

Notes from Perennial Forage Discussion Session, Nov. 20, 3:00 – 5:00 pm

Retaining/Restoring Livestock Production Infrastructure

- Opportunities for peer-to-peer learning
- Cash grain, livestock, producer partnerships
- Identifying mentors in areas where little livestock production remains
- Weeklong schools for handling livestock
- Make potential producers aware of options
- Grazing public lands
- Identify drivers of livestock losses (i.e. 1980s farm crisis; loss of a generation of farmers)
- Specialization, high labor costs
- Lack of or inconsistency of advice/info from Extension, agencies
- Lenders
- Access to land
- Lack of infrastructure: veterinarians, fencing, etc.

Item	# of dots
Inconsistent or lacking advice/information for farmers	1
Drivers of livestock losses	2
Lender buy-in to new farming models	2
Portable perimeter fence	1
Matchmaking for contract grazing; networking graziers & landowners	9
Opening public lands to grazing	1
Mentoring, education in grazing	4
Bale-grazing, swathe-grazing, high-intensity grazing; innovative methods	0

Connecting graziers with conservation lands

- Fact sheets & decision tools on conservation leases. Need straightforward, easy-to-find and use tools
- Matchmaking between farmers and recreational landowners
- Look for other examples of it working in other parts of the country
- Timing of grazing can be an issue: timing vs. price
- Framework and tools for developing relationships around multiple goals
- Private landowner education – seeing it work
- Forums and workshops, YouTube, for non-operating landowners
- Purchase information about people and their interests
- Public land/private land: is there a producer in the vicinity to graze it?
- Is there enough public land around to make it worthwhile?
- Indemnity/liability issues
- Pushback from wildlife community

- Not all grazing is equal; education of sportsmans' groups

Vote:

Item	# of dots
Simple lease agreements	1
Finding & meeting non-farming landowners	0
Education of non-farming landowners	4
Education about value of grazing for conservation	5
Landowner profile tool	1
Women non-operating landowners	1

#### Research Needs/Constraints

- Climate change; forage varieties suitable for extremes
- Quantify impacts of various grazing systems (economic and environmental)
- Health of soil – animal – human – environment; how these are connected
- Social dimensions of making changes in agriculture: urban vs. rural, lack of trust, community cooperation
- Faculty retirements: loss of expertise, or new opportunity to make progress
- Need \$ for long-term (decade-long) studies
- Faculty members are reaching out to farmer groups for ideas on research areas
- Alternative forages
- Grant funds are highly competitive; multi-state collaboration helps; NGO + farmer collaborations can work
- MDA Sustainable Ag Demonstration Grants
- Grant proposal writing workshops offered by Sustainable Farming Association
- Need local, state, & federal policies to support forages
- Iowa State University grazing models
- Morris – U of MN forage production research
- Discovery Farms – uncertain of grazing/forage focus
- WI RC & Ds – grazing specialists – but funding is going away
- Greenhouse gas emissions from grazing lands
- Interseeding warm-season grasses
- Prairie establishment into monoculture forages
- Engagement with newly hired faculty

Item	# of dots
Forage varieties for changing climate	1
Soil-animal-human-environmental health connection	4
NGOs step up to help farmers get support for on-farm research	0

Train farmers on writing grant proposals	2
Case studies of successes	3
Identify & work to shape research agendas of young scientists	0
Policy options to support forage production	0
Multi-state on-farm research	0

### Farmer Engagement

- On-farm research components; engaged farmer steering committees for research projects
- Community mapping: thought leaders, champions, conservation leaders
- Talk to organizations that represent or influence farmers
- Genuineness: interest in the farmers' operations; getting from "us and them" to "we"
- Raise up changes that have worked to raise motivation
- Focus on opportunities, not just problems. Give credit where it's due; build on the positive.
- Follow-up with farmers and push the envelope.
- Get out on farms; one-on-one and face-to-face
- Throw the "expert model" out the door; use farmer-led councils and leadership development
- Hard to convince funders to support relational efforts; huge investment at the front end; time-consuming
- Push national policy: we need enduring community and farmer support for stewardship
- Conservation performance requirements; more clearly defined goals from conservation and agricultural community
- We need to understand federal farm policy and Farm Bill development better

Item	# of dots
Talk to organizations that represent farmers or that farmers trust	1
Farmer involvement in research planning	2
Farmer-led efforts	1
Cultivate "thought leader" or champion	3
Target audience (purchase information about people)	1
On-farm research component	6
Focus on success & opportunity	0
One-on-one with farmers; show interest in their farm	1
Networking/support system for farmers	0
Follow up; step-by-step; long-term	2
"We're all in this together" (Us-them-WE)	0
Better local, state, federal policies	1
Clearly articulated policy goals from the conservation ag community	3