. When you look around the room there is not that many
 15 sportsmen here. Most of them probably have better things to
 16 do right now this time of year, but it's important to note
 17 that they are the largest user group on the refuge and, you
 18 know, we are talking, you know, about a hundred thousand.
 19 Hundreds are visiting the refuge every year.
 20 We have a large stake in the refuge in the future.
 21 In--in that I would like to say organizations are supportive
 22 of Alternative D. We have a--a couple slight disagreements
 23 in general--one, the elimination of the three proposed
 24 wilderness areas, East and West Beauchamp and East Hell
 25 Creek.

Page 37

1 It--it can be understood why these are being
 2 talked about, one, because of a road issue, and the other
 3 because private land holdings. I think it's important to
 4 note there are other established wilderness areas in the
 5 State that have these same characteristics.
 6 For example, the Great Burn Wilderness I know has
 7 private land holdings. Also, you know, our biggest concern
 8 and in general our biggest support at the same time is for
 9 what Fish & Wildlife Service is planning to do with
 10 prescriptive grazing. We see this as an excellent way to
 11 meet wildlife habitat and management goals.
 12 Through attrition and retirement of grazing leases
 13 on the refuge it's clear that decrease in grazing will
 14 happen. Grazing is secondary use. Wildlife do come first
 15 on this refuge and we need to closely monitor those
 16 populations.
 17 I had a question that I would like clarified.
 18 Talking to sportsmen's groups in terms of how buck-doe
 19 ratios have been where are they exactly and were they--what
 20 are the proposed changes, especially in the preferred
 21 alternatives? Also how would sage-grouse listing, the
 22 impending listing of sage grouse, impact future grazing on
 23 the refuge, the land adjacent to the refuge, and how would
 24 this relate to grazing?
 25 Thank you.

Page 39

1 livestock grazing. We manage wildlife and wildlife
 2 habitats. One of the questions is what's the difference
 3 between the National Wildlife Refuge System managed under
 4 the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service compared to the BLM and
 5 the Forest Service.
 6 It's really simple. We are the only federal
 7 agency that is mandated to manage only for Fish & Wildlife
 8 and their habitats. Okay? The BLM has what's called a
 9 multiple-use mandate so they are to strike a balance between
 10 providing habitat for wildlife, providing economic uses such
 11 as logging, grazing, mineral extraction, public uses such as
 12 hunting and fishing and off-road activities, and on and on.
 13 Our only mission is fish, wildlife, and wildlife
 14 habitats so therefore we hire mostly wildlife biologists, a
 15 few ecologists, but the vast majority of us that are in this
 16 field have a degree in wildlife management, wildlife
 17 biology.
 18 There are some folk that have range degrees. I
 19 have a couple on staff. Biology degrees, zoology degrees,
 20 but those are--it's mostly our background and mostly where
 21 we focus.
 22 The sentinel plant concept is not new. If you go
 23 and you look back through the literature you will find stuff
 24 that talks about indicator plants, or what's another term,
 25 Bob?

Page 38

1 MS. MATHER: Thank you, Kit.
 2 Any of you that's not on my list? Anybody else
 3 have another comment for these folks to respond to any
 4 questions? Okay. Thanks for your comments.
 5 Coming up here?
 6 MR. CRAWFORD: Okay. The way this works is we
 7 heard some questions as you had comments. Since we got time
 8 we will go ahead and address those.
 9 Randy, if you come up front I am going to put you
 10 on the hot seat here for a couple of these. Bob, you better
 11 be ready too. I answer all the easy ones. Randy, Bob, and
 12 Bill answer all the hard ones.
 13 Which ones are you doing, Bill? I didn't give you
 14 enough warning last time, did I.
 15 MR. BERG: Roads and Access.
 16 MR. CRAWFORD: Roads and Access, yes
 17 Where is the comments concerning scientific data?
 18 There is no doubt that what we are proposing is something
 19 different. The sentinel plant monitoring and management is
 20 something new. It's not based on typical range science,
 21 range management, and the simple way of answering this is--
 22 and we get several comments why don't you have a range
 23 management specialist on staff, and the simple answer is we
 24 don't manage range.
 25 Okay. Range is associated with grass and

Page 40

1 MR. SKINNER: Diagnostic.
 2 MR. CRAWFORD: Diagnostic plants, yes. Nothing
 3 new. There is no way that biologists and ecologists--we can
 4 go out there and monitor and measure everything so we pick
 5 indicator plants. We pick diagnostic plants. We pick
 6 sentinel plants. We pick sentinel wildlife, and those are
 7 the things that we monitor to give us an overall indication
 8 as to which way are the trends going. Are they going in a
 9 positive direction? Are they going in a negative direction?
 10 If they are going negative why? Can you figure out what's
 11 causing them to do that and can you make a change to have
 12 them go in a positive direction?
 13 Let's see. We have some folks commented that
 14 there is no way we are going to get back to historic
 15 occurrence of forbs and shrubs. That's very accurate.
 16 There is no doubt that we are not going to get back to what
 17 Lewis and Clark saw. However, can we go back and restore
 18 those natural processes? Can we turn that trend around
 19 where instead of the plants that are going this way can we
 20 reverse the trend and get them going that way?
 21 That's where we are focusing. We are not trying
 22 to achieve what was here at some point, you know, during the
 23 1800's and the early 1900's. We are trying to reverse that
 24 trend. We are trying to promote that biological diversity,
 25 heterogeneity, resilience. Okay.

Page 41

1 Climate change was brought up. There are things
 2 that are changing fast out there that we have no control
 3 over so our goal is to have wildlife and plants as healthy
 4 as possible so that they are resilient to these changes that
 5 we have no control over so that hopefully this is a short
 6 term, and when I say short term, you know, I am thinking a
 7 century, but we can see the trend reversing and hopefully we
 8 will have those plants in a better state that they will be
 9 able to come through this and then as conditions change be
 10 able to adapt and continue.

11 Man, I really wish my fire-management officer was
 12 here. I kick myself for giving him leave this week.

13 We had some great questions on prescribed fires,
 14 how are they going to improve wildlife habitat, the impact
 15 of prescribed fire on grazing and recreation and the impact
 16 on invasives, and we have had--prescribed fire and grazing
 17 have been used in other areas.

18 Do you want to answer some of those, Bob, or do
 19 you want me?

20 MR. SKINNER: I can do a little bit.

21 MR. CRAWFORD: Okay.

22 MR. SKINNER: I don't think I can think of all
 23 those but from the history studies we have come to learn
 24 that fire was more frequent and less intense in the past.
 25 That we can tell. That means that it burned frequently.

Page 43

1 come through and pick the ice-cream plants, okay, so as
 2 folks came in the room tonight they went to the back table.

3 How many people automatically went to the
 4 brownies? Okay. I am a selective grazer. I love brownies
 5 so I automatically went to the brownies.

6 Now, if you had four different kinds of brownies
 7 there I would probably take one of each. Okay?

8 Now, that doesn't mean that I am also not going to
 9 eat the cookies but I am going to focus on the brownies
 10 because those are my favorite.

11 That's what these animals do as well. They go out
 12 there and they focus on their favorite foods first. When
 13 you get that fire to come through there it makes everything
 14 brand-new grazing. It comes with everything on equal
 15 footing, and so the grazers eat everything equally, and so
 16 it gives all these what I call ice-cream plants a chance to
 17 actually grow, so the two actually do work in combination.

18 What we are looking at is if we do a prescribed
 19 burn we are actually hoping to attract grazers to that area,
 20 and there have been several studies that have demonstrated
 21 that, and what Bob was talking about, what we are looking to
 22 hopefully create on the refuge, is what's called patch
 23 burning, and so you go out and you set up this rotation
 24 where you are burning these patches and therefore you are
 25 moving the grazers to these different burn patches, and they

Page 42

1 Those two go together.

2 Today the fires are less frequent but when they
 3 occur they burn very hot and the burned areas--they include
 4 things like what we call refugia areas that formerly
 5 wouldn't have burned under the less intense, so with this
 6 change that's occurred, that's having fewer fires we get to,
 7 we come to a situation where animals are stationary on the
 8 lands, game is moving long distances instead of abandoning
 9 them, and as a result some plants have been favored--
 10 sagebrush, juniper, and.....

11 Others have been greatly not favored, things like
 12 golden currants, cherries, saltbush, and what we are trying
 13 to do with the prescribed fire is not trying to eliminate
 14 one or the other but strike them out as prescribed fires
 15 where we have started piecemeal.....and plants that
 16 have declined tremendously since the State-..... loss
 17 of fire and grazing interaction that historically occurred
 18 for thousands of years up to this point.

19 MR. CRAWFORD: Let's see how you did, Bob. The
 20 impact of prescribed fire on grazing. I think Bob touched
 21 on it a little bit.

22 This area evolved with fire and grazers. Fire
 23 would come in, burn. The grazers would follow. Basically
 24 those animals may graze non-selectively so which means they
 25 --they ate all the plants pretty much equally. They didn't

Page 44

1 are then grazing less frequently on the unburned areas.

2 It's been demonstrated mostly in tall-grass
 3 prairie, a little bit short grass. We are looking to do
 4 more studies, do more on the short grass, see if we can get
 5 the same effect as what you see in the tall grass.

6 The impact on invasives. There is a concern about
 7 invasives--cheatgrass, smooth brome, with--with fire. We do
 8 have a little bit of smooth brome on our refuge. It hasn't
 9 been that big a concern yet. Obviously it's something that
 10 we will have to watch.

11 The--the ultimate goal is--is if you get these
 12 native plants to respond they will choke out the more
 13 invasive plants.

14 Now, smooth brome, as everybody knows, is highly
 15 invasive and if it does get established it is very hard to
 16 control so that is something we have to take into
 17 consideration when developing these burn plans.

18 I think I touched on all of those. I think the
 19 next ones are for you, Randy.

20 (A discussion was then had off the record.)

21 I will let Randy talk about--where is he--there he
 22 is. I will let Randy talk about prairie dogs and plagues
 23 and how he is going to manage for that.

24 MR. MATCHETT: On the prairie dog and--and plague
 25 thing I have actually been working on that for the last

Page 45

1 twenty years and have learned quite a bit how it does work.
 2 One of the species on the top of our list that's dependent
 3 on prairie dogs is what's driven a lot of that and that's
 4 been the blackfooted ferret.
 5 Plague is a real tough biological issue to deal
 6 with. Right now they have only two ways to--to work with it
 7 or the main way to work with it is applying the insecticide
 8 that reduces flea populations, flea.....for it, so
 9 there is a lot of work actually nationwide trying to--to
 10 learn how to manage and live with plague for recovery of the
 11 black-footed ferret, so I am not sure where the lady is that
 12 talked about prairie dogs and plague but, yes, it is being
 13 worked on diligently but it's a real tough nut to crack.
 14 (A discussion was then had off the record.)
 15 The mule deer buck-to-doe ratio under Alternative
 16 A are correct management. That means twenty mature bucks
 17 per hundred does where those have been the last ten years or
 18 so. That's what prompted the refuge having a short three-
 19 week season in an effort to try to improve what those buck-
 20 doe ratios were.
 21 Under Alternative B I think we had--under the
 22 definition of a mature buck it is sub set of adult bucks
 23 which are bucks that have at least four points on one end.
 24 Alternative D called and named thirty-five, forty adult
 25 bucks and adult bucks are all bucks older than yearlings.

Page 47

1 way, so that will be the challenge we face with these
 2 individual habitat plans--to sit down and work something up.
 3 It's not going to be the same as it is today where
 4 the permits are the same area year in, year out, the same
 5 period of time. It's probably going to shift around a
 6 little bit more, recognizing that, you know, you can't take
 7 --there was one comment about grazing on the north side and
 8 shifting that person all the way over to Garfield County.
 9 We haven't done that.
 10 We have shifted from the north side in Phillips
 11 County directly across the river in Fergus County but, you
 12 know, in that situation it was more workable, but there were
 13 some other things involved with that, so hopefully that
 14 answers your question there.
 15 Dave Snyder, you brought up the question about
 16 mountain-lion hunting. During our public scoping meetings
 17 we received quite a few comments about us considering a
 18 mountain-lion season.
 19 You know, I have been involved with Fish, Wildlife
 20 & Parks' mountain-lion season tag process, tag quotas,
 21 things like that, for years. I don't think we want to
 22 propose a mountain-lion hunt as yearly as competitive as
 23 some of the hunting districts that currently exist in
 24 Montana.
 25 It's one of the charges we are given is to

Page 46

1 In Alternative C there really is no buck-to-doe
 2 ratio specified and in Alternative D we are calling for
 3 twenty-five total bucks per hundred does which is lower than
 4 what we had achieved under Alternative A.
 5 MR. CRAWFORD: Okay. Thank you, Randy.
 6 You want to talk roads?
 7 MR. BERG: Sure.
 8 MR. CRAWFORD: Okay.
 9 MR. BERG: Touch on a couple of other things too?
 10 MR. CRAWFORD: Yes. Okay. Have at it.
 11 MR. BERG: Kirk, you brought up a comment about
 12 maintaining some stability for ranchers and, you know, this
 13 Plan, the way it's written right now, lets you get down to
 14 the nuts and bolts of individual habitat units, but that
 15 will be something that we do with each individual habitat
 16 management plan.
 17 Where we have a unit that doesn't--isn't conducive
 18 to prescribed burning or management like that where we are
 19 going to use cattle as a prescriptive tool to manage habitat
 20 that would be the challenge between the managers of existing
 21 permittees to put together that plan that provides some of
 22 that stability you are talking about. Obviously if we put
 23 together a--a grazing treatment that only allows grazing one
 24 year out of five, you know, a rancher couldn't depend on
 25 that--just can't gear up to use cattle as a treatment that

Page 48

1 maintain quality of hunting opportunities. I see some real
 2 negative with some of those units, not all of them, but it
 3 gets to be a pretty competitive camp-on-a-track-type thing
 4 overnight.
 5 You know, we have to take into consideration some
 6 of the things with winter, you know, big-game habitat,
 7 disturbance we might have on that.
 8 To back up a little bit, before we propose any
 9 kind of a season on a national wildlife refuge we have to go
 10 through a pretty extensive hunt package it's called and one
 11 of the things that's critical to that is having the
 12 biological data in that hunt package to show that we can
 13 truly support some kind of a hunt with mountain lions or
 14 waterfowl or deer, whatever it is, so we are kind of under
 15 the microscope when it comes to opening new hunting seasons.
 16 If we were to propose a mountain-lion season for
 17 next year we would get shut down in two weeks or something
 18 like that so we are initiating a study this winter. Randy
 19 and.....are going to put collars on cats. That will
 20 kind of give us that baseline data that if it looks like we
 21 think it does there might be an opportunity for a limited
 22 type hunt.
 23 Now, whether that's one-day or five-day or ten-
 24 day, you know, we don't know at this time, and, the other
 25 comment about eliminating USDA predator control, currently

Page 49

1 on the refuge we have areas that we carte blanche allow
 2 predator control by USDA, and, to be honest with you, some
 3 of those predator issues aren't there like they used to be.
 4 You know, we don't have the sheep producers,
 5 mainly in Garfield County, like we used to. What we will do
 6 is we will go back and look at those areas, probably cancel
 7 some of those, you know, carte blanche authority to go in
 8 and currently gun coyotes, not to say that if we have a
 9 rancher producer that's having some trouble with livestock
 10 that we won't allow some type of predator management on his
 11 ranch.
 12 We don't control any predator management on State
 13 or private lands. That's beyond the scope of this--this
 14 document here. That also applies to--to hunting
 15 regulations, public abuse, and those kinds of things.
 16 I think Clint brought up the public-access shift
 17 in road concept is the way I read here. One of the things
 18 that we try to do is not only use our--our road management
 19 to influence big-game populations but we have also looked at
 20 roads from a public standpoint and we have had situations
 21 not so much in like Petroleum and Fergus and Phillips County
 22 but you get over into Garfield and to some extent McCone
 23 there would be a road that came off a main county road off
 24 the refuge right-of-ways and whether it passed through
 25 private or--most cases it was private--it got closed on the

Page 51

1 VOICE: How successful do you guys feel you are in
 2 managing the roads that are open now without the offshoots
 3 constantly being, you know, pushed into the wilderness?
 4 MR. BERG: I think we are doing pretty good, and
 5 some of the other folks in here can attest to that but, you
 6 know, I have been here about twenty years and when I first
 7 came here we made a pretty good effort to number all our
 8 roads. They correlated real nicely with the maps. Anytime
 9 there is a junction of one trail leading off another we have
 10 a post there with a three-digit number on it so it's easy--
 11 easy to tell where you are.
 12 Our--the rules are that you can't travel on
 13 anything but a numbered road. We seasonally close some of
 14 those depending on wildlife objectives, but I think we have
 15 been real successful in controlling the cherry extension
 16 type thing you are talking about. We went through a process
 17 to close some of those cherries down, mainly for wildlife
 18 sampling, provide better security habitat for big game in
 19 most cases--not that we don't have off-road problems still,
 20 but I think we have dealt with it pretty well.
 21 The thing that's encouraging to me is that, you
 22 know, we get as many complaints from the users out there
 23 about people that do choose to go off the road as we catch
 24 ourselves so the fact that the public kind of helps enforce
 25 that rule as they are, you know, on Forest Service and BLM,

Page 50

1 outside, you know, quite a distance from the CMR boundary.
 2 We made the decision quite a few years ago that we
 3 didn't want to create any kind of exclusive use on the
 4 refuge, on a refuge-numbered road, by only one individual or
 5 that individual controlling who got to use that road, so
 6 what we did is where that occurred we basically closed the
 7 road to the boundary for everybody, not only the general
 8 public but also the private landowner that had access,
 9 exclusive access, prior to that, so it was a tough nut to
 10 crack, but I think for the most part it, you know, I think
 11 it was fair to everybody.
 12 The other thing along those lines is we are
 13 working real diligently trying to secure rights-of-way where
 14 we do have public-access issues. We have acquired some land
 15 in certain areas where we are able to pick up a public
 16 right-of-way off a main county road across private land, in
 17 some cases BLM, to gain that access for the public to the
 18 CMR, not to say that, you know, there are several areas on
 19 the refuge where we need better access. Hopefully that will
 20 be a--a thing we accomplish.
 21 I don't think we want to answer more questions.
 22 (A discussion was then had off the record.)
 23 VOICE: Bill, can I just ask a question about
 24 roads?
 25 MR. BERG: Okay.

Page 52

1 you know, I think is a plus in my mind.
 2 VOICE: Thank you.
 3 MR. CRAWFORD: I think the last question I had was
 4 sage-grouse listing and how livestock grazing could be
 5 impacted. If you look at the listing package they excluded
 6 livestock grazing as being an impact to sage-grouse
 7 population so right now there is no guidance coming down as
 8 far as livestock grazing in sage-grouse areas.
 9 The only guidance that comes down is looking at
 10 the use of prescribed fire and fire suppression in those
 11 core sage-grouse areas, whether it's lek or wintering
 12 habitat, and it is reflected in our plan where we will avoid
 13 using prescribed fire in those critical sage-grouse areas
 14 and we will suppress all wildfires that threaten core sage-
 15 grouse areas, but there is no guidance right now from the
 16 ecological branch of the Service concerning these and
 17 livestock and sage grouse.
 18 We will be here. There are several staff members
 19 here tonight that will be more than happy to answer your
 20 questions. Neil Kademas is in the back, wildlife biologist,
 21 Jackie Fox, Beverly Skinner, Dan Harrell. You all met Randy
 22 and Bob. Jody is hiding back there. Matt's in the back--
 23 Bill and I.
 24 We appreciate everybody coming out. If you got
 25 more specific questions grab one of us. We will be happy to

Page 53

1 answer them.

2 Thanks.

3 (The hearing was then concluded at the hour of

4 8:20 p.m., this 12th day of October, 2010.)

5

6

7

8

9

C E R T I F I C A T E

10

11 I, Harry G. Rauch, a Certified Shorthand Reporter,

12 within and for the State of Montana, do hereby certify that

13 I took down in stenotype the proceedings had on the subject

14 hearing at the time and place hereinbefore set forth and

15 that the foregoing fifty-three (53) pages constitute a full

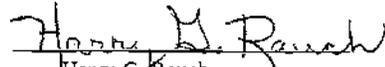
16 transcript of my notes of said proceedings.

17 Dated this 18th day of October, 2010.

18

19

20


Harry G. Rauch

Page 1

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Charles M. Russell and UL Bend
National Wildlife Refuges

The TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS at VFW, 11 South Main Street, Jordan, Montana, on the 13th day of October, 2010, beginning at 2:00 p.m.

PANEL:
BARRON CRAWFORD Project Leader
BILL BERG Deputy Project Leader
LAURIE SHANNON Planner
MIMI MATHER Speaker Facilitator

Page 2

1	SPEAKERS	PAGE
2	KAREN TAYLOR	21
3	JACK MURNION	24
4	EDLA McKERLICK	26
5	MIKE McKEEVER	28
6	NORMAN "SKIP" OLSON	32
7	KARLA CHRISTENSEN	37
8	JERRY COLDWELL	38
9	ERIC MILLER	39
10	DEAN ROGGE	40
11	MARK GOOD	41
12	JANELLE HOLDEN	44
13	JEANNE KIRKEGARD	46
14	JANET GUPTILL	48
15	RALPH GRIINK	49
16	FLOSSIE PHIPPS	50
17	JOAN D. WATSON	51
18	LAYNE MURNION	54
19		
20		
21		
22		
23		
24		
25		

Page 3

1 PROCEEDINGS
2 2:00 p.m.
3 MS. MATHER: Okay, folks, let's get
4 started in a timely start. Please have a seat.
5 Plenty of room up front.
6 Well, thanks, everybody, for coming
7 this afternoon. This is our second meeting this
8 week, and we have two others after today.
9 The purpose of the meeting is for the
10 Fish & Wildlife Service to collect your input on
11 the draft CCP, the Comprehensive Conservation
12 Plan.
13 My name is Mimi. I'll be facilitating
14 this meeting.
15 And I'm up here with Barron Crawford,
16 CMR's Project Leader; Bill Berg, the Deputy
17 Project Leader; and, Laurie Shannon, who is the
18 CCP Planning Team Leader.
19 The way the next two hours are going to
20 work is, Barron will give a brief presentation
21 on the CCP and describe the alternatives and the
22 highlight points of the plan.
23 Then we'll turn it to you and open the
24 floor for public comments.
25 Keep in mind that we want to make sure

Page 4

1 we give everybody enough time to speak, so we're
2 going to limit the time of your comments to
3 three minutes.
4 So, if you all have a lot to say, start
5 thinking about how you can narrow your comments
6 down to three minutes. There's plenty of other
7 ways that you could submit your comments other
8 than up here at the mic.
9 So, with that, I'll turn it to Barron,
10 and then I'll give you an explanation of how the
11 comments are going to run afterwards.
12 MR. CRAWFORD: Thanks, Mimi.
13 Steve, can you maybe get the first
14 couple of rows of lights and figure that out.
15 Maybe this will show up a little bit better.
16 I'm going to give a brief overview of
17 what we have been doing for the past three
18 years. Talk a little bit about the CCP process,
19 where we're at and where we're going.
20 So, we started basically in January of
21 2007. That's when we held the first public
22 scoping meetings. We did 14 of those all
23 together. We got about 24,000 public comments
24 did during that time.
25 We've had numerous meetings with our

