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GLCI News

Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

A voluntary partnership with private landowners

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Cover photograph: Darrell Wood and his "hired hands" check the forage and cattle on his California ranch.

GLCI in the Golden State

California has established an interim Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) coalition. It is a confederation of organizations focused on realizing the full potential of privately owned grazing lands in the state. Charles Pritchard, representing the California Association of Conservation Districts, is the current chair. Ken Zimmerman, representing the California Cattlemen's Association, is vice chair.

A total of seven producer-related organizations make up the membership of the interim coalition. Representatives of NRCS, California Cooperative Extension Service, and the California Section of the Society for Range Management serve as advisors to the group.

GLCI became active in California during 1995-96. Hershel Read, NRCS State Conservationist, hired five new Rangeland Management Specialists. These new specialists were all experienced and have quickly become productive employees. They have significantly increased the amount of technical assistance available to owners and managers of private grazing lands in California.

Three major areas where these specialists provide assistance include EQIP assistance on grazing lands, the Rangeland Watershed Program, and Livestock Fecal Sampling/Nutritional Balance Analyzer (NUTBAL) projects.

The Rangeland Watershed Program is a partnership between NRCS and the University of California Cooperative Extension Service. Through this effort, Ranch Water Quality shortcourses have been conducted in numerous counties since 1996. These courses are designed to acquaint landowners with water quality regulations and inform them about non-point source pollution. Ranchers and land managers attending the courses receive assistance in documenting their resources, goals, management practices, and completing self-assessment of non-point sources of pollution.

During 1997-98, shortcourses were conducted in 12 locations and about 150 plans were completed on more than 450,000 acres. More than 20 shortcourses are planned for 1998-99. Rancher interest in these courses is increasing because of stronger regulatory attention to Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) restrictions for sediment in coastal rivers.

(Continued on next page)

The Golden State...continued

Participants in the California Range Camp in San Mateo County learn to "read the range." Each year the camp hosts 25 to 30 high school students who study rangeland, livestock, and environmental issues.

The Livestock Fecal Sampling/ Nutritional Balance Analyzer (NUTBAL) project is an NRCS program in partnership with the Grazingland Animal Nutrition (GAN) Lab at Texas A&M University. In the program, producers collect livestock fecal samples and send them to the GAN Lab for analysis. The lab reports are returned within a few days and evaluated using NUTBAL computer software. The results predict nutritional requirements and animal performance. The information can be used by the producer to make timely management decisions based on forage quality and livestock performance goals.

This project holds great promise for California livestock producers. It has increased the understanding of ruminant nutrition and forage quality on California rangelands. Some of the producers participating in the project have already reported improvements in animal performance and increased profitability because of adjustments in their supplemental feeding programs based on this technology.

Are You Interested in Receiving More Information on the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative?

Contact these affiliated organizations:

American Farm Bureau Federation
Herb Maning
(605) 386-4205

American Forage and Grassland Council
Dana Tucker
1-800-944-2342

American Sheep Industry
Tom McDonnell
(303) 771-3500

Dairy Industry
John Roberts
(802) 462-2252

National Association of Conservation Districts
Robert Toole
(405) 359-9011

National Cattlemen's Beef Association
John Pemderton
(202) 347-0228

Society for Range Management
Craig Whittekiend
(303) 355-7070

Soil and Water Conservation Society
Craig Cox
(515) 289-2331, ext. 13

USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
Gary Westmoreland
(254) 742-9948

Bahiagrass pasture in Hendry County, Florida.

Montana Water Quality-GLCI Demonstration Projects and Activities

Livestock Performance & Water Quality

Water Quality is an important concern. The Montana GLCI Coalition has implemented some demonstration projects and activities to address water quality on grazing lands. One of the demonstrations involved the installation of projects in three different watersheds to determine livestock preference for different water sources. Earthen ponds supply most of the summer water supply for Montana livestock. As water levels drop throughout the summer, degradation of shoreline vegetation often occurs. This can cause sediments to be suspended in the water, thus reducing water quality. These projects consisted of pumping or gravity flowing water out of reservoirs into water tanks or drinking troughs located away from the ponds.

Water quality in tanks and troughs is higher than in ponds because there are fewer total suspended solids (TSS). Preliminary findings indicate that cattle prefer to drink fresh water from tanks and troughs rather than muddy water from ponds. Research has shown that cattle performance increases with higher quality water. Vegetation around the shoreline of reservoirs will increase due to less trampling and grazing. This provides an improved filter system for runoff collected in reservoirs.

Water Quality Monitoring

When streams in Carter County, MT, were found on the impaired streams list, the Carter County Conservation District bought water quality monitoring kits in order to assess and monitor the situation on their own. The project is now in its fourth year. Landowners gather for two days each year in July to monitor water quality in the streams. They measure pH, conductivity, and total dissolved solids. Data from the study will allow landowners to assess their own water quality situations and implement conservation practices if needed.

The Dawson County Conservation District's Range Committee sponsored a range and riparian monitoring workshop last June. More than 30 people attended including livestock producers, media, legislators, and the associate director of the National Public Lands Council. The program was taught by Extension Service and Department of Natural Resources specialists and assisted by NRCS and District employees and volunteers. Participants learned the "why, where, what, when, and how" of water quality techniques to enhance management decisions. It was an exceptional learning experience because of the interaction between ranchers and others.

A painted bunting uses the overflow from a livestock water trough. Grazing lands provide homes for a wide variety of creatures.

GLCI Joins NPREC

Noel Soto, Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative Coordinator for the Northeast Region, is now a member of the Northeast Pasture Research and Extension Consortium (NPREC). After hearing about the GLCI from different sources during the past several months, leaders of the NPREC agreed that GLCI should be represented in the Consortium.

Forage-based livestock systems generate nearly two-thirds of the agricultural income in the northeastern states. Based on this and other factors, in 1994 the Senate Appropriations Committee gave directions to the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) to create the Consortium. According to the Senate, the objectives were to promote applied pasture research, link existing resources, and foster continued state, federal, and public/private partnerships for research in this area.

The membership of the NPREC represents the public sector (research, extension, and government agencies) as well as the private sector (producer and support industries). One-half of the members are from the public sector and one-half from the private. Two co-leaders (one from each sector) share responsibilities. GLCI has many common interests with NPREC, and the 12 state area of responsibility is the same for both groups.

The invitation for GLCI to join NPREC was well received and we look forward to working together.

Southeast Region GLCI Meeting

State Grazing Lands Coalition members from across the Southeast Region will meet in Athens, GA, on November 4-5, 1998. The forum will feature opportunities for state coalition members to learn from their counterparts in other states as well as members of the National GLCI Steering Committee. Since all GLCI Coalition members serve in a voluntary capacity, it is important that they make every moment count. The meeting will begin at 1 p.m. on Wednesday and conclude at noon on Thursday. For more information, contact Sid Brantly at sbrantly@al.nrcs.usda.gov or (334) 887-4568.

***Hemarthria* grassland in deep south Florida.**

Georgia Forage Conference

The Georgia GLCI is sponsoring a statewide forage conference on December 15, 1998 at the Georgia Center for Continuing Education at the University of Georgia in Athens. The conference will begin at 9 a.m. Featured speakers include Bob Drake, Warren Thompson, Pat Bagley, Joe Burns, R.L. Dalrymple, Carl Hoveland, Don Ball, and Gary Lacefield. The conference will consist of a general session in the morning and six breakout sessions in the afternoon.

For more information contact the Georgia Center at (800) 884-1381 or register for the conference by e-mail at Register@gactr.uga.edu. The conference registration fee, which includes lunch, will be $35 if paid prior to Dec. 1.

GLCI News

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DON'T FORGET!!!

GLCI Logo contest is coming soon. Visit the GLCI homepage for more news and information about the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative. Our web address is: http://www.glci.org