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A voluntary
partnership
with private
landowners

GLCI News



Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

Graizers should promote their role as “Carbon Facilitators”

*New name could earn farmers
and ranchers a better connotation*

By Chuck Coffey, Noble Foundation

I am disturbed by the number of people in this country who seem to take agriculture for granted. Many have had little to no experience with the land and only know what they read and hear from what are often unreliable sources. They jump on bandwagons about global warming, animal rights, energy use or even belching cows, largely uninformed. Agriculture cannot be understood by only reading books or listening to people with political agendas. It is a business that has been passed on through generations of research, knowledge and experience.

Our country seems to have become “environmentally aware” in the last 30-40 years, but consumers still understand little about food and what it takes to produce it. Why is this? The answer, in my opinion, is that most Americans spend less than 10% of their disposable income to support their dietary needs. According to the USDA’s Economic Research Service, food expenditures by families and individuals as a share of disposable income were 13.8% in 1970, 11% in 1988 and only 9.6% in 2008. Could it be that food is too cheap or Americans are too wealthy, and we have little need to be worried about where our next meal will come from or how we will pay for it?

We hear too much talk about GMOs, cap and trade, carbon sequestration and cows belching gases into the atmosphere causing global warming and too little about the security of our nation due in part to our agriculture industry. Somehow we need to educate the public that farmers, ranchers and land managers are an essential link to the health and success of our society.

We should all care about the environment, but land managers must do more to educate the public about the safe, wholesome and inexpensive food and fiber our industry provides to the nation and the world. There has never been a more important time for us to portray ourselves as stewards of the land and educate the public about our business.

Carbon Facilitation

Since carbon and CO₂ emissions are of such interest today, maybe it would be beneficial if those of us who manage the land were known as “carbon facilitators.” After all, our real job is to capture carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere with the plant factories growing on the land. The sequestered CO₂ in the plants is then removed by livestock and wildlife. This is all

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"Carbon Facilitators"

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done with hopes of making a profit so that the system can be sustained.

Most of the carbon we sequester in our grazing lands is recycled by herbivores and insects, thus remaining in our lands' carbon sink. Our goal as carbon facilitators is to keep this system operating as efficiently as possible. If we graze our factories too short, we sequester less carbon and production decreases because we become overstocked. On the other hand, if we let our factories get too mature, efficiency decreases and we limit profitability because we become understocked.

In short, a carbon facilitator is one who manages a very complicated and always evolving factory. He is educated about the environment and works very hard to balance the process of photosynthesis for optimum plant growth with livestock and wildlife production for economic and ecologic sustainability.

So the next time you're visiting with someone and they ask, "What line of work are you in?" casually reply, "I'm a carbon facilitator," and be ready to answer their questions. If we do not begin to educate others of agriculture's importance to society, we may wake up one day and find ourselves dependent on other nations for our food and fiber.

Editor's Note: Current agricultural recommendations to reduce global warming are to farm with no-till techniques, plant grass and trees, "manage" grazing, and capture methane at confinement livestock operations. More and better approaches can greatly increase the carbon captured and emissions reduced. Most approaches also allow farm and ranch land to better withstand effects of global warming.

Find Southeastern Forage Info on the Web

University of Georgia (UGA) Extension forage specialists have joined the ranks of Facebook users. Learn more by going to the UGA Extension forage Web site at www.georgiaforages.com and clicking the Facebook icon. While you're at the site, you can also sign up to receive forage email alerts for the Southeastern U.S.

FUTURE GLCI EVENTS OF NOTE

- The national GLCI steering committee's spring meeting will be held February 28, 2011 at the Holiday Inn in Rosslyn, VA. GLCI Leadership will also have the opportunity to meet with political leaders on Capitol Hill to discuss grazing lands issue.
- Planning is underway for the 5th National Conference on Grazing Lands tentatively set for Dec. 9-12, 2012 in Orlando, FL.

State Spotlight:

Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition moves into the future

The Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition (NGLC) is moving into the future by taking the initiative to implement voluntary rangeland monitoring on ranches throughout Nebraska, networking for information exchange and laying the foundation of a possible, future Great Plains Regional GLCI (Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative) meeting.