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 5</p> <p>1 cooperators, and we've kind of taken all of that 2 and rolled it up into this Draft document. 3 So this is kind of just an outline of 4 the CCP timeline. You know, preplanning, public 5 involvement, scoping, alternatives, and then the 6 Draft. 7 And then from here, we'll hopefully 8 move on to a Final CCP and EIS. 9 So, basically we do a CCP because, for 10 one, we're mandated by the National Wildlife 11 Refuge System Improvement Act. It basically 12 says all refuges will have a completed 13 Comprehensive Conservation Plan by 2015. 14 And so there's about 548 refuges in the 15 United States, and a little over, what, 16 two-thirds of those are already done. So the 17 rest of the refuges are working trying to make 18 that deadline. 19 But the main point of what a CCP does, 20 is it provides management direction, guidance 21 that is based upon the refuge purposes and the 22 mission of the Wildlife Refuge System. 23 It kind of provides a road map for 24 managers as they come and go. In the past, as a 25 new manager would come in, they would have new</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 6</p> <p>1 ideas, and so they would take off and implement 2 those, and the refuge management would go one 3 direction. And that manager would leave, and a 4 new manager would come in, and they would go 5 back the other direction, and so there was a lot 6 of inconsistency in management. 7 With this plan in place, it will 8 hopefully provide the stable, long-term 9 guidance. So it outlines a vision statement, 10 goals, objectives and strategies for that future 11 management. 12 It's accompanied by some type of NEPA 13 document. Most of the time it's an 14 Environmental Assessment for the CMR. Due to 15 the complexity of issues that we're addressing, 16 we did do an EIS. That's why the document is so 17 large. Sorry about that. 18 And again, it provides the long-term 19 guidance for the management over that 15-year 20 period. 21 So they are 15-year plans. They have 22 to be updated, renewed, revisited at the end of 23 that 15-year period. 24 So, this is just kind of a flow chart 25 as to the steps that are involved in a CCP. And</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 7</p> <p>1 we're down here at the bottom with the Draft 2 Plan and NEPA document. Hopefully we can move 3 into this next step, prepare and adopt a Final 4 Plan. 5 But there's nothing to say that based 6 upon the comments that we receive during this 7 period, that we might not go back to this step 8 right here (indicating), and go with an all new 9 alternative and start back again with another 10 round of scoping meetings. 11 So, that's kind of how this works. It 12 doesn't always flow like this. Sometimes you go 13 back and then go forward. 14 Hopefully we've thought this through 15 enough, and we've covered everything, and maybe 16 we just have to do a little modification to the 17 alternative that ends up in the Final Plan. 18 So we came up with four alternatives. 19 Basically we have the Alternative A, which is 20 "No Action", which is basically continue doing 21 what we have been doing since 1986, when the 22 last EIS was developed. 23 There would be a few changes. You 24 know, some of those changes we've been doing 25 here along the way.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 8</p> <p>1 But the basic concepts of this 2 alternative is you continue to manage the refuge 3 under the 65 habitat units that are out there 4 that were established when the refuge was 5 co-managed with BLM. 6 We continue to move towards this 7 gradual implementation of prescriptive grazing, 8 and as a ranch sells to a nonfamily member, 9 holding that permit and enrolling that unit into 10 a prescriptive program. 11 We would still manage big game to 12 achieve those target levels that were identified 13 in '86 of 2.5 elk per square mile, and 10 mule 14 deer per square mile. 15 We'd keep open the 670 miles of roads 16 or so that are out there, and we'd continue with 17 protecting the 155,000 acres of proposed 18 wilderness. 19 So then we came to our action 20 alternatives, and the first one was what we 21 coined the "Wildlife and Habitat Emphasis", and 22 threw a bunch of big biological words in here 23 just to make us look smart. 24 But it's basically to manage the 25 landscape in cooperation with our partners to</p>

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 9</p> <p>1 emphasize the abundance and diversity of 2 wildlife populations using both balanced, 3 natural ecological processes. 4 And when we talk about ecological 5 processes, the three big ones out at the 6 Missouri branch are fire, grazing and flooding. 7 Then we're also looking at synthetic 8 methods. And synthetic methods are like 9 farming, tree planting, maybe some pumping to 10 recreate some of those floodings for cottonwood 11 regeneration. 12 We'd continue to encourage 13 wildlife-dependent public uses. And those are 14 hunting and fishing, wildlife observation and 15 wildlife photography, environmental education 16 and interpretation. 17 And back in the back, we've got several 18 maps set up that depict the various 19 alternatives, and if you want to take a closer 20 look at those, you are more than welcome to. 21 But basically under this alternative, 22 we would be expanding a couple of the proposed 23 wilderness areas. These are shaded in the light 24 orange. We would be closing -- proposing to 25 close several cherry stem roads. The same thing</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 10</p> <p>1 over here on the east half. 2 So, kind of a synopsis of this is, we'd 3 implement prescriptive grazing on about 50 to 4 75% of the refuge. Right now, we're 5 prescriptively grazing 35%, so we would get a 6 little bit more aggressive in moving towards a 7 prescriptive grazing program. We would do that 8 within about a four- to seven-year time period. 9 We'd do some active restoration of the 10 river bottoms. We'd continue to work with the 11 State to provide quality hunting opportunities 12 for big game, and then we'd also look more to 13 strive for providing habitat for nongame. 14 The big one for this alternative is 15 we'd close about 106 miles of roads, and we'd 16 increase proposed wilderness areas by 25,000 17 acres in six units. 18 The next alternative we came up with 19 was Alternative C, and we're calling this one 20 the "Public Use and the Economic Emphasis". 21 And basically this one is to promote 22 maximum compatible wildlife-dependent public 23 uses and economic uses while protecting wildlife 24 populations and habitats, to the extent 25 possible.</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 11</p> <p>1 And we've minimized damaging impacts to 2 habitats while using a variety of management 3 tools that would enhance and diversify public 4 and economic opportunities. 5 So, out of this proposal, we're not 6 going to close any roads. We are proposing to 7 eliminate a couple of proposed wilderness 8 areas. 9 And then some of the highlights of 10 this, is we'd work with Fish, Wildlife & Parks 11 to maintain that balance between big game and 12 livestock; work to provide more opportunities 13 for recreation; expand some hunting 14 opportunities. We're looking to hopefully 15 expand some youth hunting opportunities in 16 particular. 17 We'd recommend eliminating about four 18 proposed wilderness areas, for a total of 35,000 19 acres. 20 And then we move to our last 21 alternative, Alternative D, and this one is 22 called the "Natural Processes", or the 23 "Ecological Processes". And this is our 24 proposed action. Okay, this is the one that we 25 think best fits our mission of the Refuge</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 12</p> <p>1 System. 2 And for this one, again, we're going to 3 use those natural ecological processes of fire, 4 grazing and flooding and active management - 5 farming, tree planting - to restore and/or 6 maintain the biological diversity and integrity 7 and environmental health. 8 And then once we have those processes 9 restored to the best of our abilities, we'll 10 take more of a passive management approach. 11 We're still going to provide that 12 quality wildlife-dependent public uses. But the 13 big one here, is we would limit economic uses 14 when they are causing injury to either our 15 ecological processes or to those plants that 16 we're trying to get to going in a positive 17 direction. 18 So again, last map, a couple of 19 proposed expansions of wilderness areas. Not as 20 much as in B. A couple of eliminations of some 21 proposed wilderness. A couple of proposed road 22 closures. Same thing here. 23 So this one is economic uses will be 24 limited when they are injurious to our 25 ecological processes.</p>

Page 13

1 We would apply management practices
 2 that mimic and restore those natural processes
 3 of fire and grazing. We'd use fire and grazing,
 4 both wild ungulates and/or prescriptive
 5 livestock grazing on 50 to 75% of the refuge.
 6 We would move to prescriptive grazing
 7 at a slower pace. We would do it over about a
 8 9- to 10-year period versus a four- to
 9 seven-year period under Alternative B.
 10 Again, we would work with Fish,
 11 Wildlife & Parks to maintain health and
 12 diversity of all wildlife species.
 13 Close about 23 miles of roads, and we'd
 14 expand six of the proposed wilderness areas, for
 15 18,000 acres, but we'd propose eliminating three
 16 from a reduction of 26.
 17 So, this is about the fourth meeting?
 18 Fifth?
 19 MS. SHANNON: Fifth meeting.
 20 MR. CRAWFORD: Fifth meeting.
 21 We've heard quite a few comments. Some
 22 of the hot button topics that we've heard,
 23 prescriptive grazing, what is it?
 24 I had a gentleman ask me a question
 25 last night about conservation grazing. I found

Page 15

1 protect that area from wildfire.
 2 So, those are two examples of how you
 3 use prescriptive grazing to manage specific
 4 wildlife or habitat objective.
 5 The other one is prescribed fire. How
 6 will it be used?
 7 We've been working with fire ecologists
 8 for the past five years now that have been
 9 looking at mapping the historic fire frequency
 10 occurrence on the refuge. Starting to get a
 11 pretty good map in some places as to what that
 12 occurrence was.
 13 It's highly variable, as you can
 14 imagine, based upon the soils, based upon the
 15 topography, based upon the slope. It ranges
 16 anywhere from about every seven years to several
 17 hundred years.
 18 So, the idea is to go into those places
 19 that have frequent fire and put it back on the
 20 ground. Several of those spots haven't seen
 21 fire in 60 or 70 years.
 22 So the challenge is, is to go in and
 23 put a light, cool fire through there to reduce
 24 some of that fuel load, reduce the risk of a
 25 catastrophic wildfire, but yet also keep it to a

Page 14

1 that a very unique term. Kind of liked it.
 2 What we define as "prescriptive
 3 grazing" is basically using grazing in order to
 4 meet a specific wildlife and/or habitat
 5 management objective.
 6 So basically we're going to go out
 7 there. We're going to look at an area. And the
 8 example that I like to use, is let's say we have
 9 an area that's got a prairie dog town. It's got
 10 some mountain plovers nesting on it. We want to
 11 expand habitat for nesting mountain plovers.
 12 Mountain plovers like bare areas with
 13 very little vegetation. So that's a case where
 14 we could go in, graze an area really heavily.
 15 Hopefully get the prairie dogs to expand. That
 16 would then open up areas for mountain plovers to
 17 then occupy new nesting areas.
 18 Another example is where you have sage
 19 grouse lex, or you have wintering habitat for
 20 sage grouse, and it has a high field buildup in
 21 that area.
 22 And we obviously don't want to go in
 23 there with fire and ruin the habitat for sage
 24 grouse. We could use livestock to go in there
 25 and reduce that hazardous fuel load. and then

Page 16

1 point where it's manageable so you keep it
 2 within this designated area.
 3 We touched on wilderness. You know,
 4 basically as part of the CCP process, we're
 5 mandated to look at our proposed wilderness
 6 areas and to make recommendations as to whether
 7 those areas still meet those wilderness
 8 characteristics in which they were set aside
 9 for.
 10 It is subjective. You know, we
 11 basically look at the Act and look at the
 12 reasons that those areas where set aside for
 13 proposed wilderness, and we make a judgment
 14 call.
 15 And that's why you see under
 16 Alternative B no areas proposed for elimination,
 17 and under Alternative C, you see more areas
 18 proposed for elimination.
 19 We looked at it as to what was
 20 kind of the emphasis of that alternative,
 21 and then could we say, okay, yeah, this area
 22 may not fit well under this alternative.
 23 There's a possibility that, you know, maybe
 24 we should consider dropping it from proposed
 25 wilderness.

Page 17

1 The same thing with roads. We looked
 2 at the roads on the refuge and decided -- or
 3 tried to make a subjective determination as to,
 4 are those roads impacting our ability to manage
 5 wildlife? Are they providing necessary access
 6 for the public to get in and enjoy the area, or
 7 to access a favorite fishing hole or a hunting
 8 area?
 9 You know, it doesn't lead to -- the
 10 lake doesn't lead that a private in-holding.
 11 Those are the sorts of things that we
 12 looked at in determining what roads should be
 13 proposed for elimination, and which ones
 14 shouldn't.
 15 And then the final one was a lot of
 16 comments on bison.
 17 And I can stand here and say that as
 18 long as I'm manager of CFR, there will not be
 19 any free-ranging bison on the refuge, which is
 20 two more days.
 21 But, what I can honestly tell you is
 22 that in the plan, we do not propose to
 23 reintroduce free-ranging bison, okay? That is a
 24 State-managed wildlife species.
 25 It is in the plan, because at the time

Page 19

1 the table when you leave. You can mail that
 2 in. You can send Laurie a nice letter. You can
 3 send her an email.
 4 There's no one comment form that's
 5 weighted more heavily than the other one. We
 6 treat all the comments the same, whether they
 7 are written, whether they're emailed, whether
 8 they're spoken.
 9 And it's not a voting contest. So, you
 10 know, it doesn't matter if one person says
 11 something, and 1,000 people say something
 12 totally opposite. We look at the value of that
 13 comment, and we weigh it on that value alone.
 14 So, that's all I've got. I appreciate
 15 everybody taking time out of your very busy
 16 schedules today to come out here. It's been
 17 great working with everybody. Thanks.
 18 MS. MATHER: Okay, it's your turn. So,
 19 let me explain how the comments will work.
 20 I have got a list of everybody that
 21 signed up. I'll call folks off the list. I
 22 will call who's next as well as who's on deck so
 23 that person can be ready. Feel free to come sit
 24 in our on-deck seats.
 25 Again, you have three minutes. We're

Page 18

1 of our developing it, the State was proposing,
 2 or was looking at the possibility of proposing
 3 bison restoration in and around the refuge.
 4 So what we put in the plan was that if
 5 the State brought forward such a proposal, that
 6 we would work with them and evaluate the refuge
 7 to see what role the refuge may play in
 8 fulfilling that State plan.
 9 And it's no different than what we do
 10 working with the State to fulfill their Bighorn
 11 Sheep Management Plan, or their Elk Management
 12 Plan or their Prairie Dog Management Plan. So,
 13 that's the same thing there.
 14 So, as Mimi said, we're here to take
 15 your comments today. We ask that you come and
 16 use this microphone so everybody in the room can
 17 hear you.
 18 This other microphone goes to our
 19 recorder up here so she captures everything.
 20 We ask that you state your name; spell
 21 it if it's not a common spelling, and go ahead
 22 and give your comment.
 23 There are other ways that you can also
 24 comment. There was comment sheets handed out in
 25 the back. You can write on that and drop it at

Page 20

1 going to be strict about that time frame so we
 2 can ensure that everybody has a chance to
 3 comment.
 4 Once you've spoken for two minutes, and
 5 you are down to one minute, Brad will hold up
 6 the "one minute" sign. He's also got one for
 7 when you have "20 seconds left". At that point,
 8 we really need to start wrapping up.
 9 And then there's a "time is up", at
 10 which case, we would like for you to hand the
 11 mic back to me, and I'll call up the next
 12 person.
 13 Some of you have said that you just
 14 have a question. That's fine. Come on up to
 15 the mic and just ask your question.
 16 We're going to break -- we're going to
 17 stop at 3:45 so that Barron has an opportunity
 18 to address a number of the questions and
 19 comments as a way to close the meeting.
 20 So, one other thing I ask, just to
 21 respect one another's opinion.
 22 And to allow things to move quickly and
 23 smoothly, please don't interrupt one another as
 24 people are giving comments, and please hold back
 25 on applause and cheering.

Page 21

1 So with that, we can start. I've got
 2 Karen Taylor up first, and Tony Phipps on deck.
 3 KAREN TAYLOR: This isn't going to be
 4 easy in that time limit, but anyway.
 5 These agencies keep saying they're
 6 going to involve the public, yet they have a
 7 release out that says "not for public release".
 8 They keep doing all these decisions
 9 with no scientific data, without the public
 10 input. They've eliminated all kinds of grazing,
 11 put people out of business. I know that because
 12 we just lost our ranch.
 13 Okay. The government poisoned the
 14 wolves. Now it's the fault of the ranchers that
 15 we don't have wolves. They reintroduced them.
 16 They keep saying they want native everything,
 17 but that's not native wolves. There are people
 18 who can prove that they are not true wolves.
 19 The government still have the buffalo
 20 slaughtered. Somehow that's the fault of the
 21 ranchers. But I would like to know how come the
 22 buffalo can graze, but cows just seem to destroy
 23 the habitat?
 24 They have been taking the grazing
 25 rights and, like I say, putting us out of

Page 23

1 agencies call them "wild horses", and they're
 2 using them to take the grazing rights away. But
 3 those horses where turned loose by the people
 4 that went broke in this area from the Dirty
 5 Thirties. They are not true wild horses.
 6 Prairie dogs totally ruin the land, as
 7 all of us know, but yet these guys want a lot
 8 more of them.
 9 And a little bit ago, there was
 10 something about limiting the fuel. Well, how
 11 come we're going to have so much fuel. If we
 12 had a little more grazing, we wouldn't have that
 13 fuel, would we?
 14 Okay, you're probably not going to like
 15 me for what I'm going to say here, but our
 16 president, legislators, representatives, public
 17 servants swear an oath to the Constitution, and
 18 are supposed to be tried for treason when they
 19 pass legislation that violates the Constitution
 20 or allow the takings of private property.
 21 It's a fact that laws contrary to the
 22 Constitution are supposed to be null and void
 23 from the time of their inception. Imminent
 24 domain is not to be used to take a person's
 25 means of making a living or their homes, except

Page 22

1 business.
 2 They plan on burning things. They
 3 wanted to have cover for the birds and wildlife,
 4 but yet they're going to burn all this stuff.
 5 And they call this nature.
 6 They're closing more roads, but yet
 7 they say they want the public to be able to use
 8 it.
 9 Take a look at those maps really close,
 10 because how in the devil with all those roads
 11 closed are we going to get to our, quote,
 12 "favorite fishing hole"?
 13 They had no public hearings to close
 14 these roads. That's illegal, just the same as
 15 when they're doing all this stuff behind our
 16 backs.
 17 And they limit fishing and hunting, and
 18 yet they say it's your public land, and you can
 19 use it.
 20 They're limiting us to voice our
 21 concerns. And if you voice your concerns,
 22 believe me, you will be put out of business and
 23 threatened.
 24 Okay, they protected what they called
 25 wild horses. Wild Horse Annie and the federal

Page 24

1 for the public good, and wildlife and habitat is
 2 not what the law was meant for.
 3 Okay, I guess I'm getting limited here,
 4 so I'm just going to say, "United we stand.
 5 Divided we fall."
 6 MS. MATHER: Thank you, Karen.
 7 Tony Phipps?
 8 MR. PHIPPS: I'll pass.
 9 MS. MATHER: You'll pass.
 10 Okay, Jack Murnion, and Edla on deck.
 11 And again, Jack, if you could spell
 12 your name for the court reporter.
 13 MR. MURNION: I got to get my glasses.
 14 I was one of the Garfield County
 15 Commissioners. I will confine my statement to
 16 the economic impact of Preferred Plan D to the
 17 taxpayers of Garfield County.
 18 Page 316, Part 5 of this Draft CCP
 19 states that I believe in '07, there where 1800
 20 -- 18,872 AUMs in the refuge, at a rate of 1720
 21 an AUM for an income to CMR from grazing of
 22 \$324,598.40.
 23 When this income to the CMR ends under
 24 Preferred Plan D, and I quote from Page 5 --
 25 from Part 5, Page 330,

Page 25

1 "Alternative D will
 2 generate 2.1 million more
 3 in local output, 25
 4 additional jobs, and 569.6
 5 thousand more in agri
 6 income as compared to
 7 Alternative A."
 8 I submit that the economic impact data
 9 in this study book is flawed.
 10 I submit that I would embrace any
 11 business in our part of Montana that could give
 12 up all revenue of \$324,598.40, and promise over
 13 \$2 million in local output.
 14 Is this the same economic thinking that
 15 has our great country trillions in debt?
 16 And one further comment. Page 14 in
 17 this book.
 18 "All the issues excluded
 19 on Page 14 as outside of
 20 this Draft CCP and EIS
 21 should be addressed, as our
 22 information from Congress
 23 suggests that this plan
 24 cannot further destroy our
 25 rural economy."

Page 27

1 that are going to get up and talk -- I'm just
 2 going to say I've been here 26 years in the
 3 county, and we are all practitioners. None of
 4 us get to be a theoretical person.
 5 So when you talk about roads and all
 6 the things that go into a piece of property,
 7 we're the ones that are falling in a hole or
 8 digging some hunter out of a hole. We deal with
 9 the real situation. We have real animals that
 10 need something to eat and water to drink.
 11 So, these papers and charts and
 12 computers that the theoretician people work
 13 with, the bureaucracy people work with, they're
 14 all very neat and tidy, and everything is done
 15 in three minutes, of course.
 16 And we are put in the situation of
 17 three minutes to defend what we think would be
 18 best, but we're living out here a lifetime.
 19 Everybody in these nice outfits and nice
 20 salaries will drive away, and then people can
 21 talk. We go home to the real.
 22 So I would say of the alternatives that
 23 we're looking at, let's go with Alternative A
 24 that we can maybe deal with.
 25 The people that are sitting in some big

Page 26

1 Thank you.
 2 MS. MATHER: And Edla?
 3 EDLA McKERLICK: Thank you.
 4 MS. MATHER: And Mike on deck.
 5 MS. McKERLICK: How do you want us to
 6 hold this thing?
 7 MS. MATHER: We want you to just stand
 8 right there. This is the one you speak into.
 9 MS. McKERLICK: That's awkward.
 10 We're going to turn to the audience,
 11 though.
 12 MS. MATHER: But it's actually better
 13 for the court reporter if you face her and face
 14 these guys. These guys can hear you because you
 15 are mic'd.
 16 MS. McKERLICK: Well, that's odd.
 17 I'm going to turn to the public.
 18 MS. MATHER: Can you just spell your
 19 name real quick?
 20 MS. McKERLICK: Edla, E-D-L-A;
 21 McKerlick, M-c-K-E-R-L-I-C-K.
 22 I didn't prepare anything ahead of
 23 time, but -- can you hear me?
 24 I'll just speak -- Karen spoke with
 25 practical facts, and I'm sure the other people

Page 28

1 city in a basement with a computer and can be as
 2 odd as a \$3 bill ought not to have a word to say
 3 about the things that affect us, like
 4 predators. If they want one, come and get one.
 5 Take them home. Put it in a cage. Look at it.
 6 But the people that have been part of
 7 the history, and most of us have been from the
 8 time of so many generations, we're not just
 9 people that have come out here to get away from
 10 the city.
 11 And we have it a lot better than our
 12 ancestors had it. But for heaven's sakes, when
 13 you say "partnering up", listen to what the
 14 partners have to say, if we are the partners.
 15 Maybe we aren't.
 16 So it's a very difficult topic, but I
 17 would say, please pay attention to the people
 18 that actually live here.
 19 MS. MATHER: Mike, and I believe it's
 20 Skip Olson on deck.
 21 MIKE McKEEVER: My name is Mike
 22 McKeever, M-c-K-E-E-V-E-R.
 23 I've three questions or five questions,
 24 whatever I have to ask.
 25 And first I would like to say, Edla, we

Page 29

1 agree.
 2 One of my questions that I can't seem
 3 to get this straight, I look in the book, and it
 4 says if you're not going to pay your share in
 5 the county with PELT funding, how do you propose
 6 to pay your fair share of the taxes in the
 7 counties affected by your existence?
 8 The CMR should be taxed as recreational
 9 land. That's, I guess a question.
 10 The second one would be, we need to
 11 address the negative impacts on adjacent private
 12 lands.
 13 For example, our place is about three
 14 miles from the Big Dry Arm of Fort Peck Lake,
 15 and as Alternative D, and I think a couple of
 16 the others say, if we take out the fences and
 17 the water impoundments, and we eliminate
 18 predator control as we have it now, the limited
 19 amount we have now, we will be negatively
 20 affected by the additional wildlife that will be
 21 seeking food, water and protection from
 22 predators.
 23 Is the CMR or the government planning
 24 to pay a trespass fee for additional wildlife
 25 that we have to support? We're nearly tapped

Page 31

1 Are we, as individuals and private
 2 landowners, going to get a buy like this from
 3 the state, or is this just a special perk for
 4 the CMR at the school's expense?
 5 And water rights. I guess I'd like to
 6 know who will end up with the rights when the
 7 impoundments are removed? I think this is
 8 Page 75. I would like an explanation of that --
 9 Page 175.
 10 I guess a real brief comment here.
 11 As I read over these preferred
 12 alternatives, A is the one I would prefer, of
 13 course. But there's lots and lots of
 14 consideration for private property rights of the
 15 adjacent landowners.
 16 We got prescribed fires out of control;
 17 normal annual grazing permits, but prescribed
 18 grazing as well as introduction of native
 19 species by the partners, and, of course,
 20 increased predator populations. These changes
 21 make for a very unfriendly neighbor relations to
 22 the adjacent landowners.
 23 My solution to this would be fence
 24 the entire refuge.
 25 Predator type, pay a recreation tax to

Page 30

1 out running the livestock right now.
 2 So, I guess I'm kind of wondering if
 3 we're going to be compensated for it? Because
 4 we will have to -- we'll have to do something
 5 for the additional livestock we'll be running.
 6 I'm sure that we would have to pay a
 7 trespass fee in the event that our livestock
 8 strayed out to CMR lands and took up residence.
 9 Also, another thing, State lands. I
 10 think there's 36,000 acres within the boundary
 11 of the CMR of State lands. I think this is what
 12 I read. And I'm wondering if this is just
 13 another takings?
 14 Your proposal to protect State lands.
 15 What is your proposal to protect these State
 16 lands for the schools without the bidding
 17 process?
 18 You say on Page -- I think it's 329,
 19 "If permittees no longer
 20 retained their grazing
 21 permits, the Service will
 22 work with the DNRC to
 23 assume these permits."
 24 And part of it says "providing the CMR
 25 has the funding to do it".

