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

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USDA Agriculture Research Service

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

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Requests $40 Million for FY '98

GLCI National Chairperson, Aggie Helle, submitted a progress report to the House Sub-Committee on Agricultural Appropriations, March 18. In the report Helle said, "Demands on the private grazing lands are greater than ever. Landowners and society-at-large desire economic stability, available clean water and air, healthy wildlife populations and riparian areas, contaminant-free soils, reduced flooding, adequate supplies of food and fiber, and a multitude of other products and benefits from grazing lands." Helle says, "For too long, too many have taken this vast, valuable resource for granted."

Helle thanked the members of the House Agricultural Subcommittee for their support to date. She asked that the "Conservation of Private Grazing Land" program be funded as a line-item in the NRCS budget at a level of $40 million for fiscal year 1998. Congress designated $5 million in FY 1996 and $10 million in FY 1997 of the NRCS Conservation Operations budget for assistance to privately-owned grazing lands to further the GLCI initiative.

(Continued on Page 2).

Over 3,000 additional private grazing land owners received technical assistance last year.

GLCI Leader Wins National Stewardship Award

by Gene Surber, GLCI Coordinator
Montana State University

Nestled in the Snowy Mountains of central Montana at 5,500 foot elevation is a 13,500 acre ranch owned and operated by Bob and Kathy Lee. As a result of hard work and responsible resource management, the Lee's were selected as the State, Regional and National winners of the 1996 Environmental Stewardship award of the National Cattlemen's Beef Association.

Ranching today means facing many challenges, and Lee looks for opportunities in every challenge as a way of management. "We welcome opportunities", Bob says, "to be responsible for our own stewardship actions." Cow-calf, small grains and hay, are the enterprises which make up the life blood of this ranch. Grazing lands make up the majority of their natural resources.. Managing these grazing resources in a sustainable manner, so Bob and Kathy can pass the ranch on to their three children in better shape than when they bought the ranch, is their primary goal.

Bob Lee is an active member of the Montana GLCI Steering Committee. His contagious enthusiasm for land and resource management positively affects everyone he comes in contact with. Lee is frequently sought after as a speaker on resource management to stimulate motivation and positive thinking in his peers.

Not only do they manage the grazing lands for the cow/calf enterprise, they consciously manage it to provide for the wildlife in the area. Elk, whitetail and mule deer, upland birds and many species of varmits all call the Lee ranch home. Lee, an avid sportsman himself, uses the challenges of managing wildlife and livestock as an opportunity to educate other hunters about ranching and resource management. Visitors to the ranch will learn about the interactions of resources and the need for management.

An 880 acre land purchase in 1969 started the Lee ranch, which is one of Montana's many well managed private grazing resources. An active range monitoring program shows range condition has improved from fair to high good under their ownership. At the same time calf weaning weights have increased 250 pounds over 25 years. A number of diverse management practices have been implemented, such as the eleven water tanks that draw animals into uplands not previous watered, or the 24 pasture rotation system that allows forage to be saved for off season and wildlife use.

It would be very hard to find a more positive person involved in ranching and grazing land management than Bob Lee. Congratulations to the Lee's on winning the NCBA National Environmental Stewardship Award.

GLCI Progress (Continued from Page 1).

To date regional and state strategic plans addressing grazing land conservation needs have been developed throughout the United States in partnership with regional and state GLCI coalitions. In response to needs, NRCS has increased grazing lands specialists by some 100 positions. NRCS now has approximately 330 grazing lands specialists nation-wide. Over 800 NRCS employees received formal training in various aspects of grazing lands management. More than 3,000 additional private grazing land owners received on-the-land technical assistance in 1996 compared to the previous four years. And over 60 special grazing lands projects were established throughout the country in partnership with state GLCI coalitions.

Helle emphasized that while good progress has been made in GLCI, much remains to be done. "The fact is that most of our Nation's private grazing lands are still without the technical assistance needed to protect and improve their health and productive capacity," says Helle. She urged Congress to fund the program to its recommended level for FY 1998.

At home with Bob and Kathy Lee. Bob is an active member of the Montana GLCI Steering Committee.

State GLCI Highlights

California—NRCS hired five new grazing land specialists last year. The agency now has 10 field office range positions (had 5 prior to this year). The state coalition is now organized after meeting as a group for past three years.

Florida—The GLCI coalition includes members from the Florida Farm Bureau, Florida Dairy Industry, Florida Cattlemen's Association, Florida Society for Range Management, The Nature Conservancy, McArthur Agro-research, and the Water Management Districts of Florida. NRCS and the Grazing Land Coalition completed planning and began implementation of the Ruminant Livestock Efficiency Improvement Project. NRCS conducted strategy meetings and participated in workshops with other agencies to plan for 1997 grazing land activities. The agency also hosted a Southeast Region Pasture Health Workshop.