Through the Rangeland Monitoring Program funded by the Nebraska Environmental Trust, the NGLC has hired Kort Kemp, Ben Schiltz and Bridger Chytka as range technicians working the eastern, central and western regions of Nebraska, respectively. Kemp, Schiltz and Chytka have met with nearly 150 ranchers who have implemented voluntary monitoring on their ranch. These technicians met with ranchers in the field to provide one-on-one instruction in setting up key grazing areas, and assisted ranchers with at least one monitoring method for these key grazing areas. Ranchers were encouraged to set up grazing enclosure cages to monitor changes in forage production over time, and to set up photo monitoring points within key grazing areas. The NGLC also provided a soil and forage test. The soil test provides information on the soil nutrient level and organic matter values while the forage test analysis will provide the status of forage quality on the key grazing area. The NGLC Rangeland Monitoring program will continue through June 2012 and have a limited number of slots available to livestock grazing managers.

Another NGLC program is the Cowboy Logic Stewardship Network. This Network provides an exchange of ideas and successful practices in ranching, grazing lands management and conservation between ranchers. Participants involved with this network have gained knowledge and insight through information exchange from working with established, successful ranchers and landowners, and have developed long term working relationships, internships and exchanges that have lasted for years.

NGLC is tentatively beginning planning for a Great Plains Regional GLCI meeting. At the recent Nebraska Grazing Conference, held this past August in Kearney, Neb., the NGLC met with representatives of the Kansas and South Dakota GLCI's to begin dialogue, and is also tentatively working toward inviting the Colorado and North Dakota GLCI's to partner on this as well.

In other NGLC news, Ron Bolze recently accepted the position as the part-time NGLC coordinator. Ron comes to the NGLC with previous experience in University Beef Cattle extension and beef cattle breed association work. Ron can be contacted by e-mail at ron@nebraskagrazinglands.org or by phone at (402) 426-2033 (home office) or (402) 321-0067 (cell).

The Nebraska Grazing Lands Coalition is an independent organization of ranchers, interest groups, and agencies whose mission is to collaborate on projects that improve the management and health of Nebraska grazing lands and ensure long-term stability of rangeland resources. The NGLC is funded through grants from USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Nebraska Environmental Trust, the Nebraska Rural Development Commission and the Sandhills Task Force.

- Submitted by Joseph May, State Rangeland Management Specialist, Nebraska NRCS

MONTANA GRAZING LANDS SHOWCASED

During National GLCI Steering Committee's Fall Meeting & Tour

Members of the National Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) steering committee convened in Billings, Mont., for their annual fall business meeting and ranch tour, Sept. 10-11, 2010. The steering committee meets biannually to discuss how it can continue to promote the health and well-being of the nation's grazing lands. Steering committee members represent national organizations and industries that have an interest in grazing lands.

Steering committee members and participants toured the Lehfeldt Ranch, a sheep operation near Lavina, Mont. The ranch was founded in 1886 and fourth and fifth generation ranchers, Bob and Marie Lehfeldt and Ben and Jamie Lehfeldt, still use the sheep genetics used by their ancestors to raise fine-wool Rambouilletts. While raising sheep for meat and wool is the number one priority on the ranch, the Lehfeldts have also taken on conservation projects that benefit the sheep as well as the land. Working through the Montana Sheep Institute at Montana State University (MSU), the sheep grazing is targeted in areas infested with leafy spurge and spotted knapweed. They are also working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to improve sage grouse habitat on their ranch by renovating pastures and developing water systems.

Next on the tour was the Robert E. Lee Ranch near Judith Gap, Mont. Owners Bob and Kathy Lee run a diversified cattle and grain operation raising crossbred cattle, dryland wheat and barley. "We manage our cattle in a way that enhances our natural resources," said Bob Lee. "We believe that caring for our land and caring for our cattle go hand-in-hand." The results of this philosophy were recognized when the Lee's won the 1996 National Environmental Stewardship Award, a program that has honored farm and ranching families for outstanding resource management since 1991. A little mud and rain kept the tour buses from moving across the ranch. However, Bob was not to be denied seeing the grass plots as they were loaded into horse trailers and herded to each site.



