

Volume 14, Number 5
September/October 2009

A voluntary
partnership
with private
landowners

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GLCI News



Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

GLCI Bets on Western Venue to Link Ranchers and Conservationists

*Fourth National Conference on Grazing Lands
is Dec. 13-16 in Reno, NV.*

With grazing lands making up between two-thirds and three-fourths of the national land base, the environmental and economic implications – and wise management of these lands – cannot be ignored.

Bob Drake, Chairman of the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI), says, “The sheer quantity of land involved demands a serious dialogue among ranchers, conservationists, educators, environmentalists, economists, government agencies and land managers. We need to share our understanding of the theory and practical application of grazing land functions and opportunities.”

Increasingly such a dialogue is important not only for the continued viability of ranchers but also for the well being of watersheds and communities who rely on these lands for hunting, open space, groundwater recharge, hiking, habitat for both common and endangered species of plants and wildlife, recreational opportunities, carbon sequestration and energy collection.

The Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative is hosting a forum to facilitate just such a dialogue. On December 13-16, 2009, GLCI will host its 4th National Conference in Reno, NV, intended to facilitate the exchange of information on successful “cutting edge” grazing management technologies—especially those with environmental and/or social benefits, applied research on grazing lands, public policy implications of grazing, issues related to the agricultural-urban interface, and the economic and marketing implications of grazing.

One thing that sets GLCI apart from other conferences is its focus on ranchers as presenters. “We know experts come from academia, government, and the non-profit world and we welcome them all, but we also look for the ‘cowboy expert’ who has gained his-or her-expertise through long hours with livestock and first-hand exposure to all sorts of elements—natural, economic and political,” says Drake.

In conjunction with hosting the conference in Reno, GLCI in 2009 will give increased focus to western grazing issues. However, the conference will continue its past format of providing information along four “tracks” that will also include Eastern, Midwestern and dairy grazing issues. Some of the issues to be highlighted include the value of rotational grazing and of riparian habitat, carbon sequestration, and the flexibility within grazing systems.

Information on registration and/or exhibitor opportunities is at www.glc.org Early bird registration of \$260 is available through Oct. 1, 2009.

REDUCING RANGELAND ROAD EROSION

MT GLCI grant helps develop a solution



Road erosion on rangeland and pasture roads in the West is a challenge many ranchers deal with. Robert Kilian, Area Range Management Specialist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Miles City, MT, wanted to come up with a solution.

He says, "Road erosion on rangelands has been a pet peeve of mine for years, and there's really been no guidance for landowners on what to do about it." Instead, landowners often have to fix the road annually, or they just move a portion of the road over to go around the eroded gullies.

He adds that weed establishment tends to increase in areas where roads have become degraded.

Thus, Kilian began to visit with ranchers about coming up with a solution. He wrote a grant in 2006 to receive funding from the Montana GLCI to demonstrate rubber water diverters as an alternative to minimize rangeland road erosion.

Kilian explains that rubber conveyer belting is used in strips 15 inches wide and 16 feet long. Each strip is mounted to a treated 2x4 board, a trench is made across the road at an 11 degree angle and the belting is buried so 1-1/2 to 2 inches remains out of the ground and help divert water across the road. These diverters are placed about every 80-100 feet depending on slope, along the road where erosion occurs.

On the first ranch where Kilian tested the practice, about 10 rubber water diverters were installed along 1,000 feet of road that

had about 4-1/2% slope. Kilian reports that the rancher was repairing that stretch of road annually to mitigate the impacts of runoff, but since the diverters were installed the road has remained stable and no maintenance has been needed.

"This equates to not only a time savings but a financial savings as well for the rancher," says Kilian.

He adds, "The diverters have worked well so far, and the beauty of them is that you can drive over them and barely know that they are there," says Kilian.

Kilian says he's seen similar rubber water diverters used by the US Park Service and in other states. "They are not new, but NRCS hasn't pursued them as a conservation practice for pasture and rangeland roads," says Kilian.

He adds, "Our goal is to test this practice and then get it written up and included in our Field Office Technical Guide as an approved practice. And, eventually we hope it may be an approved cost-share practice, because installing these diverters can be fairly expensive."

Kilian has worked with another rancher on installing the diverters on about 2,000 feet of road that had erosion problems. He says they are now waiting for a thunderstorm to test how well it will work.

For more information about the rubber water diverters, contact Robert Kilian in Miles City, MT at 406-232-7905 ext. 114 or e-mail Robert.kilian@mt.usda.gov.

Survey Says:

AMERICA'S CATTLE FARMERS, RANCHERS SUPPORT WILDLIFE, ECOSYSTEMS

Source: National Cattlemen's Beef Association

New survey data show that America's cattle farmers and ranchers are raising a lot more than just cattle on their ranches. From endangered species to native trees and grasses, America's farms and ranches are hosting, and often actively supporting, wildlife, natural ecosystems and the environment.

