

A voluntary
partnership with
private
landowners

GLCI News

Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative



NCGL a HUGE SUCCESS!!!

by Dan Caudle, GLCI Coordinator, Fort Worth, Texas

The first-ever National Conference on Grazing Lands (NCGL) was held December 5-8, 2000 at Bally's Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada. The conference was an overwhelming success with a final total of 869 registered participants, and an attendance of more than 900. We were bursting at the seams, but that was a nice problem to have. Conference participants came from 44 states including Alaska, Hawaii, the District of Columbia, as well as Puerto Rico, and islands of the Pacific Basin.

The conference brought together ranchers, farmers, dairy producers, land managers, range and pasture management specialists, wildlife biologists, researchers, educators, consultants, tribal representatives, federal and state government officials, and many other diverse groups and individuals who all share a common interest in America's grazing lands. More than half of those attending are owners or managers of private or tribal grazing lands.

Bob Drake, Chairman of the GLCI National Steering Committee, led the opening plenary session with introductory remarks. Paul Iverson, Director of the Nevada Department of Agriculture, welcomed participants to the state and the city. He highlighted the agricultural activities, products, programs, and concerns of Nevada. Glenda Humiston, Deputy Undersecretary of the US Department of Agriculture, informed the crowd about national agricultural policies and programs. She recognized the positive impacts and environmental benefits of well-managed grazing lands. She reminded everyone about the importance of the next Farm Bill and encouraged participation in the legislative process at the grassroots level. John L. "Chip" Merrill, rancher from Crowley, Texas gave an informative and inspirational keynote address (see the Chair's Corner column in this issue for more details).

The cornerstones of the conference agenda were two plenary sessions and two luncheons, as well as regional and national GLCI sessions. But, the highlight of the conference was the 23 concurrent sessions that included 86 presentations by some of the nation's leading experts in grazing land management, research, and education. Most of the speakers were livestock producers. Other speakers included leading scientists, land managers, consultants, and grazing lands specialists. Presentations by concurrent session speakers from every part of the nation were outstanding. Subject areas addressed by speakers included:

(Continued on next page)

IN THIS ISSUE

NCGL A HUGE SUCCESS!!!

The first National Conference on Grazing Lands exceeded all expectations. It was the first conference of its kind, but it certainly won't be the last one.

Notes and Quotes from NCGL Speakers

"What have YOU done for grazing today?"

-Bob Evans

The Chair's Corner

Build it and they will come... and they did!

Cover photograph:

Plenary Session at the National Conference on Grazing Lands.

NCGL a HUGE SUCCESS!!! . . .

(Continued from page one)

- Grazing Management Strategies
- Economic Impacts of Diversified Grazing Land Enterprises
- New Technologies for Resource Management Planning
- Wildlife Management on Grazing Lands
- The Business Side of Grazing Management
- Grazing Management and Animal Nutrition
- Environmental and Ecological Considerations
- Effects of Legislation and Policy on Grazing Lands
- Grazing Land Watersheds - Their Impacts on Urban Areas
- Public Lands/Private Lands Interface
- Ranch Management and Economics
- Sustainable Grazing Land Management Strategies
- Optimizing Grazing Land Health for Environmental and Social Benefits
- Building Partnerships Between Agricultural and Urban Interests

Many of the concurrent sessions were so well attended that there was standing room only, and the crowds overflowed into the hallways. Fortunately, all registered participants will receive a published proceedings of the entire conference in case they were unable to get into their preferred session.

Conference participants were also treated to more than 60 excellent poster presentations on a variety of topics related to grazing lands. There were also 22 exhibitors who had booths and displays at the conference. If you went away from the conference without learning a lot, you just weren't paying attention.

The conference was co-sponsored by the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) National Steering Committee, and the Grazing Land and Public Lands Resources Committee of the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD). Major financial contributors to the conference were the Natural Resources Conservation Service; Agricultural Research Service; Cooperative State Research Education, and Extension Service, US Forest Service; and Bureau of Land Management.

This was the culmination of two years of planning and hard work, which began at a national GLCI Steering Committee meeting in Syracuse, New York. Thanks to all of the subcommittees and many individuals who worked so hard to make it happen. Thanks to the conference sponsors and financial supporters for underwriting the effort.

**But most of all,
we extend a SPECIAL
THANK YOU
to everyone who attended
and participated.**

YOU were the ones who made the NCGL such a big success.

If you did not come to the first National Conference on Grazing Lands, you really missed a special event. Don't be too discouraged, though. Based on the positive comments from participants, there will be more chances in the future. In fact, Chairman Drake said he expects this to be the first of many National Conferences on Grazing Lands. ■

GLCINews



Overflow crowds had to stand in the hallways to hear many of the presentations.



The new national GLCI display made its debut at the NCGL.



Visitors discussed grazing management issues with representatives from the national Association of Conservation Districts at their booth.



