

Volume 17, Number 3
May/June 2012

A voluntary
partnership
with private
landowners

IN THIS ISSUE:

Graze & Save!
Management planning
can help stretch the
grazing season.

**Turning Tourism
Into An Asset**
Farmers and ranchers
can add value to their
business by sharing their
land and experiences with
the public.

**Ag Careers Offer
Opportunities**
With more people being
added to the planet, the
need for agriculturists
also increases.

GLCI News

Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

300 Days of Grazing *Yes, it can be done!*

By Kindra Gordon

As prices for harvested feeds, fuel and fertilizer continue to rise, cow-calf and stocker operators recognize that more grazing and less feeding can reduce production costs and improve profits. With that in mind, a few years ago Extension and animal science specialists at the University of Arkansas were prompted to re-evaluate what livestock producers could be doing in their state to curb costs and become more efficient.

They came up with an effort called the 300 Days Grazing Program. Today, it is helping producers save hundreds and thousands of dollars, reports Tom Troxel, animal science professor and associate department head at the University of Arkansas.

Overall, the program is helping producers be more efficient with pasture, hay and feed management without affecting their livestock production. On average, Arkansas producers feed hay for 135 days. University of Arkansas professor John Jennings says, "With our long growing season and forage options, there's no reason we should have to feed hay that long."

Jennings points out that many producers plan and manage for a hay crop — when they should plan and manage for a pasture crop that the livestock can harvest instead. He offers these four steps for anyone looking to streamline and add efficiency to their forage program:

1. Start with an inventory of your forage base.
2. Determine what management practices could be added to increase seasonal grazing from that forage base.
3. Add complementary forages to fill in seasonal gaps.
4. Plan forage and grazing practices ahead for the year.

From that, Jennings says, "Monitor and adjust your forages and livestock as needed." Among the strategies being employed by Arkansas producers are rotational and strip grazing; the addition of legumes; improved hay storage and feeding; as well as stockpiling of forages and planting winter annuals for fall and winter grazing.

(continued on page 2)

300 Days of Grazing

(continued from page 1)

Also important, says Jennings, is the use of soil testing to determine soil fertility needs to optimize forage production.

Utilizing electric fencing vs. permanent fences is another beneficial tool that allows producers flexibility with their grazing efforts.

Last but not least, Troxel emphasizes that planning one or more seasons ahead is critical to success. "Planning helps ensure forage is available when the cows need it," he concludes.

For more about U of A's 300 Days Grazing Program and the grazing demonstration sites set up within the state, visit: http://www.aragriculture.org/forage_pasture/grazing_program/default.htm

Editor's note: This information was presented to producers during Cattlemen's College at the Cattle Industry Convention in Nashville in early February.

ADD VALUE WITH RECREATION



By maximizing the recreational value of their land, farmers and ranchers could reap an additional \$20,000 per year without sowing a single seed, according to Daryl Jones of the Natural Resources Enterprises Program at Mississippi State University. A recent study in Mississippi showed recreational potential increased land value by \$654 per acre, or 52%. That's on top of the agricultural and timber value of the land, and it's not unique to Mississippi.

Allowing the public onto private land to hunt, fish, bird watch and ride horses can be a boon for the environment too, since farmers and ranchers are providing a home to a thriving wildlife population.

Jones also pointed out that the state gets a bump by the landowners' increased incomes and from all the recreational tourists, including international guests, who are drawn to the region

"It takes a lot of money to get an auto company to open a plant in rural America, but what comes from these enterprises is a 'real time' impact," he explained. People from around the world travel to rural areas in the U.S. to hunt, fish and stay in bed and breakfasts, but urbanites from the cities that border rural areas are a ready-made client base, as are those who grew up on farms and ranches and want their city-raised children to get a taste of rural life.

Jones encourages farmers and ranchers to start small and diversify over time, making sure they work with their land.

Mississippi landowner Wade Henson started off with a few hunts and now his Cypress Lodge Outfitters offers whitetailed deer, turkey, duck, quail and dove hunts, as well as space for church and family gatherings.

Jones emphasizes that a landowner will get out what he puts into his recreational enterprise. Offering hunting services like planting food plots, lodging and providing guide opportunities will boost revenues.

And while landowners should get quite specific in their business plan, he urges them to look at the big picture and consider what recreational tourists really want — entertainment.

"People want to be entertained on your farm," he said. "They want to see your place. They want to talk to you."

They are also interested in a cultural experiences. Jones says. "We invented country. That is culture and it brings people in."

There are some challenges to recreational diversification, such as securing the appropriate insurance coverage and protecting against risks in nature, like wasp stings and normal farming practices.

Jones says the Natural Resources Enterprises Program helps farmers and ranchers in Mississippi and beyond who are considering integrating recreational activities with their current farm, forestry and ranch practices.

Part of the support the program provides is on-site workshops during which growers hear presentations from professionals and landowners who have launched recreational enterprises How-to information, such as what will work best on the farm and the availability of federal programs, is also discussed.

The MSU Natural Resource Enterprises web page and additional information can be found at <http://www.naturalresources.msstate.edu/>.

AG CAREERS: OPTIMISTIC OUTLOOK AWAITS AG GRADS

It's an exciting time to be in agriculture with an abundance of career opportunities ahead. With the global population projected to expand to more than 9 billion people by the middle of this century – a whopping 2.3 billion people will be added to the planet over the next four decades.

As a result, there is growing need for food and the myriad of products, research, and industry related to agriculture, which also means career growth for the ag sector.

That uptick is already being seen: a USDA outlook report forecasts 5% more college graduates with expertise in agricultural and food systems, renewable energy, and the environment will be needed from 2010 to 2015 compared to the five years previous.

