Volume 11, Number 6
November - December 2005

A voluntary partnership with private landowners

GLCI News

Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

IN THIS ISSUE:

Florida's Diversity
Tour showcased Florida's grazing opportunities.

Innovation in TX, NY
Two examples of "out-of-the-box" thinking for grazing success.

CSP in Colorado
This rancher shares his story of caring for the land.

Grazing Events
Plan to attend these upcoming events.

Chair's Corner
Highlights from the Fall Business Meeting held in September.

Cover photo: In Florida's ranch country; photo by Kindra Gordon.

Touring Florida's Diversity

Grazing tour held in Florida in conjunction with the National GLCI Steering Committee's fall business meeting.

By Kindra Gordon

Grazing enthusiasts were treated to an extensive look at the diverse grazing opportunities – and challenges – in Florida during a special tour held in early September in conjunction with the Steering Committee's annual fall business meeting. Tour stops during the two-day event included Nickerson Grazing Dairy, a review of the rangeland grazing systems operated by the Avon Park Air Force Range, and the Archbold Research Station.

Cattle ranch visits included the Carlton 2X4 Ranch, a 6,000-acre cattle, orchard and wildlife entity managed by Pat and Brady Pfeil and their sons, and the Longino Ranch owned by Buster Longino and managed by Cliff Coddington. Both of these ranches sustained incredible damage from Hurricane Andrew in 2004, and stories of how NRCS was involved in clean-up efforts – and what NRCS might be able to contribute to the Hurricanes Katrina and Rita clean-up — were discussed.

Despite Florida's abundance of sunshine and grass, water can also be problematic. Florida ranch manager and member of the National GLCI Steering Committee Pat Pfeil said, "This is the land of extremes." She said that she and her husband learned 30 years ago from the then Soil Conservation Service the importance of planning for resource management.

NRCS Chief Bruce Knight was also on hand for one day of the Florida tours. He addressed the group in regard to the future and said, "Conservation and economic development need not be mutually exclusive." Knight also expressed optimism saying he believes we are "on the cusp of a new golden age in conservation."

REPORTS FROM THE STATES

Out East...

Wyoming Calves Transition Well to New York

Cattle country is typically thought to be across the Great Plains and West, but Troy Bishopp from New York state wants people to graze more cattle in the East. "For 6-7 months my area grows great forage. Calves don't need to go to Kansas to be finished," says Bishopp who lives near Sangerfield in central New York. Bishopp is a custom grazer and also works for the Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District.

For several years Bishopp has specialized in "no ownership" grazing. He leases land from 6-7 landowners and then grazes it with cattle owned by his clients. This summer he had the opportunity to graze Devon-Angus steers raised by Glenn Barlow of Gillette, WY. Due to drought, Barlow was going to liquidate the 60 head and specialty grass-fed beef company Hardwick Beef wanted the genetics and end-product the steers had to offer. So they were shipped to New York where Bishopp custom-grazed them.

"We wanted to see how much they'd gain in New York and if they could transition from the Wyoming range to our native orchardgrass," he says. The steers had an average gain of 2.25 lbs./day. Hardwick Beef will now sell the beef to grass-finished markets.

Bishopp adds, "I want more of these grass-based genetics. With this trial we've shown that trucking animals here works. We have great grass to finish them on and we are close to urban consumers who want grass-fed beef. We need more graziers in the East."

Bishopp will speak at the PAST Conference Feb. 3-4 at Penn State. To visit more with him call 315-824-9849.

GRAZE NEW YORK!

Those involved with this Graze New York producer include, front row: Ken McDowall, RotoKawa Devon Stud, New Zealand; Mike Gourlay, Hardwick Beef; Marvin Moyer, Pennsylvania beef farmer; Laurel Hoffman, Pennsylvania NRCS; Gerald Fry, Bakewell Reproduction Center; Troy Bishopp, custom grazer; and Mike Debouc, owner of Leona Meat. In back are: David Huse, co-owner NY Beef Co.; Jason Murphy, Wyoming Cooperative Extension; Ridge Shinn, Hardwick Beef; and Joe Barnes, New York landowner.

From The South... TEXAS

Innovative Texan Learns from Ranch Mistakes

The Swiss are known for high quality watches, but one Swiss is known for his mistakes! Alain Galley and his brother John, who are of Swiss origin, Mexico raising, and ranch near Palestine, Texas, as well as in Mexico and other countries, hosted a summer Northeast Texas GLCI tour. On the tour Galley shared with participants how he pushes various aspects of his management program to failure, to then analyze the failure, make corrections, and push forward until he has learned from the next failure.

Galley's philosophy can be summed up: "If it don't pay, it don't stay!" To accomplish this he utilizes a diversified operation of Dorper sheep and Red Angus cows bred to Tule and Nelor, with crossbred heifers bred back to Devon bulls. All of these animals are selected for their utility in a 42-in. rainfall area with high humidity and heat indexes. An example of his pragmatic management is his selection pressure on hoof rot. To pick those sheep most susceptible, he herds them during the times that hoof rot seems to be the worst, then culls the sore-footed ones.

Quite the minimalist, only three people operate this 6,000 acre ranch that has a goal of 2,000 head of cattle and 5,000 of sheep. The ranch features water facilities with high pressure delivery so water is never a limiting factor in the prescribed grazing management. The cattle go first, then a mowing occurs if needed, then with adequate regrowth, the sheep rotate in. Equipment consists of a tractor, mower, hay baler and a couple of four wheelers. With no reliance on fertilizers, Galley is looking at the natural recycling of manure and the development of a polyculture in the introduced forages to provide the optimum production to meet his financial goals.

The Galleys bought the ranch nine years ago and Alain is quick to point out that he does not pretend to know anything. With a formal education in accounting and economics, he seeks out experts that can help him. He admits to getting a wide (and sometimes conflicting) variety of advice, but through all that, he finds those pearls of knowledge that apply to the context of his place.

The GLCI tour was organized by Texas Extension agent Truman Lamb, NE Regional GLCI chair; rancher Gary Price; and NRCS-GLCI range specialist David Polk.

Submitted by Mark Moseley, Texas GLCI Coordinator

From The West...

CSP Takes Root on the Shortgrass Prairie

Eleven years ago, looking for land to run a cattle operation in the high plains of northeastern Colorado, Colby Van Cleave found a place tucked away in the wind-swept, drought-prone Pawnee Creek watershed just south of the Nebraska border. It was not love-at-first-sight. After checking out the drought-damaged, over-grazed, cactus-covered pastures, Van Cleave was ready to look elsewhere. "But I saw there was a good calving area on the property," he says, adding "the location was good, and the house was nice, it'd just been remodeled." Today, Van Cleave and his wife Sandy are recognized as outstanding stewards of the land, qualifying for a top tier **Conservation Security Program** (CSP) stewardship award on more than 6,000 acres of restored, healthy rangeland.

Back then Van Cleave says he "knew the livestock side, but needed to learn the grazing side." He applied his passion for ranching to his new operation by working with the NRCS to set up two grazing management plans to accommodate a high-intensity, short-duration system, splitting his herd of just under 300 Angus-cross cows into two rotational patterns, allowing all of his fifteen pastures to rest for a minimum of forty days.

"The great thing about Colby's operation was that he didn't start with any bad habits that he'd have to undo later," says NRCS Greeley (CO) District Conservationist Jon Wicke. "He did things the right way, right from the start."

Van Cleave's success is rooted in his partnership with the Pawnee Grassland Council, a group of ranchers who participate in the National Grassland Grazing Allotment program, the West Greeley Conservation District, and with NRCS. He says, "The NRCS has taught me what I need to do and has done me so much good."

The Van Cleaves' CSP stewardship plan includes continuation of his prescribed grazing system for benefits to grassland resources, domestic livestock, and wildlife. In addition, next year he begins implementation of an energy management plan using biodiesel fuels, and will run the Nutritional Balance Analyzer program using West Greeley Conservation District's livestock scale and data recorder. "I can't believe there aren't more ranchers in CSP," says Colby. "It's a great program."

For more on the CSP program, visit www.nrcs.usda.gov.

- Submitted by Jeanette Colville, Colorado Area 2 NRCS Public Affairs Specialist

NRCS's Jon Wicke (left) and Colorado rancher Colby Van Cleave.

Grazing Events

Nov. 29-30: Western **Hay Business Conference & Expo**, Loveland, CO. For commercial hay producers and marketers. $150 per person to attend. FMI Cindy Kramer at 952-851-4698.

Feb. 3-4, 2006: ***PAST*** **Conference**, Penn State. FMI call Troy Bishopp at 315-824-9849.

Feb. 26-27, 2006: Spring **GLCI Steering Committee Meeting**, Holiday Inn Rosslyn, Washington, D.C. Make hotel reservations at 800-368-3408.

March 2006: This month is the deadline for abstracts to be considered for the **3rd National Conference on Grazing Lands** to be held in St. Louis in December 2006. The conference will have presentations and posters in three categories: East, West and Dairy. For more information contact program chairman John Spain at jbspain@att.net or call him at 479-789-2635.

Soil Survey Available On-Line

USDA has launched the Web Soil Survey site that will provide secure public access to the national soils information system. The website has been designed with three easy-to-use features – Define, View and Explore – and operates much like Internet sites that provide locator and directional information.

When viewers visit the web soil survey, they are asked to "Define" a geographic area of interest by selecting a state and county (parish) or just by highlighting an area or areas. Once a location has been defined and projected on the screen, the viewer has the choice to print the map and related information, save it to his/her hard drive or download the data for use in a geographic information system (GIS).

Viewers can also "Explore" the designated location for specific soils data, which gives important information on soil suitability in relationship to usage. To view the website go to http://soils.usda.gov/survey.

THE CHAIR'S CORNER

Bob Drake

We had great attendance and participation at GLCI's annual fall business meeting held Sept. 8-10 in Sarasota, FL. We were especially pleased to have NRCS Chief Bruce Knight accompany our group during the ranch tours. Additionally, NRCS Regional Assistant Chief Sarah Braasch attended both the tour and business meeting and listened to our accomplishments and endeavors ahead. Thanks to Pat Pfeil and Florida State Range Conservationist Pete Deal for organizing the informative tours. It's always a pleasure to be out on the land. *(For tour highlights, see page 1 of this newsletter.)*

At the fall business meeting tour, left to right: National GLCI Coordinator Kim Stine, Aggie Helle, NRCS Chief Bruce Knight, Assistant NRCS Chief-West Sarah Braasch; and California State Range Conservationist Ed Burton.

During our business meeting, we welcomed several new members to the committee. They include: **Allen Green** of Colorado to our State Conservationist's Advisory Committee; **Steve Kouplen,** representing American Farm Bureau Federation; **Bob Lee,** representing National Cattlemen's Beef Association; and **Howard Straub,** representing the dairy industry. Though he was not in attendance, longtime GLCI supporter **Rod Baumberger** will also be joining the committee representing the Soil and Water Conservation Society. New alternate producer members named to the committee included **Margaret Soulen Hinson,** representing the sheep industry; **Pat Pfeil,** representing Society for Range Management; and **Bob McCan,** representing NCBA.

With these changes **John "Chip" Merrill** and **Jack Cutshall** will become emeritus members of the committee. We thank them for their dedicated support over the years. For a complete list of the GLCI Steering Committee visit www.glci.org and click on "who's involved."

In GLCI business, a committee of Chip Merrill, Dave Forgey, Bob Lee and Kim Stine has been appointed to evaluate and make recommendations to revise the GLCI Strategic Plan. Several sub-committees have also been formed to work diligently on the upcoming Third National Conference on Grazing Lands in St. Louis in 2006.

Bob Drake, Chairman
National GLCI Steering Committee

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

GLCINews 11734 Weisman Rd. Whitewood, S.D. 57783

Contact these affiliated organizations:

American Farm Bureau Federation
(202) 484-3608

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

American Sheep Industry
Tom McDonnell
(303) 771-3500

Dairy Industry
Howard Straub
(517) 323-6575

National Association of Conservation Districts
Krysta Hardin
(202) 547-6223

National Cattlemen's Beef Association
Tamara Thies
(202) 347-0228

National Farmers Union
Chris Schepis
(202) 554-1600

Society for Range Management
Jason Campbell
(303) 986-3309

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

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

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.