

Volume 7, Number 4  
July-August 2002

A voluntary  
partnership  
with private  
landowners

# 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual “Kids Day at the Farm” event.

*(Continued on next page)*

### IN THIS ISSUE

#### Great Lakes Grazing Conference... A Team Effort

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.

## Great Lakes Grazing Conference...

**WORKING TOGETHER FOR SUCCESS** (Continued from page 1)

Jack Laurie, a member of the National GLCI Steering Committee from Michigan, spoke at this year's Great Lakes Grazing Conference and updated the crowd on GLCI activities. He emphasized the national GLCI goals of increasing or developing technical assistance, research, education, and funding for implementation of grazing land management practices.



*Jack Laurie discusses the history, mission, goals, and activities of the National GLCI at the Great Lakes Grazing Conference.*

Laurie told the group that the strategy of partnership and cooperation of the various groups that are members of the National GLCI is a good one. "Mimicking those same partnerships at the state level is vitally important," he added. "The State GLCI organizations made up of these groups can best identify state and local needs for various kinds of grazing assistance," he said.

Laurie believes there is room for more partners at the National and State level GLCI, and as the base of support broadens out so will the acceptance of grazing land management practices. He says priorities that increase technical assistance through NRCS as well as research and education through the land grant university system are important to future success among grazing land coalitions.

Laurie asked GLGN conference attendees, "Has the National GLCI done any good in these last 11 years?" He told them: "The facts speak for themselves" and listed the following statistics:

- Dollars earmarked for NRCS technical assistance has quadrupled.
- Training of agency personnel, partners, farmers, and ranchers reaches more than 6,000 persons.
- Grazing management plans were developed with almost 4,000 individuals and applied on more than a quarter million acres in 2001.
- Hundreds of brochures, news articles, videos, and TV and radio broadcasts have been created to reach over 5 million of the general public.
- Grazing land demonstration projects have been established on more than 200 grazing operations and are reaching several thousand people.

Despite those numbers, Laurie told the audience that the work has just begun. "There is still much to do," he said, pointing out that many parts of the agricultural U.S. still do not see managed grazing as a viable system. But he noted that the poor farm economy puts pressure on producers to look at reducing costs, improving profit margins and meeting consumer demands for quality food without damaging the environment. "These pressures and opportunities will increase the number of farmers and ranchers looking closer at managed grazing practices," Laurie said.

Jack also noted that another recent highlight for the National GLCI and its member organizations was the highly successful National

Conference on Grazing Lands (NCGL) held in Las Vegas in December 2000. He told the crowd that because of the success and positive feedback from the first NCGL, "The Second National Conference on Grazing Lands will be held in Nashville, Tennessee in December 2003."

Looking at the key challenges for the future of GLCI both nationally and at state levels, Laurie says, "The National GLCI has worked hard to garner support from politicians for the Conservation of Private Grazing Lands program funding in the next Farm Bill. They want to support each state's GLCI group. They want to support any funding for the implementation of conservation grazing practices by state or federal programs." Laurie also complimented the group, saying, "National GLCI supports the Great Lakes Grazing Network as a great example and vital regional forum for addressing grazing land issues."

Howard Straub, Chair of the Michigan Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (MGLCI), was also at the conference and was asked how Michigan GLCI supports the goals Jack had mentioned in his speech. "Even though the Michigan GLCI was reorganized less than a year ago, many things have been accomplished," Howard said. He



pointed out that through support of the member groups, NRCS and Michigan State University Extension, the MGLCI has had a booth and demonstration project along with the Michigan Hay and Grazing Council at Michigan's Ag Expo, the largest attended event in Michigan for agricultural equipment and technology.

MGLCI also partnered with several groups to create a "Michigan Pasture Stick" for farmers, extension and agency people to use in managing grazing in Michigan. MGLCI has grants and plans for a traveling display, more demonstration projects and workshops for Michigan. "We are excited about the future of grazing in Michigan," Howard said. ■

*Howard Straub (seated at center), chairman of the Michigan GLCI, is actively involved with the Great Lakes Grazing Network.*

### GORDON TO ASSUME EDITOR DUTIES

Beginning July 1, 2002, Kindra Gordon will take over the role as editor of the bi-monthly **GLCI/News**. She will work to bring more producer profiles and grazing management features to the newsletter. Gordon has an extensive background in journalism and range management. She has a B.S. degree in range science and ag journalism from S.D. State Univ. and earned her Master's in Range Resources from the Univ. of Idaho. Gordon has worked with the NRCS and was managing editor with BEEF magazine for four years. She and her husband Bruce now live in Spearfish, SD and have two young children. In her new role, Gordon will provide GLCI stories and information about upcoming events to the news media and will also help in providing content for the GLCI website. To contact her, e-mail [kindras@gordonresources.com](mailto:kindras@gordonresources.com) or call 605-722-7699.





