

Center for Invasive Species Management
Steering Committee Conference Call
MEETING MINUTES
Monday, September 23, 2013
2:00 – 3:30 pm (MST)

DRAFT 9-25-2013

Meeting minutes by Emily Rindos; reviewed by Liz Galli-Noble.

MEETING PARTICIPANTS

Steering Committee Members

Larry Beneker
Dave Burch
Amy Ferriter
Gina Ramos
Roger Sheley
Tracy Sterling

CISM Staff

Liz Galli-Noble
Kim Godwin
Emily Rindos
Kitty Weiss
Absent
Scott Bockness

Absent

Lars Anderson, Andrew Canham, Virgil Dupuis, Mike Ielmini, Sheilah Kennedy, Eileen Ryce

1. Introductions and meeting overview

Liz Galli-Noble did a roll call of the meeting participants (stated above) and briefly went over the purpose for the meeting.

2. Approve minutes from July 18, 2013, Steering Committee meeting

Gina Ramos made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Larry Beneker seconded the motion. The motion was passed (**Handout 1**).

3. Approve minutes from August 13, 2013, Steering Committee meeting

Dave Burch made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Gina Ramos seconded the motion. The motion was passed (**Handout 2**).

4. Discussion of Roger Sheley's idea for CISM

Liz reminded the group that Roger Sheley was recommended for the position of Steering Committee Chair, but missed the August 13 meeting. He agreed to take on the chair position with a few stipulations (see **Handout 3**).

Roger Sheley: I appreciate that people are willing to think about the idea of having me be chair, and recognize that the Center is in interesting and complicated times right now, compounded by the fact that the scarcity of dollars is so high. The Center's existence is on pretty tenuous footing. What I wanted to do was, if I were going to participate at any level besides just providing my two cents periodically, it would have to be centered on what I think is a reasonable strategy to reestablish the Center on some solid footing.

The essence of the document that I sent out is, given the current situation, outlines what is the most likely way for us to come up with a program plan that re-funds the Center and reassesses its charter; so that it provides some synergies to lower the amount of funds that individual groups have to pay to continue to execute their quality programs in invasive plant management.

How do we get more for our dollars? Can the Center provide any mechanism at all that would be helpful in trying to be effective for our Western US weeds programs? How can we help be more effective for less dollars? For me, that's the

basis on which the Center can provide some real value. If it can be an area of specialization that does outreach and education in lieu of having to be done by every specific agency, every state, and even possibly every district or group of districts coming up with their own educational programs and trying to implement them and spending money to do that.

Whether or not it makes sense for the Center to work with those folks to come up with consultation types of education efforts that would fulfill the educational obligations of existing programs, so that they wouldn't have to use their time and energy to do those things. The synergies could be made by the fact that the Center could have people on board with the most current and up-to-date types of programs and management decision making tools and processes. And then they could deliver that stuff at various levels of weed management programs, to take the pressure off of existing weed management programs. The way it could be done and save money is by, rather than having every small group create their own educational program and materials, we do it as a consortium or educational collective where people put a little bit of money into it and they get put on the education development committee and then everybody works to weave the program together, so that people who have invested in the Center get more out of what they put into it than if they had spent that money themselves.

There's reason to think that's possible by minimizing duplication, by making sure that the connection between the science of invasive plant management is as up to date as possible, and then incorporating some of the local kinds of information into an existing program. These could include actual on-site delivery programs, field schools, and efforts to make sure that managers get the best education possible; awareness programs that beef up people's interest in invasive plant management and decision support tools that people can work their way through; and step-by-step types of programs to come up with the best strategies. So, rather than a whole bunch of people doing a bunch of different types of things, the Center would be arguing that housing it out of a central location would make it applicable widely and also, working with some of the folks to add some specific information for particular states or counties or regions and trying to get more out of our educational programs by allowing the Center to provide a specialized effort that takes the energy that is likely to be spent at each level of our government and puts the dollars into the hands of the Center, ensuring that we continue to be able to give the most experiential and high-quality education to weed folks throughout the western US.

That's what I think the Center can do that can save money by specializing and having people whose jobs are solely geared towards getting the best information and putting it into forms that are useful, and getting it into the hands of people who would ordinarily be interested in it, and then working with folks to implement these programs. By taking the money for that out of existing programs that have those kinds of responsibilities but letting them get the benefit of a specialized program in which the quality of the information would be better, the delivery program would be much more experienced.

The Center can continue to fill what is going to be an increasing gap. My idea is that it's frankly the only line of persuasion that I have for the Center and the direction that I think it should go in. If folks agree that that's something you want to try with the Center, then what I would be willing to do is work with Kim Goodwin and Brenda Smith (Outreach & Education Coordinator, EBIPM, ARS) and the Center's current staff over the next few months to see if we can put a persuasive package together and go to some of the key regions in the federal, state, and even county level to see if we can develop an education consortium that could be operated out of the Center.

Now, I don't have a better idea than that and I know my idea has a lot of holes. I've imagined where some of them are, but I still think it's probably the best direction and most likely opportunity to keep the Center a useful and contributing institute for education in invasive plants. That's kind of what I'm thinking, in a nutshell. Really, my goal here is to try to figure out how, in the West, we can continue to give the quality of education for invasive species that we've been able to give, and even improve that quality of education, and at the same time do it in times of shrinking financial resources. An "education consortium" kind of concept for the Center is the one that I have come up with. I'm sure you guys have other ideas and other ways of thinking about things. If you decided that this education consortium effort

was a reasonable mission for the Center and you thought that that might have some kind of possibility to leverage that into a quality program for weeds in the West, then I would be interested in trying to provide some of the oversight for the people who would be working on it, to make sure we got it developed in the most persuasive program, and delivered it to the key folks.

We used to do consortiums quite a bit with biological control types of programs, and different types of invasive plant management that people wanted to do, and they were pretty effective. Right now what I really think we haven't thought of is doing education consortiums and specializing our education programs and giving certain people throughout the West larger responsibilities for making sure it's done well. If you guys thought that was something that might work for the Center, I'd be willing to provide some oversight to try to see it come together.

Liz Galli-Noble: Thank you, Roger. How about some feedback from other SC members.