Page 32

1 the counties, and then you can study it; you can
 2 burn it; you can let the predators have what's
 3 in there, but you won't be bothering us.
 4 Thank you.
 5 MS. MATHER: Thank you.
 6 Skip, with Karla Christensen on deck.
 7 SKIP OLSON: Olson, O-L-S-O-N. First
 8 name Norman, N-O-R-M-A-N.
 9 This is going to be short, as they
 10 say. I'm going to read just a couple of things
 11 directly from this magazine.
 12 Would you hold that, please.
 13 MS. MATHER: Yes.
 14 MR. OLSON: Just to get your
 15 attention.
 16 This is the "Effect on Riparian Areas",
 17 Page 276, Alternative B.
 18 "If wolves where to
 19 naturally recolonize the
 20 refuge, the presence and
 21 management of wolves on the
 22 refuge would provide
 23 predational pressure on
 24 wild ungulates, which would
 25 benefit riparian health by

Page 33

1 potentially reducing
 2 wildlife ungulate grazing
 3 pressure in some areas.
 4 "If wolves were
 5 reintroduced to the refuge,
 6 their presence as another
 7 large ungulate would result
 8 in negligible to minor
 9 effects on riparian health.
 10 "Alternative B, the
 11 elimination of active
 12 predator removal and the
 13 incorporation of wolf
 14 management objectives on
 15 the refuge would provide
 16 predational pressure on
 17 wild ungulates, which would
 18 benefit riparian health by
 19 potentially reducing wild
 20 ungulate grazing pressure
 21 in some areas.
 22 "The effects of
 23 management objectives for
 24 bison and fur bearers would
 25 be the same."

Page 35

1 sheet, be reminded that these are in thousands
 2 of dollars.
 3 The bottom of the page of Alternative A
 4 runs from 49 million. Alternative D goes 76
 5 million. This is over a 15-year plan.
 6 I'd like to highlight a couple of
 7 things. The biggest enemy that we have on this
 8 is range and invasive species.
 9 We are getting covered up from the
 10 north by thousands of acres of weeds. And you
 11 guys that aren't familiar with that, I have
 12 extensive experience with weeds on the CMR. I
 13 don't know if I have time to talk about them.
 14 You know, if you look at them
 15 proposals, they're going to spend \$8 million
 16 building a building. I'm sure you're going to
 17 want to jump right out and help them pay for
 18 this.
 19 There's \$4 million in there to buy
 20 land.
 21 And I'll give you some comparisons.
 22 The highest amount on any of those proposals is
 23 to take care of the range with native species is
 24 120,000 over 15 years. Compare that to spending
 25 425,000 taking pictures.

Page 34

1 I would like to go to the budget,
 2 expense, income. Some of you have a budget
 3 sheet.
 4 Quick costs. They talk about costs to
 5 this community on the refuge. 1.1 million acres
 6 minus, say, 250,000 for the lake.
 7 An AUM in this country is worth 50
 8 bucks, at least. That's costing you 8 to \$10
 9 million a year in income for this -- for the
 10 surrounding communities of the lake.
 11 They said 8 to 10 million. That's at
 12 50 bucks an AUM. That's what it's costing you
 13 to let the cattle come off of that.
 14 We're a broke nation. We even try to
 15 permit -- create something are becoming a
 16 minority in this country, as you know.
 17 Some of you have a budget sheet. I
 18 hope I can find mine before I run out of time.
 19 Hang on to that, would you? That might
 20 give me time to get my glasses out.
 21 MS. MATHER: Well, we'll pause for a
 22 minute.
 23 MR. OLSON: Thank you.
 24 MS. MATHER: Yes.
 25 MR. OLSON: If you look in the budget

Page 36

1 Compare that to spending 400, 500, 400,
 2 200 millions of dollars letting people hunt.
 3 Why the hell does it cost 338,000 to let
 4 somebody go hunting on the refuge?
 5 MS. MATHER: Skip, you're about out of
 6 time.
 7 MR. OLSON: Okay.
 8 I don't know where to go with this
 9 budget thing. It amazes me.
 10 Their number one responsibility, as
 11 anybody is, has, that's a caretaker of range of
 12 the land that we're hearing being used is to
 13 take care of the range. That is not their
 14 priority. And when they don't take care of the
 15 range, they won't have a refuge.
 16 Look at the numbers. I guess that's
 17 where I'll stop on the budget. It's astounding
 18 to see.
 19 25 new employees for Alternative D.
 20 There's new buildings proposed for Jordan,
 21 Fort Peck.
 22 MS. MATHER: Time's up, Skip.
 23 Want that back?
 24 MR. OLSON: Sure.
 25 MS. MATHER: Thanks, Skip.

Page 37

1 Karla's up, with Jerry on deck.
 2 KARLA CHRISTENSEN: My name is Karla
 3 Christensen. Karla, K-A-R-L-A, and Christensen,
 4 C-H-R-I-S-T-E-N-S-E-N.
 5 My concern is the bison that someday
 6 may be running on our range. I have a couple of
 7 questions that I would like to be answered at
 8 sometime today.
 9 One of them is, all of the proposals
 10 that are in this book talk about bison. And if
 11 they are restored to areas outside of the
 12 refuge, and the animals migrate onto the refuge
 13 as State-managed wildlife species, as stated in
 14 the book on Page 92 and Page 93.
 15 Now, my question is, where are they
 16 expected to migrate from?
 17 My second question is, can bison raised
 18 as domestic livestock become wildlife when they
 19 wander onto the CMR?
 20 And then my third question is, do
 21 domestic bison as livestock have grazing
 22 allotments on the CMR? And if so, where are
 23 those grazing allotments located?
 24 Okay, I'm really concerned that bison
 25 are going to slip in the back door.

Page 39

1 Where are the bison going to come from?
 2 Do we bring them out of the Park, which was
 3 suggested, and have to fight with BANGS,
 4 brucellosis for the next -- until we are all out
 5 of business?
 6 I don't think so. We don't like that
 7 situation.
 8 And that's my comments for now.
 9 MS. MATHER: Thanks, Jerry.
 10 JERRY COLDWELL: Thank you.
 11 MS. MATHER: Eric, with Dean.
 12 ERIC MILLER: Good afternoon. My name
 13 is Eric Miller. It's E-R-I-C; M-I-L-L-E-R, and
 14 I am from Jordan, though not originally.
 15 This is going to be pretty
 16 straightforward.
 17 In your introduction -- or in your
 18 vision statement -- and I'm going to paraphrase
 19 this -- you state that you will use adaptive
 20 management rooted in science to protect and
 21 improve the health of the refuge, wildlife and
 22 habitat.
 23 So my question to you today, you're
 24 talking about making significant wildlife and
 25 habitat changes through all four of your

Page 38

1 Thank you.
 2 MS. MATHER: Thanks, Karla.
 3 Jerry, and then Eric Miller on deck.
 4 JERRY COLDWELL: Jerry Coldwell,
 5 C-O-L-D-W-E-L-L. Rancher, County Commissioner.
 6 How are you guys doing? It sounds like
 7 you've had a pretty rough go part of the time.
 8 What I've got to say is in the last
 9 10 years, this county has lost over almost half
 10 its population since the CMR was changed from a
 11 range to a refuge and permits were cut down.
 12 I have some questions. Number one,
 13 I'll go with the bison, too.
 14 Are you going -- if they are on the
 15 game range, are you going to fence them into it?
 16 And if not, who's going to -- how are we going
 17 to manage these to keep these bison out of our
 18 cattle herds, or are we going to be able to?
 19 Another question I have, with your
 20 prescriptive grazing, you're talking about
 21 taking these fences out and impoundments of
 22 water out of the range, or refuge.
 23 How will the people be able to catch up
 24 with their cattle on the prescriptive grazing if
 25 the fences are gone. okay?

Page 40

1 proposed actions that will alter five regimes,
 2 livestock grazing and water dispersal systems.
 3 So, with those comments, do you have
 4 any local or regional short grass parent
 5 prairie-based research documentation from
 6 unbiased articles or university research
 7 professionals that has been refereed and peer
 8 reviewed journal publications that you can
 9 provide to this community and the surrounding
 10 communities that you're going to impact by these
 11 changes?
 12 Thank you.
 13 MS. MATHER: Thanks, Eric.
 14 ERIC MILLER: Mm-hmm.
 15 MS. MATHER: Dean, with Mark Good on
 16 deck.
 17 DEAN ROGGE: Has the community
 18 referenced the Garfield County Growth Policy as
 19 required by the state of Montana, or any of the
 20 other five counties' policies surrounding the
 21 state of Montana?
 22 THE REPORTER: Can you please spell
 23 your last name for me.
 24 MR. ROGGE: R-O-G-G-E.
 25 And regarding the use of sentinel plant

Page 41

1 surveys for monitoring range health, who
 2 developed the protocol, and where else has this
 3 protocol been followed, and what are the
 4 results, and are they long-term?
 5 And is there a scientific basis for
 6 understanding and determining the historical
 7 presence and absence of the selected plants?
 8 MS. MATHER: Mark Good, with Janelle on
 9 deck.
 10 MARK GOOD: My name is Mark Good. I'm
 11 from Great Falls. I work for the Montana
 12 Wilderness Association.
 13 It's my understanding that as a
 14 National Wildlife Refuge, that lands are managed
 15 differently from, say, Bureau of Land Management
 16 lands or Forest Service lands, and that the
 17 guiding principle for management on the refuge
 18 is the enhancement and protection of wildlife.
 19 Now, I know a lot of people don't like
 20 that; they wish it were different, but I don't
 21 think that's going to change.
 22 Refuges are pretty popular. Maybe not
 23 here, but they're popular by Americans across
 24 the country, and I think by most Montanans.
 25 What I have also noticed, is across the

Page 42

1 state, it seems the economies, both eastern part
 2 of the state and western part of the state, move
 3 in kind of divergent directions with the west
 4 growing; the economy's growing by most measures,
 5 and the east declining. I don't think there's
 6 anything mysterious about that, as you have seen
 7 agricultural getting -- farms and ranches
 8 getting bigger and bigger, more mechanized,
 9 hiring fewer and fewer people; easier access to
 10 commercial places like Billings and so on. I
 11 don't think that's a trend that's going to
 12 change.
 13 Now, that's not to suggest that
 14 agriculture's not important. It is, and it will
 15 continue to be, and it's not to be insensitive
 16 to those who will use this refuge for which it's
 17 important.
 18 But I do want to make the point that
 19 the refuge also contributes, makes an economic
 20 contribution to local communities.
 21 First, their staff. And it's kind of
 22 direct through employment and services in
 23 products they purchase.
 24 Indirect, you could look at things like
 25 hunting. I think they're figuring, the EIS was

Page 43

1 about 100,000. I might be wrong about that.
 2 But, you know, that's a significant number, and
 3 I haven't seen any economical calculations, but
 4 I bet it would be more than what most people
 5 think.
 6 But I also want to talk about some of
 7 the other uses that I don't think get a lot of
 8 talk for which our refuge is supposed to be
 9 managed, and that's things like wildlife viewing
 10 and environmental education and interpretation.
 11 I mean, you can look at a place like
 12 Slippery Ann, where you do get a lot of people
 13 showing up.
 14 Wildlife viewing is increasingly
 15 popular. I think things like -- which is
 16 increasing interest in like history, prehistory,
 17 paleontology, and even hiking. And I think that
 18 more could be done to attract people to some of
 19 these gateway communities which would help
 20 them.
 21 And I know that that's, you know, maybe
 22 in a small way, but maybe that's an important
 23 way, too, to help stabilize local communities so
 24 that they can keep schools and other things and
 25 other services.

Page 44

1 We put out a book every year called
 2 "Wilderness Walks". We're trying to attract
 3 people to places across the state.
 4 And what I keep finding when -- we're
 5 also making presentations around. Particularly
 6 I know some people in the eastern part of the
 7 state are surprised to learn about some the
 8 prairie landscapes that we have, and that
 9 they're much more diverse and interesting than
 10 what they thought.
 11 So I just offer -- make an offer to
 12 work with the refuge or anybody else who's
 13 interested in trying to help encourage that kind
 14 of use of this refuge and, again, as a way to I
 15 think help local communities.
 16 MS. MATHER: Thanks, Mark.
 17 Janelle, with Jeanne Kilegard on deck.
 18 JANELLE HOLDEN: Janelle Holden.
 19 J-A-N-E-L-L-E; H-O-L-D-E-N. I'm with the
 20 Wilderness Society.
 21 It's good to hear so many people here
 22 today who are very passionate about public
 23 lands. I'm very passionate about public lands
 24 myself, as is the organization that I work for.
 25 So, I'm going to say something that's

Page 45

1 fairly different from what folks have been
 2 saying here today.
 3 I feel fairly wealthy because of public
 4 lands. I live in town, and it's a way for me to
 5 feel like I own a piece of America. The 1.1
 6 million acres of the CMR is a pretty rare
 7 treasure, and it's one that I own and you own,
 8 and everyone else in America owns, and that's a
 9 pretty amazing concept.
 10 So, I wanted to say today that, I
 11 haven't been able to get through the entire CCP
 12 yet, but what I have read so far, I think the
 13 Fish & Wildlife Services has done an excellent
 14 job. I think they provided a good range of
 15 alternatives to consider.
 16 We're not very happy with some of the
 17 proposals that they made about wilderness, the
 18 boundaries that they've changed in the proposed
 19 alternative, so we're asking for them to keep
 20 the proposal that they have already and perhaps
 21 expand it, because prairie wilderness areas are
 22 very rare. There's not very many of them in the
 23 country.
 24 And this is a real gem for Montana.
 25 It's a gem for the nation, and for the world.

Page 47

1 records for the past 6,000 years that says what
 2 these lands looked like?
 3 You know, as we go, progress comes
 4 change. And if we're going to go backwards in
 5 time, I don't see how any of us are going to
 6 benefit from that.
 7 And another thing, too, you didn't
 8 address climate change 6,000 years ago, or even
 9 back in 1935, so I would like to see some more
 10 research or some more current monitoring to help
 11 with this CCP.
 12 And then there's another one in
 13 Chapter 3. It says 50% of the plants species
 14 you are to maintain, and I was wondering how you
 15 were going to have these plant species increase
 16 in size when you don't have any control of your
 17 wildlife?
 18 I work for a Conservation District, and
 19 we just did a planting in a creek bottom of over
 20 1,000 trees, and we did not fence this out
 21 except for the cattle were not allowed to graze
 22 in this, and we're lucky we got two trees left
 23 because of the wildlife damage. So, I just
 24 don't see no emphasis on any of that.
 25 The other thing, I notice wolves are

Page 46

1 So, that's why I'm here today. Thanks.
 2 MS. MATHER: Thanks, Janelle.
 3 Jeanne Kilegard.
 4 JEANNE KIRKEGARD: It's
 5 K-I-R-K-E-G-A-R-D.
 6 I just have a couple of questions.
 7 On Page 24, and then there's other --
 8 on Page 24 through 25, and there's several other
 9 places, it states that you have a lot of
 10 emphasis on the assessment that was done by
 11 Murray of 1935.
 12 And I was just wondering why you do not
 13 use more recent assessments or monitoring that
 14 you have done and were dating clear back to
 15 1935?
 16 Then also in Chapter 3 on Page 67, it
 17 says that,
 18 "This alternative, which
 19 is D, the preferred, calls
 20 strongly for evolutionary
 21 forces of fire and grazing
 22 by wildlife that shaped
 23 this landscape during the
 24 past 6,000 years."
 25 And I was wondering, do we have any

Page 48

1 listed on both the endangered species and also
 2 the reintroduced species, and I was wondering
 3 how come both? Either they are endangered, or
 4 that was just a reintroduction of species.
 5 And I have lots and lots of other
 6 comments, but I'll send them in writing.
 7 Thank you.
 8 MS. MATHER: I'm having trouble reading
 9 the last one. Somebody from the "Jordan
 10 Tribune". Is that you?
 11 You can just state your name and spell
 12 it.
 13 JANET GUPTILL: Janet Guptill with
 14 "Jordan Tribune".
 15 I would like to ask the question, that
 16 most of you people that are here from Wilderness
 17 Society and from the U.S. Fish Wildlife are on
 18 payroll. The rest of us are here as
 19 volunteers.
 20 And there's quite a difference in the
 21 time and the effort that can be put forth from
 22 people who are on payroll versus people who are
 23 trying to make a living out here.
 24 I concur with the ranchers and those
 25 who have got up and stated that we should have

Page 49

1 no change and go with Alternative A, or less
 2 than that.
 3 The other thing I would like to do is
 4 ask that those who have made written comments,
 5 please bring a copy by the "Jordan Tribune" so
 6 that we can get your exact comment.
 7 Thank you.
 8 MS. MATHER: Thank you.
 9 Okay, that is the end of my list.
 10 Does anybody else have a comment?
 11 Come on up.
 12 RALPH GRIINK: Ralph Griink,
 13 G-R-I-I-N-K.
 14 I only have one question that hasn't
 15 been asked.
 16 On Page 66, halfway down the left
 17 column, it says,
 18 "Prescriptive Livestock
 19 Grazing."
 20 "We will construct
 21 boundary fences where
 22 absent, potentially expand
 23 boundary fences to include
 24 partner lands that share
 25 the objective and

Page 51

1 We need those roads left open so we can
 2 continue to use them. And as a rancher, we do
 3 need them open for going out and riding for our
 4 cattle and using the horse trailer to haul our
 5 horses and things,. And so it's very important
 6 that we keep the public roads open to the
 7 public.
 8 MS. MATHER: Okay.
 9 One more?
 10 JEANNE KIRKEGARD: I just have a
 11 request.
 12 I was just going to request if we could
 13 have an extension of 30 days on this CCP to
 14 review it? I received mine like a month late
 15 compared to everybody else in my area that
 16 received it, and that's --
 17 MS. MATHER: Any other comments or
 18 questions?
 19 Oh, one more.
 20 JOAN D. WATSON: My name of is Joan D.
 21 Watson, W-A-T-S-O-N.
 22 My only comment is in reading the
 23 scoping results from quite a long time ago after
 24 they had the scoping meetings, and Barron
 25 referred to this a little bit in his opening

Page 50

1 strategies."
 2 So, this means you're going to grab all
 3 the BLM land there?
 4 MR. CRAWFORD: We will make note of
 5 that and answer it here in a bit.
 6 RALPH GRIINK: Thank you.
 7 MS. MATHER: Thanks, Ralph.
 8 Anybody else want to comment?
 9 Come on up.
 10 FLOSSIE PHIPPS: Flossie,
 11 F-L-O-S-S-I-E; P-H-I-P-P-S.
 12 My concern is the public land need a
 13 lot of roads and needs the roads left open so
 14 the public can use them.
 15 If it goes through private property,
 16 the private property owner should remember he
 17 got to his place on the roads -- on these roads,
 18 and he knew that it was public land beyond the
 19 road before he ever bought his place.
 20 So, I think they have no right to close
 21 those roads going through their land into public
 22 land because that is for the public to use.
 23 The roads have been there long before
 24 the landowner was, or before any of us ever
 25 were. these roads have been there.

Page 52

1 comments about the 24,000 responses that were
 2 received in writing.
 3 There where 23,867 of them. 81 of them
 4 came from individuals. So, that is the Earl
 5 Isaacs, the Leo Coles, the Joan Gibsons that
 6 took time to sit and write a letter.
 7 23 of those comments came from public
 8 agencies. Five of those where the surrounding
 9 counties.
 10 There where three Conservation District
 11 groups involved in that. Our own was the only
 12 local one.
 13 So that's 8 out of the 23 that had
 14 local community interest at heart.
 15 The other 23,753, I believe is the
 16 number, was a single form letter sent out by
 17 members of the Wilderness Society.
 18 So, I'm encouraging every one locally
 19 here to write a letter or have some input into a
 20 public letter and get as many people to sign it
 21 as we can. That apparently stood out in their
 22 mind, and obviously it would.
 23 And guess where the weight is going to
 24 go? It is going to go to the squeaky wheel.
 25 So, I would encourage every one of you

Page 53

1 to write a letter. I don't care if it's one
 2 sentence, "I am in favor of Alternate A". Sign
 3 your name and send it in.
 4 It doesn't take much to at least show
 5 where your support and your interest lies. And
 6 obviously the Wilderness Society is on the ball,
 7 and we are not. So, let's get in gear. Make
 8 some comments.
 9 We're going to try maybe to, through
 10 the Chamber of Commerce, get a local state
 11 corner meeting together, and maybe we can get
 12 some input, and maybe we can come up with a
 13 letter that has some clout and has some
 14 meaning.
 15 And so I'm encouraging each and every
 16 one of you, make some comments. Give them to
 17 Dean Rogge.
 18 Dean Rogge has worked his butt off on
 19 this project. The local Conservation Board,
 20 Monte Billing is here as well. Talk to those
 21 people. They're knowledgeable.
 22 Talk to the people that have been
 23 permit holders for a long time. The John
 24 McKerlicks, the Harold Isaacs, the Coles, the
 25 Phippses.

Page 55

1 But if you want to, I'd say go with
 2 Alternative R. Let the ranchers run it. We'd
 3 be a lot cheaper. Hell, we have do. We can't
 4 afford these millions. We don't make that
 5 much.
 6 That's all I have.
 7 MS. MATHER: Thank you.
 8 Okay, I'm going to turn it over to
 9 Barron to respond to questions you've heard.
 10 MR. CRAWFORD: Bill and I have this
 11 range of activities. He takes the hard ones.
 12 I'm just trying to figure out which ones Bill's
 13 going to get.
 14 Let's see. I was trying read through
 15 my notes here real quick and see what kind of
 16 questions we got.
 17 State lands. Are we going to protect?
 18 Page 329.
 19 Basically when we met with the DNRC,
 20 and we were talking about limited prescriptive
 21 grazing, there was a comment from the State that
 22 there's a possibility that those State lands
 23 could become unattractive then to the current
 24 permittee, would have the impact on the local
 25 school district, what was the refuge willing to

Page 54

1 AUDIENCE: Snooks.
 2 MS. WATSON: Snooks.
 3 Talk to those people. Get their input.
 4 And write a comment, or if we can get a
 5 meeting together, come to the meeting. Voice
 6 your comments today. But I encourage you to
 7 make a statement.
 8 They're making a statement. We need to
 9 make a statement.
 10 Thank you.
 11 MS. MATHER: Anything else?
 12 Yes.
 13 LAYNE MURNION: Layne Murnion.
 14 L-A-Y-N-E; M-U-R-N-I-O-N.
 15 Well, I'd like to say that I'm kind of
 16 disappointed. We had such a good hearing. I
 17 haven't seen these guys bailing hay to feed
 18 their wildlife this winter. I guess that's our
 19 job again.
 20 Every year when we get some snow or
 21 something, and it gets tough, everybody wants to
 22 see the wildlife live.
 23 The Phippses, I'm sure they got
 24 thousands of elk eating on them. We have lots
 25 of deer and stuff like that.

