

*A voluntary
partnership
with private
landowners*

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Cover photograph:

Philip Jones shows Terry Heindard his "forage harvesting and manure spreading machines"



GRAZING BRINGS SUSTAINABILITY

Terry Heindard, Prince Frederick Maryland, USDA-NRCS

to a Former Tobacco Farm in Maryland

Mr. Phillip Jones owns and operates a farm in southern Maryland near the Chesapeake Bay. The Jones family has worked this farm for more than 100 years and tobacco has been the main crop for more than 60 years. Mr. Jones is an Associate Supervisor of the Calvert Soil Conservation District and keeps up with current technology by attending field days and training sponsored by the Maryland Cooperative Extension Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Times Are Changing

Tobacco is a labor-intensive crop that is seeded, transplanted, harvested, sorted, and packed by hand. From initial seeding to market takes 15 months. Tobacco has been planted as a cash crop in this area for more than 200 years and has become an important part of the culture and economy in southern Maryland. However, times are changing because manual labor is scarce, profit margin is getting smaller, and the next generation is not staying to take over the operations on many farms.

This has caused some farmers, like Phillip Jones, to look for viable alternatives to growing tobacco. He recognized that this hilly farm with silty clay soils was better suited to pasture and hay production than to crop production. In order to preserve his family's farm for future generations, Mr. Jones decided to convert his last two tobacco fields to pasture. He already had some pastures with cool-season grasses and had implemented a rotational grazing system for his cattle. However, the cool-season grasses in his pastures did not provide adequate forage during the hot, dry summer months. Because his pasture grasses went dormant during the summer, he was sometimes forced into feeding his winter hay supply to his cattle during the summer.



Warm-season grasses for grazing have replaced tobacco on the Philip Jones farm in southern Maryland

Warm Season Grasses

At a statewide meeting, Mr. Jones saw a Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) display about warm-season grasses. He talked to the GLCI representative about warm-season grasses and their place in rotational grazing systems. The GLCI effort in Maryland serves as a catalyst to help farmers use existing cost-share programs from federal, state, and private conservation groups to implement grazing management practices. He was very receptive to the possibility of getting involved with GLCI.

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... **SUSTAINABILITY** (continued from page 1)

Mr. Jones asked the NRCS for technical assistance to establish warm-season grasses on the former tobacco fields. He received technical assistance from the NRCS Soil Conservationist from Prince Frederick, the GLCI Coordinator from Annapolis, and the Forage Crops Specialist from the University of Maryland at College Park. They provided advice, guidance, and direct technical assistance to establish a GLCI demonstration project. That assistance included:



This successful stand of eastern gamagrass was planted with a 4-row corn planter that was 30 years old

- Type of forage to be planted and equipment needed
- Conservation planning and "walking the farm" to determine and recommend best management practices
- A GLCI grant that provided grass seed, use of a no-till drill from the Soil Conservation District, and herbicides for control of weed competition.
- Guidance at time of planting to ensure correct calibration of equipment and the proper depth and rate of seed being planted.

Two fields were planted...one to eastern gamagrass, and one to switchgrass. The fields have been monitored since they were planted and are both well established. Cattle will be allowed to graze the fields in 2001. Field days will be held to show local farmers the results of this successful GLCI demonstration project and the other conservation systems Mr. Jones has installed.

Programs and Partnerships

In addition to the GLCI demonstration project, Mr. Jones has also received NRCS technical assistance to through USDA programs to install these other conservation practices on his farm:

Environmental Quality Incentives

Program (EQIP):

- nutrient management
- prescribed grazing

Conservation Reserve Enhancement

Program (CREP):

- forested riparian buffers
- livestock watering systems
- streambank fencing

Phillip Jones eagerly discusses his experiences with other graziers, and actively promotes the benefits of NRCS technical assistance, as well as the economic and environmental benefits of warm-season grasses in a rotational grazing system. ■

GLCI Project Partners
Mr. Phillip Jones
USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service
Calvert Soil Conservation District
University of Maryland, College of Natural Resources and Agriculture

To learn more about Maryland's GLCI Projects, visit this website:
www.md.nrcs.usda.gov

Oklahoma Grazing Land Conservation Association

Dan Caudle
GLCI Coordinator, Fort Worth, TX

The Oklahoma Grazing Land Conservation Association (OGLCA) is an organization whose primary interest is the management and conservation of Oklahoma's privately owned grazing lands. OGLCA is currently made up of 12 organizations. The Association has been very effective in bringing groups together for the benefit of the grazing land resources of Oklahoma. The OGLCA Steering Committee is made up of grazing land owners and managers who represent the member organizations, plus four additional at-large producers who are selected to represent different geographical regions of the state. Organizations represented on the OGLCA Steering Committee are:

- Oklahoma Farm Bureau
- Oklahoma Landowners and Tenants Association
- Oklahoma Cattlemen's Association
- Oklahoma Farmers Union
- Oklahoma Grain and Stocker Producers
- Oklahoma Cattlewomen's Association
- Oklahoma Section, Society for Range Management
- Dairy Farmers of America
- Oklahoma Forage and Grassland Council
- Oklahoma Sheep and Wool Commission
- Oklahoma Association of Conservation Districts



Members of the The Oklahoma Grazing Land Conservation Association (OGLCA) Steering Committee met in October at the USDA-ARS Grazinglands Research Laboratory at Fort Reno. They conducted their business meeting in the morning and toured the research station that afternoon to observe and discuss the various research projects that are underway in the field and the lab.

Agencies and organizations who serve as advisors to the OGLCA include:

- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Grazing Lands Center for Excellence
- Kerr Center (private foundation)
- Noble Foundation (private foundation)
- Sutton Avian Center (private foundation)
- Oklahoma Cooperative Extension Service
- Oklahoma State University
- Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment Station
- Oklahoma Beef Industry Council
- Oklahoma Department of Agriculture
- Oklahoma Commissioner of Land Office
- The Nature Conservancy
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service
- USDA - Farm Services Agency
- USDA - Agricultural Research Service
- USDA - Agricultural Research Service Southern Plains Range Research Station (Woodward)
- Oklahoma Farm Bureau

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The Association's Purpose is to provide for a collaborative and coordinated effort to identify priority issues, find solutions, and effect change on private owned grazing lands. They serve as a reference for enhancement of grazing land resources. They also provide a basis for coordination with units of government, institutes of higher education, producer organizations, and among agencies. They feel that they can complement and enhance already existing conservation programs on private grazing lands.

OGLCA's Mission:

"To provide leadership to secure needed knowledge and technical assistance for stewards of private grazing lands to manage their property in an economically and ecologically sustainable manner."

The OGLCA works closely with the cooperating agencies and organizations to encourage technical assistance, implement demonstration projects, assist with educational activities, and increase public awareness related to grazing lands. The Association also oversees a grant program to fund establishment of demonstration projects, and educational activities.

The OGLCA is involved in cooperative efforts with other organizations and individuals on issues that affect the grazing lands of Oklahoma. Some of these issues include:

- 1) the invasion of eastern redcedar on grazing lands throughout the state
- 2) development of proposed prescribed burning legislation
- 3) habitat management for the lesser prairie chicken in western Oklahoma

Last summer the Cimarron County Conservation District and NRCS's sponsored a Rancher and Stockmen meeting in western Oklahoma to introduce GLCI to the grazing land owners in that part of the state. The meeting was attended by 49 landowners who represented the majority of all grazing land acres in Cimarron County. The group identified several natural resource concerns that need immediate attention. Some of those items can be taken care of at the local level through educational activities, EQIP priority area proposals, workshops, etc. The remaining issues were referred to the OGLCA and its members in order to find solutions by working together. The meeting resulted in a better understanding and appreciation of the role of GLCI. ■

THE GRASS is ALWAYS Greener

*Keeping the Cows and
the Pasture Happy with
Rotational Grazing*

Laura Morton, Public Affairs Specialist
NH Natural Resources Conservation Service

Gordon and Marion Jones of Chichester, New Hampshire, know how to keep their pastures looking and tasting good. They use an extensive system of permanent gravel lanes, cost-shared through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, to facilitate their rotational grazing plan. The Jones' showed off their system during a pasture walk sponsored by New Hampshire Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) and University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension Service. Sarah Flack of the Vermont Grass Farmers



Sarah Flack discussing the grazing stick of Gordon and Marion Jones Farm in Chichester, New Hampshire

Association was the keynote pasture expert, with Heidi Smith, of NH NRCS, providing and demonstrating grazing sticks, and John Porter of UNH Cooperative Extension facilitating discussion. The workshop was well-attended with approximately 35 people taking the opportunity to learn how the Jones' make grazing an important part of their farming operation.

The Jones' operate a small commercial dairy farm with 50-60 Holsteins where rotational grazing on 50 acres of managed pasture is an important part of their feeding plan. Their 50 acres of pasture is divided into approximately 28 paddocks in the spring when the grass is fresh and rich, but is reduced to 10 to 12 paddocks in the late summer as grass growth rate declines.

Their keys to success are their permanent gravel lanes, their watering system, and their close monitoring of the grass height. The gravel lanes were installed over a geotextile fabric that allows water to percolate through while holding the gravel in place. The gravel lanes not only help to channel the animals to the appropriate pasture, but prevent damage to the turf, and reduce erosion from disturbed soils.

The Jones' manage their pastures for naturalized grasses and legumes such as red clover and Kentucky bluegrass. They perform frost-seeding, or seeding during the very early spring when the ground is still going through freeze-thaw cycles so that the seeds get incorporated into the moist soil surface. They also care for their pastures by top-dressing with small amounts of 4-12-18 fertilizer, and being very careful about turf damage in the spring "mud season."

One of the most serious concerns the Jones' have on their farm is the nutritional needs of their cows. Even during pasturing, they supplement grass with both grain and corn silage on a daily basis. The amount of supplemental feed the cows get is determined by pasture quality the butterfat content of the milk, which the Jones' monitor closely. Their farm also includes 10 acres for hay production, and about 100 additional acres of cropland for silage, which helps them to supplement the cows diet.

Maintaining healthy pasture is part of planning for conservation, animal health, and a profitable livestock business. The Jones' operation demonstrates a commitment to balance these concerns by closely monitoring the pasture heights, providing adequate water to the cows, and providing nutritional supplements to their animals when necessary. ■



Sarah Flack checks the pasture height to calculate the dry matter production of one of the paddocks at the Jones Farm in Chichester, New Hampshire

We are continuing to build upon the very successful national grazinglands conference that took place in Las Vegas last December. We need to take advantage of every opportunity to build on the momentum of that meeting. As a part of this effort, several members of the National GLCI Steering Committee have participated in recent national meetings of some of our member organizations, including American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF), National Cattlemen Beef Association (NCBA), and National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD).

GLCI Steering Committee members have provided information to the members and committees of these organizations regarding Chip Merrill's proposed omnibus bill, referred to as the "Conservation of Private Lands Act." Merrill first made his proposal at the National Conference on Grazing Lands. The purpose of the proposal is to improve the availability of technical assistance, research, and education for conservation of private lands. As presented in his keynote address, this would be a stand-alone bill, not a part of the new Farm Bill. Merrill's idea has created a lot of interest, excitement, and positive reaction from members of these organizations. NCBA adopted a resolution in full support of the proposal. AFBF and NACD support the concept and are also considering adopting resolutions of support. We are very appreciative of Chip Merrill's hard work and dedication on this issue.

As you know, a new administration is in place, and changes are underway in Washington, DC. Some of the more significant changes include: Ann Veneman from California is the new Secretary for Agriculture. Congressman Larry Combest from Texas is the new Chairman of the House Agriculture Committee. He has designated a new subcommittee known as the Conservation, Credit, Rural Development, and Research Subcommittee. The subcommittee will be chaired by Congressman Frank Lucas from Oklahoma. Our long-time friend, Congressman Joe Skeen from New Mexico, is no longer Chairman of the House Agricultural Appropriations Subcommittee. He has been replaced by another friend of ours, Congressman Henry Bonilla from Texas. We are starting a new year with many new people in place. We look forward to working with our new friends as well as continuing to work with our old friends.

The annual business meeting of the National GLCI Steering Committee will be held in Washington, DC from March 19-23. These items and many more will be discussed during when the full committee meets at that time.

Bob Drake, Chairman
National GLCI Steering Committee