## GLCI SPOTLIGHT

### The National Association of Conservation Districts

Serving America's Conservation Districts

The National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) is the nonprofit organization that represents the nation's 3,000 soil and water conservation districts and 17,000 men and women who serve on their governing boards. For 65 years, local conservation districts have worked with the more than 2.5 million cooperating landowners and managers of private working lands to help them plan and apply conservation treatments to control erosion and improve the quality of our soil resources, water supply, fish and wildlife habitat, and woodlands, pasturelands and rangelands for the benefit of all citizens in America.

From its founding in 1946, NACD leaders have promoted the concept of locally led self-government to achieve land conservation objectives. Today, incentive-driven and locally led conservation programs offer the most practical and reasonable approach to conservation of natural resources. But, our conservation success continues to depend on the voluntary cooperation and conservation efforts of private landowners—especially farmers and ranchers.

NACD believes providing progressive incentives for American producers is the most efficient way to promote effective conservation today, and well into tomorrow. One of the most significant achievements of the recent Farm Bill conservation title is the new nationwide Conservation Security Program (CSP), which provides incentive, cost share and bonus payments to producers to maintain existing conservation practices or install new ones. The CSP compensates producers for the environmental benefits they provide to the American public.

"I believe ranchers and farmers want to do more to protect the environment, if they can afford it," said NACD President Read Smith. "This is one of the most significant pieces of conservation legislation to come along in many years, and our local districts worked long and hard to help make this piece of legislation the best-ever for ranchers and farmers, and the American public."

#### Grazing Lands Commitment

NACD worked to make sure the Farm Bill included important grazingland provisions, such as the Grasslands Reserve Program and continued availability of technical assistance. NACD's grazingland initiatives are directed by its Grazingland and Public Lands Resources (GPLR) Committee.

The mission of the GPLR Committee is to identify current and emerging issues affecting conservation districts that are associated with grazing lands, both public and private. The committee develops and advances policy that is scientifically sound, economically feasible, and environmentally beneficial.

The GPLR Committee has identified three priority areas of focus for 2002: Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI); Outreach & Education; and, Land Policy and Management.

NACD's priority for the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative involves collaborative efforts on items of mutual interest, such as the Conservation on Private Grazing Lands (CPGL) Program, the National Conference on Grazing Lands (NCGL) and Technical Assistance for Grazing Lands.

Nevada rancher Joe Sicking, who chairs the GPLR Committee, outlined the following objectives: "For the Conservation on Private Grazing Lands Program we planned to get the rule published and to extend the program in the 2002 Farm Bill with adequate funding authorized. Our objective for the National Conference on Grazing Lands is to integrate the proceedings of the conference into public policy where applicable. Finally, our objective for Technical Assistance for Grazing Lands is simply to increase the technical assistance available to operators of grazing lands."

For more information contact NACD staffer Robert Toole at (405) 359-9011; [Robert-toole@nacdn.org](mailto:Robert-toole@nacdn.org).



#### GRETCHEN SAMMIS

Since 1954, Gretchen Sammis has owned and operated the 11,000-acre Chase Ranch near Cimarron, New Mexico. The Chase Ranch was originally established in 1867 by her great-grandfather. She prides herself on "sleeping in the same bed in the same room as she was born." Gretchen taught school in Cimarron for over fourteen years.

She has been involved in the Soil and Water Conservation District movement since 1973, serving as Director of the Colfax County SWCD and holding leadership positions with the New Mexico Soil and Water Commission and as Chair of NACD's Grazing Lands and Public Lands Committee. She has served as a NACD representative on the National GLCI Steering Committee since 1994.

Gretchen manages a 250 head Hereford cow/calf operation. The ranch operation is based upon adoption of rotational grazing practices on native range and hosts an excellent population of elk, deer, turkey, mountain lion and bear. Gretchen's work in the education community and her leadership in natural resource management and public policy led to her induction into the Cowgirl Hall of Fame in 1986.

Gretchen strongly believes NACD's mission of promoting the wise use of our nations resources is critical to every landowner. She states the adoption of sound conservation practices is key to the sustainability of our American farms and ranches. The National GLCI Steering Committee goal of "increasing technical assistance on our nation's 634 million acres of privately owned grazing lands, in a voluntary basis, and in respect of private property rights" is vital.