Page 56

1 do to ensure that there wasn't an impact on that
 2 school?
 3 And what we said is that we would be
 4 willing to pick up of those leases, and as we
 5 put on the statement, "depending upon budgets".
 6 As everybody knows, our budget is year
 7 to year. We're not guaranteed any old funding.
 8 You know, it's pretty much Congress passes a
 9 funding bill. Sometimes it's passed before
 10 October. Sometimes it's passed after December.
 11 But the bottom line is, we don't know
 12 how much funding we're going to get. So we had
 13 to put that statement in there that says
 14 "depending upon current funding".
 15 Now, come reality, is the CMR ever not
 16 going to be funded out of the federal budget?
 17 There's a possibility if they decide to
 18 abolish the National Wildlife Refuge System. If
 19 they did that, I'm sure this land would probably
 20 be turned over to some other agency, such as the
 21 BLM. So that then, you know, it would fall upon
 22 the BLM; it would fall upon a different
 23 management strategy.
 24 The bottom line is, we made the best
 25 assurance to the State that we could make given

Page 57

1 the constraints that we have to deal with.
 2 The State was comfortable with that.
 3 So, I think they understood kind of the dilemma
 4 that we're in, and they were respectful of that,
 5 and they felt that we addressed it adequately
 6 from their standpoint.
 7 Some of the bison issues.
 8 Talk about bison that migrate on the
 9 refuge. Okay. Again, you know, we're talking
 10 about if the State moved forward with their
 11 proposal, okay, State Fish, Wildlife & Parks
 12 moved forward with the proposal to reintroduce
 13 bison somewhere in the state, somewhere in the
 14 local area, and those bison moved onto the
 15 refuge.
 16 So in the plan, we addressed how we
 17 would work with the State for managing those
 18 animals, okay.
 19 It is a valid concern. You know, how
 20 do you deal with bison and livestock together?
 21 It's been done down in the Henry Mountains area
 22 of Utah. So, there is one example there.
 23 It's being done up in -- adjacent to
 24 Grasslands National Park in Canada. So there
 25 are examples out there of how bison herds and

Page 59

1 are coming out of the quarantine facility. And
 2 it was my understanding that was one of the
 3 reasons why they started talking about
 4 developing this bison restoration plan.
 5 Domestic bison convert to wild bison
 6 that wander on the CMR?
 7 No, domestic bison that wander around
 8 on the CMR are trespass livestock and are dealt
 9 with as trespass livestock.
 10 Domestic bison grazing on CMR?
 11 Yes, we had one long-standing permittee
 12 in Garfield County that's been grazing bison for
 13 20 years.
 14 MR. BERG: 20-plus, yeah.
 15 MR. CRAWFORD: 20-plus years, and that
 16 is it.
 17 I'm at the point where I need
 18 bifocals. It is driving me crazy, because I
 19 refuse to buy them. I'm not that old.
 20 Bison. Fence bison. How we keep from
 21 cattle herds?
 22 Again, we're not proposing to do
 23 anything with bison, so we are not going to
 24 create a fenced bison herd. We have no interest
 25 in maintaining a fenced bison herd. The two we

Page 58

1 cattle herds can get along in the same area.
 2 Let's see. State land species, where
 3 they come from? A great question.
 4 Obviously everybody's heard, there's
 5 quite a bit of talk about the bison quarantine
 6 facility over in the western part of the state
 7 where they are taking bison out of Yellowstone
 8 National Park, putting them in the bison
 9 quarantine facility, getting animals through
 10 that program that come out, quote, "brucellosis
 11 free", and then the state is looking for a place
 12 to put those animals.
 13 I think in their charter, is they look
 14 to go to federal, state or tribal lands. They
 15 did send proposals around last year for the
 16 first group of bison coming out of the
 17 facilities. There where a couple of tribes that
 18 expressed interest in taking those animals.
 19 There where no federal or state agencies
 20 interested in taking those animals, Fish &
 21 Wildlife Service being one, so they ended up
 22 going to Ted Turner, and that created quite a
 23 stink.
 24 So, the State is trying to figure out
 25 what they're going to do with these bison that

Page 60

1 have in Lewistown is plenty.
 2 Taking fences out and reducing water.
 3 How are we going to manage livestock? That's a
 4 great question.
 5 And obviously this hasn't been thought
 6 out all the way. You know, we're throwing stuff
 7 down on paper as to what we would like to see
 8 under this umbrella management plan.
 9 And one of the things, is we would like
 10 to remove interior fences. We would like to see
 11 animals move across the landscape. We would
 12 like to see riparian areas restored by restoring
 13 the natural water regimes as they flow down to
 14 the river.
 15 Now, when we get to developing what's
 16 called Habitat Management Plans, and those will
 17 be done after this CCP is finalized, that's
 18 where what I like to call the "boots meet the
 19 dirt", okay. That's where the refuge staff sit
 20 down with our partners, our neighbors, our
 21 permittees, and they figure out how we're going
 22 to implement, or how we're going to achieve our
 23 wildlife and habitat management objectives.
 24 And if we're talking about using
 25 livestock as prescriptive grazing, and we're

Page 61

1 talking about removing water, we're talking
 2 about removing fences, that's where we're
 3 expecting our partners, our neighbors and our
 4 permittees to step up and say, "Well, wait a
 5 minute. How are you expecting us to use
 6 livestock as a management tool? We're going to
 7 need this, this and this."
 8 And that's where we need to have a
 9 meaningful dialogue back and forth across the
 10 table so everybody knows where everybody else is
 11 coming from, and we can all reach some type of
 12 resolution of how we're going to work together
 13 to accomplish this.
 14 MS. McKERLICK: Isn't that kind of a
 15 lopsided partnership, though?
 16 MR. CRAWFORD: Is it a lopsided
 17 partnership?
 18 If we're both sitting at the table and
 19 talking --
 20 MS. McKERLICK: But you already have
 21 this thing that you're going to go by for 15
 22 years.
 23 MR. CRAWFORD: This is the umbrella
 24 plan that throws out all the ideas of what we're
 25 looking to do.

Page 63

1 published. We're looking -- we have done a lot
 2 with fire history folks for several years now.
 3 And let's see. Is there more to that
 4 question?
 5 MR. BERG: Peer-reviewed research.
 6 MR. SKINNER: Our plans of the, well,
 7 principal direction we're heading is the patch
 8 burn grazing. It's been published by Sam
 9 Hildegard extensively.
 10 And we work closely with (inaudible) CS
 11 people as appropriate, and their work is
 12 published.
 13 And then if you look at our sentinel
 14 plants, which are also called indicator plant,
 15 or diagnostic plants, or focal species, or
 16 decreaseers of some plants, and you go to a place
 17 like Hooper's Holler, there's thousands of
 18 references related to those types of things.
 19 MR. CRAWFORD: Answer the question
 20 about use of sentinel plants to develop where
 21 it's been used, and the scientific basis or the
 22 historic basis for those selected plants.
 23 MR. SKINNER: In our job, which is
 24 wildlife management, our primary directive is to
 25 manage for wildlife diversity. That's our

Page 62

1 It didn't say what fences we're taking
 2 out. It didn't say what water we're taking
 3 out. So when we sit down with you and John, and
 4 we say, "Okay, this is what we want to do",
 5 that's when you can say, "You are full of crap.
 6 This is not going to work. We need this and
 7 this." And that's where we have that dialogue
 8 back and forth.
 9 MS. McKERLICK: Why don't you do that
 10 in the beginning?
 11 MR. CRAWFORD: Well, because we're not
 12 at that stage yet. Then we would be talking 600
 13 pages long.
 14 This is questions for Bob, talking
 15 about the vision statement, adaptive management,
 16 rooted in science, short grass permit research
 17 that's been peer reviewed.
 18 Do you understand that question?
 19 BOB SKINNER: I think so.
 20 We work closely with several folks
 21 looking at rangelands, wildlife habitat in
 22 particular. We're looking very closely at the
 23 patch burn grazing system with wildlife and
 24 livestock participating.
 25 We have done -- and this is highly

Page 64

1 marching orders.
 2 And plant diversity is the foundation
 3 of the wildlife food web.
 4 And sentinel plants or diagnostic
 5 plants or indicator plants, or focal plants or
 6 decreasing strips, of course, are the first
 7 plants to vanish.
 8 So in order to maintain diversity, we
 9 look to those in particular because they are the
 10 ones that are sentinel.
 11 They are also highly palatable to all
 12 herbivores. They're (inaudible) and buck
 13 grasses. They're especially valuable for
 14 wildlife for seeds, fruits, insects, and part of
 15 the advantage and strategy to get those back is
 16 to return to (inaudible) practices that occurred
 17 that were apart of their past, which is this
 18 patch burn grazing and total ungulate
 19 management.
 20 Also, because it's a little narrower
 21 than total plant community, monitoring is
 22 accomplishable. It's very difficult to manage
 23 all species. Is that an answer?
 24 MR. CRAWFORD: Sounds good. Thanks,
 25 Bob.

Page 65

1 I had a comment concerning Murray's
 2 1935 assessment. Ellis Murray was a
 3 world-renowned naturalist from Jackson. He was
 4 commissioned by President Roosevelt to come
 5 through here and do a biological assessment and
 6 make a recommendation.
 7 We researched his work just from a
 8 historical standpoint, okay. We looked at it
 9 and said, this is what Murray saw in '35. That
 10 should be something that we should strive for.
 11 It's a great question concerning
 12 climate change. There has been a lot that has
 13 changed, and continues to change.
 14 And what biologists talked about was
 15 taking these ecological processes and using
 16 those to build resilience within plant species.
 17 The more resilient a plant species is, the
 18 better that it can adapt or withstand some of
 19 these drastic changes that could be occurring,
 20 occurred, will occur, whatever term you want to
 21 use, okay.
 22 So if you've got good, healthy plants,
 23 you get a bad drought year, the number of those
 24 plants that will survive and come back next year
 25 increases as their health increases.

Page 67

1 gave them a different set of protection under
 2 the Endangered Species Act.
 3 So that's how you have wolves up in the
 4 Glacier area declared as fully endangered,
 5 because they were a natural migration into the
 6 area, versus wolves brought into the
 7 Yellowstone, which were reintroduced and fall
 8 under the experimental and nonessential
 9 designation.
 10 But again, wolves are outside the
 11 scope. We are not doing anything with wolves.
 12 I think that's all the questions I
 13 had. Did I miss anything, Bill?
 14 MR. BERG: Mike McKeever asked about
 15 payment in lieu of taxes.
 16 MR. CRAWFORD: Oh, that's a Bill
 17 question.
 18 MR. BERG: You know, I wish we had
 19 control over that, Mike.
 20 In Montana currently, the federal
 21 agencies are paying about 30% of entitlement to
 22 the counties.
 23 In eastern Montana, when we hit 50% of
 24 entitlement, which is determined by Congress,
 25 they're the ones that basically set aside that

Page 66

1 And so that's what we're looking to do,
 2 is make these plant communities as healthy as
 3 possible so that they can either adapt or
 4 withstand change as it continues to move from
 5 one end to the other.
 6 AUDIENCE: Where is your scientific
 7 data on what you just said?
 8 MR. CRAWFORD: It's books.
 9 MS. MATHER: Folks, if you could hold
 10 your questions, the staff will be around
 11 afterwards. I just want Barron to get a chance
 12 to answer all the questions.
 13 MR. CRAWFORD: There's talk about
 14 wolves endanger rancher dues.
 15 I'm not sure about that. I think
 16 wolves are -- wolves do have a dual status.
 17 This is outside the scope of the CCP,
 18 but the question was asked so I will address it.
 19 Wolves up in the Glacier area naturally
 20 migrated into the United States from Canada, so
 21 they were protected under the full auspices of
 22 the Endangered Species Act.
 23 Wolves brought into Yellowstone were
 24 reintroduced. They were classified as an
 25 experimental and nonessential population, which

Page 68

1 moment for payment in lieu of taxes, where I
 2 bought equity, as far as comparing it to private
 3 lands and the taxes that are collected on those
 4 properties.
 5 So, it's something we don't control.
 6 Obviously some money that's generated on the
 7 refuge does come back to the local communities
 8 in the same format, but typically just the big
 9 oil-producing refuges truly put back more than
 10 what that land would bring if it was in some
 11 other ownership. So, it's something we don't
 12 control at this time.
 13 Another question Mike had, explanation
 14 of water rights.
 15 We're currently going through a
 16 Compact Commission. We've got a deadline of
 17 October 15th to file with the Compact
 18 Commission, which is the review board for water
 19 rights in and around CMR.
 20 At that time, what they'll do is take
 21 all the water rights that are filed on the
 22 various tributaries. Obviously some will be
 23 overappropriated, but that's kind of their job
 24 to make that cut and determine, you know, who is
 25 going to get what share of what water right that

Page 69

1 exists in each of its tributaries.
 2 They're doing that for the Milk River
 3 right now, and they're also going to do it for
 4 that portion of the Missouri River in and around
 5 CMR.
 6 So, I don't know if that answered your
 7 question, Mike, or not, but I think it covers it
 8 a little bit.
 9 The other question that I had starred
 10 here was Ralph Griink. You brought up examples
 11 of other adjacent conservation lands.
 12 And a couple of examples that I can
 13 think of just off the top here, is in the past,
 14 what we've done where BLM has developed water
 15 off the refuge, we have sometimes extended water
 16 lines down ridges onto the refuge.
 17 And it's usually a situation where it's
 18 easier to develop water in that manner than,
 19 say, going and building some new ponds, federal
 20 water quality in most cases. That would be one.
 21 Another example of that more recently
 22 where a conservation buyer, American Prairie
 23 Foundation, came in and bought what's called the
 24 Wiedrich Ranch north of UL Bend.
 25 They initiated a pretty extensive

Page 71

1 With the exception where that road runs
 2 to private land or State land, those roads
 3 remain open where historical roads access those
 4 properties.
 5 So, what we're trying to avoid there is
 6 creating an exclusive use of that public road on
 7 CMR that's only accessible to a few people
 8 because of what's going on off the refuge.
 9 We've attempted in several areas where
 10 we have got access issues where the public can't
 11 get to large blocks of CMR, we've actually
 12 purchased rights of way from landowners either
 13 as part of a land purchase or a sale to us, that
 14 kind of thing, which has resolved some of that,
 15 but that will be an option in the future for us
 16 to try to do that where we can.
 17 MS. MATHER: Okay, folks, that's it.
 18 We have a number of CMR staff, most of
 19 them are at the back, in addition to these two
 20 up here, so you if you do have additional
 21 questions, please grab one of them.
 22 We will be here for another half an
 23 hour or so. Thank you very much for coming.
 24 (Whereupon, the hearing was concluded
 25 at 3:45 p.m.)

Page 70

1 riparian restoration project similar to the one
 2 that was brought up by the conservation person
 3 here, and we've seen some excellent results in
 4 that.
 5 We expanded that study to the
 6 Department of (inaudible) Project onto the
 7 refuge for Chef Bay and Valentine Creek to kind
 8 of broaden the study area a little bit, and I
 9 guess would be another example of other
 10 conservation lands or practices where we've
 11 partnered up with the adjacent landowner.
 12 What else?
 13 MS. SHANNON: Roads is the last thing.
 14 MR. BERG: Okay, a question came up
 15 about roads.
 16 One of the things we've looked at
 17 pretty closely here in the last few years is
 18 there's situations where we don't control the
 19 public access off the refuge. There's not a
 20 legally identified access road coming off the
 21 main county road.
 22 In situations where the public access
 23 is cut off before it gets to CMR, what we've
 24 done is also stopped the use of that road that's
 25 not accessible to the public on the refuge.

Page 72

1 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE
 2
 3 CASE TITLE: CMR & UL Bend Wildlife Refuges
 4 HEARING DATE: October 13, 2010
 5 LOCATION: Jordan, Montana
 6 I hereby certify that the proceedings
 7 and evidence herein are contained fully and
 8 accurately on the electronic notes reported by
 9 Karlene Lehfeldt at the hearing in the above
 10 case before the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service,
 11 and that this is a true and correct transcript
 12 of the same.
 13
 14 DATE: October 16, 2006
 15
 16
 17 Frances L. Mock
 18 Big Sky Reporting
 19 2308 Interlachen Circle
 20 Billings, Montana 59105
 21
 22
 23
 24
 25

1

1 PUBLIC MEETING
2 OCTOBER 14, 2010
3 GLASGOW, MONTANA

4 U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.
5 Draft Comprehensive Conservation
6 Plan and Environmental Impact Statement
7 Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge
8 and UL Bend National Wildlife Refuge
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

2

1 MS. MATHER: Good afternoon everybody.
2 Thank you for coming. Thanks for coming. My name is
3 Mimi and I'll be facilitating the meeting today, and
4 I'm up here with Barron Crawford, CMR's project leader,
5 Bill Berg, the deputy project leader, and Laurie
6 Shannon, the CCP planning leader.
7 So the purpose of our meeting in the next two hours
8 is really to collect -- the Fish and Wildlife Service
9 to collect your comments on the Comprehensive
10 Conservation Plan. We're going to start the meeting
11 today with Barron giving a brief presentation about the
12 CCP, and then we'll turn the floor to you and give
13 folks that signed up on the list the opportunity to
14 offer their comments.
15 Just keep in mind, in order to let everybody give
16 their comments, we're going to hold you to three
17 minutes of comments, so if you have lots of ideas,
18 start thinking about how you can streamline that down
19 to a three-minute comment. So I'll turn it to Barron.
20 MR. CRAWFORD: Alrighty. Thanks.
21 Welcome everybody. I'm going to give you a brief
22 overview of what we've been doing for the past three
23 years, kind of tell you how we got to where we're at,
24 and give you a brief overview of each of the
25 alternatives. Take about 20 minutes or so. Just a

3

1 real brief run through here.
2 So we started this process, basically, in January
3 of 2007. We held a series of public scoping meetings;
4 14 of those. Had several meetings with our
5 cooperators. Those cooperators include the six
6 counties, the Corp. Of Engineers, the Bureau of Land
7 Management, the DNRC, Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks,
8 and the conservation districts. I knew I'd forget
9 somebody.
10 This is kind of the time line that we've been
11 working under. We're right now at the release of the
12 draft CCP. That's that 400 page document that
13 everybody's been reading. We hope to be able to
14 release the final CCP. This time line is a little out
15 of whack, but we'd like to have the record of decision
16 signed off on by the summer 2012.
17 So basically why do we do CCPs? The first reason
18 is the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act
19 of 1997 requires that all refuges have a CCP completed
20 by 2012, and there's about 548 national refuges in the
21 system, and about -- out of those about two-thirds of
22 those are completed, all pushing towards the 2012
23 deadline.
24 The other reason is basically that this provides
25 that critical management direction and guidance that's

4

1 based upon the refuge purposes and the mission of the
2 National Wildlife Refuge System. It outlines a vision
3 statement, goals, objectives and strategies for that
4 future management. It's accompanied by some type of
5 NEPA document, either an environmental assessment or
6 impact statement.
7 Due to the complexity of issues here at the CMR, we
8 went ahead and did the Environmental Impact Statement.
9 The key is that we provide the guidance for that
10 15-year plan. It basically provides that road map to
11 guide that future management.
12 This is kind of the eight steps that are involved
13 in putting together a CCP, and we're down here at
14 number five. Hopefully, after we're done with the
15 public hearings and we've gathered the comments, we
16 then move into stage six, which is prepare the final
17 plan. However, after the comments there is a
18 possibility that we could go back to step four and look
19 and maybe develop a new alternative, and then come back
20 out and present that alternative. But hopefully we've
21 done our jobs well and are able to move on to the next
22 step.
23 So now I'm just going to give you kind of a brief
24 nutshell here of each of the alternatives. We have
25 four of them. The first one was the No-Action

5

1 Alternative, and this is basically where we're going to
 2 keep doing what we've been doing, with just a few
 3 modifications, since the 1986 EIS was passed.
 4 Basically, we'll continue to manage the refuge in the
 5 65 habitat units that we have out there now, we'll
 6 continue to gradually move to prescriptive grazing as
 7 the ranch sells to a non-family member. Big game will
 8 be achieved to achieve the target levels that were
 9 identified in the 1986 EIS. We'll keep the
 10 approximately 670 miles of roads open, and we'll
 11 continue protection of the 155,288 acres of proposed
 12 wilderness.

13 Then we had three action alternatives.

14 "Alternative B" was the one we kind of coined the
 15 Wildlife Habitat Emphasis. And, basically, this one is
 16 managing the landscape with our partners to emphasize
 17 the abundance and diversity of wildlife populations
 18 using both balanced natural ecological processes, such
 19 as fire and grazing, flooding and synthetic methods,
 20 such as farming or tree planting. We also encouraged
 21 wildlife and public uses, and those are hunting and
 22 fishing, wildlife photography, and we limit economic
 23 use when they compete for habitat resources.

24 In the back we've got some maps that depict the
 25 various alternatives. Under this alternative pretty

7

1 expansion of wilderness. There is a couple of
 2 suggestions to eliminate some wilderness in proposed C,
 3 some proposed wilderness areas.

4 So the main bullets for this one is manage habitats
 5 to provide more opportunities for recreation, maintain
 6 balance numbers of big game and livestock. Work with
 7 Fish Wildlife and Parks to expand and maximize hunting
 8 opportunities. Improve access to boat ramps and
 9 recommend eliminating four proposed wilderness areas
 10 for reduction of 35,880 acres.

11 And then we move to "Alternative D," and this is
 12 our Proposed Action Alternative. We coin this one the
 13 Natural Processes or the Ecological Processes. And,
 14 again, working in cooperation with our partners, using
 15 those natural economic processes of fire, grazing,
 16 flooding, and active management, tree planting, farming
 17 in a balanced responsible manner to restore and/or
 18 maintain biological diversity, biological integrity and
 19 environmental health.

20 Those three things right there come right from your
 21 Improvement Act as to what we're supposed to be doing
 22 here. Once we've restored those natural resources we
 23 take a more passive management approach. We still
 24 provide for those quality wildlife-dependent public
 25 uses and experiences, and we limit when they are either

6

1 substantial increase in proposed wilderness areas,
 2 substantial recommendations for some road closures.
 3 Same thing here on the east side of the refuge.

4 Kind of some of the highlights of this one is we
 5 actively manage, manipulate habitats to create
 6 productive wildlife food and cover. We implement
 7 prescriptive grazing on about 50 to 75 percent of the
 8 refuge within a time period of four to seven years. We
 9 get aggressive in restoring the river bottoms. We work
 10 with Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks to provide quality
 11 hunting opportunities and sustain the populations of
 12 big game, and also the habitat for non-game species.
 13 Close approximately 106 miles of roads, and expand the
 14 acreage of proposed wilderness by 25,000.

15 Then we move to "Alternative C," and this is kind
 16 of the Public Use and Economic Emphasis. And this
 17 someone again manages that landscape with your partners
 18 to emphasize and promote maximum compatible wildlife
 19 while protecting wildlife populations and habitats to
 20 the extent possible. We minimize damage to wildlife
 21 habitats while using a variety of management tools to
 22 enhance the diversity of public and economic
 23 opportunities.

24 And again, the map. Very few road closures, no
 25 road closures, just a couple seasons proposed, no

8

1 injurious to the habitats or to the ecological process.
 2 Under this alternative we did propose expanding a
 3 couple of proposed wilderness areas. We did propose to
 4 eliminate a few as we got a few recommendations for
 5 some road closures. Same thing here on the east end.
 6 So under this alternative, the main points of it,
 7 economic uses would be limited when they are causing
 8 injury to ecological processes for the habitats out
 9 there. We'd apply management practices that mimic and
 10 restore natural processes, use fire and grazing whether
 11 its with wild or livestock, so prescriptively to mimic
 12 that historic interaction. Work with Fish Wildlife and
 13 Parks and maintain health and diversity of all species.
 14 Do about 25 miles of all road closures. We'd recommend
 15 expanding six of the proposed wilderness areas for
 16 about 18,000 acres, but also eliminating three for a
 17 loss of 26,000.

18 So we've been doing several of these meetings now,
 19 and it's kind of the hot button topics that we've been
 20 hearing, prescriptive grazing, what is it? And
 21 basically it's using livestock to achieve a specific
 22 wildlife and/or habitat objective. One example is that
 23 let's say you have an area that is an important sage
 24 grouse breeding ground or important sage grouse
 25 wintering ground, and we've got a large grass buildup

9

1 in that area, and we can't use prescribed fire, or we
 2 don't want to use prescribed fire because of the
 3 potential impact on that sage grouse area. We could
 4 use livestock in a prescription to go in there and
 5 reduce that fuel load to protect that area from a
 6 wildfire event.

7 Prescriptive fire, how will it be used? We've been
 8 working with five ecologists across the refuge now for
 9 the past five years, and along with some rain
 10 scientists to look at the historic fire frequency on
 11 the refuge, and we started at a very close level and
 12 have been working our way down to the very fine scale
 13 level. And what we found is we've got several areas on
 14 the refuge that historically burn within about a seven
 15 to 14-year time period. We have several areas on the
 16 refuge that maybe burn once every several hundred
 17 years, so we have quite a range.

18 And the idea is to go in and look at those areas,
 19 determine that historic fire frequency, and try to
 20 restore that back to that landscape. Some areas burn
 21 more frequently than others, some burn hardly at all.
 22 So it's using prescriptive fire to put it back into
 23 that historic fire condition. Several of those areas
 24 that historically burned in that 7 to 14-year period
 25 haven't seen fire in 60 or 70 years, and that's why

11

1 bison. I can just come out and say that we do not have
 2 a plan from the Fish and Wildlife Service to
 3 re-introduce bison. What's in the plan is based upon
 4 talks by Montana Fish Wildlife and Parks where they
 5 were considering, or they were looking to consider,
 6 evaluating the possibility of reintroducing bison
 7 somewhere in Montana. If such a proposal went forward,
 8 and if such a proposal identified areas around the
 9 refuge, we wanted to have something in our plan that
 10 addressed that. So everything in our plan is based
 11 upon Fish, Wildlife & Parks taking the lead and pulling
 12 together a bison proposal. So the service will not be
 13 reintroducing wild bison or creating a fence bison herd
 14 on the refuge.

15 So as Mimi said, we're here to gather your
 16 comments. There are several ways to comment. One is
 17 through your public testimony today. The other is by
 18 one of the forms that was handed out to you as you came
 19 in the door. You can write your comment on that, drop
 20 it off as you leave today, or you can mail those back
 21 to us. You can send us a written letter. The
 22 addresses are on those forms; they are in the document.
 23 You can send Laurie an e-mail. She doesn't get nearly
 24 enough e-mails at work. And right now our comment
 25 period is scheduled to end November the 16th. We have

10

1 you'd use prescriptive fire to reduce the fuel in that
 2 area and put it back into that condition.

3 As part of the CCP process, we're mandated to look
 4 at our proposed wilderness areas and to evaluate those
 5 areas to see if they are still meeting those wilderness
 6 characteristics in which they were set aside for. So
 7 part of it is a subjective call on our part as to
 8 whether those areas still meet those wilderness
 9 characteristics in which they were established. And so
 10 in some of the alternatives, that's why we proposed
 11 expanding some areas and others we proposed eliminating
 12 some areas. A lot of it is based on the main topic of
 13 what that alternative was, and then the other is,
 14 again, a subjective examination of those -- those
 15 areas.