GLCI tour participants listen intently to a presentation about targeted grazing using sheep on a Montana Ranch.

ty rights. GLCI emphasizes high quality, voluntary technical assistance, expanded grazing lands research and education, and a more knowledgeable and informed public.

"Our work now is just as important as when we started this endeavor nearly 20 years ago," said Bob Drake, national GLCI steering committee chairman. "For the land that we love and for the benefit it provides, we must continue to work to meet our goals."

The national steering committee was hosted by the Montana GLCI steering committee. Sponsors for the event included Stockman Bank, Montana Farm Bureau Federation, Montana Woolgrowers Association, the Montana Beef Council, Wells Fargo Bank, Montana Stockgrowers Association, the State Association of Grazing Districts, the Montana Association of Conservation Districts, Northern Ag Network, the Bank of Baker, and First Interstate Bank. Their support is greatly appreciated.

- Submitted by Lori Valadez, State Public Affairs Specialist, Montana NRCS



Rancher Bob Lee welcomes GLCI tour participants to his home state of Montana.

The final tour stop was at the Invenergy wind power facility at Judith Gap, Mont. The facility consists of 90 General Electric wind turbines capable of producing 135 mega-watts. Each turbine has a rotor diameter of 77 meters, which is about 253 feet. Total height of the structure, with the blade straight up, is approximately 389 feet. All power is sold to Northwestern Energy. The energy of the wind was evident, as all turbines were in full rotation and this left no question in anyone's mind why this site was chosen for the project.

The following day, the national steering committee held the fall meeting to review actions outlined in its strategic plan. GLCI seeks to carry out its activities through local, state and national partnerships. It informs the public of the contributions well-managed grazing lands make to the environment. GLCI is founded on the principles of voluntary action by those who own and manage grazing lands and a respect for private property rights.



Cookies with the Montana GLCI logo on them were a huge hit during the tour.

State Spotlight:

Farmer-to-Farmer grazing networks in New York



Morgan Hartman, Grass Masters member and farmer in Berlin, New York, sets out round bales of hay in a checker board pattern across his fields in fall and winter for rotational grazing. Hartman's switch from feeding in a barnyard to rotational winter bale feeding increased his soil fertility and saved him about 200 gallons of diesel fuel a year. He learned this from a fellow Grass Masters member.

For many New York livestock farmers, managed rotational grazing is a new technology and some lack the knowledge or confidence to try something new. Yet, New York is an excellent place to graze. With roughly a 40 inch average rainfall and prime soils, some farmers are able to support a stocking rate of 1 animal unit per 1.5 acres and graze up to 8 months out of the year.

To help share grazing knowledge, Hudson Mohawk RC&D (in Eastern New York) with support from the state Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI), have started a farmer-to-farmer grazing group called the Hudson Mohawk Grass Masters covering the Albany capitol region. Realizing that farmers often learn best from other farmers, the RC&D and their partners provide the framework for farmers to come together to learn from one another, share ideas, network, problem solve and form alliances. The farmers decide when and where to meet and what topics to discuss and members volunteer to host or lead meetings.

The farmer-to-farmer grazing groups have been very successful in helping farmers learn concepts that they have been able to put into practice on the farm. These include frost seeding clover, how to properly take a soil test, utilizing smaller paddocks and increasing the frequency of animal moves to allow for greater recovery periods, improved on-farm decision making, how to stockpile forage for winter grazing, and rotating animals through paddocks in the winter time to evenly distribute manure.

For more information about the grazing groups, visit the Council's website at www.hudsonmohawkrcd.org. RC&Ds are non-profit organizations working in partnership with USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).



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

In the U.S., Department of Agriculture (USDA) programs provide information on its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and gender.

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

National Farmers Union
National Beef Association
National Cattlemen's Association
Beef Association of Districts
(202) 547-6233
National Association of
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Contract these affiliated organizations: