

GLBW Perennial Forage Working Group
April 7, 2015 meeting
Decorah, IA

Present:

Caroline Van Schaik

Jim Paulson

Terry VanDerPol

Jane Jewett

Laura Paine

Warren King

Diomy Zamora

Meghan Filbert

Joe Sellers

Vance Haugen

Dick Cates

(online) Kent Solberg

Discussion on miscellaneous other topics:

Discussion on divide and/or relationship between cover crops and perennial forages and the fact that we are the 'Perennial Forage' group. Does cover crops work fit within our mission? Should we change our name? Consensus was 'no'. Our primary focus is getting more forages and livestock into farming systems in the region. However, this is a good opportunity to connect our work with other working groups. We should propose that we meet with the Cover Crops working group at the November conference.

How does Perennial Forage group want to fit into the larger GLBW group?

This is a question we need to think about throughout the day.

Joe suggested that we invite someone from Illinois to join our working group...maybe Andy Larson (currently Small Farms Coordinator with U of I). or Theresa Steckman (Dixon Springs-southern IL) or Travis Materie (Macomb area). Or Conservancy people (northern Illinois).

Planning for the upcoming conferences.

2016 conference is scheduled to be in Wisconsin and hosted by SW Badger and UW CIAS. Since SWBadger, which offered to host the conference, has lost its ED, we will put this on hold until a new one is onboard. More to come.

2015 conference.

Discussion was held regarding the Perennial forage group's role in the 2015 GLBW conference on Nov. 3-4 in Minneapolis. The draft agenda starts with a general session where each of the five working groups shares a summary of their activities. That afternoon, there is a two hour block of breakouts for each working group.

We should think about who we want to make sure is on the invite list (e.g. MN-DNR Commissioner Tom Landwehr); and take advantage of the plenary session to raise issues important to MPFWG members.

Morning summary session on five working groups.

Our general session will briefly cover four current hot topics. This will be a brief summary of current issues and a teaser for our afternoon session. We will also take a few minutes to identify overlaps between our working group and the efforts of other groups.

- Integrating livestock, perennials, and annual cropping systems; particularly cover crops (and integrating between our GLBW working groups).
- Conservation grazing on public and private recreation land.
 - This seems to be a 'teachable moment' for conservationists and natural resources professionals; there has been a sea change in attitudes toward grazing.
 - Policy implications, opportunities for influencing policy.
 - Including implementation-level policies such as fencing requirements
 - Opportunities and barriers to moving forward.
- Riparian grazing
 - In the context of MN Governor Dayton's buffer proposal
 - Efficacy of buffers
 - Grazing management and water quality
- Grazing and soil health (including WICST and Geoff Brink's research).

Afternoon session (2 hours)

(deeper dive into one or more of the morning topics)

We discussed dividing our session in half and inviting other groups to meet with us to see how we can integrate our efforts. We would focus on meeting with the Midwest Cover Crop Council (MCCC) and the Mid-American Agroforestry Working Group (MAAWG)..

Jane will contact the MCCC and see if they're interested.

Diomy will talk to MAAWG.

The other half of the session will focus on conservation grazing/riparian grazing. Other topics mentioned in conjunction with these: water quality, soil health, integrating livestock into farm systems. None of these are separate from each other but we have to make decisions on what to emphasize.

Effort to define "Conservation Grazing:" Using grazing as a tool to manage public and private lands for non-economic benefits such as wildlife habitat or plant diversity.

New term: "Negotiated-goal grazing:" the balancing of conservation and economic goals that allows livestock owners/managers and conservation land managers to develop grazing agreements.

We will talk further after we determine the interest of the other working groups.

Process for planning this session:

- We will email out the four topic areas to all working group members and invite brainstorming ideas on how to frame them, what we need to cover under each topic, how to organize the session (speakers, panels, open discussion?) with responses to be returned by August 1.
- We will have one or more conference calls in August and September to finalize plans: what the topics will be, who will present, development of power point, etc.
- Session descriptions should be available by mid-September for inclusion in the conference agenda.

Webinars for Grazing Educators

Presentation by Warren covered what this group discussed at two conference calls in March. PDF of the presentation is available online:

[http://greenlandsbluewaters.net/Decorah Grazing Ed Presentation 040715 final.pdf](http://greenlandsbluewaters.net/Decorah%20Grazing%20Ed%20Presentation%20040715%20final.pdf)

The group generally approved the wording and appearance of the save-the-date flyer, with one suggestion to change the title of the first webinar to “Communicating the Basics of Grazing” or “Teaching the Fundamentals of Grazing.”

Further discussion of audience for these webinars. The audience is grazing educators, so that leads us to a different set of topics and different approach to them than there would be if the audience were farmers and landowners. We do not have to present introductory material about what managed grazing is and what the benefits are. We can assume that the audience is already familiar with those things and is joining the webinar because they want to improve their ability to educate farmers and landowners.

Emphasize sharing of tips, techniques, and resources for that task of teaching grazing.

Discussion of logistics for delivery of the webinars:

- Allison Van and Jeff Farbman of Pasture Project, Jane Jewett, and Terry VanDerPol were on a call last week re: technology. At least the first webinar will be on GoToMeeting. Pasture Project has a GoToMeeting subscription that will allow up to 100 participants and allows for a lot of interaction. The “Presenter” can be changed so if someone wants to show a resource or a weblink to the group, they can.
- If we get to more than 100 participants, GoToWebinar or WebEx are options that we need to explore more fully. Each allows up to 1000 participants. GoToWebinar is less interactive than GoToMeeting. We need more information on WebEx features.
- If having someone present who has limited Internet access and/or limited familiarity with the technology, we may need to pay their mileage to get to an Extension office or similar location where they can get a fast connection and help. Alternatively, providing microphone and some advance training on the technology may work for some presenters.
- Support from the group for offering a \$200 stipend to all presenters. Educators for whom the presentation fits into their workplan would be expected to not require the stipend. Warren will make a request to Pasture Project for funding for stipends and mileage.

Part of this effort is building the network. The technology call included discussion about how to facilitate that, by an online bulletin board or some other means. Facebook was suggested; Jim noted that his dairy education Facebook page has seen increased participation. We may need to “seed” discussion with some people committed to regular posting to get things going.

Concern expressed by several members of the group that they can’t add on extra work that isn’t part of their existing workplan or program; especially not a major effort. One challenge for this group is to find ways to divide up needed tasks in a way that fits into members’ workplans or is an easy item for them.

On a conference call we had committed to contacting people within state agencies and organization to secure their help in pushing out publicity about these webinars. Dividing up responsibility for making those contacts, by state:

MN – Terry, Diomy, Jim
WI – Dick, Vance
IA – Joe, Meghan
IL – Warren
MO – Joe, Warren
IN – Warren

Agencies and groups to contact, at minimum:

NRCS

SWCD

Extension

The Nature Conservancy

DNR

Business entities that offer grazing education: Organic Valley, Thousand Hills

Suggested presenters for the first webinar on Teaching Grazing Fundamentals:

Kent Solberg

Laura Paine

Contract Grazing Conference Discussion

General goals of this effort.

- Raise awareness of the contract/custom grazing model. Discussion was held regarding the terminology we use when we share information on this topic. We agreed that we needed to provide descriptions of what 'contract grazing' and 'custom grazing' means until the terminology becomes more familiar to the farming public.
- Create a network to link people who are doing contract/custom grazing across the region. Create opportunities for producers and landowners to come together to foster contract grazing partnerships.
- Create opportunities for contract graziers to learn from each other.

Potential formats:

- High-profile keynote speakers to draw people in
- No speakers; instead, facilitated roundtable discussions

Without the funding from SARE, the group decided that a regional conference wasn't an option at this time. It was suggested that at this time, lots of people do not recognize the possibility of contract grazing or have a frame of reference for what it is, so presenting it at existing conferences as an emerging area might help build up to an eventual stand-alone conference.

Discussion was held on alternatives to move the effort forward. Possible options:

- Approach existing conferences to incorporate the contract grazing topic into their programs, either as a single session introduction, or a breakout track, or a pre-conference all-day workshop.

- Develop materials (power points, fact sheets, written materials) that cover the topics we feel are important to include in a workshop or conference and make them available to our working group members and others. These could be a product of the working group.

Approaching existing conferences. We came up with the following list of possible conferences. Those with names after them are the ones we will begin with this year.

- Practical Farmers of Iowa (Megan)
- Iowa Forage and Grassland Council (Joe)
- Minnesota Organic Conference (Jane)
- Wisconsin Grazing Conference (Dick, Vance, Laura)
- Organic Farming Conference (Jane/Helene)
- Professional Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin (Dick, maybe – might be a stretch for this year)
- Sustainable Farming Association (Kent)
- Illinois Stewardship Alliance (Warren)
- Field days around the region

Developing materials. We agreed that there are several general topic areas that are important for understanding and successfully implementing a contract grazing partnership.

- General presentation on what contract grazing is, how it works, who it could work for (landowners, livestock producers, beginning farmers).
- Types of contract or custom grazing opportunities (cow-share, backgrounding, finishing farms, custom dairy heifers, goat grazing, etc.); also present these opportunities in the context of beginning farmer opportunities
- Economics of each of these types of contract grazing arrangements.
- Evaluating land suitability (from fact sheet). Including accessing public land, restrictions on grazing public and private lands, fencing and infrastructure development and cost-sharing opportunities, rates for different land types
- Contracts, leases: provisions, payment methods, what goes into a lease.

Structure of a workshop or conference on contract grazing. We decided that the following approaches would enhance the effectiveness of a contract grazing educational program.

- Have expert speakers on some topics (e.g. economics of various contracting practices).
- Panel discussions: have producers and landowners who are doing this serve as speakers.
- Networking opportunities: incorporate opportunities for networking among producers into the program.

Discussion of how and why to work together on this:

- Development of workshop materials goes a step beyond the fact sheets. Sharing developed materials and circulating those within the group for feedback would be a way to keep the group functioning and useful.
- Contract grazing is an important topic because it opens many opportunities. It's a way to address the resources held by absentee landowners.
- Lots of farmers don't know to ask for contract grazing information yet. Start with the "What is it, who is it for" piece; the rest may be premature.

- Investors are interested in contract grazing.
- There may be financial incentives available from some conferences to offer a presentation at their conference.

Bottom line: The will of the group is coalescing around developing materials that can be used in a variety of ways by group members.

Brainstorming Session – Next Steps

Things to work on for next 1 to 2 years:

- Updating fact sheets for mass printing
- Webinar series
- 2015 GLBW Conference
- 2016 GLBW Conference
- Contract Grazing informational materials
- Development of a sample contract
- Summary fact sheet on contract grazing

Face-to-Face meetings are appreciated and productive. Decorah is a good central location. Have these at least once per year; maybe twice.

- Most of the group plans to attend the Nov. 3-4 GLBW Conference. Have a group session over lunch, perhaps.

Regular project development work can take place on conference calls. Quarterly regular calls were suggested.

There's a need to increase awareness of existing projects. Enhanced web presence is a possibility.