Indiana—A state GLCI coalition has been organized and is active. Training in grazing management was provided to 15 NRCS conservationists, 12 Extension agents, and 2 Department of Natural Resources personnel by Keith Johnson at Purdue University. A similar number of personnel received training at Purdue in two separate sessions on evaluating hay nutritive value. NRCS established a state grazing lands specialist position and three part-time specialist positions.

Iowa—The GLCI coalition assessed the location of livestock in Iowa and in the process identified 115 elk farms in the state. NRCS established three state grazing lands specialist positions with one more planned for 1997. NRCS also established a grasslands specialist position at the Leopold Center. Extensive training of field personnel was carried out through a state pasture management meeting, a grassland management demonstration project in southern Iowa involving 15 counties, the annual Management Intensive Grazing Conference in Des Moines, and a national warm season grassland conference. Additional training was accomplished with the Iowa Forage and Grassland Council, through pasture walks, and other activities involving producers, bankers, veterinarians, etc. A new 20-page publication was published entitled "Profitable Pastures."

Michigan—A GLCI coalition has been organized. About 600 NRCS and Extension personnel, producers, and others received training at the Great Lakes Grazing Conference. NRCS is working to have two grazing lands trained personnel in each of seven Michigan watersheds. The state coalition has worked with the state legislature in establishing an incentives program of converting cropland to permanent pasture through use of revenue generated by a tax on fertilizer sales.

Missouri—A GLCI coalition has been organized. Missouri has 17 grassland specialists, including two state specialists. All GLA data bases have been completed. A "Train the Trainer" conference in grazing lands management was completed with Illinois, Iowa, and Minnesota. The Missouri "Grazing Lands Manual" was revised. A soil test program on pastures was developed and initiated with the Missouri Forage Systems Research Center. Four grazing lands training sessions which involved 80 agency personnel and 160 producers were held. An additional 800 producers were trained in planned grazing systems by NRCS through the Missouri Department of Natural Resources.

Mississippi—The GLCI has established four, grazing management and livestock efficiency demonstrations in the state. The coalition of grazing land stakeholders in the state has adopted the name "GLCI Steering Committee for Mississippi."

Montana—An in-depth 30 hour educational program on whole ranch planning has been developed by MSU Extension which focuses on the integrated management of livestock, wildlife, human, forage and financial resources of a ranch. The course was presented to 34 ranches last summer. Eight more classes were held last fall and winter throughout the state. An additional $70,000 grant has been acquired because of GLCI collaborative efforts. Dollars will be used to develop a correspondence course for ranchers on Riparian Grazing Management Practices using videos and written material.

New Mexico—The Chair of the New Mexico Assoc. of Conservation Districts has taken the lead since last spring and brought the GLCI coalition to life. An action plan is formalized. A questionnaire will be sent to landusers to identify issues. A letter in support of GLCI was sent to Congressman Joe Skeen.

North Carolina—The GLCI actively works through an informal assembly of grazing land stakeholders to initiate GLCI spurred activities. NRCS in North Carolina has established a full-time Grazing Lands Specialist who has worked effectively to establish three grazing land management and livestock efficiency demonstrations. In addition, North Carolina NRCS has sponsored three in-state GLA training sessions. North Carolina also produces an excellent monthly newsletter on grazing land activities in the area.

South Dakota—The State Grassland Coalition worked with the South Dakota Section SRM to sponsor two grazing coalition meetings, produce newsletters quarterly for 2,100 producers, develop range tool boxes, and sponsor an educational grazing systems meeting. Training programs and workshops were held: The South Dakota Rangeland Days (115 participants), Bootstraps training for four groups (30 ranchers), and four range management tours (150 producers). The coalition has requested and received preliminary funding approval from the SD Association of RC&D Councils for co-sponsoring three information meetings in western SD on dealing with saline seeps. Reclamation methods will emphasize deep rooted perennial grasses and legumes.

Washington—A rangeland committee has been active for 20 years, and are now concentrating on GLCI efforts. One additional range position, and three range conservationists were hired. Range conservationists are being put back to work on rangeland. The Department of Natural Resources also has five range people. One new range conservationist is being hired for watershed activities.

Wyoming—Hired five new full-time employees and re-prioritized one to provide direct field assistance on grazing lands. The coalition partnered with the Wyoming Department of Agriculture to schedule and conduct six training sessions for approximately 175 people on Coordinated Resource Management. They also partnered with the Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts to develop and publish an updated Wyoming Range and Land Management Manual.

For Additional Information on the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative Contact these Affiliated Organizations

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

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