Tracy Sterling: I just wanted to make a comment. We have an example of an education consortium in Montana. It started much like what you're proposing and it now has whittled down to just a few funders, and it has reached a difficult point as well. Now it is proposing writing grants to pay the salary of the program's main employee. Dave, maybe you want to chime in about your experience with the education campaign in Montana? I like Roger's idea and I'd get behind it because I'm always willing to give things a try.

Roger Sheley: Tracy, if it's Carla's program you're talking about, then I started that program when I was at MSU. I've been involved in it for five or six years and I think the essence of that particular program had a lot to do with the person running it and it was a very difficult and complicated situation that I know you're aware of because I've talked to Jane Mangold about it. I'm excited to hear what Dave has to say, but I want you to know that my familiarity with that program is really high and I was the one who went around to the different groups to get that program going. I'm actually patterning what I think can happen here after that program. Its fate needed to be dealt with a long time ago and we never really mustered up the "who's responsible?" to get the program moving on the right tracks.

Dave Burch: I think that the consortium idea is a good one. It would be just what we have had in Montana and since Roger started that he knows how it goes. What we've found out here (in Montana) is that it has to do with the evolution of weed control and weed education as a whole because, when we first started it, most of the agencies didn't have a weed person or program. Now all the agencies have weed programs/people and our funding level has gone down considerably. We're down to three or four funding partners instead of the seven or eight we had originally. I think it would be a good idea to try that. We've kind of done that too with the Missouri River Watershed Coalition, and people got behind it. I just don't know how much money they're going to be able to put behind it. Until you really sit down and discuss it with them you don't know. Who knows how much we're really talking about anyway, and what programs we're going to do. I think it would be good, but like I said, I think the nature of weed control has evolved so much that it's really different now than it was then.

Roger Sheley: Dave, on one hand, we were sort of limited because we did education and awareness in Montana and I think different states are at different stages and have different amounts of dollars. I think there are some states that just wouldn't do it for boundary reasons. I think there are some states that might be interested in it. Back when we did the Montana education program, if it were the same kind of environment we had, I'd give it about a 75% chance of working, but now I'd give it about a 40 to 50% chance of working. I do think that the difference between those numbers says a lot about where we are in the weed business right now.

Dave Burch: I'd have to agree with you. I kind of see the political boundaries as not being such a big issue lately. It seems like that's what everybody is wanting to do—more regional things. But then we can't get funding for the Center, so I don't know how all that works. I haven't been able to figure it out yet. Anyway, I agree with you. I think we need to try it and see what's out there. Then we'll know if we can go on and where we're at.

Amy Ferriter: I was just wondering, Roger and Dave, what kind of niche do you see that needs to be filled, specifically with education? I'm trying to figure out what exactly the entity would be going for, as far as needs to fill.

Roger Sheley: I'm just brainstorming out loud with you right now. One of the things that is pretty clear to me is that it's going to be important for us to move out of 1960s technology and into the future if weed management is going to be successful. One of the primary, and biggest, responses that we've had is that we're now hiring ecologists and biologists in invasive plant management programs, and they're really interested in information on how they can apply their ecological information in dealing with invasive species. The Center was originally set up to do that, to be honest. We still have a huge void in trying to apply ecological types of information. So, what I think is a primary pull—and I know Extension has some responsibilities to do this type of educating—but the truth of the matter is that the biggest response and the biggest thing we've been able to get people to pay us for is the decision making tools we've developed—and I'm not suggesting we use them—that help them use contemporary ecological ideas and theories and manage invasive plants based upon those. So there's a huge group of folks out there who are dying to understand how they can use their understanding of ecology to help them make better management decisions. There's a clear open need for that. Beyond that, I see some fairly standard types of goods and services that the Center could provide in the form of decision making tools. If this took off, I anticipate that we would have a calendar of where we're going to meet folks to do field schools and to get this information out, and to work with folks to continue to give them scientifically-based information on how to deal with invasive species. And I do think there's an increasing demand for what is fairly difficult for them to find information about. I see that as a huge niche. We have spent a lot of time educating people about tools and how to employ tools. Now we have information on how to use scientific information to determine which tools and which combination of tools to use for restoring ecosystems in the face of invasive plants. That's the nugget which we could develop an education program around that would excite many land managers to be willing to participate in it and fund it. I haven't brought this up to The Nature Conservancy, but I'm convinced they'd be all over something like this. So, there's a need out there to move to the next step in invasive plants and there aren't programs that are offering that.

I just went through an exercise doing it on a small scale with my EBIPM program and it was hugely successful, and hugely well received. I don't think we need to use that (and I'm not even suggesting that we do), but the need for helping people make wiser decisions on how they spend their dollars and if ecology can help them do that. Not only that, but there are sampling strategies that can be put in place that help people do sample mapping strategies that really haven't been used that can minimize time and money spent trying to understand where these plants are, and then developing management plans around those. We have lots of really thoughtfully developed practical decision making tools that we've worked with the Park Service and other programs on. I think the idea here is to continue to try to move us into the future on dealing with invasives, so that we're actually having some positive effects at times. That's just one angle to take, but how we do it across the West is what I'm thinking about.

Amy Ferriter: Is the target audience federal biologists? Or state and county weed superintendents? Or all of the above? Do you know?

Roger Sheley: From our experience, there has actually been a change in who is given invasive plant management responsibility throughout the western US. They are much more ecologically oriented, and by that I mean: what are the principles of invasive plants that we can use to make the best decisions on what to do. The people are just coming out of the woodwork for that. I see everyone involved in that. We were giving one week-long field day a year, and we would have unlimited amounts of people come to them and the ones that had education responsibilities would beg for us to come and do the same thing in their counties. So I do think there's a huge niche and marketable product there that could be useful. But I'm not saying that has to be the only marketable product and I'm not saying that how it's delivered has any particular way of doing it. I do know that making sure that people have science-based decision making capabilities is going to be essential to moving invasive plant management into the future.

Amy Ferriter: This is more of a question for Dave. Do you see any need for resistance management type work? Educating people about herbicide resistance and things like that?

Dave Burch: I would think so. I have those questions myself.

Roger Sheley: Just to be clear, while we're tossing out our ideas, to truly get the people who are members of the education consortium to design what the program is so that it's not something we think people should have but that it's something they're really receptive to having.