16 The same thing with roads. We look at roads. Some
 17 of the roads that we proposed to close are roads that
 18 cross private property before entering the refuge, and
 19 there's either limited public access or no public
 20 access, and so, therefore, we can't create an exclusive
 21 use on the refuge, so those roads were proposed to be
 22 closed. Others, it's a fragmenting of the habitat, so
 23 it would allow animals to move more freely. Others
 24 it's a maintenance type issue.

25 And then bison. Quite a few talks concerning

12

1 received numerous requests to extend that comment
 2 period. We are evaluating those requests, and a
 3 decision will be made in the next couple weeks, but
 4 right now there's still four weeks left, and so the
 5 service is not entertaining an extension at this time,
 6 but a decision will be made within the next couple of
 7 weeks.

8 So we're going to open the floor up to you guys,
 9 and if you want to ask a question, go ahead. We'll
 10 take all those questions down and answer as many of
 11 them as we can at the end of the meeting. Thanks.

12 MS. MATHER: While these guys are
 13 rearranging up here, I'll explain how we'll run the
 14 next portion of the comment period. So I've got a list
 15 of everybody that signed up. I'll call the folks off.
 16 I'll call up who's up next and who's on deck so you can
 17 be ready. What we'd ask is you come up here, speak
 18 into the microphone, please state your name and spell
 19 it. We've got a court reporter recording the
 20 proceedings.

21 As Barron mentioned, if you just have a question,
 22 that's fine, come on up and ask your question. Barron
 23 and Bill will be taking notes, and we'll have about
 24 15 minutes at the end so we can respond to the
 25 questions they heard. Other than that, three-minute

13

1 rule. So you have three minutes up here. We're going
 2 to be strict to keeping you to three minutes. Brett
 3 Husong is my time keeper up here. When you've spoken
 4 for two minutes and you only have one minute left,
 5 he'll waive the one minute, and when you're down to
 6 20 seconds, that's when it's time to wrap it up, in
 7 which case we'll ask you to move the mic. to the next
 8 person. Other than that, we'd just ask, in order to
 9 keep things running smoothly and respect one another's
 10 opinion, that you hold back from cheering or applause.
 11 So with that, Kenneth is first on our list, and I've
 12 got Nancy on deck.

13 KENNETH LOCKE: MR. Kenneth A. Locke,
 14 Medicine Lake, next to the Medicine Lake Wildlife
 15 Refuge. Can I ask questions?

16 MS. MATHER: Yes. You can ask your
 17 question. You won't get an answer until the end.

18 KENNETH LOCKE: How much did this thing
 19 cost (indicating)? That's what they're using for
 20 shredding the trees at Medicine Lake. How much did
 21 that master plan cost? How much is the budget at
 22 Medicine Lake Wildlife Refuge for one year? How much
 23 did the parking lot at the Medicine Lake Refuge cost?
 24 Was it \$800 and some thousand or was it a million
 25 dollars? How much was the parking lot at Fort Peck?

15

1 the Fish and Wildlife Service took it over in '76
 2 they've been closing off roads, and the reason they're
 3 closing off roads is they're putting in these proposed
 4 wilderness areas out there, which we don't need out
 5 there. Anyone that has ever driven through that
 6 country can see that it's protected out there. No
 7 one's going to move out there. It's rugged country.

8 And why do we have to have wilderness areas out
 9 there? When they do that, they have to close off all
 10 the roads within that area, and as hunters, it's hard
 11 for us to get around anymore. If we get something,
 12 it's hard to get them out to keep from spoiling, and so
 13 I'm not too happy with the Fish and Wildlife Service
 14 over that.

15 The board -- the board of supervisors of the Valley
 16 County Conservation District are in favor of option "A"
 17 of the Comprehensive Conservation Plan and
 18 Environmental Impact Statement, which is no action.
 19 And most of the people that I've talked to about this
 20 say, well, why don't we just leave it the way it is?
 21 And most of Montanans, I believe -- I feel, believe
 22 that way, and especially native Montanans, and I
 23 consider myself a native Montanan because I was born
 24 and raised here, and I'm still here. I'm a native
 25 Montanan. And there's a lot of us here that are that

14

1 Was it a hundred thousand for the employees to park on,
 2 or was it less? Why are you cutting trees down for
 3 pipets? How many pipets do we have at Medicine Lake?
 4 And I'll reserve the rest of my time.

5 MS. MATHER: Thanks, Kenneth. Nancy with
 6 Ron on deck.

7 NANCY HEINS: My name's Nancy Heins. I'm
 8 from Fort Peck, H-e-i-n-s. I had one basic question.
 9 Last fall we had a tremendous deer problem around the
 10 Fort Peck area, and I ask, who is responsible for the
 11 deer, CMR or the Corp? And I have not been able to get
 12 a straight answer, and I really would like to know
 13 that.

14 MS. MATHER: Thanks, Nancy. Ron with
 15 Dave on deck. Dave Pippin.

16 MR. GARWOOD: Yeah, my name is Ron
 17 Garwood. I'm a Valley County Conservation District
 18 supervisor, immediate past chairman. And I've -- the
 19 conservation district gave me permission to speak for
 20 them. And I have a -- have a written thing here from
 21 them that I wrote up.

22 I've been hunting out on the CMR since '57, and it
 23 was a Fort Peck game range at that time, and -- and
 24 it's much the same now as it was then, except we don't
 25 have near the roads to drive on anymore. Ever since

16

1 way, and I think we feel the same way.

2 We would like to ask for a 30 to 60 day extension
 3 of the comment period. Probably about two,
 4 two-and-a-half months ago I sent my card in to the Fish
 5 and Wildlife Service to get my big book. Well, it
 6 still hasn't showed up in the mail. I guess we'll have
 7 to blame it on the postal service, but, anyway, I would
 8 still like to get that. One minute left?

9 But we are elected officials charged with
 10 overseeing soil and water conservation in Valley
 11 County, and I feel that the farmers and ranchers are
 12 the true conservationists [sic] in this country. It
 13 isn't these environmental groups that are causing
 14 problems for us. They have money, big, free money.
 15 Tax free money is given to them to sue the Fish and
 16 Wildlife Service to do things. They either sue or they
 17 threaten to sue to get things done, and I don't think
 18 it's right or fair.

19 There's enough wilderness area out in the CMR right
 20 now; we don't need anymore. We don't want free roaming
 21 bison on the CMR. We do not want wolves on the CMR,
 22 and we feel that prescribed burning on the CMR is just
 23 asinine. I can't believe that they're even considering
 24 this out there. When they go out there and fight
 25 fires, they got backpacks on. Good gosh, you know, and

17

1 they want to go out there and start up a prescribed
 2 fire? We can't trust them.

3 MS. MATHER: Ron, we need to interrupt.

4 MR. GARWOOD: Anyway, we, the Valley
 5 County Conservation District supervisors, ask the U.S.
 6 Fish and Wildlife Service to respect Valley County and
 7 be a good neighbor by considering Alternate A and
 8 keeping the management the same as it has been for the
 9 last 25 years. And, once again, we thank you for the
 10 chance to talk. And I have got to know Bill Berg,
 11 pretty good guy, and I even kind of like Barron now,
 12 even though the first time I seen him I knew he was a
 13 company man and he wasn't going to listen to us.

14 MR. CRAWFORD: I like Ron too.

15 MS. MATHER: Thanks, Ron. Dave Pippin,
 16 Janelle Holden on deck.

17 COMMISSIONER PIPPIN: Hello. My name is
 18 Dave Pippin. I am a resident of Valley County, third
 19 generation Valley County resident. As we journey
 20 through a new CCP and EIS plan I think it's really
 21 important to know and understand what public land
 22 comprises of.

23 Ballentine's Law Dictionary describes public land
 24 as "Such lands as are open to sale or other disposition
 25 under general law." In the passing years some have

19

1 believe that the number of visitors visiting the CMR is
 2 a figure that is too high, as it includes many people
 3 that are not really visitors to the CMR, per se. I
 4 also question whether an accurate EIS statement has
 5 been done in a completed form. An environmental impact
 6 statement is a document required by the National
 7 Environmental Policy Act for federal government agency
 8 significantly affecting the quality of the human
 9 environment.

10 A tool for decision making, an EIS describes the
 11 positive and negative environmental effects of proposed
 12 agency action and cites alternative actions. Several
 13 U.S. state governments have also adopted "little
 14 NEPA's". State laws imposing EIS requirements for
 15 particular statement actions. Montana has many of
 16 these and are -- and all are not listed in this
 17 coordination process.

18 A full financial note of the cost to local
 19 economies is essential if we are to be treated fairly
 20 and be in compliance of the law. Surely a land mass
 21 that had 70,000 cattle on it in 1984 and only has
 22 18,000 grazing cattle on it in 2010 is a very
 23 considerable loss of value to the counties compromised
 24 by this reduction in livestock production.

25 Partitioned roads and historical RS2477 right of

18

1 come to think that the changing of this definition may
 2 have eliminated many acquired rights and benefits that
 3 were acquired in an earlier time, long before the CMR.
 4 This is not the case.

5 The CCP/EIS a document that has far reaching
 6 consequence and is of great importance to decide and
 7 evaluate all the existing rights on the CMR held by
 8 individuals and local governments before a new policy
 9 is set. It is also important to note that the FLMA,
 10 NEPA, Taylor Grazing Act and many other executive
 11 orders all address existing rights in various ways, and
 12 all have a savings clause that demand that existing
 13 rights will not be extinguished because of the
 14 enactment of new federal policy.

15 It should be further noted that the Data Quality
 16 Act directs the Office of Management and Budget to
 17 issue government-wide guidelines that provide policy
 18 and procedural guidance to federal agencies for
 19 ensuring and maximizing the quality, objectivity,
 20 utility and integrity of information, including
 21 statistical information disseminated by federal
 22 agencies.

23 I believe that a comprehensive, independent study
 24 on prescriptive grazing and burning are required if you
 25 truly are to have an accurate, workable document. I

20

1 ways have not been documented and identified on CCP
 2 document maps. The fact is that coordinating status
 3 was not granted to the counties around the CMR but was
 4 offered to other organizations that have less standing
 5 than the counties have. Almost all federal policies
 6 address existing rights in various ways, and have a
 7 saving -- I'm on the wrong page there -- require that
 8 local governments have coordination and not only be
 9 offered cooperative status.

10 These federal policy requirements should be
 11 observed and honored. Valley County has a Recourse Use
 12 Plan which was not coordinated within the formation of
 13 this proposed CCP plan. Not once has the U.S. --

14 MR. PAGE: I'll give two minutes of my
 15 time to Mr. Pippin.

16 MS. MATHER: I'm afraid we don't do that.

17 MR. PIPPIN: In conclusion, I support
 18 plan "A". No change should be your only consideration
 19 with a strong emphasis on addressing and correcting
 20 many of the items that were done in the past. The
 21 assumption that we will address these items with other
 22 documents or at a later date, or maybe it will just go
 23 away is totally unacceptable in a document that has the
 24 far reaching effect such as this.

25 Most people know that the points that I have

<p style="text-align: right;">21</p> <p>1 presented here today have been on your table for a long 2 time and exist because your agency has not addressed 3 them in a timely manner. Tax payers should be treated 4 with fairness and in a timely fashion. To let other 5 public minded groups with other agendas not be informed 6 of all the existing rights and privileges that exist 7 with these lands is unfair to them, and it is unfair to 8 us.</p> <p>9 MS. MATHER: Janelle with Leonard on 10 deck.</p> <p>11 JANELLE HOLDEN: Janelle Holden, 12 H-o-l-d-e-n, with the Wilderness Society out of 13 Bozeman. We support "Alternative D," with some 14 recommended changes to the wilderness -- proposed 15 wilderness that is recommended to be eliminated in 16 "Alternative D". We actually support the 17 recommendations for wilderness in "Alternative B," 18 which would expand wilderness, and the recommendations 19 for road elimination in "Alternative B".</p> <p>20 We value very much the proposed wilderness areas on 21 the CMR Refuge; they are very rare in our prairie 22 public lands. We value the fact that the Fish and 23 Wildlife Service has a mission to manage this refuge 24 for wildlife, and we think the Fish and Wildlife 25 Service has done a good job of creating a range of</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">22</p> <p>1 alternatives that support managing the refuge or 2 wildlife. Thank you.</p> <p>3 MS. MATHER: Thanks, Janelle. Leonard 4 with Jason on deck.</p> <p>5 LEONARD SWENSEN: Okay. First of all, 6 I'm Leonard Swensen. My grandfather homesteaded here 7 over a hundred years ago, been involved with the CMR 8 for 30 years in sharing grazing, and there's been -- in 9 fact, it's been 40 years, and there's been 30 years 10 prior to that, that other ranchers have enjoyed 11 grazing.</p> <p>12 I'm not so sure I share the excitement of nearly 13 three years you work to get 450 pages drawn up. I 14 haven't read through all of those, like our health bill 15 people. I didn't read over the overview, and I guess I 16 thought A was the best one. Usually you have four 17 alternatives, have a preferred one, we have the public 18 meetings, and then you choose the one you want anyway, 19 but it's our chance to toot our horn a little bit here.</p> <p>20 And the most important thing to me is, is that 21 renewable resource we have, and it's grass. When we 22 hear you talk about burning it, it really bothers me. 23 It's a renewable resource here on Earth and to use 24 wisely. When you don't graze it properly, lightning 25 hits or else you come along and have to burn it. It's</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">23</p> <p>1 -- this is the best fire prevention you have. And it's 2 -- grazing is the best for the habitat for the 3 wildlife, as your own range specialists from North 4 Dakota had in a magazine here.</p> <p>5 Talk about wilderness; to me it's the same as waste 6 land. It's already a wilderness, it's not going to 7 change when its a study area out there. It's used only 8 a couple months out of the year by the majority of 9 people, and they don't even get to it.</p> <p>10 There's going to be more fires than what you know 11 what to do with because of the grasses this last year. 12 I think the Interpretive Center in Fort Peck is great. 13 I think the James Kip Recreation is great where the BLM 14 helped people to view it. The elk bugling view area is 15 great, but I often wonder how many more people had 16 enjoyed the beauty of the refuge if you had left the 17 roads not closed.</p> <p>18 A little history about Lewis and Clark, keep 19 hearing about them. They saw very little of the CMR, a 20 little bit by where Ron Garwood lives, the rest is in 21 the lake right now. When it was a game range. Charlie 22 Russell would have been really proud to have it named 23 after him. Now I think he's turning over in his grave. 24 I'll skip ahead here a little bit. 25 BLM built reservoirs, developed grazing systems,</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">24</p> <p>1 totally rested pastures when we used it, put in some 2 interior fencing, and the BLM took a lot of pride in 3 their management of the land for the wildlife and the 4 land. When it became a refuge, grazing fees doubled 5 and then they tripled. The best ratio was 21 -- was 6 seven acres to a cow. You guys wanted 21; that's when 7 excess grass started.</p> <p>8 This prescriptive grazing doesn't make any sense 9 either. It's not realistic, like your grouse and 10 antelope objectives. And on the way to Billings last 11 spring went by that pristine looking bull mountain area 12 where there was a fire, and makes me wonder what's 13 going to happen with the rest of this.</p> <p>14 I think this alternative -- I guess my time's up. 15 The alternatives have a lot of BS in them, and there's 16 better solutions. Thanks.</p> <p>17 MS. MATHER: You want to tip that 18 microphone down a little bit. Jason and Mark Good on 19 deck.</p> <p>20 JASON HOLT: Hi. My name is Jason A. 21 Holt, J-a-s-o-n, A, H-o-l-t.</p> <p>22 MS. MATHER: Maybe that wasn't such a 23 great idea.</p> <p>24 JASON HOLT: Hi. My name is Jason Holt. 25 I'm new to Valley County. I moved here about five</p>

25

1 years ago, and so I kind of have an outsider's
 2 prospective. And looking around it seems to me like
 3 the CMR and the ranchers don't have such a good
 4 relationship. I'd like to tell you what would happen
 5 if you treat the ranchers as partners and gave them a
 6 sense of ownership.

7 The ranch I live on is on BLM right now. About 10
 8 years ago the BLM looked at Timber Creek but didn't
 9 kick the cows off. They said, let's make it their own
 10 pasture. My father-in-law built fences, my
 11 mother-in-law came up with a rotation system so if a
 12 pasture gets grazed in the spring of one year it has
 13 16 months to recover from a spring grazing. The
 14 results of this cooperative effort is that today that
 15 creek works the way the BLM wants it to.

16 That's where BLM's involvement in the project ends,
 17 but not the ranchers. We're still monitoring those
 18 sites, so we have our fingers on the poles. We were
 19 implementing a program to control creeping foxtail on
 20 our own initiative because we know if that gets that
 21 creek, we will no longer be able to have the sections
 22 that we were supposed to be managing for.

23 I know the CMR has a problem with noxious weeds. I
 24 think you would have fewer problems if the ranchers
 25 were treated more like partners, because on our place

27

1 with Scott on deck. And. Again, if I can ask you guys
 2 to hold your applause. Thank you.

3 MARK GOOD: My name's Mark Good. I work
 4 for the Montana Wilderness Association. I'll bet I
 5 don't get an applause. I'm from Great Falls and I just
 6 want to -- I think it's worth talking about the mission
 7 for a bit about the refuge.

8 As a national wildlife refuge it's supposed to be
 9 managed different from other BLM and forest service
 10 lands, and as a guiding principle, the refuge is to
 11 manage for the enhancement and protection of wildlife,
 12 and I think it's through this plan that these decisions
 13 have to be made.

14 I know a lot of people don't like a refuge, maybe
 15 some would wish it just to go away. But it's not, I
 16 don't think it is anyway, and I think the reason is
 17 because wildlife refuges are popular with the American
 18 public, and I think popular with most Montanans. I do
 19 think it would be maybe more productive to make this
 20 refuge work for local communities that surround here.

21 I think it's no secret that the population of the
 22 eastern half of the state has been decreasing. I don't
 23 think that's a trend that's likely to change, and maybe
 24 this refuge, as other protected landscapes, have taken
 25 advantage of these landscapes and then with their

26

1 we found some Russian fireweed and we went after it;
 2 you know, we tried pulling it and mowing it, and that
 3 doesn't work. We had to spray it, and we didn't want
 4 to because there's frogs that live in that creek. But
 5 my mother-in-law, she was really careful and made sure
 6 she was spraying individual plants, and there was lots
 7 of patches, and it was not close to a road. She had a
 8 lot of work, but she -- she sprayed and sprayed the
 9 next year, and we made sure our success in that in two
 10 ways.

11 Number one, the frogs are still singing, and when
 12 mom went all she needed was a little bitty spray can,
 13 and it only took her one day. You can't get those
 14 results with your weed strike team because you've got
 15 65 habitat units to manage, but the ranchers will do it
 16 for you if they have a stake in it. That wasn't on
 17 mom's land, but it was on her ranch. It was a state
 18 section of BLM grazing land, but it was on her ranch.

19 Doesn't matter what you want to accomplish. If you
 20 want more salt bush or maximillian sunflowers, fewer
 21 noxious weeds, whatever you want to accomplish, the
 22 ranchers can do it for you, cheaper than anybody you
 23 can hire, and they will do it for free, in fact,
 24 they'll pay you. Thanks for listening.

25 MS. MATHER: Thanks, Jason. Mark's up

28

1 communities. Economics are pretty simple; people care
 2 where they live and make a preference to live in places
 3 with some economic or some environmental values, such
 4 as protected landscape.

5 I think the refuge -- it should be noted, too, that
 6 the refuge does make a direct contribution to local
 7 communities; I think through employment, through the
 8 purchase of goods and services, and then, of course,
 9 there's hunting, which is a big activity. I think
 10 there are a hundred thousand hunting visits. I don't
 11 know the exact -- how much -- either of those
 12 activities contributes locally, but I bet it's more
 13 than a lot of people would think.

14 Other than this part of the refuge mission is just
 15 some of the environmental education and interpretation.
 16 Out here there's the Interpretive Center, and so I
 17 guess maybe a question too is, I don't know what that
 18 translates into dollars, but I think it's worth asking
 19 or thinking about; what other kind of activities could
 20 be done -- interpretive activities that could be done
 21 on the refuge? Maybe bring people to the refuge. I
 22 think at some places access is an issue, people don't
 23 now how to get there or where.

24 In the case of Slippery Ann you probably have too
 25 many people there, and maybe there's a way of directing

29

1 them to other places, and encouraging people to come
 2 out and look at other places in the state. When I look
 3 around I find people have a tendency to think,
 4 especially from the western side, that prairies are
 5 kind of boring and monotonous, but quite the reverse.
 6 So maybe someone could talk about some of your thoughts
 7 about the interpretation activities that you're
 8 proposing to do in the future. So, thanks.

9 MS. MATHER: Scott with John on deck.

10 SCOTT CASSEL: My name's Scott Cassel.
 11 It's Scott with two Ts, C-a-s-s-e-l. I'm a resident of
 12 Valley County. It is plainly evident that the CMR CCP
 13 is not a conservation plan but is instead a document
 14 designed with a specific goal in mind. The goal is a
 15 vision based on what may have occurred 150 years ago,
 16 as stated in the CCP itself.

17 With all due respect, it certainly appears that the
 18 CCP contains the tenants normally ascribed to religion
 19 or philosophy rather than the principles demanded by
 20 science and logic. Range science is nearly excluded in
 21 the CCP in favor of biological myopia. There's no
 22 underlying credible data to support this vision that
 23 you have.

24 "Sentinel plant" is a term that is never associated
 25 with accepted range science. In this document it

31

1 with managers of the surrounding land managers, not in
 2 isolation under a vision.

3 Local comments and concerns should be weighted more
 4 than comments that come from Tennessee. That's how
 5 FLPMA works. To choose any alternative but A is going
 6 to guarantee litigation, and the problem with that is
 7 the tax payers are going to be paying for both sides.
 8 It is plainly evident that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife
 9 Service should stick to fish and wildlife and not range
 10 management. When the overtly negative social, economic
 11 and cultural and resource -- and the resource impacts
 12 are logically evaluated, Alternative A is the only
 13 alternative that would be acceptable. To select any
 14 other alternative would be to make a choice not based
 15 on scientific method, credible research or relevant
 16 data, but based on pseudoscience and preliminary
 17 science of the worst kind. Thank you.

18 MS. MATHER: Thanks, Scott. John with
 19 Maxine on deck.

20 JOHN BRENDEN: I don't think I need that
 21 microphone.

22 MS. MATHER: Can you state your name?

23 JOHN BRENDEN: My name is Senator John
 24 Brenden. I represent District 16, which is six
 25 counties up in. It's B-r-e-n-d-e-n. You know, I don't

30

1 appears to be a term that was created for the express
 2 support -- express purpose of supporting your vision.

3 Flawed and failed management of the CMR is
 4 responsible for the present conditions out there on the
 5 ground. Mismanagement is producing a system prone to
 6 fire, which is being dominated by cheat grass and
 7 Japanese brome. The plant community is degrading into
 8 chaparral. All alternatives, with the exclusion of
 9 "Alternative A," would accelerate this trend to the
 10 detriment of the resource, the local economy and the
 11 tax base.

12 Scientific data regarding range health is missing
 13 from the documents. Faulty methods were used for
 14 conclusions in the CCP. There are data deficiencies
 15 that are huge. The argument related to vegetation
 16 types is illogical, the interpretations are suspect.
 17 There's no sensitivity analysis in this document.

18 All but Alternative A would take, or subvert,
 19 private property or private property rights, and would
 20 usurp county jurisdiction. No MEPA analysis has been
 21 conducted for the state lands that are inside the CMR.
 22 Barron Crawford has stated, and I quote, "You can not
 23 look at the refuge in a vacuum, you have to management
 24 at the landscape level." Knowing and admitting that
 25 fact, the CMR management should be operating in unison

32

1 even like "Alternative A". And why would I like
 2 "Alternative B," "C" or "D"? As I said in Malta a few
 3 weeks ago, we don't need anymore Montana National
 4 Parks, we don't need anymore wolves, we don't need
 5 anymore wilderness, and we don't need anymore free
 6 roaming buffalo because this is the livelihood of these
 7 folks in this area. It isn't somebody in Tennessee, it
 8 isn't somebody from New York City.

9 And I've fought the bureaucrats all my life, and
 10 the point is, Barron, I guess I'd ask you, how long are
 11 you going to be in your job? Are you going to be in
 12 your job until the job is over and we've got
 13 "Alternative D," and then they move you around and then
 14 the new guy comes in? I'm just taking care of business
 15 like the good law directs me to. Well, I will do
 16 everything I can in the state legislature to protect
 17 the farmers and the ranchers and the business person
 18 here in Montana, and not only in my district.

19 What I don't like to hear is subjectivity
 20 management, like you're talking about. Because
 21 government subjectivity management is totally
 22 180 degrees opposite of John Brenden's. Thank you.

