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A voluntary partnership with private landowners

GLCI News

A group of grazing enthusiasts gather to tour the land in the New England States.
Photo courtesy of Kim Stine.

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Cover photo courtesy of NRCS.

Exciting Efforts in the East

Grazing enthusiasm is taking off in eastern states

by Kindra Gordon

Often, when grazing issues are discussed, the large ranches of the Great Plains and West first come to mind. But grazing is also an important resource to livestock producers in the east – and momentum is building among these states to bring grazing management and expertise to producers. National GLCI Coordinator Kim Stine visited the New England region this fall to help bolster support for grazing issues.

In Massachusetts, Stine met with GLCI Coordinator Barbara Miller along with GLCI coordinators and NRCS field office staff from Connecticut, New Hampshire, Vermont, and New York. They had the opportunity to discuss GLCI efforts in the East and toured a proposed research farm outside of Amherst, MA.

In New Hampshire, GLCI Coordinator and Natural Resource Specialist Kim McCracken reports that they were hosts to the Northeast Pasture Consortium Meeting on Feb. 2. Thirteen eastern states were involved in the conference. Additionally, on Feb. 3-4, New Hampshire held its first statewide grazing conference, which was sponsored by GLCI and the Cooperative Extension Service.

McCracken says speakers from across the region were represented and the goal of the event was to connect with producers across the state as well as to establish a GLCI steering committee within New Hampshire.

For more highlights on grazing efforts in New York, New Jersey, Alabama, Vermont and North Carolina, see inside this issue of the GLCI News.

GLCI STATE SPOTLIGHTS

Alabama Hosts 5th Grazing Conference

Farmers from Alabama and surrounding states had the opportunity to hear from a number of national leaders in livestock production at the 2005 Alabama Forage Conference. The conference was held in December at the Pike County Cattlemen's Association building in Troy, AL, with about 250 producers and ag specialists attending. Since 1997, with the formation of the Alabama Forage and Grassland Coalition, there have been four other forage conferences.

Speakers for the conference included keynote speaker Kit Pharo from Colorado, Dr. Garry Lacefield from the University of Kentucky, Dr. Mike McCormick from Louisiana State University, as well as successful livestock producers, consultants and extension representatives. The conference also featured vendor exhibits related to forage and livestock production.

Submitted by Julie Best
Alabama NRCS Public Affairs Specialist

Attending the Alabama Forage Conference, from left, Charles Holmes, Chairman of the AFGC; Kimberli Stine, National Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative Coordinator; and Eddie Jolley, Alabama NRCS Agronomist.

Nevada Holds Range Management School

The Eureka Opera House in central Nevada was the site for the first Nevada Range Management School on December 7, 2005. The event was partially sponsored by GLCI.

The historic elegance of the building constructed in 1881 and recently remodeled was the perfect location to get 68 ranchers, grazing permitees, agency, and university range managers all on the same page in terms of the rangeland resource.

The purpose of the 8-hour school and tri-tip dinner was to learn about the sound science of plant growth, timing and duration of grazing, animal nutrition and behavior, rangeland monitoring, grazing response index, riparian management, and grazing plan strategies. It was emphasized and re-emphasized that, with the proper management of rangeland resources, both the livestock and vegetation can be maintained and improved.

Instructors included staff from the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension, Nevada Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, UNR College of Agriculture, Biotechnology, and Natural Resources and the Nevada Ranching Industry.

Three more schools will be held in other parts of the state. The summer schedule for the Nevada Range Management School will also include a field tour.

Submitted by Gene Fults
Nevada NRCS State Rangeland Management Specialist

New Jersey Forms State Project Grass Committee

The New Jersey Project Grass State Steering Committee was formed December 30, 2005. The Chairperson is Matt Pearson, Co-Chair Ken Hoffman, and Secretary/Treasurer Tara Bowser. Objectives for this newly formed steering committee will be to:

- Raise public awareness about grass-based, healthy, locally raised livestock;
- Improve access to (inspected) processing;
- Create a voice for grazing livestock farmers to influence important issues like health regulations and other regulatory issues, and to get support for needs (i.e. processing, marketing, infrastructure); and
- Improve communication and networking among farmers.

