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Cover photograph:

Winter grazing scene of the William Suan farm in Harrison County, West Virginia.



Case Study-Extended Season Grazing

William Suan Farm, Harrison County, WV by Jeff Griffith, NRCS, Johnstown, WV

William Suan owns a 189-acre farm located in southern Harrison County, West Virginia. Mr. Suan entered into a 5-year pilot project with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, West Virginia Soil Conservation Agency, and the West Fork Soil Conservation District in August of 2000. The primary purpose of the pilot project is to demonstrate winter feeding area improvements by extending the grazing season and feeding in areas that are better suited for winter-feeding. This two-year project will concentrate on the advantages and disadvantages of implementing an extended season grazing program.

Mr. Suan agreed to stockpile forages on two hay meadows during August and September for winter grazing. These two meadows totaled 7.7 acres. The soil types in these fields are rated as having good grassland potential, medium to high soil fertility, and a pH of 6.2-6.4. Tall fescue is the predominant grass species, but there is also a fair amount of orchardgrass present. Mr. Suan typically makes two cuttings of hay from these fields, with the second cutting being made in early August. No water supply exists in either field. Plans are to develop two nearby springs as a water supply.

Applying the System

After the second cutting of hay was made on both meadows on September 1, 2000, Mr. Suan applied 60 pounds of actual nitrogen per acre by broadcasting 18-46-0. There was enough moisture in September to produce regrowth of 6 to 8 inches of grass. Forage supply after the first killing frost was estimated at approximately 2000 pounds of dry matter per acre in each field.

Forage samples were taken on two separate occasions. The first forage sample was taken on October 31 from the first field. Crude protein was 15% and Total Digestible Nutrients (TDN) was 58%. The second forage sample was taken on December 9 from

(Continued on next page)



This 5 acre field provided grazing for a herd of 26 cows from December 7th to December 19th before Mr. Suan had to start feeding hay.

the second field. Crude protein was 12.8% and TDN was 63%. Both samples showed that forage quality was more than adequate for 1250 pound cows in the last trimester of pregnancy.

The two fields that had been stockpiled for winter grazing were subdivided by a single strand electric fence. One field consisted of 2.7 acres, and the other field was 5 acres. The cow herd consists of 26 cows weighing an average of 1250 pounds. Grazing of the 2.7 acre stockpiled meadow began on November 16. That field furnished four days of grazing for the 26 cows. Mr. Suan then moved the cows across the county road to graze another pasture for three weeks. Cattle were then moved to the second stockpiled meadow which consisted of 5 acres. This field was split into three paddocks and grazing began on December 7. The 5-acre field provided 12 days of grazing for the herd.

The month of December brought cold temperatures and several winter storms that left snow cover on the ground for most of the month. Mr. Suan began feeding hay in order to supplement the remaining forage on December 19th at a rate of 1 round bale per day. He fed hay at that rate for about two weeks. On January 1st, he started feeding two round bales per day since all available forage had been grazed.

Mr. Suan also improved the access road to his hilltop meadow by installing several culverts, water bars, adding filter fabric, and applying stone to the surface of the road. Since improving the road, he can now access his hilltop meadow in order to feed and transport hay during winter months.

Observations and Results

Mr. Suan was satisfied with the first year of the pilot project. Initial feedback and economic analysis from the first year of winter grazing indicate that the system will be cost effective for his operation. He saved an estimated \$1131. This represents a reduction in feed costs of \$44 per year per cow. He noted that he saved 1-hour labor per day when he was grazing instead of feeding hay. The extended grazing season allowed him to save 40 round bales of hay compared to previous years. He also noted that the cattle maintained excellent body condition while grazing stockpiled forages. Another benefit was that he did not rut or gully out any of his meadows because he did not need to use his tractor while his cattle were grazing, and he used his access road for his tractor when transporting and feeding hay in his hilltop meadow. Water quality improvements and a reduction in soil erosion were accomplished with improved winter feeding areas and better access to winter feeding areas.

Mr. Suan noted a couple of areas where improvements are needed. The first was that there needed to be an earlier application of fertilizer. He also recognizes that both water systems need to be developed so livestock do not have to travel so far for water during the winter grazing periods. He will begin stockpiling forage in early August this year in order to increase dry matter production. ■

William Suan Extended Season Grazing Case Study Economics

Cost of Winter Feeding (Previous Year Average)				
Winter Feeding Period (Nov. 15th - April 15th) with 26 cows				
Item	Qty	Units	Price/Unit	Expense
Hay	240	rolls	\$ 20.00	\$ 4,800.00
Minerals	1	unit	\$ 200.00	\$ 200.00
Hand Labor to Feed Cattle 1 hr/day	150	hours	\$ 8.00	\$ 1,200.00
Labor with Tractor to Feed Cattle - 1/2 hr/day	75	hours	\$ 25.00	\$ 1,875.00
Labor with Tractor for Spring Cleanup	10	hours	\$ 25.00	\$ 250.00
Total Average Winter Feeding Costs (Previous Year)				\$ 8,325.00
Cost per Cow for 26 cows				\$ 320.19
Cost per Cow per day for 150 day period				\$ 2.13
Cost of Winter Feeding (Year 2000-2001)				
Winter Feeding Period (Nov. 15th - April 15th) with 26 cows				
Item	Qty	Units	Price/Unit	Expense
Hay	200	rolls	\$ 20.00	\$ 4,000.00
Minerals	1	unit	\$ 200.00	\$ 200.00
Hand Labor to Feed Cattle 1 hr/day	118	hours	\$ 8.00	\$ 944.00
Labor with Tractor to Feed Cattle - 1/2 hr/day	59	hours	\$ 25.00	\$ 1,475.00
Labor during Grazing Period	17	hours	\$ 8.00	\$ 136.00
Fertilizer (18-46-0)	2400	pounds	\$ 0.12	\$ 288.00
Fertilizer Spreading Labor	4	hours	\$ 25.00	\$ 100.00
Fencing Materials (\$527/10yrs)	1	unit	\$ 52.70	\$ 52.70
Total Average Winter Feeding Costs (2000-2001)				\$ 7,193.30
Cost per Cow for 26 cows				\$ 276.67
Cost per Cow per day for 150 day period				\$ 1.84



