

Meeting Minutes of MCDEC, October 2020

Here are the minutes from the October 20th MCDEC meeting for your review. Our November meeting is this coming Tuesday, November 17th, at 6:30 via Zoom. Watch for Carol Ann's emails for the meeting's agenda and Zoom link.

Just an FYI: While compiling the minutes this morning, I noticed online that our October guest speaker Stacey Scott received the 2020 Casper Region Landowner of the Year award from the Wyoming Game and Fish Dept and a short video was made of the ranch to commemorate the occasion. To get a quick overview of the ranch, including conservation efforts and a look at the wildlife and landscape there (including the sage grouse), you can watch this video: <https://youtu.be/SiK0LPcmc3Q>. Those of us who attended the October meeting and enjoyed Stacey's informative presentation will be especially interested.

**Thanks,
Hank Bonner
Secretary/Treasurer**

Call to Order: Carol Ann called the October 20th meeting to order at 6:35.

Members and Guests Present: Carol Ann Leonard, Liz Piel, Jon Page, Sam Hay, Hank Bonner, Dave Cross, Tobi Evans Webster (classmate of Janice Scott and Carol Ann), Stacey Scott (guest speaker)

General Announcements: Carol Ann reminded Caucus of the following: a) Jon is still looking for poll observers and roving observers. Contact Jon Page if interested: 305-904-2906 or drjonpage1@gmail.com. b) Dave Cross is looking for phone banking volunteers to answer questions about voting (locations, hours, amendments, judges, etc.) and to GOTV. Contact Dave if interested: 772-267-6329 or david.v.cross@gmail.com. c) Eric Buetens needs volunteers to man the Voter Protection Hotline. Contact Eric at ebuetens@metrolink.net. d) Another car caravan will be held Nov 1. Meet up at 1:00 at Dem Headquarters, caravan to start at 2:00.....The caravan held on Oct 18th was a success. Over 100 cars were counted.

Minutes: Carol Ann suggested a few additions to the minutes that were previously sent out. July minutes then approved.

Treasurer Report: Current balance is \$485. Ben Lovelace paid for membership in late September, which brought up the balance from \$460 to \$485. Thanks, Ben!

Guest Speaker Stacey Scott: Among other things, Stacey Scott is a cattle rancher, an environmentalist, and an avid bird watcher. His family manages a 23,000 acre cattle ranch called Eagle Ridge Ranch near Casper, WY and Stacey just happens to be

married to Janice, who is Carol Ann's friend and classmate from her high school days in Aruba. Carol Ann had invited Stacey to speak to the Caucus about his farm, especially his pro-environment approach to farming. He has about 400 Black Angus cattle on his farm, and each cow needs anywhere from 36 – 200 acres, depending on the land and cow conditions. The farm is primarily in an arid environment.

Stacey contrasted **conventional** agricultural techniques historically used by ranchers vs the **regenerative** agricultural techniques that he uses. **Conventional agricultural techniques** are less environmentally friendly and involve such activities as performing annual plowing of crops, planting single or "monoculture" crops, using chemicals like herbicides, fertilizers, and fungicides to improve crop production, and following non-timed grazing of cattle—all of which have deleterious effects on the soil and thus the environment. The **regenerative agricultural techniques** used by Stacey largely focus on improving the quality of the soil, which has an added benefit of sequestering carbon into the soil. He is able to do this in part by adding manure/organic matter into the soil, thereby increasing humus and enriching the soil. He pointed out that increasing organic matter in the top 6 inches of soil equals 7500 pounds of sequestered carbon or 27,000 pounds of CO₂ taken out of the atmosphere. He also achieves better soil by following time-controlled rotational grazing management (rather than allowing overgrazing and plant/soil depletion), by limiting the disturbance of soil by cutting into the soil and dropping the seeds instead of plowing the soil, by planting a diversity of crops (such as grasses, legumes, and broadleaf plants), and by keeping roots in the soil. Having naturally enriched soil allows Stacey to avoid using fertilizers, fungicides and pesticides and only occasionally needs to use herbicides. Crops are able to naturally obtain their nitrogen and phosphorus from the organic soil without using fertilizers. He pointed out that most insects can be beneficial (grasshoppers being an exception) and eliminating pesticides is a benefit to soil organisms, insects, birds, and all the wildlife on the ranch. Another advantage of the regenerative method is that the methane the cattle produce after digesting grass can be used by methane-eating bacteria in the soil and this may help produce better organic matter for new plantings and, by also reducing methane that goes into the air via the cattle's belching, this means it is better for the environment. In essence, this regenerative approach helps to make the ranch self-sustaining – good for the soil and harvest, good for the cattle, good for the birds and wildlife, and good for the environment.

Stacey also spoke at length about the relationship between grazing and bird-friendly environments. **Audubon Conservation Ranching** is an Audubon Society program that says cattle ranching can be done in a bird/wildlife-friendly manner. The basic concept is that since habitat is very important to birds, ranchers can use time-controlled rotational grazing to not only help cattle with their feed but also to provide an environment better suited for bird nests and breeding grounds and this, in turn, brings in more birds and insects that are attracted to the abundant harvest. This is especially true if different plants are grown on the ranch rather than just one type. The leading thought today is that plant diversity, time-controlled grazing, and elimination of pesticides surely are beneficial to grassland birds and this approach to ranching is one the Audubon Society

strongly supports. In fact, Eagle Ridge Ranch is certified by the Audubon Society as Bird Friendly.

Stacey clearly showed at the beginning and end of his talk his interest in the sage grouse. This bird is not on the endangered list yet, but the sage brush fields they inhabit in western states have been reducing in size. Stacey pointed out that Wyoming currently has the largest population of grouse in the US. He enjoys seeing these birds and all other birds and wildlife on his ranch and this is one of his motivations for being an environmentally responsible rancher. He stated that many other ranchers are seeing the benefits to this approach and are using these techniques as well.

See handouts Carol Ann emailed prior to the meeting for more information on Stacey's talk. She will also send out a list of books Stacey has recommended as well as her own notes from the talk Stacey gave.

Rivers Coalition Update: Next meeting is on October 22nd. Carol Ann will send out info on that.

Old Business/New Business: DECF has been working on getting Democrats elected by supporting Democrat candidates and getting out the vote.

Meeting Concluded: Meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m.