23 MS. MATHER: Thanks, John. Maxine? And
 24 then I believe it's Gene next. I have a little trouble
 25 with the handwriting.

33

1 MAXINE KORMAN: My name is Maxine Korman,
 2 M-a-x-i-n-e, K-o-r-m-a-n. My husband and I own a ranch
 3 in Valley County, in Hinsdale. I've got a document I
 4 am going to submit for the record. It contains the
 5 certified copy of our declaration of acceptance of land
 6 patents that are recorded with Valley County Clerk and
 7 Recorder. That's proof of our title as against even
 8 the federal government, including the pertinences. And
 9 those impertinences include Rs 223 stock water rights
 10 and the associated easements, which is recognized as
 11 the ownership of the fee or the inheritable right to
 12 use.

13 All the enabling documents in the game range and
 14 the wildlife refuge contain the savings provision, as
 15 has been previously pointed out, which says, "Subject
 16 to valid preexisting rights, U.S. Fish and Wildlife
 17 Service has historically ignored and continues to
 18 ignore the existence of private rights." That would
 19 include grazing rights. The term grazing rights
 20 appears in the Stock Grazing Homestead Act statute.
 21 That is defined as an easement, the right to use and
 22 take from the land of another.

23 These rights predate the game range and now the
 24 wildlife refuge. Nowhere in this document or in any of
 25 the documents that CMR has ever put out is there a

35

1 MS. MATHER: Gene? Gene from Glasgow. I
 2 think it's Gene Etchart. And Steven Page on deck.

3 GENE ETCHART: Name is Gene, G-e-n-e,
 4 Etchart, E-t-c-h-a-r-t, address, Glasgow, Montana. My
 5 first suggestion to this group is that this thing
 6 should be moved so that the person that's trying to
 7 deliver a message can talk to the audience, as well as
 8 to you people.

9 I'm wondering what I'm doing here. I'm 93 years of
 10 age. I was born and raised in this county. My first
 11 six years was living on a ranch, and now it's with the
 12 CMR. I spent about a page getting at my credentials.
 13 Before that I'd like to make one other observation.

14 I think your time frame is too short. Everybody
 15 that's come up here is trying to rush through to have
 16 this fellow allow him to keep talking, and I think
 17 that's wrong. If you've got an important message, I
 18 think it should be important to you people to listen to
 19 it, and not only that, but for the neighbors to
 20 understand what he has to say.

21 Now, I lived all -- all my life in this county. I
 22 operated several ranch units; some of you people are
 23 familiar with them. I'm going -- I'm going to try to
 24 speed this up a little bit, but I can remember the days
 25 before the Taylor Grazing Act and before the Fort Peck

34

1 recognition of those rights, and there's never been any
 2 action to protect private rights, but rather to ignore
 3 them and extinguish them. This plan, I believe, is
 4 nothing more than a vehicle to advance treasured
 5 landscape and national monuments with the Antiquities
 6 Act, which ignores the United States Supreme Court law.
 7 All lands to which private rights and claims attach are
 8 not public lands. And the U.S. Court of Claims
 9 recognizes these lands as fee lands.

10 I would ask you provide the Valley County
 11 Commissioners with the documentation that the United
 12 States Fish and Wildlife Service has authority to turn
 13 these lands over to intranational or international
 14 management authority and jurisdiction. Also, since
 15 wolves and grizzlies and bighorn sheep pop up in all
 16 but one proposed plan, I can only assume we intend to
 17 use endangered species as a method to regulate us out
 18 of business.

19 In here I point to a particular part in Title I of
 20 the United States code. It has to do with laws enacted
 21 into positive law, and I'm also asking you provide the
 22 commissioners with when that title was enacted into
 23 positive law, so, in fact, the Endangered Species Act
 24 can be applied in Valley County or in the sovereign
 25 State of Montana. Thank you. Thank you.

36

1 Game Range. I can remember when the Air Force come in
 2 here with their bombers and wanted to move the ranchers
 3 out, all that sort of thing.

4 I'll digress here a little bit, but I remember that
 5 someone talked about the content of your proposal. I
 6 think all four of those say nothing. I think they are
 7 written in such a way with elastic words that the Fish
 8 and Wildlife Service can do anything they want to in
 9 the future under any one of them, and that's -- that's
 10 my opinion. I read them, I try to say, what does this
 11 mean? Well, I think it means that you and I could have
 12 differing opinions, and either one could make the
 13 argument that it's in here.

14 But at any rate, I have been on several grazing
 15 boards of the BLM. I was the chairman of the BLM's
 16 National Advisory Board Counsel for 10 years. I have
 17 the distinction, which I doubt if anybody else in the
 18 room has, is I have an citation from the Secretary of
 19 Interior as a conservation award for Man of the Year,
 20 something of that nature.

21 I remember that when the first announcement on the
 22 Fort Peck Game Range was made, I can remember that, and
 23 I remember there was acceptance, generally. I think
 24 everybody thought it was a good idea. And I remember
 25 my father seemed to approve of it. FDR was a popular

37

1 person, but then -- and the other thing I want to say
 2 now, unless there's some confusion, I don't have any --
 3 UNIDENTIFIED PERSON: You can have my
 4 three minutes, Gene.
 5 GENE ETCHART: I have three more minutes.
 6 You want to start that over?
 7 MS. MATHER: Jim, we need you to just
 8 wrap it up.
 9 GENE ETCHART: You do?
 10 UNIDENTIFIED PERSON: Keep going.
 11 MS. MATHER: Folks, we need to be fair.
 12 This is our 7th meeting. We'll give Gene one more
 13 minute, and that's it.
 14 GENE ETCHART: Okay. The whole problem,
 15 the main problem we have here is because of the action
 16 that Senator Metcalf had taken when he passed the
 17 amendment to an obscure bill to hand the fish -- the
 18 CMR over to Fish and Wildlife, and it caused a lot of
 19 problems, just like there is in this room now. And
 20 some of the grazing districts sent people over to --
 21 back to the -- Washington D.C. to talk to Senator
 22 Metcalf and said, what can we do about this problem?
 23 And there was just as much anxiety at that time as
 24 there is now over the buffalo. People were -- were
 25 very frightened over what it might mean, and Manson

39

1 but I think I would just be repeating a number of
 2 points that have already been made. But one of the
 3 things that I was noticing as I was reviewing your
 4 handout, and no one has mentioned it at this point, is
 5 it would appear to me as though we are saying that if a
 6 pack of wolves show up on the CMR, they'll remain on
 7 the CMR, and you have no intention of controlling wolf
 8 populations because you stated that you are going to
 9 eliminate your relationship with the USDA predator
 10 service. And so I guess I have the question to ask
 11 you. Do you intend to allow wolves to survive on the
 12 game range? Thank you.
 13 MS. MATHER: Thanks, Steve. Did anyone
 14 else have a comment or a question before Barron answers
 15 questions?
 16 SCOTT CASSEL: Yes.
 17 MS. MATHER: Can you please come on up?
 18 SCOTT CASSEL: I have to come up to ask a
 19 question?
 20 MS. MATHER: Yep.
 21 SCOTT CASSEL: What congressional
 22 authority exists where you guys assert the right or
 23 convince me that you have the right to expand or change
 24 wilderness areas without the authority of Congress?
 25 Thank you.

38

1 Bailey, Jr., who was a fish and game commissioner here
 2 in Montana, plus a legislator, he and I on a different
 3 schedule were commissioned to go talk to Senator
 4 Metcalf. And Senator Metcalf looked me in the eye and
 5 he said -- 15 seconds.
 6 MS. MATHER: 15 seconds. Count down.
 7 GENE ETCHART: He said the game range
 8 would be administered under the Taylor Grazing Act, and
 9 he said, you go back and tell your friends and your
 10 neighbors and your people that that's the way it's
 11 going to be. And fish and game -- Fish and Wildlife
 12 never adhered to that at all, and it comes back to the
 13 points somebody else made. I don't think there's
 14 anybody alive that remembers that, except that he gave
 15 me the commitment to bring it back to you people that
 16 it would be administered under the Fish and Game Act,
 17 or rather, the Taylor Grazing Act, and he said, tell
 18 your friends they've got no problems.
 19 MS. MATHER: Thank you, Jim. Steve?
 20 STEVEN PAGE: My name is Steven Page.
 21 I'm a local rancher. For the record, I would like to
 22 state that I fully support, since we have no other
 23 options than to support one of the options, I would be
 24 in favor of option "A".
 25 I have a number of things that I would like to say,

40

1 MS. MATHER: Anybody else? Come on up.
 2 Thank you.
 3 RON GARWOOD: Beings I didn't get to get
 4 everything out, I'm for continued cattle grazing out on
 5 the CMR, and I think the "Alternative A" is the best
 6 option, but what -- the other day, about two weeks ago,
 7 I was coming out of Harper's Ridge and we met a bunch
 8 of people walking down the road. Anyway, kind of
 9 curious what was going on, so we stopped, they wanted
 10 me to stop, so I stopped. Here I found out because
 11 they asked, how far is the next fence? Of course I got
 12 to thinking, whoa, and I asked them, are you taking out
 13 fence? And they said yes.
 14 So then I told them what was going on here, and I
 15 wanted to keep cattle grazing here, and all of a sudden
 16 they backed away from the outfit. They didn't want to
 17 talk to me or divulge anymore information. Anyway, as
 18 I got back down to where they had left their outfit, it
 19 was the Montana Conservation Corp. And it almost seems
 20 to me like you're working on that D Alternative
 21 already, taking out cross fences, and I was wondering,
 22 who gave them permission to do that, or did they do it
 23 on their own, or what?
 24 MS. MATHER: Okay. I'm going to let
 25 Barron and Bill -- do you have a question?

41

1 GENE ETCHART: Can I have two minutes?
 2 MS. MATHER: No. Do you have a question?
 3 I can't give you any more time. They'll be plenty of
 4 time afterwards.
 5 GENE ETCHART: I think I have a picture
 6 that you'll all enjoy.
 7 MS. MATHER: Would you like no hold it up
 8 and share?
 9 UNIDENTIFIED PERSON: Ask a question with
 10 it, Gene, and it will be fine.
 11 MS. MATHER: Go ahead.
 12 GENE ETCHART: The thing I wanted to say
 13 is that --
 14 MS. MATHER: Gene, our recorder can't
 15 hear you from there. Gene, I'm giving you 30 seconds
 16 this time. Believe me, I love a story teller as much
 17 as anyone else, but this is not the venue. 30 seconds.
 18 GENE ETCHART: The thing I wanted to say
 19 is the Fish and Wildlife Service has been too modest on
 20 the size of this CMR, and I have a picture that I think
 21 will illustrate that and I need both hands here to get
 22 at it. But this is a picture. Can you folks see it?
 23 There's six beautiful elk if that picture, and they are
 24 grazing in a horse pasture at the stone house. And
 25 that's 15 miles north of the nearest CMR boundary. The

43

1 Barron's got a number of questions to answer.
 2 GENE ETCHART: If they were cattle on the
 3 refuge --
 4 MS. MATHER: Thank you.
 5 MR. CRAWFORD: I'll have to admit, this
 6 has been the most lively meeting we've had out of the
 7 six, so I appreciate you guys making it interesting.
 8 To address John's comment about how many years am I
 9 going to be around? I'm around one day. Today is my
 10 last day, officially, as an employee of CMR, and I am
 11 proud to say I'm going back to Tennessee, my home
 12 roots, glad to go back to family.
 13 I've enjoyed my time immensely here in Montana, but
 14 as you all spoke, the pull of home is very strong, and
 15 the pull to my home is extremely strong. So I took the
 16 opportunity to go back and to be two hours from the
 17 farm that I grew up on and have the opportunity for my
 18 children to have the same experiences that I had on
 19 that farm.
 20 So, Kenneth, this is a CMR meeting. We don't
 21 manage Medicine Lake, so I'm sorry, I can't answer any
 22 of your questions about Medicine Lake. That's Jerry
 23 Rodriguez up there, and so I don't have any idea what
 24 the budget is. I don't have any idea what their master
 25 plan is. I don't know about their parking lot and I

42

1 sportsmen tell me that deer like the private land
 2 section better.
 3 Now, if these deer are 15 miles off of that, just
 4 think if you take 200 miles --
 5 MS. MATHER: Did you have a question,
 6 Gene?
 7 GENE ETCHART: Well...
 8 MS. MATHER: Okay. Thank you for the
 9 picture.
 10 SENATOR BRENDEN: I have one question.
 11 Why do you treat us so rudely when you're working for
 12 we the tax payers?
 13 MS. MATHER: Okay. I'm going -- I have
 14 no intention of treating you rudely. I'm actually
 15 trying to treat everybody fairly. This is about our
 16 sixth or seventh meeting, and we've handled them all
 17 exactly the same. I'm now turning the mic. over to
 18 Barron to answer questions.
 19 GENE ETCHART: I still didn't make my
 20 point.
 21 MS. MATHER: You'll have time afterwards,
 22 Gene.
 23 GENE ETCHART: My point is that those
 24 seven or eight elk were off the refuge.
 25 MS. MATHER: Gene, with all due respect,

44

1 don't know about them cutting trees down. Sorry. This
 2 is CMR.
 3 KENNETH LOCKE: Can I ask you how much
 4 that cost?
 5 MR. CRAWFORD: Oh, I don't know how much
 6 this cost. A lot of staff time, I can tell you that.
 7 But I don't have a dollar figure.
 8 Nancy asked about the deer problem around Fort
 9 Peck. Who's responsible? That's the Montana Fish,
 10 Wildlife & Parks. They manage resident wildlife.
 11 Let's see, what else did I have here?
 12 Okay. One of the things I want to talk about is
 13 the difference between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife
 14 Service and the Bureau of Land Management and the
 15 Forest Service. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is
 16 the only agency that has the sole mission of managing
 17 fish, wildlife and habitats. Okay. We are not a
 18 multiple-use agency such as the Bureau of Land
 19 Management or the forest service.
 20 We have a very clearcut mission that comes from the
 21 National Wildlife Refuge Administration Act of 1966,
 22 and then that was updated with the National Wildlife
 23 Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997. Both of those
 24 were congressional laws passed by Congress. In there
 25 it states what we are to do as a National Wildlife

<p style="text-align: right;">45</p> <p>1 Refuge System, and the key word there is "national".</p> <p>2 Okay. Our policies stretch from the Eastern United</p> <p>3 States all the way to the Hawaiian Islands, Alaska, all</p> <p>4 the way to Puerto Rico.</p> <p>5 There was lots of talk about FLPMA, the Federal</p> <p>6 Land Protection Management Act and Taylor Grazing.</p> <p>7 Those two laws apply to multiple lands; the Bureau of</p> <p>8 Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service. They do</p> <p>9 not apply in managing a national wildlife refuge</p> <p>10 system.</p> <p>11 Let's see, what else do we have here? Grass is a</p> <p>12 renewable resource. That was an interesting concept,</p> <p>13 and there is -- there is lots of uses for grass out</p> <p>14 there, it's just not used to be eaten by various</p> <p>15 animals, it's used as nesting cover. It's used for a</p> <p>16 whole variety of insects, and the idea that we're</p> <p>17 striving for in this plan is to create to diversity out</p> <p>18 there. You have short grass, you have tall grass, you</p> <p>19 have forbs and you have shrubs, and, therefore, you're</p> <p>20 providing these microhabitats for a whole wide range of</p> <p>21 species from mountain plovers all the way up to sharp</p> <p>22 tailed grouse. Both of those require different types</p> <p>23 of habitats in order for them to raise chicks and be</p> <p>24 successful.</p> <p>25 What else do we have here? What other kind of</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">46</p> <p>1 interpretive activities have we done? We do have -- we</p> <p>2 had -- we had a person that was stationed at Fort Peck</p> <p>3 that was an outdoor rec. planner that worked with the</p> <p>4 Corp staff on taking programs to schools, and</p> <p>5 unfortunately we lost that position about three years</p> <p>6 ago and have not filled it back. What we have done is</p> <p>7 converted a person in our Lewistown office from admin.</p> <p>8 position to a manager/trainee position with part of her</p> <p>9 duties being environmental education outreach, and been</p> <p>10 working in mostly the Lewistown district right now</p> <p>11 because that's where she's based out of. Hopefully in</p> <p>12 the plan we've identified the need for additional</p> <p>13 outdoor rec. planner, environmental education type</p> <p>14 planners that could assist with taking environmental</p> <p>15 education programs to the schools.</p> <p>16 Other things we identified in the plan was the</p> <p>17 building of various interpretive trails, a couple of</p> <p>18 them here on the east end of the refuge to interpret</p> <p>19 the natural and historical resources of the area.</p> <p>20 No, we're not going to introduce wolves. What we</p> <p>21 state in the plan is it involves naturally colonizing</p> <p>22 the area. We would work with Fish, Wildlife & Parks to</p> <p>23 identify a management plan for them. We are not going</p> <p>24 to consider hunting those species if they do migrate on</p> <p>25 to the refuge. We do have in there that we will</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">47</p> <p>1 authorize the taking of wolves that are causing</p> <p>2 livestock deprivation. The canceling of the service</p> <p>3 with Avis, USDA is mostly for coyote control, that's</p> <p>4 being done on the southeast portion of the refuge at</p> <p>5 this time.</p> <p>6 I had a question as to what authority do we have to</p> <p>7 expand wilderness. What we're doing is we're talking</p> <p>8 about proposed wilderness. We're not talking about</p> <p>9 designated wilderness. Only Congress has the authority</p> <p>10 to designate wilderness. Within the refuge we have CMR</p> <p>11 and we have UL Bend. UL Bend has designated wilderness</p> <p>12 on it. All the other areas are proposed. Proposed</p> <p>13 means they've been evaluated by the service, they've</p> <p>14 been approved by the service, they've been approved by</p> <p>15 the Secretary of Interior, and are waiting action by</p> <p>16 Congress.</p> <p>17 Since they have not been designated, the service</p> <p>18 can go back during this planning process and reevaluate</p> <p>19 those lands and determine whether they still meet that</p> <p>20 wilderness characteristic, and make a recommendation</p> <p>21 back to our director's office and then up to the</p> <p>22 secretaries office. According to our policy, we do</p> <p>23 manage proposed wilderness as if it was designated, so</p> <p>24 we maintain those characteristics until Congress goes</p> <p>25 ahead and acts on that.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">48</p> <p>1 I think we had one other one that was about the</p> <p>2 cross fences down in Harper's Ridge. And that was on</p> <p>3 exclosure. It wasn't an interior type fence that</p> <p>4 divided pastures, it was a habitat exclosure that</p> <p>5 burned up in a fire, and since it is in a proposed</p> <p>6 wilderness area, we weren't going to go back in and</p> <p>7 rebuild that exclosure, so we went ahead and took that</p> <p>8 fence out.</p> <p>9 RON GARWOOD: Excuse me, Barron. That</p> <p>10 isn't in a proposed wilderness area over there on the</p> <p>11 north side of Harper's Ridge.</p> <p>12 MR. CRAWFORD: It's just outside of it,</p> <p>13 but it was a fence no longer needed for management, and</p> <p>14 it was non-functional. It was laying on the ground,</p> <p>15 Ron.</p> <p>16 RON GARWOOD: I know that, and excuse me,</p> <p>17 one question. And in the fires of 2006 when you were</p> <p>18 fighting fires on the south side of Harper's Ridge and</p> <p>19 it got away from you and burned on the north side,</p> <p>20 that's when it burned those up, and now you're taking</p> <p>21 out cross fences.</p> <p>22 MR. BERG: But that fence is not needed</p> <p>23 anymore for livestock management. That's the reason</p> <p>24 we're taking it out.</p> <p>25 I just wanted to expand a little bit on Steve's</p>

49

1 question about USDA permits. Under current management
 2 we've got a couple blanket agreements with USDA to go
 3 in and remove predators when they cause trouble for
 4 livestock, mostly sheep, in the area around Haxby
 5 Point, Garfield County. Some of those sheep no longer
 6 operate in that area. There are no sheep out on the
 7 tip of Haxby Point like there used to be.

8 What we're proposing to do is take those off the
 9 table. When depredation problems do arise, we'll
 10 address those individually as they come up. And, for
 11 the record, the wolf that was shot down in Timber Creek
 12 a few years back, we actually issued a permit
 13 authorizing the taking of that animal on the refuge if
 14 it occurred there, so -- and it wasn't taken on the
 15 refuge. It ended up being taken several miles up
 16 Timber Creek, but just so you understand how we're
 17 proposing to handle that in the future.

18 If wolves did move onto an area and they could get
 19 along for a period of time without causing depredation
 20 problems, you know, our policy would be not to go in
 21 and kill them just for the sake of killing them.

22 We'll be around afterwards here. Several staff
 23 people here. Bob Skinner, somebody had a question
 24 about the sentinel plant concept. There's a lot of
 25 different names for sentinel plants, and maybe Bob can

51

1 do, which is a subset of this. In an instance like
 2 that, the counties would be a cooperating agency. We
 3 work directly with them, probably more with the
 4 counties than anybody else, and some of the adjacent
 5 land owners that those roads effect, so in that case
 6 they would be a coordinating agency. Coordinating
 7 where they have a say, and you have to listen, instead
 8 of cooperating where they say but you do what you want.

9 And the reason for that, as you define it -- I've
 10 never heard it defined that way -- the fact is some of
 11 those roads that proverse [sic] the refuge have
 12 petition, so we legally would have to address those on
 13 the refuge because there's another entity that has a
 14 legal identifier to that road.

15 COMMISSIONER PIPPIN: Valley County has a
 16 further question that never was addressed in the
 17 responses to questions. We've repeatedly brought up
 18 the issue of valid, preexisting rights.

19 Now, when you read the cases in the United States
 20 Court of Claims where people have been forced to file a
 21 claim against the federal government for the taking of
 22 their property under the Tucker Act. The court
 23 recognized that under the prior appropriation doctrine
 24 ranchers, for example, owned vested water rights, and
 25 the court said the rancher owns the fee. That's

50

1 give you a better idea what those plants are. Matt
 2 DeRosier is in the back there, west end Sand Creek
 3 manager. Aaron Johnson up here in the front is at Fort
 4 Peck, closer to home. Paula Gouse is in the back,
 5 Jared Eatmon in the back.

6 UNIDENTIFIED PERSON: I've got a quick
 7 question. I'm sorry. Is this a cooperation or a
 8 coordination with Valley County?

9 MR. CRAWFORD: Valley County was one of
 10 the cooperating agencies on this planning effort. They
 11 were included in the county group. They weren't always
 12 represented in the meetings because they had other
 13 county commissioners from some of the adjacent counties
 14 that were represented.

15 UNIDENTIFIED PERSON: But cooperate or
 16 coordinate?

17 MR. CRAWFORD: Cooperating?

18 UNIDENTIFIED PERSON: Do they have
 19 coordinating status and will they?

20 MR. BERG: You know, I guess in my mind
 21 there's not much difference. For example, on --
 22 something came up on roads here earlier where we're not
 23 proposing to address some of the -- like the 2477
 24 issue, petition roads, some of those things. That's
 25 going to be part of the road management plan that we

52

1 because the federal government in 1866 passed a statute
 2 for vested water rights and rights of way according to
 3 local law, custom and decisions of courts.

4 MR. BERG: Well --

5 COMMISSIONER PIPPIN: Let me finish,
 6 please, sir. Now, well before a BLM was created there
 7 were grazing rights recognized, bought and sold, passed
 8 on in inheritance. Traditionally this agency has said,
 9 you know what, if you go to a family, we'll let you
 10 pass the permit down, but if you sell the place, nope,
 11 the permit doesn't go. You haven't addressed that the
 12 court recognizes that the permit is not property, and
 13 that property exists independent of the permit. And
 14 the court has said, cancellation of a permit does not
 15 extinguish the property.