Amy Ferriter: Personally, coming from the Department of Agriculture here [in Idaho], I think you're going to have a hard road with what you described. I think Idaho would be much more receptive to more applied information. I think it's a tough sell for the group here on that type of thing. I'd be curious to hear what Dave has to say about Montana. But if you're looking at the weed program in Idaho, then I honestly don't see something like that going over very well.

Roger Sheley: To put it in more commonly discussed terms, the question becomes, "How do we do a better job of restoring weed infested systems?" That, I think, will be applicable to Idaho. If they're not interested in that I'd be hugely surprised. I've worked in the Boise area a lot and I know they're clamoring for that information.

Amy Ferriter: Well, you probably worked with the federal folks and there's probably a divide. I don't want to get further off track, but I'll give it more thought and shoot you an email.

Tracy Sterling: I think it's a good idea. I think there are some Extension units where it'll work; the Noxious Weed Short Course is course that Jane Mangold has done for the last few years here in Montana. So I'm asking, is the need going to be great enough to fuel the entire Center?

Roger Sheley: I'm not willing to argue that this thing's going to be successful. What I'm willing to do is say that there's a glimmer of possibility—I can see where Jane's course is augmented, so in every state someone is doing Jane's course. The question I have is whether every state is willing to do Jane's course, or if we should have Jane do it in every state?

I don't see the Center as a Montana thing. You guys use examples of Montana and what Montana has done because you're familiar with it and consider it to be the leadership of the program. I'm looking at it from a much broader perspective where all of the western states have similar types of things that are ongoing in Montana at some point. The duplication is so massive that there must be ways to consolidate it into an efficient type of program. I really am not arguing for it or against it.

If you think that there's a need for unbiased science-based decision making education, then I do think there's opportunities to make a contribution to the western US, which is my only goal. I have an idea of what I think the strengths and weaknesses are, and I think that saying its 40 to 50% doable is probably an overly optimistic view. I see the need for science to be incorporated into invasive plant management and restoration, and ecological restoration as being huge invasive plant strategies that we need to get better at, and will if we get better at applying science.

Gina Ramos: I was just listening to the part about restoration, which is something that the BLM has been focusing a lot on in the past few years. The only part that I'm struggling with is that the federal agencies have their own training components and training centers, so building a consortium is probably going to be a little bit of a tough sell, especially when you're talking about a possible government shut down a week from today.

Roger Sheley: The other question I have is whether we're losing enough people in these programs. I know we are in ARS. We're beginning to actually lose function. If we're getting to the point that we're losing function in these

programs, then we will be able to say “we can still get this function done, we just have to pool our resources.” If we’re not losing function yet, then it’s probably going to be a much harder sell.

Larry Beneker: I can see where there would be a fit. Unfortunately, like we all know, [federal] budgets are shot. We do such a thing with Mark Schwarzlander at University of Idaho for biological control tech transfer; we say “Hey Mark, we need help. We need you to get out to the western regions and start talking about what we can do, what’s available, what works and doesn’t.” I could see the same thing being done for BIA and tribes; however, it’s a funding issue right now.

Roger Sheley: It’s an issue with everyone. That’s the problem.

Larry Beneker: I can see where there would be a fit with us.

Roger Sheley: The question becomes, “Do we try it or do we let the Center fall off the vine and then someone creates something new when the economic environment gets more reasonable?” All of these are reasonable alternatives to me. First of all, I do not want more work to do. I’m really not arguing that this is something that I need to do, but I’m trying to look at it from the weeds perspective and the Center’s perspective and see if there’s any reason that the Center could revisit its charter and promote itself as a much more “We help you, you help us” kind of program pattern. It’s amazing how many \$10,000 chunks there really are out there, in counties and in regions and in industry and natural resource management stewardship programs like The Nature Conservancy. I don’t know how many of those it would take to pull something like this off, and I don’t know whether or not anyone thinks it’s something we really want to do with the Center. We may be tired; I know I am. I fully recognize all of that.

Liz Galli-Noble: Thank you, Roger. I thought that was a very constructive discussion with a lot of good ideas. I’d like to call for some sort of consensus here. Is this something that people would like to pursue? I want to remind everyone that the Center still has four very capable and excellent staff, who can assist the SC and move these ideas forward. You have a year: twelve full months of funding, maybe more. They have good projects to work on over the next year, so there’s a cushion. We’re not in crisis yet.

Would people like to pursue this? Would they like Roger to chair the SC for a few months and give it a try? I happen to have a really great consortium MOU example that MSU gave me a couple of years ago (for possible use by the North American Invasive Species Network). I’d be happy to send that out and people could have a look. Or is this something that people don’t want to pursue? I want to hear from the group, please.

Gina Ramos: I think it’s something that we ought to think about, at least the restoration part. One thing that I’ve tried to do is to think outside the box and look for other things that the Center could be doing. Trying to expand the Center’s capability. I’m at a bit of a loss and the reason I say that is because there are so many centers that are doing the same thing that you’re doing, and I’m trying to think of things that could be unique so that the Center can stand apart. The things you do for DoD is one example. Maybe the Center could try to expand on that.

Larry Beneker: I feel like it’s a worthwhile effort because, in discussing this with agencies, and that’s what Roger is proposing, maybe there will be an idea that will come out that will fit that niche. If we don’t ask, it won’t happen. Some of this discussion needs to go on.

Dave Burch: I agree with Larry. I don’t see this “saving” the Center, so to speak, I see it as maybe moving it in a different direction. I know we’re not going to be able to continue as we have in the past, maybe we should at least try. If we don’t ask, we’ll never know. Let’s ask and see where we go from there.

Gina Ramos: Like I said, I think we ought to look at the restoration part. I haven't given up on the other FICMNEW people. I'm still trying to encourage them and they don't want to see the Center close. They know that there's a purpose there and they're supportive.

Amy Ferriter: I think it's worth a try and I really do support it, but I echo what Gina said a few minutes ago. If we can look for some unique opportunities, that's what we need to do to be successful. As she mentioned, there's almost an invasive species center fatigue going on right now—the centers are almost invasive; they're popping up everywhere. I think we really need to look for unique opportunities and try to figure out what sets this Center apart. I don't want it to go away because the western US needs a center. But we need to figure out what role we're trying to fill. Doing the same thing all the other centers are trying to do isn't going to let us be successful.

Tracy Sterling: As I said at the beginning of the meeting, I think it's a good idea to pursue and look into. I'd be happy to support an investigation.