NEWCOMER:

Susan H. Stewart is currently GLCI's newsletter designer. She is a senior at Louisiana State University studying Graphic Design. "I am very proud to be involved in a national organization such as GLCI and will do only my best to communicate your ideas." ■

NOTES and QUOTES from NCGL SPEAKERS



Karl Wolfshol, southwest editor, Progressive Farmer magazine:

"You (farmers and ranchers) are the best public relations people to get your message across to the media. One pickup ride in the afternoon with a media person is one of the best things you can do to promote grazing lands."

Mark Pfister, Reporter for KLAS-TV, Channel 8 on Las Vegas, NV:

"When it comes to promoting your industry, it is imperative to develop a good working relationship with the media. Promote yourself and educate the media. Consider this as part of your full-time job."

Bob Evans, Ohio cattleman and founder of Bob Evans restaurants:

"My reason for being here is I'm out to save the family farm."

"What have YOU done for grazing today?"

Kit Pharo, Colorado rancher:

"I can't change market prices or the weather, but I can control ranch inputs. If I can raise an animal with half the inputs, I've just doubled my profit. The more fully you can rely on the resources from the ranch and decrease inputs from town, the more money you can make."

Bob Drake, Oklahoma rancher and Chairman of the National GLCI Steering Committee:

"Grazing lands are our most extensive watersheds and contain the majority of our riparian area. Most wildlife populations – game and non-game – are dependent on the habitat diversity found on grazing lands. Well-managed grazing lands can improve not only ecosystem health, but also human health through the reduction of invading noxious brush and weeds."

"We simply must do a better job of informing and educating every citizen about the values and benefits of grazing lands conservation and management. The first National Conference on Grazing Lands is a good start, but we need your help to get the job done."

John L. "Chip" Merrill, Texas rancher and founder of Texas Christian University Ranch Management Program:

"Properly managed livestock grazing is the most ecologically sound and sustainable form of agriculture. With few exceptions, wise grazing management can improve and maintain rangeland more effectively than no grazing at all."

"Grazing is at least compatible, and often complementary, to habitat management for most forms of wildlife. Grazing lands afford bountiful recreational opportunities."



Glenda Humiston, USDA Deputy Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment, Washington, DC:

"Work on grazing lands issues affects the livestock sector and provides the obvious environmental benefits. But often we overlook the positive impact on the nation's water supply and the huge multiplied impact to many sectors of the rural economy."

"This conference is timely as we prepare the upcoming Farm Bill and generate support for positive solutions to the challenges facing us."

Bob and Kathy Lee, Montana ranchers:

"We're the luckiest people in the world. We live in the mountains, we run cows, and we have a great family. There are so many people who want to scrutinize what we do, ranchers sometimes think we can lock the gate and keep the world out. But, I'm pretty sure the world isn't going to stop at the gate."

"As ranchers, we can lose a lot of time and money chasing the regulatory game, GLCI is the new kid on the block. GLCI can be a new door of opportunity, opening new partnerships with USDA, universities, and others."

Linda Campbell, Nature Tourism Coordinator, Texas Parks & Wildlife Department, Austin, TX:

"In an increasingly urban nation, ranchers sometimes feel like strangers on their own land. But, while they may come at it from different angles, ranchers and urban dwellers agree on one thing. They love wildlife and birds . . . and catching a glimpse of these creatures up-close is something they both value. Managing land for livestock and providing habitat for wildlife are not two separate occupations, but one function. Taking care of the land takes care of the wildlife in return. Many ranchers already earn extra income from hunting and fishing leases. Adding tourism to the mix is just a natural extension of this."

THE CHAIR'S CORNER

Build it and they will come...and they did! More than 900 people attended the First National Conference on Grazing Lands. Exhibit booths and poster presentations filled the conferences halls and were constantly being visited by participants. We maintained our crowd throughout the duration of the conference. Most sessions were filled to overflow capacity. The support we received from NRCS, NACD, ARS, CSREES, state agencies, and private landowners made for a stellar first National Grazing Lands Conference.

The conference drew the attention of national and local media. Landowners and managers shared their personal successes focused on application of grazing land technologies. Presentations were made on various grazing land issues by leading experts in their field. The information presented will be published and provided to all participants and appropriate agencies.

Keynote speaker, John "Chip" Merrill, XXX Ranch in Crowley, Texas addressed the values and opportunities that grazing lands offer this great nation. With zeal and vision, Chip expressed the need to implement the Conservation of Private Grazing Lands Act. He went on to say funding is needed to restore voluntary technical assistance provided by NRCS to the owners and managers of private grazing lands, to the pre-1985 level. He also expressed the need for increased levels of research and education through ARS and CSREES to address grazing land issues.

Chip inspired the participants, and now we must move that enthusiasm into the political arena. Congressional delegations, colleagues, and the public need to be informed of the values and opportunities available through grazing land management.

As a reminder, ask yourself the same question that the legendary Mr. Bob Evans asked us at the conference: "What have YOU done for grazing today"?

Bob Drake, Chairman

National GLCI Steering Committee