

Internationalization of extension, research and teaching programs in rangeland management, invasion ecology and reclamation science

Global Perspectives Program Summary Report



In June and July of 2011, Brian and Rachel Mealor accompanied the Enhancing Global Perspectives in Youth American Mongolian Exchange program to Mongolia to discuss natural resource issues shared between the Western U.S. and Mongolia. In addition to providing instruction on natural resources, the Mealors planned to explore potential collaborative research and teaching programs with Mongolian colleagues. Overall the trip was very successful. We spent quite a bit of time interacting with faculty and administrators from the Mongolian State University of Agriculture. They expressed very strong interest in forming a cooperative relationship specifically related to reclamation, grazing management and other rangeland-related issues. Specific goals as stated in the grant application (tied to CANR strategic plan) included:

Action Item 3 (Energy Programming): B. Mealor and R. Mealor will interact directly with Mongolian professionals in the energy extraction industry regarding reclamation and restoration activities in Mongolia.

During the planning process and while in Mongolia, we were able to establish relationships with professionals in the Mongolian energy industry including: Peabody Winsway Resources, Boroo Gold Mining, Oyu Tolgoy Mining and others. We were able to visit four mining operations operated by various companies, which gave us a diverse picture of mineral extraction in Mongolia. We were also able to spend several days with researchers developing plant materials for use in reclamation of disturbed lands in Mongolia. We have continued to communicate with these individuals in exploration of future partnership



opportunities. We learned that reclamation practices in Mongolia are varied and range widely from reclamation to well-planned and implemented reclamation practices. We are seeking opportunities to host one or more Mongolian reclamation practitioners in Wyoming in the future.

Action Item 7 (support internationalization): International experience will broaden the experience of both Mealors and provide international perspectives in the reclamation field.

To say that this experience broadened our perspective would be an understatement. Neither of us had travelled to a developing country and the way we view rangeland management, different cultures and our own approach has changed since this project. Materials and technology taken for granted as best management practices in the U.S. are not available or unknown in Mongolia. There is a great potential for education and technical development in the field of reclamation and grazing planning. We have given several presentations since the trip on Mongolian rangelands including an invited presentation at Southern Utah University. We are also in an advisory capacity for a Mongolian M.S. student at Yale University investigating grazing management strategies for Mongolian rangelands. We have discussed patterns observed in Mongolia in several classroom settings and incorporated discussions on species occurrence in Mongolia and the U.S.

Action Item 15 (experiential learning): High school students, adult participants, and cooperators were able to discuss natural resource-related issues shared by Mongolia and Wyoming.

B. Meador and R. Meador gave four presentations on reclamation principles, post-reclamation vegetation



assessment and vegetation

monitoring techniques to both the United States and Mongolian participants. Three of those presentations were conducted in the field and led to various discussions regarding both similarities and differences among U.S. and Mongolian rangelands and natural



resource issues. Such discussions and sharing of ideas led to a greater understanding of the ecological, social and economic issues that many natural resource managers face in both countries. Through site visits and discussion with Mongolian experts in natural resource management we gained a much greater understanding of natural resource issues caused by natural resource extraction, overgrazing and drought. It was rewarding to see the high school students get engaged in the demonstrations and express genuine curiosity in the ecology and management of rangelands.

Conclusion - A personal perspective

We successfully met the objectives stated in our grant proposal including providing training to exchange participants, establishing relationships with potential collaborators in Mongolia and expanding our understanding of rangeland ecology and management in a developing country. The potential for future work with our partners is great especially with increased administrative and financial support for such projects. We envision recruitment of Mongolian students in the future who can learn best management practices, sound ecological knowledge and decision-making strategies and then incorporate these skills into the reclamation industry back in Mongolia. The most rewarding part of the experience was the ability to increase our cultural perspective and to reinforce the knowledge we have gained with our experience in the Western U.S. We greatly appreciate the support provided by the UW Global Perspectives Program.