Liz Galli-Noble: I think I've heard from everyone here, and there's also consensus here around the table with the Center staff that everyone agrees it's a good idea and it's something that all of us here can support. Roger, are you comfortable with us saying you'll be chair until the end of the calendar year, and you'll start pursuing this idea, and maybe if you find in several months that it's not going to happen, or if people decide they want to take a different direction, you can stop being chair. Are you comfortable with that?

Roger Sheley: I'm totally comfortable with all that. What I'm really offering is this sort of unknown, what can we put together to try to make ourselves sort of economically valuable to people and still fulfill my fundamental mission, and I think the Center's [mission] too, and provide the best possible education to people that we can. How can we do that in a way that makes it so it's valuable to people under that premise, valuable enough for them to invest in in these very serious and scarce economic times. Once we start putting our best package together and start offering it to people—if we get a lot of pushback we'll realize that we're not going to make headway in that direction. That's what I'm willing to try and help the Center with.

Liz Galli-Noble: Roger, thank you so much. I think I speak for everyone when I say that we really appreciate you stepping forward and giving this a try. So we need an official SC vote that you will function as chair for the next three to six months. What are you comfortable with?

Roger Sheley: You can put six months. I'm really interested in overseeing your staff working on this project and working with them on it, and trying to incorporate the comments from the rest of the advisory group to see what we can weave together into a saleable consortium sort of idea, and trying to set up a few meetings [with agencies] to see what kind of feedback we can get, fix it based on that feedback, and try it on a few more. If we get a bunch of commitments, we'll know to keep pushing and if we don't, then we'll know that it's not going to work out.

Liz Galli-Noble: CISM staff are comfortable with what they've just heard. May I have an official motion and vote for making Roger SC chair for the next six months?

Larry Beneker: I agree with that. I make a motion that the Center Steering Committee elect Roger Sheley as our chair for the next six months.

Amy Ferriter: I second that motion.

Liz Galli-Noble: Is there anyone who objects to that or wishes to change that motion?

Hearing no objections, I congratulate Roger and thank him.

Tracy Sterling is also here with us in person, and said she is willing to work behind the scenes to help, and CISM staff will do the same.

ACTION ITEM: Roger Sheley will function as Steering Committee chair for the next six months (October 1, 2013 - March 31, 2014).

Liz Galli-Noble: Did anyone have any other items or topics that they wished to discuss during today's meeting?
No one responded.

Okay then, this meeting is adjourned.

I want to sincerely thank everybody for your tremendous support, and for the time and energy everyone has given to the Center as Steering Committee members.

With that, I say good bye as the CISM director.

Center for Invasive Species Management
Steering Committee Conference Call
MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, August 13, 2013
10:00 – 11:00 am (MST)

Meeting minutes by Emily Rindos; reviewed by Liz Galli-Noble.

MEETING PARTICIPANTS

Steering Committee Members

Dave Burch
Virgil Dupuis (*joined a few minutes late*)
Mike Ielmini
Gina Ramos
Eileen Ryce
Tracy Sterling

CISM Staff

Liz Galli-Noble
Kim Goodwin
Emily Rindos
Kitty Weiss

Absent

Scott Bockness

Absent

Lars Anderson, Larry Beneker, Andrew Canham, Amy Ferriter, Sheilah Kennedy, Roger Sheley

1. Introductions and Meeting Overview

Liz Galli-Noble did a roll call of the meeting participants (stated above) and briefly went over the purpose for the meeting.

2. Approve Minutes from July 18, 2013, Steering Committee Meeting

Tabled. No quorum so this will be addressed at the next meeting.

3. Elect a Chair for the Steering Committee

Liz reminded the group that Tracy Sterling suggested at the last Steering Committee meeting that we should elect a chair, which will be helpful in the absence of the Director.

Mike Ielmini: We have to have a quorum to do an election.

Liz Galli-Noble: You are correct.

For the record: does anybody on the call today wish to be the chair? Are any of you willing to be the chair?

Dave Burch: I nominate Roger Sheley.

ACTION ITEM: Liz was asked to approach Roger in the next week or so to see if he would be willing to serve as the CISM Steering Committee chair. If he is willing to do it, the Committee can conduct a formal vote at the next meeting when we (*hopefully*) have a quorum.

4. Transition/Sunset Plan for CISM; New Models for CISM

Handouts referenced: (1) CISM Financial Statement and CIG Project Budget Revision/One-year Extension; (2) Summary of Suggestions from Steering Committee Members and Others; (3) Draft Transition Plan

Financial update (**Handout 1**: CISM Financial Statement)

Liz reported that we are waiting to hear back from three major funding sources:

- a. Department of Defense (webinar series; \$36,000)
- b. DuPont (follow-up webinar series; \$50,000–60,000) supposed to make a decision by August 15
- c. BLM via Gina Ramos (base funds/project assistance; half of \$15,000, less 17.5% IDCs, so about \$7,500). The other half of the \$15,000 is earmarked for the Weeds Across Borders 2014 conference; however, if that conference is cancelled, the funds will go to CISM.

Current funding levels are enough to keep CISM staff (not including the Director) funded through October 2014.

In preparation for this meeting, Liz typed up some notes (**Handout 2**: Summary of Suggestions) on the comments heard during the last meeting and when talking to people independently.

Discussion of CISM's relationship with MSU, Liz's Transition Plan (Handout 3**. Draft Transition Plan), and ideas for new models/approaches for CISM:**

Mike Ielmini: The activities you've outlined for the next cycle are outlined well and the Transition Plan is well laid out. From October 1 of this year through next year, Emily and Kitty are covering those projects and Scott is continuing with his project. If a new project comes in, or if there's an additional request with funding attached to it to conduct some work, is there a plan for who would handle or manage that project? Or is CISM maxed out on with current staffing?

Liz Galli-Noble: No, we're not 100% maxed out. There is a little bit of flexibility to take on additional tasks, but those ideas are going to have to be presented to the staff—just as they would be presented to me—to determine whether or not they have time to complete the project. For example: oftentimes, Emily can quickly do something like a new brochure and Kitty can build a new website fairly quickly, depending on how complicated it is. If we were asked to host a webinar or webinar series, it would depend on the amount of planning and preparation required. Also, Kim has some free time so she could be pulled into a few projects to help Emily and Kitty.

