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GLCI News



Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative

Great Lakes Grazing Conference... A Team Effort

A coalition of farmers, researchers, environmentalists and agency personnel from eight states and one Canadian province teams up annually to promote the use of managed grazing systems in the Great Lakes region. This year the 10th annual Great Lakes Grazing Conference was held in Battle Creek, Michigan on February 11-12. This annual event is hosted by the Great Lakes Grazing Network (GLGN), which was organized by the Wisconsin Rural Development Center and is coordinated by the River Country Resource Conservation and Development Council.

The network is a collaborative effort of working groups from Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin, and the province of Ontario. The aim of this coalition is to support and promote the use of managed grazing systems for livestock production. Members say their mission is to provide a national voice to forward the grazing movement as a profitable, environmentally sound way of producing food.

In addition to sponsoring basin-wide grazing conferences, other goals of the GLGN include:

- 1) Tracking emerging environmental and land use policy initiatives that advance management-intensive grazing (MIG),
- 2) Identifying new grazing land research priorities and policies,
- 3) Educating policy makers and environmental, animal welfare, and consumer groups about the advantages of MIG.

As the interest in grass-based agriculture has grown in the region, so has attendance at the Great Lakes Grazing Conference. Today, the regional grazing conference serves as a model for the individual state coalitions involved in the network. Previously, Michigan and Wisconsin were the only states to host grazing conferences of their own. In 2002, each state in the network and the province of Ontario hosted at least one grazing conference of its own – in addition to being involved with the regional conference.

The GLGN has also promoted management-intensive grazing through the “Profitable Grazing” display that has traveled to several of the states. Its greatest success was in Illinois when it was viewed by 1,300 4th grade children at the Kankakee County 3rd Annual “Kids Day at the Farm” event.

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This annual event represents a coalition of working groups from 8 states that met in February. Learn about their mission and goals.

GLCI Spotlight: The National Association of Conservation Districts

This issue highlights the NACD and two individuals who serve on the National GLCI Steering Committee:

GRETCHEN SAMMIS
Cimarron, New Mexico

J.K. “ROOTER” BRITE
Bowie, Texas

The Chair’s Corner

Read about some of the activities your chairman has been involved in since the last issue.

Cover photograph:

Dave Forgey (far right), National GLCI Steering Committee member from Indiana, participates in a discussion group.