Volume 4, Number 6
Nov-Dec 1999

GLCINews

Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

A voluntary partnership with private landowners

IN THIS ISSUE

South Texas Ranching.....
The Las Novillas Ranch won the *"Excellence in Rangeland Management"* award from the Texas Section Society for Range Management in recognition of their achievements.

Kentucky Grazing School.....
The school features both classroom and field activities.

The Chair's Corner...
National achievements of GLCI.

Cover photograph:
Quality white-tailed bucks are a major objective on the Lopez family's ranch.

SOUTH TEXAS RANCHING...

Putting it all Together

By Stan Reinke, Wildlife Biologist, NRCS, Victoria, Texas

The Las Novillas Ranch is owned and operated by the Lopez family. The ranch sits on the southern extreme of the Rio Grande Plains' mixed brush country in Starr County near the town of Rio Grande City. The aura of South Texas surrounds the ranch. Vast expanses of mixed brush, big deer, big cows, and harsh climatic extremes all go together to make up this unique ranching environment.

Lionel Lopez and Lionel Lopez, Jr. had a clear picture of what they wanted their ranch to look like and what they wanted it to produce. Their first priority was to raise high quality white-tailed deer. Their second goal was to produce livestock profitably. They also wanted to use livestock to help manipulate the grassy vegetation to maintain and improve habitat for deer and quail. With the help of their foreman, Ruben Villareal, they set out to accomplish these objectives.

Shortly after purchasing the property, the Lopez family contacted the local Natural Resources Conservation Service for technical assistance in developing their plan for the future. At that time, much of the property was so brush infested that it could only be seen on foot, and a machete had to be used to get through the dense thorn-scrub brush.

Erasmo Montemayor (then range conservationist in the Rio Grande City NRCS field office) evaluated the ranch and did numerous range surveys. He helped the owners delineate soils and range sites, identify fencing and watering needs, and design brush management patterns. He also provided stocking rate recommendations and resource management advice. He then assisted the Lopez family with development of a long-range comprehensive plan for their ranch.

(Continued on next page)

SOUTH TEXAS RANCHING...

(Continued from page one)

The plan included cross fencing, water development, and brush management. Brush management had to be carefully planned in order to leave an adequate amount of woody vegetation to enhance deer habitat. Great care was taken to ensure that habitat diversity was achieved by clearing and leaving brush in each of the various habitat types. Since deer are "edge" animals, brush was maintained throughout the ranch in strips, blocks, and patterns.

After the brush management work was completed, some of the cleared areas were seeded to buffelgrass. These areas are grazed, hayed, and used for seed harvest. The rest of the cleared areas were disked in patterns to enhance native forb and grass production and to encourage taller brush species to resprout. This created lush browse conditions for the deer herd and high quality habitat for quail.

Prior to implementing the resource management plan, Las Novillas Ranch had a buck/doe ratio of 1:5. To assist with deer herd management, a high fence was constructed around the ranch. This helped control the deer population and enhance deer quality. For several years the owners did not allow bucks to be harvested, but some does were harvested.

In the fall of 1998, a deer census showed that deer population numbers had reached the desired level and the buck/doe ratio had been adjusted to 1:2. By using high fences, brush management, and selective deer harvest techniques for several years, the Lopez family accomplished its objective. Based upon the census, the ranch was opened to commercial hunting for the first time in the fall of 1998.

In order to maintain better control of the hunts and the numbers and kinds of deer harvested, the ranch decided to sell three-day package hunts. Excess deer are harvested by family and friends near the end of the hunting season. The first-year hunt was very successful…hunter success was 100%. One trophy class buck was harvested and another mature buck was harvested that field dressed an impressive 180 pounds. Mature doe weights are consistent each year. These are indicators of herd health, habitat management, and nutritional quality of the forage and browse. Native forage and browse species on the ranch provide most of the nutritional requirements of the deer herd, but they are also supplemented with food plots and high protein pellets.

Entrance to Las Novillas Ranch in South Texas. Strips and patterns of brush were cleared (background) while other areas were left untreated (foreground) to enhance wildlife habitat for deer.

Cattle are used on the ranch for profit and as tools to manipulate the grassy vegetation to enhance wildlife habitat. A base herd of 80 commercial Beefmaster cows is maintained. The ranch is divided into 10 pastures for management purposes. The cow herd grazes in a one-herd, four-pasture rotation grazing system. When conditions are good and excess forage is produced, steers are purchased and graze in a five-pasture rotation grazing system.

South Texas is a harsh and demanding environment. Rainfall and temperatures are unpredictable and highly variable. This requires flexibility in resource management. On Las Novillas Ranch, one pasture is always maintained as a reserve and can be allocated to the cows or steers depending on which group needs the extra forage. There are years when no steers are purchased because first allocation of all forage is for the deer and cow herd.