Mike Ielmini: I was just wondering because you didn't describe the capacity for additional work in the Transition Plan. You listed the projects staff is going to work on in the next year but the plan doesn't say whether it's going to take two people to do those projects, or if one person could do them and the other can do something else, or if there's room for additional projects. That's important because it determines your ability to accomplish the work; if someone brings you a project and the money to do it, does that mean you need to hire someone? Or would you shift someone so that project could get done? It sounds like you've got flexibility and the ability to do additional projects.

Liz Galli-Noble: If you presented the staff with an opportunity that they didn't have time to complete, they could pull in partners from other centers to help. For example: CISM staff are busy with two big webinars from January to March, but if there was another project, they could

pull in partners to help. I wanted the plan to show you that if CISM received no additional funding—and that's what I'm facing right now—we've got enough money to carry the staff through October 2014. And if we get all the contracts that I'm planning to sign in the next month, I predict that there's enough money to take staff through December 31, 2014. Also, keep in mind that some of the actions CISM staff are obligated to do can be done later, like November 2014 rather than finishing it in August. I just wanted to clearly show that we're fully covered, with flexibility, for now.

Mike Ielmini: You mentioned earlier this additional \$15,000. Is that factored in here and what is that money for?

Liz Galli-Noble: It is not factored in. It is supposed to go into our base funding account. It's for the wide variety of things that we've done since the beginning, using the CESU Agreement, which is basic regional invasive plant management support for multiple stakeholders.

Mike Ielmini: So it's not a project, it's just paying salaries or something like that?

Liz Galli-Noble: It's base. We use it for staff, for communications, for all functions of the Center.

Gina Ramos: I may come up with a project; Liz and I haven't talked about what we're going to do with it yet.

Mike Ielmini: Would it be possible to use that \$15,000 to keep Liz on past her original end date? Or will it be put towards Emily, Kitty, or Scott? I'm just wondering. Do you have a plan for that Tracy?

Tracy Sterling: I met with CISM staff last week and we discussed that. The Center is in my department so I will default into being the staff's direct supervisor, unless we appoint an interim director (though we haven't really explored that). That's one of the ideas Liz has on her list. In terms of the \$15,000, I think it would be appropriate and allowable if Liz were to extend her stay as Director, if she wants to do that, given that the money was targeted toward base.

Liz Galli-Noble: We are supposed to get half of that money, which is \$7,500 less 17.5% IDCs; that leaves about \$6,400. That doesn't even cover one month of my pay and benefits. Gina is moving \$15,000; half of it is for the Center and she's hoping to use the other half to support a conference that is being planned right now. But it's not 100% that that conference will happen in 2014.

Gina Ramos: The other half of the \$15,000 is for the Weeds Across Borders conference.

Tracy Sterling: So [Liz] would need a larger pool of money in order to remain as Director.

Eileen Ryce: My concern for the Center is not necessarily about how to get the Center through the next year, but about the sustainability of it. From what I've seen and heard, I'm not sure if the Center staying affiliated with MSU will help it be sustainable into the future. It seems like there have been issues with getting political support. It's surprising to me that with as much political attention invasive species have been getting in Montana, the Center really hasn't been able to make much stride. I'm not sure if that's due to lack of ability to lobby or lack of ability to get the

Center more recognized on a political front; but my concern is just seeing the Center become more sustainable. I think it definitely has a role to play in the national arena and it concerns me that, if it keeps going the way it is, it's going to be out of business by the end of next year. I don't know if trying to team up with another organization or following a model like the Invasive Species Advisory Committee would help, but it does seem like something drastic would have to happen to keep the Center sustainable past next year. Alternatively, maybe we just agree that the Center is going to live out its life and finish the projects that are budgeted and then move on to other things.

Gina Ramos: Now that MSU has asked for a sunset plan, have they said that they just want the Center out of MSU?

Tracy Sterling: No, MSU has not said that. The Center was started with our state senator for regional emphasis, and so it's always been on the cusp of state versus regional. The state has shown its support through housing the Center, thousands of dollars in rental contributions, and helping with payroll, accounting, and those sorts of things. I think that because it's a regional center it is difficult to create multiple units supporting the Center. That just hasn't evolved. One of the components was that it did not become part of a faculty position because Roger hired a director, and that became the model. If it had been part of a faculty member's position, then that might have created a bit more sustainability. Getting to Gina's question about whether or not MSU wants the Center, MSU values greatly everything the Center has done, as evidenced by supporting it and housing it for many years. The department also values the Center greatly for the attention it brings it.

The Center's being on the fence between state and regional has muddied the water. Because there is no infusion of dollars since the earmark days, it's difficult for MSU to pick that up because of the Center's regional focus. And I don't think it is MSU's responsibility to pick it up entirely, we've picked up a lot in terms of managing the personnel, accounts, space, etc. If we had an infusion of dollars, that would be wonderful. I'm not familiar with Eileen's idea, but other ideas have been pursued over the years to try and get sustainable funding, and MSU had to take a stand: if there is no sustainable funding, MSU can't fund it as it has a regional emphasis.

Mike Ielmini: Tracy, does MSU have other examples of programs or centers that are functioning and conducting business and providing support and/or research outside the bounds of the state of Montana?

Tracy Sterling: We have the Water Center, but that's federal dollars that come to each state and that center is located in Bozeman even though it's a statewide program. It relies on federal dollars. It interacts with a lot of other states because it focuses on water issues.

Mike Ielmini: If MSU sees value in working outside the bounds of the state of Montana on invasive species, would MSU be interested in housing and continuing this great support that it has done so well? Is MSU going to continue that support even without a director, after Liz leaves, in the future?

Tracy Sterling: Because it's in my department, I would have to be part of that decision, and I'd also have to propose it to the dean. I don't think that's a very sustainable model without a director. I've been thinking about how to move forward and have accepted the responsibility of

supervising the staff of the Center, but I don't think that's a really good model. I was hoping the Steering Committee would elect a chair, who could rally regional support to make the Center permanent. But at this point, we've gone through a year of that and it's not looking good.

Mike Ielmini: That leads us to the question that I've been asking Liz: what the Steering Committee is and what added value it offers? Are we a steering committee? Are we some sort of decision making body? Are we reviewers/approvers or a board of directors? Most of the time, when you have this organizational structure, you put people in these positions to play those types of roles. What I'm starting to hear, more often than not, is that you are not really interested in the Steering Committee's decision making or approvals or credibility as much as the Steering Committee's role as fundraisers. Is that still the case?

Tracy Sterling: I guess I disagree.

Mike Ielmini: What role will the Steering Committee plays in how the Center operates, where it's housed, how it's funded, who the director is, how that person functions, and what types of projects they work on? Is that the kind of thing you're thinking of in the future? This has been brought up for years, even before Liz started, and it's important to note that because, again, many years ago, the need for sustainability was recognized and the advice and counsel of this board/Committee, which I served on, has been largely ignored up to today, where we're looking at the end of the Center. That's been directly communicated to the university and both directors of the Center. So I'm wondering what the future holds for this body that we have on the phone. Are we here to offer advice that doesn't get taken, or direction that isn't communicated properly somehow, or are we going to play a different role in the future? Because if we're just fundraisers, if we're just supposed to go out there and rattle the cup, everybody knows that federal funding is zero. There's not going to be any money from the feds. That's one of the reasons the earmark went away, and that's not going to change. If we're just raising funds, then that's really not the role of a board or steering committee, it's something else—development.

Tracy Sterling: Any comments from the Steering Committee? I'm an *ad hoc* member.

Eileen Ryce: I think it's a valid point and it gets back to the question of, is our role just to get the Center through next year or are we looking at options for sustainability? If it's the latter, then we're starting to exhaust the avenues for the small pots of soft money needed to become sustainable. It's going to have to be something more than that. If we are just going to become a fundraising body...

Tracy Sterling: I don't think that was the goal of anything that I said.

Eileen Ryce: I think that we need to discuss whether we're serious about making it sustainable and if that's the case, then I don't think we have any other options other than to make significant changes. I haven't seen much in the way of a plan that's going to get us past next year. I'm not sure if there are any options out there that will help the Center become sustainable.

Tracy Sterling: Liz fought valiantly for lots of those options, with the help of the state Department of Agriculture, federal partners, and so on. I've also asked her to engage with our development officer to try to find fundraising avenues over the last three years.

Well, if there are no other comments on that topic, it seems to me we don't quite have enough of the Steering Committee with us to move to the next level. I think Liz's notes would be a good start, but I'm not quite sure what to do without the majority of the Steering Committee here.

Mike Ielmini: If you're going to have a discussion, then you want as many people as you can get, but if you're not making decisions and you want to move things forward, there's always going to be times when people can't make the meetings. That's not unusual. Is there anything else we should discuss today?

Virgil Dupuis announced that he had joined late, bringing the number of Steering Committee members present to six.

Gina Ramos: Has there been any thought of merging with another center?

Liz Galli-Noble: We work really closely with some other centers, the Invasive Plant Atlas of New England, which has more or less shut down, and the Midwest Invasive Plant Network, which is really struggling. We work with Cal-IPC a little bit and we work closely with the Center for Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health at the University of Georgia. I haven't talked to anybody about merging, and I don't know if it's even possible. If people want to explore that, it's fine with me.

Mike Ielmini: Are we obligated to continue basing the Center out of MSU? If MSU is saying that they don't see sustainability in the future, has no budget for base, no chance of functioning without a director, are they saying it's over in one year?

Tracy Sterling: That's how I see it, Mike.

Mike Ielmini: I just wanted to be clear about this so we're not making assumptions. So in one year, there's an opportunity for CISM to move and/or be dissolved. Is that correct?

Tracy Sterling: That is correct. Or find a solution to flourish.

Mike Ielmini: Well, a solution may include moving. It will have to move because MSU won't fund it, unless someone gives MSU money. Is that correct?

Tracy Sterling: Yes, that is correct.

Mike Ielmini: So we have to move if we want the Center to continue, with or without a director.

Gina Ramos: Is this an operation that can be moved if needed?

Mike Ielmini: It's an entirely virtual operation; we have housing for the staff, the administrative support that MSU has been providing...otherwise, you can write grant proposals and do projects from your desktop. You don't need bricks and mortar to do that kind of work. So, it could be coordinated to work anywhere.

Dave Burch: I agree with what's being said and regardless, if we had base funding for [CISM], it could be housed anywhere. And anybody would probably take it on if you had the funding to do

it. MSU is not really in tune to do it because there isn't going to be any funding there for anyone or for a director or staff or whatever. So, we as a group need to decide what our real role is—are we going to be fundraisers and try to get baseline funding for this so we can house this program somewhere, whether it's in MT or another place? If we as a group are exhausting our potential for trying to find that funding, then I don't see any choice but to let this go at the end of this year, as in the plan. The Montana Department of Agriculture has put a lot of money into this program but we can't continue to do that. If other states were joining in, which we've talked to them about and can't get them to do, then I really don't see the light at the end of the tunnel, where we're going to be able to sustain this program. From this Board's perspective, when Roger started the Center, bringing in a million dollars a year was pretty easy. Unfortunately, that's no longer the case. Unless there is some magic pot of funding out there that we're not seeing, then I don't see how we're going to sustain that program. That's what is really going to drive this committee and what we do in this next few months. If we decide as a group that we've exhausted all of our avenues, and we're just going to run it out, then I think that changes the role of this committee quite a bit. I'll leave it at that, but it's not the best looking picture in the world because I don't know where we'd get baseline funding.

We just went through this with Montana's noxious weed education program. Until you get baseline funding, you can't be very effective because you're always looking for money. I don't have answers for where we find that money. If it's not a high priority for the feds or states or universities or whoever, then we're not going to be able to find the money we need, even though, like Eileen said, invasive species have been at the forefront over the last couple of years. Why isn't there other funding coming in for invasive species, and especially to the Center, which has proven itself not only in the terrestrial world but also the invasives world and proven that it can coordinate efforts in this region? I just took a survey from the Western Governors Association and that's what they think needs to happen, to have coordinated efforts within this region to be able to fight invasive species. So, somewhere or another we're missing each other and it's not going to end well for the Center I'm afraid.

Mike Ielmini: Dave, why do you think that, of all the western states who have taken such great advantage of the Center's work, centralized as well as it is and tied so closely to groups like WWCC, NAISMA, NAISN, etc., why don't they see added value to the Center after all these years and why aren't they willing to fund it?