Vermont Celebrates 10th Year

Congratulations to the Vermont Pasture Network Program for hosting their 10th annual grazing conference on Jan. 21. The event had the theme "Bringing it all Back Home: Connecting People, Animals and the Land."

For more about grazing activities in Vermont visit their website at www.uvm.edu/~susagctr/pasture.html.

North Carolina Grazing Event

Jim Gerrish will offer his management-intensive grazing school **April 4-7** at Braeburn Farm in Snow Camp, NC. Participants will learn how to become an efficient, low-cost cattle producer. Topics covered will include fertility management, grazing cell design, pasture finishing, fence and water development and much more.

For more information e-mail: dawn@americangrazinglands.com or call 208-876-4067.

New Mexico Campaign Urges Smarter Farming

The notion of smarter farmers and wiser ranchers using the latest technology to make operation decisions is the goal of a new conservation planning campaign underway in New Mexico.

Titled "Conservation Planning: Smarter Farmers – Wiser Ranchers," the campaign is designed to educate farmers and ranchers and citizens of New Mexico about the value of utilizing USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as a partner in planning farm and ranch conservation improvements. Throughout the campaign NRCS is offering a free packet of information about conservation planning and the kinds of data that can be incorporated in making those farm and ranch decisions.

"While the campaign may be a little light-hearted, we hope to help New Mexico farmers and ranchers enhance their soil and water resources and improve their production through practical, sound conservation," says Rosendo Treviño III, NRCS state conservationist.

"We hope to help New Mexico farmers and ranchers enhance their soil and water resources and improve their production through practical, sound conservation."
Rosendo Treviño III, NRCS state conservationist

"Increasing the awareness of conservation planning among New Mexico's farmers, ranchers, and others is the first step in the process of bringing the latest conservation technology to the farm and ranch," Treviño adds. "We hope this campaign using radio spots and public appearances will help farmers and ranchers understand some of the resources available to them. Conservation planning can give them a fresh look at their operations, and help them make their management decisions."

Anyone interested in receiving a free conservation planning packet can call 1-800-410-2067.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS:
New York Grass-Fed Seminar

"Strategies for going Grass-Fed" is the theme of a one-day seminar on **March 25** in Vernon, NY. Greg Judy, Missouri grass farmer and author of ***No-Risk Ranching*** will headline the event.

Also on the program are Shannon Hayes, a New York farmer and author of ***The Grass Fed Gourmet***; Dave Forgey, an Indiana seasonal grass-based dairyman; and Dr. Ben Lucio from Cornell University, speaking about pastured poultry. Special guest speakers will be Patrick Brennan, New York Commissioner of Agriculture and Bill Magee, 111th District New York Assemblyman.

The conference will be held at the Dibbles Inn in Vernon, NY, from 9 am to 4:30 pm. There will also be a trade show and a lunch featuring New York products including grass-fed beef, chicken and pork.

Ongoing Sponsors are : Central NY RC&D Project Inc., Center For Agricultural Development and Entrepreneurship, New York; Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative; The Graze-NY Program; Madison and Onondaga Co. SWCD; Oneida Co. Ag. Economic Development; CCE of Oneida Co.; USDA/NRCS; William's Fence Co.; Penny Nutrition; Fertrell Minerals and Cornell Dept. of Animal Science.

When you graze—you will amaze! Admission for this exciting event is $ 35.00. To make a reservation and find out more, contact Kim Totten @ 607-334-3231 Ext. 4 or Troy Bishopp @ 315-824-9849.

RESEARCH REVIEW

Corral Fescue Foot

During the cold months, Eldon Cole, a University of Missouri livestock specialist, advises watching cattle closely for signs of Fescue Foot. Untreated, the painful condition can result in frost bite, or even hooves sloughing off. Producers familiar with grazing cattle on endophyte-infected fescue know this is the result of poor blood circulation that stems from ingesting fescue that has produced large amounts of ergot-like toxins.

Cole says the most effective thing to do when you notice the limping on the rear legs is to remove the cattle from the fescue pasture. Even putting them on another fescue field that may have lower toxin levels can help, he explains. In more severe cases, he says moving the affected cattle to dry-lot and feeding them legume hay and grain can help.

According to Cole, "Antibiotic treatments are of little value other than preventing infections that could arise. So far, there are no magic formulas to correct the problem. Toxin levels in the fescue tend to decline into the winter." For more details about managing fescue, go to: muextension.missouri.edu/explore/agguides/crops/g04669.htm and click on **Tall Fescue Toxicosis**.

