A VOLUNTARY PARTNERSHIP
GRAZING LANDS CONSERVATION INITIATIVE
GLCI

Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

A Voluntary Partnership with Private Landowners

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National GLCI Steering Committee

American Farm Bureau Federation

American Forage and Grassland Council

American Sheep Industry

Dairy Industry Representatives

National Association of Conservation Districts

National Cattlemen's Beef Association

Society for Range Management

Soil and Water Conservation Society

The Nature Conservancy

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Cooperative State Research Extension & Education Service

Land Grant Universities

USDA Agriculture Research Service

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

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National GLCI Steering Committee to Meet in Washington, April 6–8

The Spring meeting of the National GLCI Steering Committee (for committee members only) has been rescheduled for April 6–8 in Washington, D.C. GLCI Vice-Chair Pat Bagley is arranging for a field review of grazing lands research in northern Virginia for the Committee on Sunday afternoon. Chair Aggie Helle has scheduled a GLCI meeting for Monday (April 7th) and the Committee will utilize Tuesday to meet with members of Congress and their staffs. " We are excited to have appointments with key members of Congress who serve on the Agriculture Appropriations subcommittees," said Helle. Aggie will submit written testimony on behalf of the National GLCI to both House and Senate Agricultural Appropriations subcommittees. Congressman Joe Skeen has assured Aggie that the GLCI statement will be made part of the Committee's printed "hearing" record.

Several members of the GLCI Steering Committee had the opportunity to talk with Tom Hebert, Deputy Under-Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and Environment, recently at the National Cattlemen's Beef Assoc. and National Assoc. of Conservation District's annual meetings. They want to thank Mr. Hebert for his long-standing support of the GLCI.

Gary Westmoreland mentioned that recent reports from Tennessee and Louisiana impressed him with the emphasis those state GLCI coalitions are giving to expanding producer and other memberships.

American Forage and Grassland Council

The American Forage and Grassland Council Annual Meeting will be held at the Radisson Hotel in Fort Worth, April 13–15.

"This will be an excellent opportunity for anyone who manages grassland to get the latest most reliable research information from speakers across the United States and Canada," said Dr. Gerald Evers, professor of forage management at Texas A&M University Agricultural Research and Extension Center at Overton, Texas.

Dr. Floyd Horn, Under Secretary of Agriculture, USDA, is slated to give a national perspective on grasslands. Dr. Edward Hiler, Vice-Chancellor of Agriculture at Texas A&M University, will give the Texas perspective.

Various other grassland authorities will discuss other topics, including Dr. Edward Segarra who will discuss the influence of NAFTA and Farm Programs on grasslands.

For more information or to register call the American Forage and Grassland Council at 1-900-944-2342. Ask for Ms. Dana Tucker, AFGC executive secretary.

Indiana Dairyman Benefits from GLCI

Dave Forgey, Cass County, Indiana, dairyman doesn't just talk about GLCI activities in Indiana, he practices what he preaches.

Forgey, of near Logansport, is in his fourth year of seasonal dairying and intensive management grazing. He grazes his 120 cow herd on 335 acres that he's split into 85 paddocks. He has water to all of the paddocks. Cows are moved to a fresh paddock every 12 hours.

Dave's paddocks are mostly alfalfa-orchardgrass mix. He also has 20 acres seeded to a mix of Indian Grass and Big Bluestem.

Forgey reports an increase in the health and vigor of his paddocks since he implemented the rotational grazing. His cows are healthier too. He's had a dramatic drop in vet bills since the cows have been on pasture. Hoof trimming chores require far less time since he's been grazing. He used to trim over two-thirds of the herd each year, but the number he has to trim now has dropped to less than ten percent.

Forgey may be the happiest dairyman this side of New Zealand. He's ripped a few pages out of their dairying handbook and put them to good use in northern Indiana. Gone are the big tractors, planting and harvesting equipment, silo unloaders, belt feeders, and what have you. Gone too is the 365 days a year milking schedule.

Forgey has given all of that up in favor of grazing and seasonal dairying. The seasonal dairying is the other part of Forgey's transformed operation. His cows begin freshening around March 1 and he dries them up by the end of December. The cattle are grazed as long as possible, in the fall, on stockpiled forage. Dave gets the cows out on grass as quickly as the pastures can support them in the spring. The cows get all the grass they want plus some concentrate. Surplus grass is baled and plastic wrapped throughout the growing season. Dave has seen his feed bills drop with the management intensive grazing, while herd production has remained high. His feed cost last year was $3.29 per hundred weight of milk produced. He's happy with that figure considering the cost of grain.

Dave Forgey serves on the Indiana GLCI Steering Committee

Forgey is striving to improve his herd's ability to utilize grass by artificially breeding his cows with semen from New Zealand bulls. He contends the New Zealand cattle have the genetic makeup to do better on grass.

"Twenty years ago", he says, "the conventional way of dairying made sense. We were all doing it. But things have changed. The cost of doing business has continually gone up. Machinery costs have gone up and up and up. But our returns—the price we receive for our milk—has become very level. Therein lies the problem! The only way we can make a little more money on the milk we produce is to reduce our costs, because we can't do anything about the price that's being paid for milk."

How's production? Dave's got a 20,000-pound herd average again. We say again because that's what he used to have prior to the changeover from conventional to grazing. The transition period costs him about 2,000 pounds of milk per cow. But he has gained all that back now.

As for the profit margin, Dave netted over $500 per cow this past year and expects to net over $800 per cow this year. Compare that to $125 per cow in 1991, $285 in 1992, and $428 in 1993.

Lower feeds costs, optimum use of pasture, less equipment and fuel use, and more profit per cow are among the many advantages of having cows on pasture.

Dave and his wife Helen have been active in the Indiana and American Forage and Grassland Councils. They have hosted numerous field days and pasture walks to educate other graziers about management intensive grazing and traveled the country giving talks about their experiences with grazing and seasonal dairying. Dave is currently on the Indiana Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative Steering Committee. He recently spoke to a training session for Natural Resources Conservation Service and Cooperate Extension Service personnel. The training session introduced the students to management intensive grazing principles, fencing and watering systems.

Dave figures he's doing a good job, but also believes he can still do better. That's another reason he's smiling. Across the top of Dave's business card it says:

"The grass is greener on our side of the fence."

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Please submit information for the April *GLCI Newsletter* by April 7th to GLCI Editor, Society for Range Management, 1839 York Street, Denver, CO 80206 • FAX 303-355-5059.

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