The two major accomplishments achieved by the National GLCI Steering Committee is creating a greater national attention on the need for improved grazing lands management and the passage of the Conservation of Private Grazing Lands (CPGL) section in the 2002 Farm Bill. The biggest challenge facing the National GLCI Steering Committee is assisting State GLCI Coalitions as they work to achieve full funding for CPGL.

#### J.K. "ROOTER" BRITE

J.K. "Rooter" Brite of Bowie, TX has represented the (NACD) on the National GLCI Steering Committee since 1997. He is currently a Director of the Upper Elm-Red Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) and has been involved with SWCD since 1980.



Rooter, his wife Lynda and son J.K.III represent the third generation on the 3400-acre ranch, originally purchased by his grandfather in 1931. The Brites operate a 225 head cow/calf herd, maintain 40 to 75 replacement heifers, and produce 400 to 500 stockers annually. Brite's forage base is native tallgrass prairie managed to totally supply feed for the ranch. Key management practices include rotational grazing of pastures designed to match their productive ability to the climate, soils and topography. He notes the ranch is home to excellent populations of whitetail deer, turkey and quail.

Rooter believes the primary role of NACD is to pool natural resource management assistance for the benefit of today's agricultural producer. He cites working with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service through the Great Plains Conservation Program in the early 1960s. He strongly maintains today's landowners always make sound, informed management decisions if provided quality technical assistance and economic alternatives. The adoption of rotational grazing practices on his ranch has saved their operation during recent drought periods.

He says the principal goal of GLCI is to achieve a more equitable focus of limited conservation dollars on the nation's largest land use...grazinglands. He notes two major accomplishments of GLCI have been creating a greater national awareness of the importance of the nation's 634 million acres of privately owned grazinglands, and achieving dedicated funding for grazing lands technical assistance through USDA-NRCS. The biggest challenge faced by GLCI is to maintain a balanced approach to the education of our leaders and land managers of the value of sound management of our grazing land resources. ♣

# The Chair's Corner

I had the pleasure of visiting with Deputy Undersecretary of Agriculture Mack Gray and NRCS Chief Bruce Knight while in Washington, DC. Both individuals expressed support for GLCI and our efforts to ensure the availability of voluntary conservation technical assistance for the nation's grazing lands.

I also represented GLCI at the Sustainable Rangelands Roundtable in Washington, DC. This group represents various organizations, agencies and individuals meeting to develop ways to identify and address rangeland issues.

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002, commonly known as the Farm Bill, passed Congress and was signed by President Bush. Conservation of Private Grazing Land Program (CPGL) was reauthorized with funding authorized at \$60 million per year. CPGL is a voluntary program that helps owners and managers of private grazing lands address natural resource concerns while enhancing the economic and social stability of grazing land enterprises and the rural communities that depend on them. The National GLCI Steering Committee will continue our efforts to fund this important program.

Bill Tucker recently resigned as the American Forage and Grassland Council (AFGC) representative on the National GLCI Steering Committee. Dave Forgey, from Logansport, Indiana will now represent AFGC on the committee. We want to thank Bill for his years of dedicated service on the committee, and we look forward to working with Dave in the future.

We also have two new Regional GLCI Coordinators. Kim Stine, from North Platte, Nebraska has been selected to serve as the Northern Plains GLCI Coordinator. She replaces Rod Baumberger who is now the National GLCI Coordinator. Kim will start in her new position July 15th. Jana Malot, from McConnellsburg, Pennsylvania, is currently serving as the East Regional GLCI Coordinator. She replaces Darrell Emmick who completed his assignment in that position. We appreciate Darrell's contributions, and look forward to continued strong GLCI support and assistance from Kim and Jana. ■

**Bob Drake, Chairman**

*National GLCI Steering Committee*

## GLCI/News

Contact these affiliated organizations:

**American Farm  
Bureau Federation**  
Rosemarie Watkins  
(202) 484-3608

**American Forage and  
Grassland Council**  
Dana Tucker  
1-800-944-2342

**American Sheep  
Industry**  
Tom McDonnell  
(303) 771-3500

**Dairy Industry**  
Jack Laurie  
(517) 323-6575

**National Association of  
Conservation Districts**  
Robert Toole  
(405) 359-9011

**National Cattlemen's  
Beef Association**  
Myra B. Hyde  
(202) 347-0228

**National Farmers Union**  
Chris Schepis  
(202) 554-1600

**Society for Range  
Management**  
Samuel Albrecht  
(303) 986-3309

**Soil and Water  
Conservation Society**  
Craig Cox  
(515) 289-2331, ext. 13

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

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.