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partnership  
with private  
landowners

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# Stretching Grazing Into Winter

*Three forage specialists share the do's and don'ts of winter and windrow grazing.*

*By Kindra Gordon*

We get advice from specialists in West Virginia, Wisconsin and Montana on what works – and what doesn't – when it comes to getting cows to forage through the winter months and shave dollars off feed expenses.

**Plan ahead.** Dan Undersander, Extension forage agronomist at the University of Wisconsin, emphasizes that planning ahead to stockpile forage for winter grazing is key. This typically requires deferring grazing on the pasture or native range by mid-summer.

Additionally, he suggests fertilizing the pasture set aside for winter grazing to get an extra boost in yield. Undersander says in his region fertilizing with 50 lbs. of N/acre can help produce 1 to 1.5 extra tons of forage per acre.

Undersander's top picks for stockpiling are orchardgrass for late fall or early winter grazing and tall fescue, which can be deferred to early spring. West Virginia University Extension forage agronomist Edward Rayburn also counts crop residue, such as corn, wheat and rye as high quality alternatives for winter grazing in the Midwest and South.

For windrow or swath grazing, Janna Kincheloe, a Montana State University Extension educator in Judith Basin County says anything from seeded annual forages to perennial grasses can work so long as the forage has been allowed to grow enough to make a dense windrow. Typically it works best to swath the forage in late August or September, and cattle can graze those windrows from October through December before snowfall gets too deep.

**Cross-fencing critical.** The second key: "Winter grazed areas should absolutely be cross-fenced or kept to a small size for best forage utilization," says Undersander.

Rayburn reports that by strip grazing stockpiled fescue the cattle will get about 50-75% more grazing days from it than if access is allowed to the entire pasture. As a rule, allow access to only as much forage as the cattle will clean up in 3-7 days.

**Supply supplements.** Undersander says supplementation may be needed along with winter grazing depending on the type of cattle. He suggests for dry beef cows supplementation is only needed if temperatures fall below 0 degrees F. Lactating cows and growing young animals will have the highest nutritional requirements.

**Lastly, monitor forage conditions.** Kincheloe admits winter or windrow grazing may not be an option every year – especially if a drought produces minimal forage growth. Producers may want to graze in early spring and then defer grazing to see if there is enough regrowth on certain pastures for fall or winter grazing. Also, the pastures used for winter grazing should be rotated from year to year to ensure plant diversity.

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## USDA selects Montana invasive weed control projects to receive national funding through GLCI

USDA Undersecretary for Natural Resources and the Environment, Mark Rey, has announced grants totaling over \$4.1 million to fund 27 projects in 20 states. These projects will reduce the spread of noxious weeds throughout the nation.

Among the grant recipients is the Powell County Weed District, a partner in the nationally recognized Blackfoot Challenge in Montana. They received a grant totaling \$122,561 that will be administered through GLCI/NRCS.

"We have more than 300 landowners, managers, and partners involved in weed management covering some 630,000 grazing land acres. This outstanding project has evolved since the 1980's," said Jason Smith, Powell County weed district coordinator. "The Blackfoot Challenge and the Powell County Weed District are all about partnerships and this grant will advance our work immeasurably."

Selected through national competition, the approved grants will fund one- to three-year projects to control and manage invasive species. The grantees—state and local governments, tribes, and non-governmental organizations—must provide at least 50 percent of the project cost with non-federal funds and/or in-kind contributions.

In addition to the Blackfoot Challenge project, three other Montana organizations received national grants through GLCI. These include:

- 1) Cooperative Weed Management at the Headwaters of the Stillwater River - \$122,260.
- 2) Integrated Weed Management Project of the Rock Creek Watershed Valley - \$50,000.
- 3) Fish Creek Weed Management Project - \$100,434.



Jim Stone, chairman of the Blackfoot Challenge, and Jason Smith, Powell County weed district coordinator, accept a check to the Blackfoot Challenge to fund a noxious weed project presented by Mark Rey, Undersecretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and the Environment, and Dave White, Montana NRCS State Conservationist.

For more information about the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative Noxious Weed Grants, contact the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Montana at 406-587-6952.