Lionel Lopez, Lionel Lopez, Jr. and their foreman, Ruben Villareal, have worked hard to achieve their objectives on Las Novillas Ranch. Their wise planning and dedicated efforts have made this ranch a model for others to follow. They recently received the "Excellence in Rangeland Management" award from the Texas Section Society for Range Management in recognition of their achievements. The ranch is divided into 10 pastures for management purposes. The Lopez family has implemented a management philosophy that enables their natural resources to continue to improve. The land, the wildlife, and the livestock reflect the balance needed to sustain the range and its inhabitants.

Cows, grass, and brush are integral parts of the overall ranching and wildlife operation on Las Novillas Ranch near Rio Grande City, Texas.

Kentucky Grazing School...

A Team Approach

By Dr. Garry Lacefield, Extension Forage Specialist,
University of Kentucky

Kentucky is one of 14 states now conducting "Grazing Schools." The Kentucky Grazing School is patterned after the very successful Missouri school. Support from all sponsors has been excellent. Participation and encouragement from students has been overwhelming.

Two three-day schools are offered each year. The spring school is usually held in the central part of the state, and the fall school is usually in the western part. The school features both classroom and field activities. Field activities include plant identification, estimating pasture yield, fence building, paddock design, water development, and many other related topics. The school is so popular, the overall program has been expanded to offer one- day schools in several locations throughout the state.

The success of these schools is a result of the need, interest, and opportunities for grazing throughout the state. A team of dedicated individuals has worked harmoniously to develop, refine, and improve the Kentucky Grazing Schools. Members of this team include representatives from University of Kentucky, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Kentucky Department of Agriculture, Kentucky Forage & Grassland Council, Kentucky Cattlemen's Association, and the livestock/agricultural industry.

For more information concerning Kentucky Grazing Schools, contact:

Dr. Jimmy Henning at 606/257-3144
jhenning@ca.uky.edu
Dr. Garry Lacefield at 270/365-7541, Ext. 202
glacefie@ca.uky.edu

Fence building demonstration at the fall grazing school at Princeton, Kentucky.

CALL FOR PAPERS

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON GRAZING LANDS

DECEMBER 5-8, 2000
BALLY'S LAS VEGAS
LAS VEGAS, NV

You are invited !

National Conference on Grazing Lands Hosted by:

National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD)
Grazing Lands and Public Lands Committee
Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI)
National GLCI Steering Committee
Many other sponsoring organizations

Purpose: Heighten awareness of the economic and environmental effects of proper grazing land management.

Target Audiences:

- **Consumers**
- **Conservationists**
- **Environmentalists**
- **Urban-based resource interests**
- **Grazing land managers**
- **Landowners**
- **Others interested in effective natural resource management**

Conference sponsors are accepting abstracts for oral and poster papers in the following categories:

- **Building partnerships between agricultural, grazing, and urban communities**
- **Successful "cutting edge" management technologies for grazing practices**
- **Economic and public policy implications of grazing**
- **Optimizing grazing land health for environmental and social benefits**

All accepted papers are eligible for publication in the conference proceedings. To submit an abstract you need to prepare a 400 word or less description of your presentation (indicate oral or poster). Include your name, mailing address, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail address with the abstract. Submit abstracts by mail, fax, or e-mail to:

John W. Peterson, NCGL Program Mngnt.
9304 Lundy Ct.
Burke, VA 22015-3431
Phone: 703.445.6886
Fax: 703.455.6888
E-mail: jwpeterson@erols.com

DEADLINE for Abstracts - APRIL 1, 2000

Abstracts will not be returned. Notification of accepted abstracts will begin in June, 2000.
Presenters are responsible for providing their own travel, registration, and other expenses for the conference.

"THE CHAIR'S CORNER"

As we near the end of the current millennium, there is no shortage of issues facing America's private grazing lands and its owners. Invasive species, TMDLs, endangered species, riparian areas, carbon sequestration, AFOs—the list goes on. While the number of issues and their complexity seem almost staggering at times, we can take heart.

Increasingly, grazing land owners and managers are leading the way in issue identification, definition, and resolution through GLCI. On a national level, GLCI's collaborative process continues to gain recognition with Congress and the federal executive branch of government. Recent examples of this are:

1. Passage of $17 million in GLCI funds for fiscal year 2000 (an increase of $2 million or 13 percent over 1999 levels).

2. Selection of GLCI as one of the panelists in the Secretary of Agriculture's Private Land Conservation Forums held in five regional locations in October, 1999.

While these examples are positive indicators of the achievements of GLCI, the really important indicators are those accomplishments made by state GLCI coalitions. Nationally, GLCI is only as strong as the individual states that make up the collective whole.

As we enter the new millennium, let all of us resolve to do our part to make GLCI work effectively and efficiently. We have a great natural resource to protect and enhance—and the freedom to do it voluntarily. Together, we can achieve a measure of benefits worthy of our stewardship and responsibility!

BOB DRAKE, Chairman
National GLCI Steering Committee

GLCINews

Contact these affiliated organizations:

American Farm Bureau Federation
Herb Manig
(847) 685-8785

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 Pemberton
(202) 347-0228

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

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

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