

November 27,

2019

To whom it may concern,

At our recent November 25th fall Focus Group meeting of the USDA-Agriculture Research Service's Northern Plains Agricultural Research Laboratory (NPARL) in Sidney, MT, our members voted unanimously to endorse a resolution put forth by the NDSU Williston Research and Extension Center (WREC) and the MSU Eastern Agricultural Research Center joint Advisory Board seeking to establish a new Animal Research Extension Specialist position at WREC. Both the NDSU and MSU research facilities are strong partners with our Sidney, MT ARS research facility in what we describe as our "MonDak Agricultural Research Triangle."

By working together, our cross border federal and state research facilities are able to avoid unnecessary duplication of research efforts and leverage expertise and equipment from all three facilities to reduce costs and increase the value of research conducted in this region to the benefit of local and regional producers like those on our NPARL Focus Group. As that research leads us in new directions, such as reincorporating livestock into specialized crop production systems to help rebuild soil health, additional expertise is needed. While the 20 plus scientists at WREC, EARC and Sidney ARS have the skills to address issues with any crop being grown or proposed for this region, no one at any of those facilities has a livestock research background. And while there is a joint MSU-ARS livestock research facility at Miles City, MT, their focus is primarily on animal breeding and management in rangeland systems. By adding a new Livestock Research Extension position at Williston, we can begin to address those issues related to joint crop and livestock systems as described in the approved

resolution, as well as addressing related agricultural issues unique to this region, such as energy development and its impacts.

Another key component associated with the addition of this new research position is the potential it holds for increasing agricultural diversity and sustainability in the MonDak region. Increased diversity is a vital component of economic sustainability in agriculture, but one that is difficult to achieve in semi-arid areas like ours where operating margins are thin. Adding a new Livestock Research Extension position at the Williston Research Extension Center will provide producers with the knowledge needed to potentially add livestock to their operations or to work cooperatively with neighboring livestock owners to the benefit of both.

With the above justification and need, our NPARL Focus Group, which includes more than 80 farmers and ranchers and representatives from various ag industries and organizations across our two-state region, strongly supports the addition of a new animal research extension specialist position at WREC. Respectfully submitted on behalf of the USDA-ARS-NPARL Focus Group by:

Connie Iversen

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