### CEAP aims to monitor conservation progress

The Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP) began in 2003 as a multi-agency effort to quantify the environmental benefits of conservation practices used by private landowners participating in selected USDA conservation programs such as EQIP, CRP, CSP, WRP, WHIP and GRP. The project consists of three components:

1. National Assessment: Providing national summary estimates of conservation practice benefits and assessing the potential for USDA conservation programs to meet the nation's environmental and conservation goals.
2. Watershed Assessment: Basic research on conservation practices in selected watersheds nationwide to provide a framework for evaluating and improving performance of national assessment models.
3. Bibliographies and Literature Reviews: Two literature reviews in progress will document what is known and not known about the environmental benefits of conservation practices and programs for cropland and fish and wildlife.

Project findings and results will be used to report progress on the environmental effects of these programs, aid discussions on conservation policy development, guide conservation program implementation, and ultimately, help farmers and ranchers make informed conservation choices.

A CEAP grazing lands meeting is scheduled for Beltsville, Maryland Dec. 4-7, 2006. For more information about CEAP visit [www.nrcs.usda.gov/Technical/nri/ceap/](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Technical/nri/ceap/)

### American Cowman launched as resource for small family farms

About 90% of the beef cow-calf operations in the U.S. are small family farms with herds of 100 head of cattle or fewer, according to USDA. Collectively, these family beef operations contribute an important share of the American beef supply, along with having an essential role in the stewardship of natural resources and the leadership and social fabric of rural communities.

BEEF magazine recognizes the importance of this beef production sector, and recently launched a new electronic venture called American Cowman that is designed to meet the information needs of today's family-owned cattle herds with up to 100 head. The American Cowman effort consists of a Web site ([www.americancowman.com](http://www.americancowman.com)) and American Cowman Update, a twice-monthly electronic newsletter to be sent free to subscribers.

The goal of these online ventures is to offer timely, practical production and management strategies that will add efficiency, value, and profitability to cattle herds with up to 100 head. American Cowman.com provides a resource of information on facilities, nutrition, animal health, pasture and range, and genetics. Additionally the site includes industry news, new products, and links to breed associations, ranch horses, weather, markets, recipes, continuing education opportunities, and books about beef and rural life.

To learn more and to subscribe to the free newsletter, go to [www.americancowman.com](http://www.americancowman.com).



## GLCI State Spotlights

Across the country GLCI efforts are geared toward educating private landowners about grazing management practices. Here we share highlights of some of the activities held in recent months:

### Missouri: Hosts tour and gears up for National Conference

The National Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative Steering Committee and grazing leaders from across the country met in St. Louis, September 8-9, to make final arrangements for the upcoming "3rd National Conference on Grazing Lands" to be held there Dec. 10-13. They also toured two ranches in southeastern Missouri that have installed Managed Intensive Grazing systems.

Over 100 of the nations leaders in grassland agriculture, representing 27 states, attended the "2006 Missouri Grazing Lands Tour," hosted by the Missouri Forage and Grassland Council/ Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative. The tour focused on two ranches near Farmington, Missouri. Ranchers Jerry Cunningham and Jerry Hollerbach explained the benefits of Managed Intensive Grazing Systems and how the practices made their operations more efficient and profitable.



Attending the Missouri Grazing Lands Tour were Roger Hansen, State Conservationist, USDA NRCS Missouri, Matt Boatright, Deputy Director of the Missouri Department of Agriculture, Terry Bohmont, Co-Chair Missouri Forage and Grassland Council/Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative Coalition, Steve Baima, Co-Chair MFGC/GLCI, and Bob Drake, Chair, National GLCI Steering Committee

### Maryland: Eastern gamagrass featured on GLCI pasture walk

A pasture walk showcasing the use of Eastern gamagrass for grazing and haying was held in early August at the William Edwards Bison Farm near Hurlock, Maryland. General pasture management, technical and cost-share assistance, and details on eastern gamagrass management and establishment were highlighted. Eastern gamagrass is known for producing good hay mid-summer and is similar to a corn in growth habits and forage quality.

### Texas: Collaborates with others on wildlife symposium

Approximately 130 participants attended the Pronghorn Symposium at Sul Ross State University in Alpine, Texas in mid-August to learn about the history, biology, and management of the unique pronghorn in far West Texas. Texas GLCI was a co-sponsor of the event which was very well-received.