Dave Burch: I don't know. We point blank asked the same question, in regards to the Missouri River Watershed Coalition, last year at the Western Weed Coordinating Committee meeting. We asked if the states would donate or put up \$5,000 or \$10,000 and nobody was willing to do that, other than Wyoming and Montana. The WWCC barely gets along anyway, and all they do is have one meeting per year. It gets support, but there's no executive director or staff for it. It's all volunteer based and whatever money we bring in is enough to run the meeting and that's about it. We have put in \$350,000 of state (MDA) money and Forest Service money to help run the MRWC—and we can't even get support from the states who benefit from the MRWC ten times more than what they'd have to put into it. If I give \$10,000 and every other state does the same, that's all we really need. What the CIG project brought in is triple what we've spent, so to me it was a win-win situation. That's what the Center was supposed to do. I guess it's just because funding is tight and getting tighter. I'm still not ready to roll over and die though because there's a lot of value in the Center and what it can do. I think Liz and her crew have shown that. I don't know where the rest of the Steering Committee is sitting. I've talked to FICMNEW and I

understand you [the feds] have problems as well but somewhere out there we've got to be able to tighten the priorities and find some funding to get this thing going again, or to keep it going with a new director, whether or not it's at MSU or even in Montana. MSU has, over the past few years, donated quite a bit of money and they also given up some IDCs.

Mike Ielmini: I don't see too many options because whether the Steering Committee's ideas or advice matter anymore or not is immaterial. The only option we have is to watch the clock until the year's out and then fold up the tent or spend some time between now and October 2014 getting the Center realigned with another university or organization. That would be worth the investment because I'm hearing you have the flexibility with the time of the staff and you have base funding coming into the Center from BLM, which could help. So I would invest in finding a new place to camp and maybe starting all over from scratch, instead of hoping that funding will fall from heaven, because that's not going to happen. I don't doubt that MSU has been very helpful, and all these other facets of administration must be accounted for. Also note that the agencies have, on their own and through other organizations, funded operations and projects and continue to do that. For example, the Missouri River Watershed Coalition, which Dave mentioned. We've put a lot of money into that and it would hardly exist without a lot of federal funding and state support. I would suggest the Steering Committee act like a steering committee and steer, instead of just riding along until the bus goes over the cliff.

Would it be worth it to develop a budget operations structure in addition to this "transition" plan for sunseting CISM? Transitioning isn't the correct word because it implies new leadership coming in, and adjusting to that leadership. The term "sunset" tells me it's a death knell for a year of operations and then it's over. So I suggest developing a plan with an accompanying financial package and moving the Center out of MSU.

We don't have to decide today because we don't have a quorum. We are beating a horse and at this stage it's dying, so let's think about it really hard.

Tracy Sterling: Having a chair would help our meetings.

Dave Burch: Let's send the minutes of this meeting out to the other Steering Committee members and get a consensus from them. I still want to see the Center go the way it should be going. What I'm hearing now and what I've heard in the past, though, is that we're not going to be able to sustain it. Let's be realistic about it and end it, like the plan that's already in place, which will run it until October/November of next year, and if we have to pick up the pieces and try again at some other point in time, somebody can lead that charge and we can jump on the bandwagon and do it again. I agree with Mike. I think we need to follow Liz's plan and be done with it.

Mike Ielmini: That's a good idea, Dave. But we've also got to look at future functionality and what the Center's really going to end up serving. What is its role in this day and age? When it first started, the situation on the ground was very different. There wasn't much coordination or a bunch of organizations, there weren't any outreach and education projects, and so things are different than they were when the Center was started. And perhaps what the Center is doing, or has been doing, as good as it is, may need to adapt and change in the future. For example, UGA [CISEH]. They've adapted and changed and continue to modify—they're based in Georgia and work worldwide. They're constantly building new partnerships outside of their state. They would be a great partner for CISM, if not a co-managed operation.

Dave Burch: I'd have to agree with you, Mike. I think the evolution of weed management and invasive species management has changed. That's what the Montana Weed Control Association went through too. When that group really got going, none of the agencies had a weed program or coordinated education activities, so [the MWCA] did that for them. Now, all the agencies have education people or programs. It's just an evolutionary thing that's happened. The MWCA went from a little group to a non-profit group with 800-900 members and is now running well. But I think that's the same way with the Center; maybe it's run its course with what it traditionally does and needs to find new and innovative things to do. I know CISM has done a lot with the group Mike just mentioned (CISEH) and a lot of people have talked about what this Center has done. Maybe we just are at that point where we need to rethink and restructure.

Mike Ielmini: I think that's where the Steering Committee could play a role. If the Steering Committee advises to rethink and restructure and adapt and change, but MSU isn't willing to change because of the Center's regional approach, then we can't help them. One of the ways it could change is to expand its regional scope to a national scope to gain more partners. An example is discussions with the Steering Committee to change the name from the Center for Invasive Plant Management to CISM. This was done for two reasons: to expand its national scope to gain more partners and reach out to new stakeholders and provide more services that would, in turn, provide more opportunities for funding. Obviously that's soft money most of the time, but you can only do so much for the weed community in Montana because eventually you're going to run out of customers. The Center needs to look for a better customer base, and needs to figure out how to sell itself, show people what value it adds. Liz has been extremely successful with that.

Liz Galli-Noble: Should we wrap this up and talk about scheduling another meeting? Or do people want to continue this discussion? We will send the minutes of this meeting out to the rest of the Steering Committee shortly.

Mike Ielmini: When is your end date, Liz?

Liz Galli-Noble: September 30.

You have almost 14 months of full funding for the Center before the doors will close. I'm very thankful that the people on the phone today are willing to have a discussion about this. Closing the doors of the Center is an option, but I think there are other options as well, now that more people are really thinking about it and talking about it. The shockwaves are starting to move through our partners. I'm already having people ask me, if money came through tomorrow, would you stay?

I've been telling people for two years that this was coming and nobody did anything about it. I felt that I needed to step back for something to happen. Maybe we are going to close our doors, but we have an entire year to have this dialogue. The situation we have here with MSU, as far as infrastructure and admin and technical support, is excellent: we have great office space and a strong team working right now at the Center. There is good and bad in all of this.