16 Valley county's question is because we've got
 17 letters in our file, we've got responses back that
 18 pretty much say, nope, we say there are no private
 19 rights, what -- my question is: What is it the county
 20 has to do, short of calling for an Office of Inspector
 21 General oversight, to get Fish and Wildlife Service --

22 MR. BERG: That might be the best avenue
 23 in this case.

24 COMMISSIONER PIPPIN: Okay. Got our
 25 answer. Commissioner Pippin.

53

1 MR. BERG: Because this isn't the venue
2 or the plan that's going to address that issue. In
3 regard to water rights, we have an expert, Gene
4 Etchart. If you have a water rights issue we can't
5 address, I'm sure Gene could help us with that.
6 Thanks.
7 MS. MATHER: That's it --
8 UNIDENTIFIED PERSON: Have I got any time
9 left? I'm all washed up.
10 MS. MATHER: You can talk to staff.
11 UNIDENTIFIED PERSON: This was supposed
12 to last until 3:00.
13 MS. MATHER: We'll be here until 3:00, if
14 you have any questions of the staff.
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

54

C E R T I F I C A T E

1
2
3 STATE OF MONTANA)
4 COUNTY OF VALLEY)ss
5
6 I, Kelley A. Barstad, Official Court Reporter of
7 the Montana Seventeenth Judicial District Court, and
8 Notary Public for the County of Valley, State of
9 Montana, residing at Glasgow, Montana DO HEREBY
10 CERTIFY:
11 That I was duly authorized to and did report the
12 foregoing proceeding. Said testimony and
13 proceedings were reported and transcribed by me with
14 a computerized transcription system.
15
16 That the foregoing transcript of this matter
17 constitutes a true and accurate transcription of the
18 proceedings which were heard.
19
20 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and
21 affixed my notarial seal this 30th day of January,
22 2011.
23
24
25

Kelley A. Barstad
Certified Shorthand Reporter
My commission expires 2-2-14

1

1 PUBLIC HEARING
 2 OCTOBER 14, 2010
 3 MALTA, MONTANA

4 U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service.
 5 Draft Comprehensive Conservation
 6 Plan and Environmental Impact Statement
 7 Charles M. Russell National Wildlife Refuge
 8 and UL Bend National Wildlife Refuge
 9
 10
 11
 12
 13
 14
 15
 16
 17
 18
 19
 20
 21
 22
 23
 24
 25

2

1 MS. MATHER: Good evening, everybody.
 2 Thank you for coming. If you take a seat, we can get
 3 started here. Somebody's lights are on across the
 4 street, a white Taurus. Anybody's? Okay. Thank you
 5 all for coming this evening. My name's Mimi. I'll be
 6 facilitating the meeting this evening. I'm up here
 7 with Barron Crawford, CMRs project leader, Bill Berg,
 8 the deputy project leader, and Laurie Shannon, the
 9 planning team leader for the CCP.
 10 The purpose of today's meeting is for the Fish and
 11 Wildlife Service to collect your comments on the
 12 conservation plan, the Draft CCP, as we've been calling
 13 it. We'll start the evening with Barron giving a
 14 presentation on the CCP, and then we'll turn it over to
 15 you.
 16 Most people have signed up who want to give a
 17 comment. If you want to sign up later, that's fine
 18 too. Keep in mind, though, we're going to be limiting
 19 it to three minutes, so if you've got a lot to say,
 20 start thinking about how you can streamline your
 21 thoughts and get it down to three minutes. With that
 22 I'll turn it over to Barron.
 23 MR. CRAWFORD: Thanks everyone for taking
 24 time out of your evening to come here tonight. I've
 25 been asked to speak a little bit slower as I go through

3

1 this, which shouldn't be a problem for me. I'll just
 2 pull out the southern twang out here a little bit,
 3 draw stuff out. So we're going to talk about the CCP
 4 for the Charles M. Russell and the UL Bend National
 5 Wildlife Refuges.
 6 We started this process back in 2007. We held 14
 7 public meetings, collected about 24,000 comments.
 8 We've had numerous meetings with your cooperators, and
 9 now we're at the point where we've developed this draft
 10 document where everybody has had a chance, or is having
 11 a chance to review.
 12 This is kind of the timeline of what we've been
 13 doing and when we've been doing it. So right now we're
 14 in the fall of 2010 with the draft out. Hope to have
 15 the final CCP out by the winter of 2012 with a record
 16 of decision by that summer. So basically we do a CCP
 17 for several reasons. The first is it's mandated by
 18 Congress.
 19 The National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act
 20 of 1997 said all national wildlife refuges will have a
 21 CCP completed by 2011, so there's about 548 refuges.
 22 Right now about two-thirds of those have completed
 23 plans. The rest of us, like CMR, are working
 24 feverishly trying to make that 2012 deadline. We've
 25 received some comments from folks about why are you

4

1 rushing through this. It's basically to meet this
 2 deadline.
 3 So there's several key elements to a CCP. The
 4 first one is it provides that management direction,
 5 gives guidance. It's based upon the refuge purposes
 6 and the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System.
 7 Refuge managers come and go, some stay longer than
 8 others. As new managers come in, they basically have a
 9 management plan to guide that management, and so
 10 there's not an abrupt change, you know, based upon the
 11 thoughts or ideas of a new manager coming on board. It
 12 outlines a vision statement with goals, objectives and
 13 strategies for that future management.
 14 It's accompanied by some type of a NEPA document,
 15 either an environmental assessment or impact statement.
 16 And due to the complexity of issues we're dealing with
 17 here at CMR, we went ahead and did an Environmental
 18 Impact Statement, and that's one of the reasons this
 19 document is 400 some pages long. And the last thing is
 20 it provides that long term guidance for that 15-year
 21 period. There are 15-year plans. At the end of that
 22 time period the process starts over again.
 23 So this is where we're at. There's kind of eight
 24 steps. We're down here at number five. After public
 25 comments, after we've evaluated those public comments,

<p style="text-align: right;">5</p> <p>1 move up here to number six, and then you implement the 2 plan, you monitor and evaluate. That's one thing I 3 haven't mentioned at some of the previous meetings is 4 the services adopted in this policy called adaptive 5 management. 6 So one of the comments we received is it seems like 7 there's a lot of vagueness in this plan, and being 8 accused of doing that on purpose. Well, like, yeah, we 9 have done that on purpose because we'll be employing 10 this strategy called adaptive management. As you 11 gather information, as you do make changes, you 12 evaluate those changes to make sure you're meeting 13 those goals, and then you adapt. So that is a 14 component that is built in to this planning process. 15 So we have four alternatives. "Alternative A" is 16 the no action. It's basically keep operating as we've 17 been operating since the 1986 EIS was completed. There 18 would be a few minor changes. We continue to manage on 19 the 65 habitat units like we're doing now. We'd 20 gradually implement prescriptive grazing like we're 21 doing now. We'd manage big game to achieve the target 22 levels that were identified in that '86 EIS, 2.5 elk 23 per square mile, 10 mule deer per square mile. We'd 24 keep the 670 Miles Of Road open, and we'd continue to 25 provide protection to the 155,000 acres of proposed</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">6</p> <p>1 wilderness. 2 So then we've got three action alternatives. The 3 first one we've coined the Wildlife and Habitat 4 emphasis. And basically this one is we're managing the 5 landscape in cooperation with our partners to emphasize 6 an abundance and diversity of wildlife that uses both 7 natural ecological processes, such as fire and grazing, 8 and synthetic processes such as farming or tree 9 planting. 10 We encourage wildlife and public uses such as 11 hunting, fishing, photography and wildlife 12 interpretation, and we'd limit economic uses when they 13 compete for habitat resources. 14 So outside the door as you were coming in we had 15 several maps set up, and these maps depict what the 16 various alternatives might look like, so under 17 "Alternative B" we've got expansion of some proposed 18 wilderness areas, and we've got some suggestions for 19 some road closures. 20 And this is the east half of the refuge. So some 21 of the main points of "Alternative B" is we'd actively 22 manage, manipulate habitats for productive wildlife 23 food and cover. We'd get aggressive in moving towards 24 prescriptive grazing. We'd want to be prescriptively 25 grazing 50 to 75 percent of the refuge within four to</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">7</p> <p>1 seven years. Right now we're grazing about 35 percent. 2 We'd get aggressive in restoration on the river 3 bottoms. We'd work with Fish Wildlife and Parks to 4 provide quality hunting opportunities, sustain 5 populations of big game, and habitats for non-game. 6 We'd close about 106 miles of roads, and we'd expand 7 acreage in the proposed wilderness areas by 8 25,000 acres. 9 So the next alternative, "C," was what we coined 10 the Public Use and Economic Emphasis. And this one 11 again we're working in cooperation to manage the 12 landscape to emphasize and promote maximum compatible 13 wildlife dependent uses and economic uses, while 14 protecting wildlife and habitats to the extent 15 possible, and we'd minimize impacts to wildlife 16 habitats while using a variety of tools that enhance 17 the diversity of public and economic opportunities. 18 So under this alternative you don't see any road 19 closures, no proposed expansion of any wilderness 20 areas, and recommendations of eliminating a couple of 21 wilderness areas. There's one. 22 So kind of the main points of this one is manage 23 habitats to provide more opportunities for recreation. 24 Work with Fish Wildlife and Parks to maintain balanced 25 numbers of big game and livestock. Expand and maximize</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">8</p> <p>1 some hunting opportunities. Improve access to boat 2 ramps and then recommend eliminating four proposed 3 wilderness units for a loss of 35,880 acres. 4 And then the last alternative, "Alternative D," is 5 the one that's called our proposed action. We've 6 coined this the Natural Processes or the Ecological 7 Processes, and, again, working with our partners, 8 intensively use those natural ecological processes of 9 fire and grazing in a balanced, responsible manner to 10 restore and maintain the biological integrity of 11 environmental health. 12 And that phrase comes straight from our organic 13 legislation as to what we're supposed to do on a 14 national wildlife refuge. So once those processes are 15 restored, we'd take a more passive approach. We'd 16 still work to provide those quality public uses, and 17 we'd limit those uses when they are causing injury to 18 either the plants or habitats out there. 19 So on this map we've got expansion of a couple of 20 wilderness areas. We've got proposed to close a couple 21 of roads, and we've proposed to eliminate a couple of 22 wilderness areas, proposed wilderness areas, here and 23 here. 24 So main points here, economic use would be limited 25 when they are injurious to the natural processes.</p>

9

1 Apply management practices that mimic and restore
 2 natural processes, and those natural processes again,
 3 fire and grazing. Use fire and grazing whether its
 4 with wild or livestock, so prescriptively to mimic that
 5 historic interaction.

6 Again, work with Fish Wildlife and Parks to
 7 maintain diversity of species. Close about 25 miles of
 8 roads, so quite a difference, and then recommend
 9 expanding six of the proposed wilderness areas for
 10 18,000 acres, but eliminate three for a loss of 26,000.
 11 So kind of strike a little bit of balance there between
 12 B, C and D.

13 So this is our seventh meeting for this round.
 14 We've had a lot of good comments. Some of the hot
 15 button topics or questions that we've received during
 16 this is what is prescriptive grazing. Kind of a lot of
 17 questions surrounding that, and the basic way to answer
 18 that is prescriptive grazing is using livestock to meet
 19 a very specific wildlife and/or habitat objective.

20 So one example of that is say we have an area
 21 that's important for wintering sage grouse, or it's an
 22 important sage grouse lek, and we've got heavy grass
 23 coming into that area and there's a threat of wild fire
 24 that could come through there and eliminate that sage
 25 grouse habitat. We would use livestock to go in there

11

1 diverse recommendation as far as areas to keep and
 2 areas to recommend for elimination or for expansion.

3 The same thing with roads. We looked at roads,
 4 looked at the alternative, the major focus of the
 5 alternative, and determined which roads are impacting
 6 our ability to manage that area, which one does the
 7 public not have access due to private land ownership
 8 off the refuge, which ones are cherry-stem roads that
 9 just lead out of ridges that fragment habitat.

10 And then the last subject is bison, and I've been
 11 consistent in my message. The Fish and Wildlife
 12 Service is not proposing to re-introduce bison on the
 13 refuge. The sections in the document that talk about
 14 bison are in there in case Montana Fish Wildlife and
 15 Park develop a proposal that looked at restoring bison
 16 somewhere around a refuge. We would work cooperatively
 17 with them to see what role the refuge may play, but the
 18 Fish and Wildlife Service is not going to take the lead
 19 in reintroducing bison on the CMR. We are not going to
 20 create a fenced herd. Okay.

21 So now we're at the point where you guys get to
 22 tell us what you think. What I would ask is that we're
 23 here to address the items that are in this plan. I
 24 know a month ago everybody was here to talk about the
 25 monument and treasured landscapes. That is not what

10

1 and graze that area to reduce that risk of wild fire
 2 instead of using prescribed fire.

3 So that brings us to prescribed fire. How will it
 4 be used? We've been working with fire ecologists and
 5 range ecologists from across the country mapping the
 6 historic fire frequency of the refuge, and what we have
 7 found is that it's highly variable across the refuge.
 8 You've got some areas that historically burn on an
 9 average of every 17 to 14 years. You've got other
 10 areas that saw fire maybe once every 500 years. And so
 11 the idea is to go into those areas that burn frequently
 12 that haven't seen fire in several decades, write a
 13 prescription.

14 The prescription would let you know as to what
 15 conditions you would use fire, temperature, humidity,
 16 fuel moisture, wind speed, wind direction, and you
 17 would go ahead and use that fire to restore that area
 18 to its historic fire frequency.

19 Wilderness. As part of the CCP process we're
 20 mandated to evaluate our proposed wilderness areas.
 21 Part of that evaluation is to make sure that they are
 22 meeting their wilderness characteristics in which they
 23 were established. Some of it is subjective. You look
 24 at it and you make the best guess based upon what the
 25 alternative is trying to achieve. That's why you see a

12

1 this plan is about. This plan is about management of
 2 the CMR, so I would ask that you keep your comments
 3 focused on that.

4 Numerous ways to provide comments. You can get up,
 5 give it to us orally, you can write them down, drop
 6 them as you walk out the door. You can send Laurie an
 7 e-mail, you can drop them in the mail box. It's not a
 8 voting contest. There's not one form of comments that
 9 weigh more than the other, and we'll consider all the
 10 relative comments that we receive. So with that, I'll
 11 turn it back over to Mimi and you guys. Thanks.

12 MS. MATHER: Thanks. Just real quickly
 13 just let me explain how the comment portion of the
 14 evening will run. I've got a list of everybody that is
 15 signed up to comment. I ask -- I'll read who's up next
 16 as well as who's on deck so you can be ready. If you
 17 could come up here, speak into the microphone and spell
 18 your name. We've got a court recorder recording the
 19 proceedings for the meeting.

20 Again, we're going to keep it to three minutes.
 21 That's what we've been doing for the last six meetings.
 22 That's what we're going to do tonight. You can not
 23 sell or give away or barter your three minutes to
 24 somebody else, so please keep it to three minutes.
 25 Brett's my time keeper back here. Once you've spoken

13

1 for two minutes and only have a minute left, he has a
 2 one minute sign. He's also got a 20 second sign and a
 3 time is up sign.

4 I know some of you mentioned you just have a
 5 question. That's okay. Please come up and just ask
 6 your question, if that's all it is, and not a comment.
 7 When we're done -- if somebody else's comment inspires
 8 you and your name's not on the list, don't worry, I'll
 9 ask once I've gone through this list if anybody else
 10 has a comment or question, and then Barron and Bill
 11 will respond to the questions they heard and the
 12 comments.

13 The only other thing is we ask you refrain from
 14 applause and cheering so we can move through these
 15 comments smoothly. With that, our first is Janelle
 16 Holden, and I've got Mark on deck.

17 JANELLE HOLDEN: My name is Janelle
 18 Holden, J-a-n-e-l-l-e, H-o-l-d-e-n. This is my seventh
 19 of the seven meetings that the Fish and Wildlife
 20 Service has held, so I've sort of been on tour, and I
 21 want to start my comments by saying that I really
 22 appreciate the way the Fish and Wildlife Service has
 23 put these meetings together, and I hope they continue
 24 to do the same for the final comments.
 25 It's easy for agencies -- I've been to a lot of

15

1 it is a gem for Montana and it's a gem for the United
 2 States, and actually a gem world wide.

3 So with that, I just want to conclude by saying
 4 thank you to Barron. This is his last day on the job,
 5 and I think he's done an excellent job as manager, and
 6 I wish him well on his way to Tennessee, and I hope
 7 that his final meeting will go smoothly. Thanks.

8 MS. MATHER: Thanks, Janelle. Mark with
 9 Mike on deck.

10 MARK MANOUKIAN: Three minutes. The lead
 11 document was only 22 pages and we got three minutes.
 12 Okay. For the record, my name is Mark
 13 M-a-n-o-u-k-i-a-n.

14 The CM Russell Wildlife Refuge is a part of the
 15 Fort Peck watershed. The watershed comprises over
 16 3.3 million acres. Private lands account for
 17 36 percent of that watershed. The BLM compromises
 18 29 percent of that watershed, and CMR is 21 percent of
 19 that watershed. I think that's an important figure for
 20 your document as it reflects the breath of the resource
 21 we're talking about.

22 You say there's over 250,000 visitors that visit
 23 your refuge each year. I'd like to know the methods
 24 and materials in which you determine that number. You
 25 talk about excessive livestock grazing. The record

14

1 agency meetings, and it's very easy for agencies to
 2 chicken out, so to speak. Agencies often can host an
 3 open house type format where they put staff around the
 4 room, and you can go and ask them questions, but I find
 5 that those are a lot less productive, and get a lot
 6 fewer comments than the meetings that have been set up
 7 by the Fish and Wildlife Service this way around, which
 8 provide a presentation and then a format for
 9 commenting. And then what's really important is that
 10 they are answering the public's questions at the end.
 11 You don't often get that in public meetings, so I
 12 really appreciate that.

13 The staff has been professional, sometimes in
 14 difficult circumstances, and I thank you for that. So
 15 one of the things that we've heard from a lot of people
 16 during these meetings is concern about changes in the
 17 proposed wilderness areas and the refuge. There are a
 18 lot of people who really treasure these places, they
 19 find a lot of value in them, they find all of the
 20 things that make wilderness wilderness; solitude,
 21 quiet, recreation, opportunities, just an awesome view
 22 of a landscape that is under represented in our
 23 national wilderness system.

24 So I think the comments demonstrated how much
 25 people love and care about the CMR, and they recognize

16

1 decision allocated a hundred thousand AUMs on the
 2 refuge, 60,000 for wildlife, 40,000 for livestock,
 3 currently based on pages 203 through 206. 73,000 AUMs
 4 used by elk, mule deer and wild tail deer. At the same
 5 time you've reduced grazing by 90 percent since the
 6 1980. I question the decision. I encourage you to
 7 read *Where the Buffalo Roamed - Or Did They?* by
 8 Richard H. Hart. He has some interesting aspects on
 9 grazing prehistory.

10 You're working with Samuel Fuhlendorf on the
 11 sentinel plant monitoring. I have a degree in Range
 12 Science from the people's University of Bozeman. The
 13 ARS, BLM and USGS have a way to interpret range land
 14 health, technical reference 1734-6. I would encourage
 15 you to look at that, and to hire somebody to figure out
 16 a way to monitor range lands, or you make a fallacy of
 17 range science and the art of range science.

18 For years the service has -- this is under
 19 endangered species -- has argued about the management
 20 responsibilities with the Army Corps of Engineers on
 21 salt seed located on Cedar. Now that it has jumped the
 22 pool level on the southern part of the refuge, when I
 23 was fishing this summer, the drainage systems and the
 24 uplands are now well inundated with salt seed. We also
 25 found it several miles within Phillips County, a long

17

1 ways from the service or the river system, so that is
 2 being translocated great distance at this point and
 3 time.
 4 The services indicated additionally there is cheat
 5 grass and Japanese brome within the refuge just like
 6 all lands in Montana. The services indicated the
 7 desire to use fire vegetation management on the refuge.
 8 Both cheat grass and salt cedar are fire responders.
 9 Without comprehensive methods to control salt cedar it
 10 appears the legacy will result in continued invasion of
 11 this species.
 12 In addition, Eurasian watermilfoil has been found
 13 in several locations in the reservoir and the main stem
 14 of the Missouri River. Prescriptive grazing -- all
 15 grazing plans are prescriptive in nature. Using
 16 grazing for the purpose of manipulating vegetation or
 17 wildlife habitat with regard to animal -- without
 18 regard to animal performance is targeted grazing. I
 19 think you are grossly confused as in the use of
 20 prescriptive versus targeted grazing, and that targeted
 21 grazing can be found on the fish and wildlife web
 22 cites. Thank you for coming today.
 23 MS. MATHER: Thanks, Mark. Mike's up
 24 with Troy on deck.
 25 MIKE SJOSTROM: My name's Mike Sjostrom.

19

1 irrelevant and should be stricken.
 2 Also, the Six County Fort Peck Lake Group requested
 3 an extension on the comment period, and we would like
 4 that to be on record again and request that you take
 5 that into consideration. Thank you.
 6 MS. MATHER: John with Craig on deck.
 7 RONNIE KORMAN: My name's Ronnie Korman.
 8 Every one of these ranchers in here have a land patent,
 9 and if they bring that land patent up into their name,
 10 that's proof of our title against the federal
 11 government, including all apprentices. All enabling
 12 documents contain the savings rezinum, subject to
 13 valid, preexisting rights.
 14 All ranchers has water rights and grazing rights on
 15 the CMR. Lands which has private rights and claims
 16 attached is not public lands. Nowhere in this document
 17 of this plan that you have do you recognize to protect
 18 them private rights. I'm going to ask you also, are
 19 you going to coordinate with the county commissioners
 20 in this county, or are you just going to go along with,
 21 as you are doing at this time cooperating with them?
 22 Thank you.
 23 MS. MATHER: Craig. Mark on deck.
 24 CRAIG FRENCH: My name is Craig French,
 25 F-r-e-n-c-h. Nothing special there. My main concern,

18

1 It's spelled S-j-o-s-t-r-o-m. And I just state in
 2 support of no loss of cattle numbers on the CMR. I
 3 think we've seen enough of that already. I don't own a
 4 cow, probably never will own a cow in the future, but I
 5 do understand a little bit about economics and what
 6 it's doing to our local communities, our tax base, and
 7 like I say, just wanted to go on record that I don't
 8 feel we should see any loss of livestock production
 9 there. Thanks.
 10 MS. MATHER: Troy, Don on deck.
 11 TROY BLUNT: Thank you. My name is Troy
 12 Blunt, B-l-u-n-t. I'm a rancher in South Phillips
 13 County, and a Phillips County Commissioner, and
 14 chairman of the Six County Fort Peck Lake Group, which
 15 are the six counties that surround the Fort Peck Lake.
 16 My comment is on bison on page 93, and I quote from
 17 this document, it says, "The service has taken the
 18 position that it will not consider reintroducing bison
 19 on the refuge unless MFWP initiates an effort to
 20 restore bison, as a wildlife species on a large
 21 landscape." Skipping one sentence down then it says,
 22 "MFWP does not have any plans at this time to consider
 23 reintroducing a free-ranging herd of bison in the
 24 area," therefore, I conclude that the rest of the
 25 information in relation to bison in this document is

20

1 as touched on by Mark, is the salt cedar and your plan
 2 on trying to curb that spread. I see that as the most
 3 invasive species that we are faced with in south
 4 Phillips County. It has made it up to our place, and
 5 we are actively curtailing that. I blame it on two
 6 theories, heavy equipment and elk and/or birds, but
 7 can't really prove either one.
 8 And then I never had this plan, but they also said
 9 I might as well speak, but I wish that the main
 10 emphasis would be on land. I attend several meetings
 11 where it's either the buffalo, the ferret, prairie dog,
 12 the sage hen, doesn't seem to matter, we just go from
 13 one animal to the next. But if focusing on land and
 14 water management was the focus, those animals are
 15 geared up to take care of themselves, and if they
 16 can't, extinction is a natural process. That's about
 17 it. Thanks.
 18 MS. MATHER: Okay. Mark. Richard on
 19 deck.
 20 MARK GOOD: My name is Mark good.
 21 Nothing special about that either, G-o-o-d. I'm from
 22 Great Falls. I work with the Montana Wilderness
 23 Association. I just attended some of these meetings
 24 too, and I think it's helpful to explain a little bit
 25 more about the purpose of the wildlife refuge and how

21

1 it's managed differently from other forest service and
 2 BLM lands.

3 Certainly my understanding of a national wildlife
 4 refuge, the guiding principle for management is the
 5 enhancement and protection of wildlife, and other uses
 6 are secondary; compatible but the primary mission of
 7 the refuge. Now, I know some people don't like that,
 8 wish it were different, but I don't think that's going
 9 to change. Because wildlife refuges generally aren't
 10 popular with the American public, and I think popular
 11 with most Montanans.

12 That said, I think it would seem that it might be
 13 possible to figure out how to make the refuge maybe
 14 work better for some of the surrounding communities. I
 15 think although I think it's also overlooked that the
 16 refuge makes significant contributions to local
 17 economies; I think first through employment, purchases,
 18 goods and services, and of course interpretive centers
 19 and activities such as Fort Peck, but probably in a
 20 more indirect way through hunting, wildlife viewing,
 21 people coming through.

22 And while these are significant, I think more could
 23 be done in terms of creating an economic contributor,
 24 and that might be the landscape itself, which I think
 25 helps make a community an attractive place to live,

23

1 side to doing that. Again, we appreciate you guys for
 2 holding the meetings, and thanks.

3 MS. MATHER: Richard, Leslie on deck.

4 RICHARD DUNBAR: Richard Dunbar, Phillips
 5 County Commissioner and rancher. I'd just like to hit
 6 a few topics. Roads. You say in the scope -- outside
 7 the scope of your document, in your documents you say
 8 outside the scope of your documents we're going to talk
 9 about roads, but in the document you're proposing
 10 closing up to a hundred miles of road in one
 11 alternative. As you know, Phillips County has
 12 petitioned county roads down in the CMR, and we
 13 recognize all roads that we have petitions on.