"This symposium was a great forum to get a combination of Texas Parks and Wildlife, the NRCS, landowners and hunters all together to discuss pronghorns," says Dan McBride, a veterinarian from Burnet, Texas. "There was a broadening of knowledge that came from getting those four groups together.

Found only in North America, pronghorns occupy relatively arid climates, such as that found in the Trans-Pecos area. However, current pronghorn populations are just a fraction of their historic numbers. Symposium attendees learned that primary causes for population and distribution declines include loss of habitat, artificial barriers (fences and highways), isolation from other populations, predators and natural climatic fluctuations (drought).

*Symposium presentations were delivered by professionals from USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, Texas Parks and Wildlife, Texas Cooperative Extension, Sul Ross State University, The Caesar Kleberg Wildlife Research Institute, Arizona Game and Fish Department, Arizona State University, and New Mexico State University.*

The impacts of habitat fragmentation, predation, grazing management, and riparian and grassland restoration on pronghorn were discussed. Local landowners and managers also participated in discussion panels and shared how they include pronghorn management in their operations.

### New York: Shares GLCI message with new NRCS State Conservationist



Ron Alvarado, left, visited Troy Bishopp's (right) custom grazing operation this summer and learned more about GLCI efforts. Alvarado is the new NRCS State Conservationist in New York and Bishopp is a

grass farmer and chairman of the state's GLCI. Bishopp has helped coordinate several grazing tours throughout his area to get the message out about the benefits of grazing.

### 2007 Upcoming Events

**Jan. 7-10** American Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting, Salt Lake City, UT.

**Jan. 19-21** National Pheasant Fest, Des Moines, IA

**Jan. 24-25** Heart Of America Grazing Conference, Mount Vernon, IL. Contact Garry Lacefield at 270-365-7541, ext. 202, or glacefie@uky.edu.

**Jan. 25-27** American Sheep Industry Convention, San Antonio, TX

**Jan. 31-Feb. 3** National Cattlemen's Beef Association Annual Convention & Trade Show, Nashville, TN

**February 4-7** National Association of Conservation Districts Annual Meeting, Los Angeles, CA

**Feb. 10-16** Society For Range Management 60th Annual Meeting, Reno, NV.

**Feb. 28-March 2** National Grassfed Beef Conference, Grantville, PA. Contact John Comerford at 814-863-3661 or jxc555@gmail.com.

# THE CHAIR'S CORNER



**Bob Drake**

The GLCI team has been busy these last several months to bring grazing enthusiasts our Third National Conference on Grazing Lands in St. Louis Dec. 10-13. We are extremely proud of this event and the technical grazing information it provides to private landowners as well as many of our policy makers. From the well-rounded line-up of speakers to the enthusiasm of participants, I think it also represents the progress that GLCI has made in bringing voluntary technical assistance to private landowners since our inception in 1991.

Our strength has always been in the nine partner organizations that have come together to support GLCI. (They are listed below along the left-hand side of this page.) These organizations recognize the importance of private grazing lands, and we also recognize that we still have much work to do.

To keep up with GLCI efforts and activities, please visit our website at [www.glci.org](http://www.glci.org). Here you'll find a listing by state of GLCI coordinators, as well as upcoming events and archives of our newsletter.

Lastly, I extend a welcome to Arlen Lancaster the newly appointed Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). We look forward to working with him on private grazing lands issues. Our GLCI team also says thank you to former NRCS Chief Bruce Knight for his past support. We wish him well in his new appointment as USDA Undersecretary for Marketing and Regulatory Programs.

Looking ahead to 2007, the GLCI Steering Committee will hold their annual spring meeting in Washington, D.C. on Feb. 26. This is always a great opportunity to carry the GLCI message to our policy makers.

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](mailto:kindras@gordonresources.com)

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(202) 484-3608

**American Forage and  
Grassland Council**  
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1-800-944-2342

**American Sheep  
Industry**  
Peter Orwick  
(303) 771-3500

**Dairy Industry**  
Howard Straub  
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**National Association of  
Conservation Districts**  
Krysta Harden  
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**National Cattlemen's  
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**National Farmers Union**  
Chris Schepis  
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**Society for Range  
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Jason Campbell  
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**Soil and Water  
Conservation Society**  
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