- 88% of cattle farmers and ranchers surveyed said their land includes areas that support wildlife. More than half report wildlife populations on their land have increased in the past 10 years.
- That's important, because approximately 73% of land in the U.S. is privately owned, and the majority of the country's natural wildlife habitats are found on those lands, according to information cited by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. In fact, the land managed by America's farmers and ranchers supports migratory birds, fish and other wildlife, including many threatened and endangered species ranging from whooping cranes in Nebraska to gopher tortoises thriving on a cattle ranch in Florida.

"Seeing healthy birds and animals means we're making the right decisions with the way we manage the environment on our ranch," says Carey Lightsey, whose family runs a centuries-old cattle farm in Florida that is home to waterways, wide expanses of oak and pine trees and animals such as bald eagles and the gopher tortoise.

Nationally, rangelands and pastures currently provide food and habitat for many types of wildlife, including deer, pronghorn antelope, elk and prairie chickens.

"No one is more passionate about the environment than ranchers working to increase the quality of their grass and water, for both their cattle and the fish and wildlife that call their operations home. These private landowners love the land and have a strong environmental stewardship ethic that they pass on from generation to generation," says Heather Johnson, with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program.

The survey results show how beef production helps preserve the environment for future generations by protecting and restoring wildlife habitats, maintaining hundreds of miles of rivers and streams and sustaining millions of acres of open space. When consumers practice "sustainable consumption," - choosing foods like beef that are produced in ways that conserve and actually enhance the Earth's land, water, air, wildlife habitat and other natural resources -- they demonstrate a commitment to the health of the planet.

Johnson continues, "Farmers and ranchers provide quality, protein-rich food for our families while at the same time creating safe havens for fish and wildlife species. That's a win-win for wildlife and for sustainable agriculture -- and most certainly cause to celebrate."

The survey was conducted during telephone interviews with 750 commercial cattle farmers and ranchers. The margin of error is +/- 3.6 percent.

UPCOMING GRAZING EVENTS

Sept. 29-Oct. 3 -- World Dairy Expo, Alliant Energy Center, Madison, WI. Visit www.worlddairyexpo.com.

Oct. 29 -- Kentucky Grazing Conference, University of Kentucky Research and Education Center, Princeton. Details available soon at www.uky.edu/Ag/Forage.

Nov. 10-11 -- BEEF Quality Summit, Stoney Creek Inn, St. Joseph, MO, hosted by BEEF magazine. Visit beefconference.com.

Dec. 1-3 – Range Beef Cow Symposium, Casper, WY. For information contact University of Wyoming's Steve Paisley at (307)-837-2000 or spaisley@uwyo.edu.

Dec. 13-16 – Fourth National Conference On Grazing Lands, Reno, NV. Presented by the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative. Visit www.gcli.org.

Jan. 27-30, 2010 – Cattle Industry Annual Convention and Trade Show, San Antonio, TX. See www.beef.org for information.

Feb. 7-11, 2010 – 63rd Annual Society for Range Management Annual Meeting, Denver, CO. Visit www.rangelands.org for information.

Submit your upcoming grazing events for the Nov./Dec. issue to office@gordonresources.com.

"HOPE ON THE RANGE" DVD NOW AVAILABLE

A new 9-minute DVD titled "Hope on the Range" has been released in an effort to better tell the story about the role of livestock grazing on western public rangelands and emphasize a collective hope for a future of sustained rangeland health and enjoyment.

The DVD was produced by the Society for Range Management in partnership with the U.S. Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management.

Organizers say the short film is intended to foster broader awareness of the many public benefits derived from the responsible use and conservation of America's public rangelands.

"We believe it is the hope of all citizens that the magnificent landscapes and great open spaces of the American West can be preserved as our legacy to future generations. We also hope that these lands will continue to be managed for multiple uses and values that benefit conservationists, recreationists and other public rangeland users," said the Society for Range Management in a press statement introducing the video.

The video discusses livestock grazing and its contributions to a variety of important public interests and values, including:

- the health, diversity and productivity of the rangelands;
- the quality of water resources;
- the health of habitat for diverse native species of plants and wildlife;
- the ability of rangelands to withstand noxious weed invasion and the impacts of wildfires;
- and the preservation of open spaces in the face of a growing human population and increased urbanization of the American West.

The Hope on the Range video may be viewed at the following website: http://www.rangelands.org/videos/video_hopeontherange.shtml. Sponsors of the program invite and encourage viewer comments that may contribute to future documentary presentations in the ongoing effort toward public education and public participation in the stewardship of America's rangelands.

Viewer comments may be submitted to: Linda Coates-Markle, BLM Liaison to the Society for Range Management at lcmarkle@rangelands.org or by telephone at 303-986-3309.



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

GLCI News

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Whitewood, SD 57793

Contact these affiliated organizations:

American Farm
Bureau Federation
(202) 484-3608

American Forage and
Grassland Council
(800) 944-2342

American Sheep
Industry
(303) 771-3500

Dairy Industry
(517) 323-6575

National Association of
Conservation Districts
(202) 547-6233

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

National Farmers Union
(202) 554-1600

Society for Range
Management
(303) 986-3309

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

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

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