14 Livestock grazing. There's grazing permits on the
 15 CMR. These grazing permits must be kept as they
 16 currently are so the ranchers using these allotments
 17 year after year know their livestock, get acquainted to
 18 them so they know where they are located at.

19 Prescribed burns. When we were in Bozeman, I don't
 20 know if it was Bill or Barron made the comment that
 21 prescribed burns put carbon back into the ground. I
 22 found no one to tell me any information that that is
 23 anywhere -- that that happens. All the information I
 24 find is that it puts carbon in the air and they're not
 25 very cost-effective. You got to spend a lot of money

22

1 thereby holding and attracting residents. I think
 2 economics are simple, people care where they live and
 3 act on that preference.

4 During the past few decades the western part of the
 5 state has been the job growth, while the eastern
 6 Montana has been in the bottom of the ten states
 7 actually losing population, and I think that's the
 8 surrounding landscape. I think it's also important to
 9 remember it hasn't always been that way, but the
 10 attraction of mountains, mountainous areas is a
 11 relatively new phenomenon.

12 The problem is that I think prairies are too often
 13 viewed as monotonous, boring, but I think those that
 14 know the refuge and surrounding lands know it's quite
 15 diverse, and in my mind a whole lot more interesting
 16 than mountains to the west. My position is that
 17 people's appreciation for lands develop, and I don't
 18 think it would take a major reversal of American
 19 attitudes towards prairie to help to maybe attract
 20 people here.

21 In a country with over \$3 million people it would
 22 only take a tiny fraction that would need to develop
 23 this appreciation for places like the refuge, so I just
 24 want to say I think more should be done to promote the
 25 refuge, and I don't think there's a whole lot of down

24

1 to set up a prescribed burn. Grazing will do the same
 2 thing for a whole lot less dollars.

3 Wilderness. Phillips County opposes anymore
 4 wilderness areas, and I have some minutes from the
 5 commissioners minutes, May 8th of 1974, and I'd like to
 6 read them -- portions of them. "Protest against the
 7 burnt lodge wilderness proposal for the Charles M.
 8 Russell National Wildlife Range. In view of the
 9 impending action of creating a wilderness area in and
 10 out of the confines of Phillips County, we feel as due
 11 to the county commissioners in our neighboring county
 12 that the following point should be considered: 33
 13 percent of the area lies in Phillips County and grazes
 14 approximately 300 head of cattle for six months. The
 15 economic value of this area lies in its grass, which is
 16 a reasonable resource. It provides a substance for
 17 game, for the hunter, livestock for the rancher,
 18 therefore, feed for the nation. The area provides this
 19 with no noticeable distraction from its essential
 20 nature.

21 The scenic value of this area is a vast emptiness
 22 that soon calls for lack of variety and comfort, except
 23 for the hardiest of those in pursuit of communication
 24 with nature. This area shows little change since its
 25 creation, and if left as it is at its present, shows

25

1 little change, if any change, in the future, as this is
 2 the main point in creating a wilderness area. It
 3 appears the desired result is already assured by the
 4 very character of the area itself, without changing its
 5 present status in any way.

6 It seems pointless to take land from which there is
 7 some use and change it to an area for which there will
 8 be no use. Therefore, we protest any new designation
 9 or restriction as being not only not necessary, but not
 10 in the best interest of the citizens of this county,
 11 state or nation. Board of county commissioners, Lester
 12 Wilke, Duane Compton, Dan Garrison. That was said
 13 35 years ago and it's the same today. Thank you.

14 MS. MATHER: Leslie, Jim on deck.

15 LESLIE ROBINSON: My name is Leslie
 16 Robinson, R-o-b-i-n-s-o-n. I'm a rancher from out
 17 south, and a Phillips County Commissioner. I want to
 18 hit a little bit on the economics that are in the
 19 document. Your proposed or preferred alternative is
 20 "D," and in that alternative it calls for all of the
 21 current staff positions plus seven additional
 22 positions.

23 It says, "Alternative D" would generate \$2.1
 24 million dollars more in local output, 25 additional
 25 jobs, \$569,600 more in labor income compared to

27

1 CMR.

2 I would like to see a copy of the study that says
 3 that carbon is sequestered with a prescriptive fire.
 4 Also in your document it says, "While there are no
 5 requirements to base management decisions on public
 6 opinion, the Service values and considers input from
 7 the public." I know there is technically no
 8 requirements, but I would suggest that you take the
 9 input from the public as a -- seriously when you do
 10 your plan. Thank you.

11 MS. MATHER: Jim?

12 JIM ROBINSON: Jim Robinson,
 13 R-o-b-i-n-s-o-n. If I speak for three minutes, that's
 14 three minutes more than I've probably spoke all my
 15 life. I want to start off with the wilderness. Most
 16 of this country is pristine the way it is. Why protect
 17 it? For some reason, it seems like when things start
 18 getting protected, they don't stay that way. It
 19 happened with the prairie dog. It's been protected and
 20 now there's no prairie dogs anywhere.

21 The grazing. Prescriptive grazing. If I get it
 22 right, if you have an area that wants grazed, you could
 23 call us up and say we need 700 head of yearlings for
 24 three-and-a-half weeks to graze it, and it might be in
 25 south Phillips or it could be at Jordan. It's not

26

1 "Alternative A", which is the current alternative, but
 2 that's excluding livestock. So I want to hit a little
 3 bit about the economics you have in your document about
 4 livestock.

5 One job for every 1350 AUMs of livestock grazing,
 6 and in Phillips County that's 4,849 AUMs, which is
 7 25.7 percent of the AUMs on the CMR. That creates 3.6
 8 jobs, \$199,303 of production and \$385,500 in total
 9 economic output.

10 I don't think that you should be excluding the
 11 grazing when you look at your complete picture, and all
 12 of the increase in staff positions would have little or
 13 no impact on Phillips County where decreasing grazing
 14 would have a large impact on Phillips County. The
 15 document says, however, considering that the refuge
 16 currently supplies less than one percent of all AUMs in
 17 the region, the regional cumulative effect of the
 18 refuge management actions, which combined with economic
 19 effects of other land management, changes would be
 20 next, I believe. I question if 3.6 jobs and \$385,500
 21 in economic output is negligible for Phillips County.

22 Therein, also you say in the document there will be
 23 some increases in the level of visitation, so to me
 24 that means that the only real increase in the economic
 25 output is only from the seven additional jobs on the

28

1 going to happen. It's not economical and it's not
 2 feasible for us to do.

3 As far as grazing and wildlife, ever since the
 4 inception of the CMR, or since the Fish and Wildlife
 5 Service has taken it over, the grazing permits have
 6 been cut, and as far as wildlife populations, they
 7 haven't. I mean, we've got more elk than we know what
 8 to do with. There's mountain lions down there, a few
 9 bears once in a while. I mean, we got white tail mule
 10 deer, you name it, it's there. There's even wild
 11 turkeys that have shown up.

12 And as far as the weeds, we do have a problem with
 13 salt cedar. It's starting to creep up the drainages.
 14 We've seen it outside the CMR, and we were the
 15 recipients of that from the CMR. And one more thing
 16 before I leave. Three years ago at the scoping meeting
 17 in here the questions were asked on the buffalo, if
 18 there were plans. The answer was no. I asked about
 19 livestock grazing and the reply was, it would always be
 20 there in some form or another, and then after the
 21 meeting the biologist by the name of Bob Skinner sat
 22 down next to me and said your answer, or your grazing
 23 question was not answered correctly. He said,
 24 eventually as new species such as buffalo are
 25 introduced onto the CMR, livestock grazing will be

29

1 eradicated. Thank you.

2 MS. MATHER: Jim was the last person on

3 my list. Before we answer questions, is there anybody

4 else that has a question or comment that didn't get a

5 chance to come up? Okay. Please do send in or e-mail

6 your comments.

7 MR. CRAWFORD: All right. As Janelle

8 said, this is my last day as manager of the CMR. I

9 have accepted a job going back home. I leave Monday to

10 report as refuge manager of Tennessee National Wildlife

11 Refuge back where I grew up. Bill Berg will be acting

12 project leader for an extended period of time, so I'm

13 officially passing management of the refuge over to

14 you, Bill.

15 MR. BERG: Gee, thanks. What I'll try to

16 do is go through the notes I have here and try to

17 answer some of the questions that I made note of, and

18 if there are any other ones that Laurie or Barron

19 picked up on that I didn't put an asteric by here,

20 we'll pick up those shortly after that.

21 The first one was asked by Ron Korman. We had this

22 question earlier today, whether or not counties would

23 be considered coordinators or cooperators, and there

24 was a little bit of confusion there. As part of this

25 process, we formed a cooperators group. Barron

31

1 come up time and time again, and we've been asked to

2 kind of give an explanation of refuges versus other

3 federal public lands, and again it was noted during the

4 earlier presentation, but refuges have a specific

5 mission, that being wildlife and wildlife habitat.

6 Most of the other federal agencies, BLM, Forest

7 Service, to some extent, Bureau of Reclamation have

8 more of a multiple mandate, so, for example, on BLM

9 lands, whether it's grazing, timber harvest, mining,

10 all those uses on those types of lands have equal

11 weight with wildlife or recreation, and so forth.

12 On refuge lands it's real specific. It's more

13 similar to how the national parks were set up for

14 public recreation. Refuges were set up for wildlife

15 and wildlife habitat, so quite a difference.

16 The other thing that comes up, too, is also the

17 grazing programs that we have on refuges versus grazing

18 programs and other public lands. On BLM lands, those

19 grazing rules and regulations fall under what's called

20 the Taylor Grazing Act. Quite a bit, I would say more

21 liberal, or maybe that's not the right choice of words,

22 but quite a bit of different types of use are allowed

23 under Taylor Grazing versus grazing on a national

24 wildlife refuge. All the grazing we do is for the

25 purpose of improving habitat, in the long run. So

30

1 mentioned those participants earlier in the

2 presentation. The intent of that group was to sit down

3 with us and help us draft this plan. I'm not sure what

4 the distinction is, Ron, between cooperators and

5 coordinators, but the example I gave earlier was that

6 when we get further along with some of the stepdown

7 plans, for example, the road management plan that we'll

8 develop, we will truly be a coordinator with the

9 counties, and the main reason for that is, based on

10 what some of the commissioners brought up, is the fact

11 that some of the roads on the refuge are petitioned

12 county roads, and it would be good for both our agency

13 and the counties to clear up, you know, which roads are

14 truly county roads, which roads are refuge roads, and

15 so forth, and in some cases it's going to be one in the

16 same. I don't know if that answers your question, Ron.

17 MR. KORMAN: Well, coordinator is equal

18 status, right?

19 MR. BERG: I think what we should do is

20 let me go through the ones that are marked, and we can

21 talk about that more at the end, and maybe you can give

22 a better explanation of what you mean by that, if

23 that's all right?

24 MR. KORMAN: Yeah.

25 MR. BERG: Okay. Another topic that's

32

1 quite a difference there between the agencies.

2 We don't do any timber harvest, for the most part,

3 except on some of the eastern refuges where we're doing

4 it for habitat reasons. Most of the mineral extraction

5 is not allowed on refuges, but it's just kind of a

6 totally different target that we're looking at.

7 Okay. Jim Robinson brought up the prescriptive

8 grazing not being economical or feasible for a

9 permittee. And we recognize the fact that prescriptive

10 grazing is going to be a major change for some of our

11 permittees.

12 Currently, we have several units or habitat units

13 on the refuge. Barron mentioned we had 65. We'll

14 probably have fewer than that, but probably larger

15 units in the future. The challenge we're going to face

16 with our existing permittees when we transition into

17 this prescriptive program is that we're going to have

18 to sit down with individuals that have current,

19 existing permits where we don't have another management

20 tool to use on that landscape, or we might even use a

21 combination of the two.

22 What we'll do is, you know, we realize we can't go

23 in and say, okay, five years from now we want 500 head

24 of yearlings to run for two months on the refuge. We

25 know that's not the possibility with the livestock

33

1 industry that boarders or currently has permits on the
 2 refuge. So that will be our challenge to sit down and
 3 not only make it workable for you guys so that when we
 4 want to use cattle as a tool to manage habitat or to
 5 improve it, we're going to have to set it up in such a
 6 manner where it still fits your operation.

7 But I'll be honest with you, there are quite a few
 8 permittees we have right now that are strictly a small,
 9 cow/calf pair operation. They might calf back home,
 10 keep their cattle in for about a month, and then turn
 11 them out onto the refuge for three months, bring them
 12 back in or shift them to another pasture. It's not
 13 going to be that consistent, same pasture every year.
 14 It might be the one next to it, or slightly or a little
 15 bit further away, or it might be a bigger pasture,
 16 depending on how it's set up. I think that will be the
 17 big challenges for our managers to actually sit down
 18 and try to coordinate that.

19 You know, we're going to try to plug in some other
 20 tools to manage habitat out there. One of the things
 21 we talked about was doing some prescriptive grazing,
 22 which will influence the use of that area, you know.
 23 When it starts to green up, we will actually move some
 24 of the young lets into those areas that have been
 25 burned, which theoretically will take the pressure off

35

1 that defoliates the plant, actually knocks it back. It
 2 doesn't totally kill it out, but it thins it out, and
 3 we're hopeful that that will become adaptive to the
 4 plants we have here in Montana. It's actually working
 5 in the southwest fairly well, so we'll continue to
 6 treat noxious weeds. With the lake the way it is and
 7 the fluctuations in water levels, and, you know, stuff
 8 coming down the Musselshell and Missouri River, it's a
 9 tough one to deal with.

10 Just matter of fact, or the way it grows and where
 11 it grows, it's a tough one to deal with. We've got a
 12 real aggressive noxious weed program going on with some
 13 of our spotted knapweeds, and some of those things that
 14 are fairly common in some of the upper river bottoms.
 15 Spurge is a little bit less of a problem, but we do
 16 have some spurge too, which in my eyes is even more of
 17 a concern than some of the knapweed.

18 But just as an example of what can be done, I
 19 think, with some of the noxious weeds, you know, the
 20 agency has spent millions of dollars on salt cedar over
 21 the years, our agency and others also. And now there's
 22 a real effective biological control agent, if you've
 23 ever been through any of the parks in North Dakota,
 24 Medora and the one to the north, those hill sides used
 25 to be yellow with spurge, and now there's an insect

34

1 some of the other habitats.

2 So, again, this plan the way it is right now, isn't
 3 specific enough to, I know, ease your concerns about
 4 how prescriptive grazing will work, but of all the
 5 other refuges in the system, CMR is one of the few
 6 refuges that still does an annual grazing program like
 7 we have right now.

8 What else? I'm going to have to defer on that one,
 9 the carbon sequestration. Okay. Anything else? Okay.
 10 Salt cedar. We're aware of that. I don't personally
 11 take the blame for all the salt cedar problems in
 12 Montana. Some of the oldest documented plants in
 13 Montana exist in the town of Jordan and the town of
 14 Roundup. Matter of fact, Malta at the USDA office here
 15 had a salt cedar plant growing off the southwest corner
 16 of their building up until three years ago here. That
 17 plant was there for 10 years plus. So to blame all the
 18 salt cedar problems on the refuge I don't think is fair
 19 either.

20 We do a lot of work with the Corps of Engineers, we
 21 put a lot of money into the salt cedar control the last
 22 few years. It's one of those plants that I don't think
 23 you could put enough money towards right now to
 24 control. One encouraging thing we've heard, though, is
 25 there's a pretty good biological control, an insect

36

1 that actually keeps it in check pretty good. So we're
 2 hopeful something like that gets going with the salt
 3 cedar and it's not as big of an issue down the road.

4 Excellent question. A lot of disagreement with
 5 what we consider wildlife health or wildlife habitat
 6 health versus good range condition. In my mind, or in
 7 our mind, if you've got good wildlife habitat you've
 8 also got good or excellent range condition, but the
 9 reverse of that isn't always true. You can have a
 10 pasture out there that's totally, a hundred percent of
 11 the vegetation is removed at the end of the year, and
 12 it can still be an excellent range condition, if you've
 13 got all the components there.

14 The challenge we face as wildlife managers is we
 15 can't just manage for, you know, a slate or a list of
 16 species that are there but are not providing the cover
 17 that are required for winter habitat, the following
 18 spring nesting, which is usually the previous year's
 19 growth, and also some of the species that are often
 20 looked at from a range condition standpoint aren't the
 21 ones that are most important for wildlife.

22 Bob's done some real good work on what we're
 23 calling sentinel plants. A little bit of confusion
 24 about that. Sometimes they call them diagnostic plants
 25 or indicator plants, but those are some of the species

37

1 like salt brush, salt bush, winter fat, some of your
 2 shrubs that are important to mule deer that truly are
 3 as or more important to some of the wildlife species
 4 than the common forage plants or the grasses out there.
 5 We all realize that elk, you know, are a little
 6 more adaptive and probably utilize that forage out
 7 there more similar to cattle than, say, deer, but, you
 8 know, we're charged with managing that habitat for a
 9 lot more diversity of species than just those two, so,
 10 you know, we have to look at those other plants to make
 11 sure that they are in enough abundance to provide the
 12 needs for some of those other species.
 13 I'll do the carbon sequestration question, since
 14 I'm the one that made the comment. I've taken kind of
 15 an active role in the climate change issue for the
 16 service, been on a couple of national teams helping to
 17 develop climate change policy. One of the things that
 18 was the first topic that came up when we were
 19 developing our current climate change policy for the
 20 service was the use of prescribed fire, and what
 21 effects would prescribed fire have on potential climate
 22 change.
 23 So working with Bob we started doing a little bit
 24 of research, and we came across a professor by the name
 25 of Tom DeLuca, and Tom was in Bozeman, and Tom was

39

1 the prairie landscape again.
 2 Looking through my notes here I came across a
 3 couple other, or one other item. A question came up
 4 from Mark Manoukian, I think, about our 250,000 visitor
 5 use days we reference in the document. That comes out
 6 of a refuge reporting system that we have annually put
 7 together, but the basis for that is several places the
 8 Corps of Engineers document use on many of their
 9 recreation areas.
 10 We have upwards of 50 traffic counters on roads
 11 leading into the refuge. Those are some of the smaller
 12 bladed or two track roads. It's not an impact science,
 13 but, you know, it's a pretty calculated estimate of
 14 what we think's going on out there. The majority of
 15 those uses are associated with hunting and fishing, to
 16 be honest with you. We are seeing an increase in some
 17 of that just recreational camping, elk viewing,
 18 wildlife viewing type activity, and that's a trend we
 19 see nationwide, so that's increasing, but I would be
 20 safe to say, I think, that that number is probably as
 21 accurate as we can get, without more traffic counters
 22 or survey type stuff.
 23 We are doing a visitor use survey right now that
 24 will get us a little more data in that area, mainly
 25 like length of stay, amount of money spent, you know,

38

1 doing climate research work for the Wilderness Society.
 2 And we got to speaking with Dr. DeLuca and started
 3 talking about carbon sequestration and prairies, and he
 4 became real excited and we started developing a couple
 5 of research proposals wanting to look at how much
 6 carbon could be sequestered in prairie.
 7 Quite a bit of biomass sitting down below those
 8 roots. And how much carbon is released when that is
 9 burned and how much goes back into the soil? It is new
 10 science. There's not been a lot of work on it.
 11 There's been a lot of work in the Ponderosa Pine forest
 12 west of here. Not a lot in the prairie. And that is
 13 something that we're interested in, the CMR is
 14 interested in, and so we're trying to get a couple of
 15 research proposals put together to look at that and to
 16 determine. So on page 419 of the CCP there's four
 17 articles referenced by T.H. DeLuca, and that's where
 18 those comments come from.
 19 Tom, unfortunately, took a job as the head of the
 20 climate program at the University of Wales. He's a
 21 little hard to get a hold of now, but we've been
 22 successful in keeping in touch with him in the past,
 23 and hopefully one of these days one of those research
 24 proposals will get funded and we'll be able to bring
 25 Tom back to the states and have him work out here in

40

1 how far those people have come from, things like that.
 2 So we're expanding on that effort a little bit. Well,
 3 with that, we'll shut it down, and we've got the
 4 comment period. Yeah, I'll let you talk about that,
 5 Laurie, since that date's a little bit questionable.
 6 MS. SHANNON: Okay. The comment period
 7 is November 16th to get your comments in. We have
 8 received several requests to extend our comment period;
 9 however, right now there are still more than four weeks
 10 to go, so it's a little hard to say you need more time
 11 when there's still lots of time to comment. So what we
 12 are going to do is in the next week or so we will make
 13 a decision about if or when, how long we will extend
 14 the comment period. That notice will go in the federal
 15 register. I will put out a press release. I will
 16 notify all of the agencies. I will do everything I can
 17 to get the word out as to how long, if there will be an
 18 extension, okay? So I hope that answers that.
 19 MR. BERG: Yeah, and we're going to stick
 20 around here and answer some questions if anything comes
 21 up. Bob Skinner's the person to talk to about plants.
 22 Paula Gouse from our Fort Peck office if you have
 23 visitor questions or biological problems. Randy
 24 Matchett is our senior wildlife biologist and works
 25 with our ferret programs. Matt Derosier is from our

41

1 Sand Creek, and I see a bunch of people that hunt that
 2 area touch base with him if you want some more
 3 information. Who else did I miss? Doug, our mountain
 4 lion biologist. Actually, Doug is our pilot right now
 5 and is probably going to head up a mountain lion study
 6 we've initiated with Fish Wildlife and Parks this
 7 coming winter. With that we have a lot of cookies back
 8 there.

9 UNIDENTIFIED PERSON: Before you go, you
 10 talk about your partner. Can you identify your
 11 partner? You keep talking about your partners and also
 12 you talk about the Corps of Engineers. How much
 13 talking do you do with the local people?

14 MR. BERG: Well, you know, I guess the
 15 definition of partners is pretty broad. You
 16 specifically identify Corps of Engineers. We routinely
 17 coordinate our weed control efforts with them. Kind of
 18 a rough description of what we do, they treat stuff
 19 below the high water mark, we treat stuff above the
 20 high water mark. We share data, we map it, we document
 21 it, where we're working, we share crews, we share
 22 contractors. That would be one of our, I guess, more
 23 involved cooperators.

24 With the counties, years past, we cooperated with
 25 the counties to get funds for graveling roads to access

43

1 will not recognize private property rights along the
 2 CMR?

3 MR. BERG: Come on up, Ron, and I'll talk
 4 to you.

5
 6
 7
 8
 9
 10
 11
 12
 13
 14
 15
 16
 17
 18
 19
 20
 21
 22
 23
 24
 25

42

1 the refuge and the rec. areas. I don't think we would
 2 have gotten anywhere by ourselves without cooperating
 3 with the counties on that effort.

4 Fire, both prescriptive and wild fire work that we
 5 do, state agencies, BLM, forest service, counties.
 6 Counties are becoming a huge player in our fire program
 7 because of the engines and stuff they have around the
 8 counties. We've got a couple of individuals that we
 9 cooperate with, like APF, for example, on repairian
 10 work on Telegraph and Valentine Creek. We have done
 11 some cooperative studies there where they had a grad.
 12 student who was trying to restore some repairing areas.
 13 Fish, Wildlife & Parks, we deal with them weekly
 14 almost on different issues. Don't always see
 15 eye-to-eye but we work together as much as we can. Law
 16 enforcement, working with the counties, BLM, ride in
 17 the same trucks with Fish, Wildlife & Parks dealing
 18 with law enforcement issues. Help with almost any law
 19 enforcement effort that goes on in the six county area.

20 Why don't we break now and we'll get together with
 21 individuals. Probably would be a little easier
 22 handling it that way, especially some of the questions
 23 that need a little more clarification.

24 UNIDENTIFIED PERSON: I would just like
 25 to ask one thing before you quit. How come you guys

44

1 C E R T I F I C A T E

2

3 STATE OF MONTANA)
 4)ss
 COUNTY OF VALLEY)

5

6 I, Kelley A. Barstad, Official Court Reporter of
 the Montana Seventeenth Judicial District Court, and
 7 Notary Public for the County of Valley, State of
 Montana, residing at Glasgow, Montana DO HEREBY
 CERTIFY:

8

9 That I was duly authorized to and did report the
 foregoing proceeding. Said testimony and
 10 proceedings were reported and transcribed by me with
 a computerized transcription system.

11 That the foregoing transcript of this matter
 constitutes a true and accurate transcription of the
 12 proceedings which were heard.

13 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and
 14 affixed my notarial seal this 30th day of January,
 2011.

15

16 _____
 17 Kelley A. Barstad
 18 Certified Shorthand Reporter
 19 My commission expires 2-2-14
 20
 21
 22
 23
 24
 25