Alfalfa Studied

In The Southern Plains: Based on research conducted by the Noble Foundation, grazing alfalfa in the Southern Plains — where bermudagrass and small grains represent typical forage — could provide high gains. It also could improve the distribution of available high-quality forage through the spring and summer.

In the study, researchers looked at the impact of continuous alfalfa grazing beginning in April or May with either continued grazing in August or an August rest period for the pasture.

Across three years (2001-04), animal gains averaged 2.21 lbs. for the pasture that was rested, and 2.04 lbs. for the pasture grazed in August. During that same research period, the continuously grazed pasture served up an average of 382 lbs. of animal gain/season, compared to 341 lbs. for the rested pasture. Likewise, researchers got an average of 130 days with the continuous grazing approach; 102 days with the rested strategy. Stocking rate (1.7) was the same in each instance. However, the average forage allowance (availability) was highest each year for the rested pasture — 1,544 lbs./acre compared to 1,320 lbs.

In both cases, there was no significant impact on the stand resistance of grazing-tolerant cultivars. For cultivars involved in the study that weren't grazing-tolerant, there was a 17% reduction in stand persistence.

Find more of the details at www.noble.org/Ag/Research/Articles/AlfalfaGrazing/index.html.

In The Southeast:

University of Arkansas researchers successfully seeded alfalfa into clipped bermudagrass sod. But seeding rates higher than the recommended 20 lbs/acre didn't improve yield. They mowed bermudagrass to a 2"-stubble, removed the residue and no-till seeded alfalfa at 10, 20, 30 and 40 lbs/acre.

Alfalfa seedling density increased with increasing seeding rate, and plots seeded at 40 lbs/acre still had the highest plant density a year later. But dry matter yields were about the same among the seeding rates.

They concluded that interseeding alfalfa into bermudagrass is a viable option for growers wanting to produce high-quality hay. They recommend a 20-lb/acre seeding rate, but say even 10 lbs/acre can provide enough alfalfa to improve forage quality.

Also, congratulations to Troy Bishopp for hosting a successful grazing conference on Jan. 14 at New York's Morrisville State College. The symposium focused on reclaiming fallow land using livestock as a tool for change and understanding the relationships between the soil seed bank, animal impact, grazing management and the opportunities for landowners and farmers to work together. New York State Senator Dave Valesky addressed the group and said, "The answers are out there. We just have to do a better job connecting the dots and bringing our bold ideas forward."

THE CHAIR'S CORNER

Bob Drake

Spring is a busy time of year for GLCI's nine partner organizations. Not only is this the time that we gear up for calving and lambing season, but it is also the political season. Many of our organizations hold their annual conventions in January and February to set their leadership and policy directions for the coming year. The GLCI Steering Committee also held their spring meeting in Washington, D.C., Feb. 26-27 and had the opportunity to have our voices heard in front of lawmakers and USDA agency leaders.

A big item on GLCI's agenda for 2006 is the Third National Conference on Grazing Lands (3NCGL) to be held Dec. 10-13 in St. Louis, MO. The theme for the conference is **"Grazing Lands Gateway to Success,"** and it is sure to offer something for all grazing enthusiasts.

We are expecting well over 1,000 participants, and speakers will be separated into four general categories – East, Central, West and Dairy. As in the past, a trade show will be held in conjunction with the conference, and we encourage state GLCI coalitions, partner organizations, conservation and land management agencies and private industry to exhibit at the event. This is a great means to get your message to a targeted audience of grazing specialists. For booth reservation and prices contact John Peterson at Ph: 703-455-4387 or e-mail him at jwpeterson@cox.net.

Most importantly, plan to join me in taking in this spectacular event – and be sure to invite your fellow livestock producers and conservationists.

Bob Drake
National GLCI Steering Committee

No Fooling! Abstract Deadline Is April 1

To submit an abstract for the 3NCGL in St. Louis, go to www.glci.org and click on "grazing conference." Information about the conference and the link to the abstract submission is all there. The deadline is April 1.

To have your GLCI activities or upcoming events highlighted in this newsletter, contact Kindra Gordon at phone 605-722-7699 or kindras@gordonresources.com

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