2nd Annual MID-AMERICA GRASSLAND EVALUATION CONTEST

The 2nd Annual Mid-America Grassland Evaluation Contest will be held at Cape Girardeau, Missouri from June 11-13, 2001. The contest is sponsored by the Missouri Forage and Grassland Council in cooperation with the Missouri Department of Conservation, University of Missouri Outreach and Extension, and USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service.

The contest is open to FFA and 4-H teams from all 50 states. As many as five FFA teams and five 4-H teams from each state will be allowed to compete. Each team consists of four members and a coach. The contest is divided into four sections: 1) soil interpretations, 2) plant identification, 3) grassland condition, and 4) wildlife habitat. Participants are divided into four groups and they rotate through all four sections at 25 minute intervals. The goal of the contest is to educate students in the benefits, use, and management of grasslands for livestock production and wildlife habitat.

Registration fee is \$60 per team. All pre-registered teams will be sent four Grassland Evaluation Contest Study Guides, maps, hotel information, etc. This year the American Forage and Grassland Council (AFGC) has allocated \$2500 to support student team travel to the contest. The conditions are a maximum of \$500 to any one team, and the state AFGC affiliate council is required to match the money 1:1. Requests for

travel support should be submitted to American Forage and Grassland Council, P.O. Box 94, Georgetown, TX 78627, Attention: Dana Tucker. The letter of request for travel support must be accompanied by a letter from the state AFGC affiliate council indicating their commitment to match the travel grant. Travel support will be awarded on a first come, first served basis. ■

For more information about the contest, contact:

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Jack Cutshall

Louisiana Cattleman
of the Year

by Dan Caudle, GLCI Coordinator,
Fort Worth, TX



Jack Cutshall was recently honored as Cattleman of the Year by the Louisiana Cattlemen's Association (LCA) during the Southeast Beef Symposium in Lafayette, Louisiana. Jack is a member of the National GLCI Steering Committee representing the National Cattleman's Beef Association. He was recognized for stewardship of the natural resources on his own ranch, his many years of service providing technical assistance to other livestock producers, his special efforts to conserve Louisiana's grazing lands and coastal wetlands, his outstanding service to LCA, and his contributions to GLCI.

Jack has implemented many conservation measures and state-of-the-art grazing management on his Rafter J Ranch near Glenmora. Before retiring as State Range Conservationist for the Soil Conservation Service, Jack was recognized as a leader in the conservation and management of Louisiana's grazing land resources. Jack has been a member of .LCA for many years and has served in many leadership positions, including his long-time role as chairman of the Private Lands and Environmental Management Committee. He has also been involved in the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative for many years. He was one of the founding members of the Louisiana Grazing Lands Conservation Coalition, and is a member of the national GLCI Steering Committee. ■

THE CHAIR C R E R

The spring business meeting of the National GLCI Steering Committee was held in Washington, DC from March 19-21. All of the national member organizations were present. The reception on Capitol Hill from such key supporters as Senator Conrad Burns, Representative Joe Skeen, and Representative Frank Lucas was extremely favorable. We are pleased with the support of these and other congressional friends for GLCI and the proposal for a Conservation of Private Lands Act (CPLA) stand-alone bill.

The DRAFT version of CPLA contains these five essential elements:

1. Restore NRCS staffing for field level technical assistance to pre-1985 levels.
2. Increase research in soil, water, plant, and wildlife science...the need for science-based data for Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) is an example.
3. Establish short courses for both producers and agency personnel in soil, water, plant, livestock, and wildlife management.
4. Provide cost-share assistance for installation of conservation practices and systems based on the development, implementation, and maintenance of a comprehensive conservation plan for a five to ten year period.
5. Ensure confidentiality of conservation plans as a private agreement between the landowner and the conservation district, not as a public record that is subject to open records access.

I want to personally thank the steering committee members for their hard work on behalf of GLCI, their support of the Conservation of Private Lands Act concept, as well as the funding of the Conservation of Private Grazing Lands provisions of the 1996 Farm Bill at \$60 million, and the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative earmark of \$20 million.

The National GLCI Steering Committee also approved a motion to hold the Second National Grazing Conference in December 2003. Stay tuned as we move forward with this next grazing conference. Send your suggestions for conference themes, session topics, and speakers to Dennis W. Neffendorf, National GLCI Coordinator at P.O. Box 6567, Fort Worth, TX 76115 or through the GLCI website at www.glci.org.

Bob Drake, Chairman
National GLCI Steering Committee

GLCINews

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Visit the GLCI homepage at <http://www.glci.org>