Mike Ielmini: This is good that you have lined things out so well to keep things going for the next year. I disagree that we have opportunities for more dialogue here. You will be gone, there won't be a director. We still have not articulated what role the Steering Committee will play and whether we have any kind of decision making authority or if we're just a sounding board. If we haven't

been listened to, as we've seen for years, and all we have left is communication with MSU between now and 2014, what's going to change? They already made their point. We agree and we've suggested moving.

There's no accountability for what we say. I don't see it being that useful. I don't see a return on that. We're busting our chops and we have been for years. Essentially, it stems from this attitude that the taxpayers of America are going to pay for what MSU is not willing to do. And so the people in Connecticut, Florida, and Kansas are supposed to pay tax money to the federal government to agencies like ours to fund base operations for something that isn't even serving them, or isn't willing to serve them. That's the issue we have to wrestle with. What added value does this offer to the rest of the country that justifies us spending taxpayer money on the issue? If it's regionally driven and serves mostly the local people in those states, and clearly those governors are not willing to fund it, what message does that send to the people of Connecticut or California? The answer is, not on our watch. They're not going to do it. It's just reality. So is there another option? The options we've suggested have not been tried, or they've been belittled. The opportunities we've given haven't been followed up on. So I guess the answer is that it's over in one year. And if anybody is interested in restarting the Center with a sustainable model or earmarks, then we'll be successful. It's tough out there right now.

So are we going to have a dialogue between now and the end of September about the Steering Committee's role? Looking at the information Liz has sent out to us, reminding of the Steering Committee's role and charter and that sort of thing, it wasn't as clear as it could have been from a decision-maker standpoint; although it does note relationships with MSU, the oversight and responsibilities, and it notes things about communication. But it's unclear about long-term decisions or programmatic and financial issues. We might vote on what we think should happen, but it hasn't been put into play in the past.

Liz Galli-Noble: So Mike, to summarize what you just said, you feel it would be crucial during the next call—which will be before I leave—to make one of the key focuses be the role of the Steering Committee. Is that correct?

Mike Ielmini: I think that should be one of them. Think about the logic of what's happening here. You have a director leaving, you have one year's worth of soft money for projects and to keep staff employed to do those projects, and you have a Steering Committee that is in sort of a gray zone in terms of its responsibility, being asked how to help figure out a solution to what's going to happen in one year. Between MSU and its leadership and support, and the Steering Committee's role, that's the only place you can make decisions on where this is going. If the Steering Committee suggests we keep it at MSU and we offer some recommendations to MSU on what they should do to change the way things are operating and what role they should play in helping sustain the Center into the future, how much of that does MSU need to follow? Obviously you don't want to offer someone advice if they just can't do it for some reason or they aren't willing to do it. But we are advisors; we aren't managing CISM. So what are we doing here? What are we helping with? Are we just providing advice and somehow it looks like there just aren't any solutions? Or if we say, hey MSU, nice working with you, we are recommending the staff of the Center take the project work they're doing, and the money that was given to them by the customers, and leave and go finish their work somewhere else. Is that feasible? They wouldn't have any incurred costs at MSU at that point. That's something that might happen. What would be the response from MSU to that?

Tracy Sterling: Well, for grants that are already in place, MSU probably wouldn't allow them to move.

Mike Ielmini: So if the staff decides to leave, what would MSU's approach be to completing the work that they've been paid to do?

Tracy Sterling: We would have to hire someone to do that. We'd need to bring the staff opinions into this as well. But if there were any recommendations or solutions from the Steering Committee for the institution, we would be grateful and review them and do the best we can given the conditions.

Mike Ielmini: If the University of Idaho or University of Florida decided they would be more than willing to house CISM, and hire that staff on to work with them, would MSU be interested in transferring those projects and the funding that was provided by those agencies over to the new university to continue?

Tracy Sterling: I would have to talk with someone higher up to know what their response would be. But the funds have been awarded to MSU, so it's in MSU's hands at this point. I suspect MSU's answer would be that such a move wouldn't make sense, as the projects are going to be done in a year anyway.

Mike Ielmini: A year is a long way away and there is a lot of work to be done. And there's \$15,000 coming in to do more work. So I'm assuming there's plenty of work and I'm wondering, if the Steering Committee says they found a solution and the solution is that they're going to pull up the stakes and find a partner willing to house the Center in a new location, we don't want to miss a beat and we don't want the Center to lose credibility, we just want to quickly move and resume business as usual, how hard would it be for MSU to cut the cord?

Tracy Sterling: I think if it were packaged in that sentiment, I think we could work through it. But I don't know the rules. It seems like a reasonable and smart move to me.

Mike Ielmini: We're just looking for options here. I just want to know that, if MSU won't fund the Center, it's willing to let it move somewhere else.

Tracy Sterling: If that was something the Steering Committee wanted to move forward, we could certainly explore it further.

Mike Ielmini: I think we should explore that and know what the situation would be and how hard it would be because if we're going to spend the time and energy to go find a new landing zone and find the political powers to make that happen...we should know if it's not going to work, so we won't waste our time.

Tracy Sterling: We've made good progress today, thank you for creating an arena for discussion.

5. Schedule next Steering Committee Meeting

Liz was asked to send out a Doodle poll to schedule another Steering Committee meeting in early to mid-September, and to contact Roger Sheley about becoming the Steering Committee chair.

Sent by: Roger Sheley
August 22, 2013

I would be interested in chairing the Steering Committee for CISM if:

1. The focus of the Center is aimed at fulfilling needs of districts, state and federal agencies as well as industry by capitalizing on synergies in collaborative education (and later research) that reduces duplication and delivers best science solutions at a savings to them. The goal is to provide services that are critical to invasive species programs, but increasingly unaffordable on a state-, county- and/or local-scale.
2. Redefine our mission and charter to strengthen the role of supporting state and federal agencies as well as districts in a time of diminishing budget and scarce funding (with their input and support).
3. We use Montana and Wyoming to initiate an aggressive campaign to develop a “consortium-partnership” funding mechanism among western states and federal agencies, as well as districts. The campaign must be based on how we can fill education and outreach efforts region-wide, with specific and clear benefits to partners.
4. A portion of Kim Goodwin’s and Brenda Smith’s time can be purchased and dedicated to developing this partnership and its funding. This would include clear time schedules, milestones, and defined outcomes.