Specifically, the USDA study, titled *Employment Opportunities for College Graduates in Food, Renewable Energy and the Environment, 2010-2015*, projects there will be an estimated 54,400 annual openings nationally for individuals with college degrees related to food, renewable energy, and environmental specialties through the year 2015. Seventy-four percent of the jobs are expected in business and science occupations; 15% in agriculture and forestry production; and 11% in education, communication, and governmental services.

The same report projects that there will only be approximately 53,500 qualified graduates available each year – with about 29,300 of those students having specific ag-related degrees in those fields. Resulting in job growth out-pacing college graduates, and putting individuals with ag-related degrees and experience in demand.

What's Hot?

The USDA report pinpoints a few career fields that will particularly be seeking employees in the future as well. They include:

- More graduates from the allied fields of biological and health sciences will be required to fill positions that address consumer preferences for a safe and nutritious food supply.
- Likewise, more earth and atmospheric scientists and environmental engineers will be required to deal with the evolving public policy choices in energy and the environment.
- Shortfalls of qualified graduates to work as plant geneticists and plant breeders, climate change analysts, and food safety and security specialists are anticipated during 2010–15.

Growing Career Fields

The opportunities – and occupations – in agriculture are diverse, with growth projected in many career fields. Specifically, the U.S. Department of Labor projects significant growth in selected food, renewable energy, and environment jobs through 2018. Among those occupations and the anticipated percent increase in jobs include:

- Agricultural Inspectors (12.8%)
- Animal Scientists (13.2%)
- Biochemists and Biophysicists (37.4%)
- Computer and Information Systems Managers (16.9%)
- Credit Analysts (15%)
- Environmental Engineers (30.6%)
- Environmental Scientists and Specialists, (27.9%)
- Financial Analysts (19.8%)
- Food Scientists and Technologists (16.3%)
- Hydrologists (18.3%)
- Market Research Analysts (28.1%)
- Natural Sciences Managers (15.5%)
- Pest Control Workers (15.3%)
- Public Relations Specialists (24.0%)
- Recreation Workers (14.7%)

GREAT FINDS ONLINE

- **All About Soils** – A website featuring all things soil can be found at <https://www.soils.org/story>. Short videos on the site feature soils connection to human health, water quality and food security. The site is part of the Soil Science Society of America's website.
- **Range Monitoring Video** – The North Dakota State University Extension Service and Hettinger Research Extension Center have teamed up to produce a video titled "The Importance of Range Monitoring." The video highlights the benefits of healthy rangelands including forage for livestock, wildlife habitat, water storage and filtration and soil erosion protection – as well as recreational possibilities. View the video at www.ag.ndsu.edu/HettingerREC/range-wildlife.
- **Got carbon?** www.carbonranching.org is part of the Quivira Coalition's *Carbon Ranch Project*, which explores strategies that use food and stewardship to build soil, sequester CO₂, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and build resilience in local landscapes. The purpose of this web site is to provide a virtual library of resources related to the Carbon Ranch idea.
- **Educational Ag Games** – A fun website aims to educate consumers about agriculture. The site is www.myamericanfarm.org, which was created by the American Farm Bureau with sponsorship from Pioneer Hi-Bred. The website offers 15 educational and interactive games along with teacher resources and family activities. Each of the activities on the site is designed to emphasize four consistent messages:
 - Agriculture is everywhere.
 - Farmers feed the world.
 - Farmers steward the land.
 - Farmers care for animals.

Examples of games on the site include: *Where in the World?* – a mystery game that challenges individuals to locate where different crops and livestock originated around the world; *Ag Across America* – which provides a quiz about American ag while also testing geography knowledge; *Keys to Stewardship* – a race to earn points by identifying different conservation practices hidden in a farm scene.

The My American Farm activities are available free online. To further grow awareness for the website and the ag knowledge it emphasizes, portable kiosks with the My American Farm activities are also being created for use as an ag literacy exhibit at various venues – from schools to State Fairs and farmers markets.



Pharo, Grandin and Provenza among speakers coming to 5NCGL in Orlando in December



The Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative is busy planning the 5th National Conference on Grazing Lands (5NCGL), which will take place in Orlando, Florida, December 9th - 12, 2012.

Among the speakers confirmed for the event include: animal scientist Temple Grandin, Colorado rancher Kit Pharo, and animal behavior specialist Fred Provenza.

What truly sets the National Conference on Grazing Lands format apart from all other conferences is that approximately half of all featured presenters are real producers recounting their own success stories – and lessons learned – so that other's may benefit.

The conference objective is “To Heighten Awareness of the Economic and Environmental Benefits of Grazing Lands.” The 5NCGL will draw producers, academics, conservationists, and virtually anyone interested in effective natural resource management. Abstracts are now being accepted and more information can be found at: <http://www.glc.org/5NCGL.html> or contact Monti Golla, GLCI Initiative Administrator, at 979-777-9779 or grazinglands@verizon.net.

You can now keep up with GLCI and pending information about the 5NCGL via Facebook. Check it out at <http://www.facebook.com/grazinglands>.

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

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and gender (Title VII). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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

American Farmland Trust (800) 944-2342

Bureau of Land Management (202) 484-3608

Grassland Council (800) 333-3500

American Sheep Industry (303) 771-6575

Dairy Industry (511) 372-6575

National Association of State Broadcasters (202) 547-6233

National Catlemen's Union (202) 541-1600

National Farmers Union (202) 347-0228

Beef Association (202) 547-3309

National Cattlemen's Beef Association (202) 547-2331

Conservation Districts (202) 547-6233

National Association of State Soil Conservation Societies (511) 289-2331

Soil and Water Conservation Society (981) 966-3309

Society for Range Management (303) 998-3309

Soil and Water Conservation Districts (511) 289-2331

Contact these affiliated organizations: