Grass, Cattle and Quail in South Carolina
by Michael Hall, State GLCI Coordinator

The S.C. Grasslands Conservation Coalition’s March meeting focused on the task of identifying common ground between livestock producers and wildlife managers addressing quail habitat.

Coalition leadership had recognized the need for developing a proactive approach to addressing wildlife habitat issues on grazing lands in South Carolina.

Quail, being a keystone species requiring diverse habitat, was chosen as the target species although it is recognized that many other grassland and edge species can benefit from a successful effort of organizations represented by the Coalition.

Mr. Rocky Evans, Executive Vice President of Quail Unlimited, along with Mr. Billy Dukes, Small Game Supervisor, and Ms. Judy Barnes, Wildlife Biologist, with the SC Department of Natural Resources, presented the status of quail population. Mr. Evans cited a 70% decline over the past 25 years in 17 S.E. states. The primary cause of the decline being a loss of habitat, they enumerated the demise of the family farm, clean, large-scale row crop fields and conversion of open land to pines through the CRP program as major contributors to the loss.

Dr. Steve Meadows, Director of the Clemson University Edisto Research and Education Center, along with Dr. Harold Hupp, Clemson University Animal and Veterinary Science Department, and Mr. Brian Bolt, Executive Director of the S.C. Cattlemen’s Association, represented the state livestock producers.

Dr. Meadows profiled the South Carolina cattle operations as being cow-calf, with the majority of the herds maintaining 25-30 breeding animals on an annual basis. Dr. Hupp and Mr. Bolt defined the typical producers as being part-time and owning or controlling 30-100 acres of open land dedicated to producing grass. Fescue and Bermuda grass were agreed on as the dominant perennial grasses in the state. It was noted that while all livestock producers were not avid hunters, as a group they were unquestionably dedicated to conservation of natural resources. This strong sense of stewardship resulted in a keen interest in game and non-game wildlife species.

(Continued on next page)
KENTUCKY

GRAZING DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS IN KENTUCKY
by David Slipes, NRCS Kentucky

The livestock industry makes a tremendous contribution to the overall agricultural economy in Kentucky. Because of a favorable climate and productive soils, Kentucky livestock producers can produce a broad range of forage species that can be harvested by grazing animals. Many agricultural producers in Kentucky have traditionally depended upon tobacco as a major cash crop. Because of changes in the tobacco industry, many producers are now relying more heavily on livestock production with grazing systems as a way to recover income no longer available from tobacco production.

With good management techniques, forage and livestock production is being improved all across the state. Demonstrations of improved management techniques have been established at five locations in Kentucky through the technical and financial support of NRCS with cooperation from the University of Kentucky, College of Agriculture, Resource Conservation and Development Councils (RC&D), Conservation Districts and others. These demonstrations have been established on farms that represent conditions commonly found on farms in specific regions of the state. On each of these farms improved grazing management strategies, as well as structural measures and forage improvement practices, have been implemented. Field tours have been conducted on each farm as a method of providing outreach to producers in the area. In addition, the Kentucky Grazing School has been held on one farm twice.

For further information contact David Slipes, NRCS State Agronomist in Kentucky at 606-224-7392 or email david.slipes@ky.usda.gov.
GLCI SPOTLIGHT
AMERICAN SHEEP INDUSTRY

The American Sheep Industry (ASI) is a federation of individual sheep and goat producers as well as state organizations. ASI is one of the founding organizations of GLCI and supports the National Steering Committee with two representatives.

ASI represents nearly 70,000 sheep and goat producers in the United States and has associate members in national breed associations and businesses directly and indirectly involved in the industry. Their funds are utilized to fulfill the goals set out by producer leaders. Affiliated with ASI is the American Sheep Industry Women, whose members actively support the association in promotion and legislative activities. ASI believes the American sheep producers are best equipped to lead the efforts in setting a successful course for the organization. That is why their producer members establish the goals of ASI. Their goals are:

- Develop an industry vision for the future.
- Be an advocate of public policy to protect, promote and support the economical viability of the industry.
- Create strong national and international markets for lamb and wool through advertising, promotion and marketing.
- Advance and coordinate science and technology of production and marketing.
- Promote communication and cooperation among all segments of the industry, related business and government agencies.

For more information about the American Sheep Industry, log on to their web site at www.sheepusa.org or contact your state sheep association. Aggie Helle of Dillon, Montana, and Frank Philip of Shoshoni, Wyoming, represent ASI on the GLCI National Steering Committee.

Aggie Helle was raised on a sheep and cattle ranch in Beaverhead County, Montana and graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree from Western Montana College (currently University of Montana-Western). After they were married, Aggie and Joe Helle moved to Dillon where they established Rebish and Helle Partnership with Aggie’s brother. The operation manages a thriving sheep operation, utilizing AKBash guard dogs and herders. As producers of extremely fine wool, the partnership has been able to move into international markets. They also manage a farming operation with alfalfa, malt barley, spring wheat, and winter wheat, and previously also managed a cow/calf operation. Joe Helle has a master’s degree in Range Science from the University of Idaho.

The Helles’ sons, Tom and John, now manage independent ranch operations that also include a purebred Rambouillet sheep operation and cattle. They also help out with Rebish and Helle Partnership from time to time.

Both Joe and Aggie have served in many capacities with the Montana Woolgrowers’ Association and the American Sheep Industry and were co-recipients of the “McClure Silver Ram” Award, attesting to their dedication to the industry. Aggie also serves as the rancher representative for the Center for Invasive Plant Materials Board for Montana State University and has been elected to co-chair the Natural Resources Council for ASI. Mrs. Helle has been appointed by the President to serve on the state FSA Committee.

The Helles have demonstrated that sheep are environmentally friendly and can enhance rangeland in Montana when managed properly. Rebish and Helle Partnership has even provided sheep for noxious weed and brush management as far away as New Hampshire.

Wyoming state legislator Frank Philip and his family are an integral part of the Philip Sheep Company, a diversified operation with range cattle and sheep, irrigated farms, and livestock feeding and finishing. Frank’s immediate family includes his wife, Janet, and daughter Aley (now at the University of Wyoming). Representative Philip’s education includes a bachelor’s degree in range management from the University of Wyoming.

Philip Sheep Company, operated by Frank, his father, brother, and sister, is located in the Shoshoni-Lytle area of central Wyoming. The cattle operation is commercial Angus and Angus cross cattle, with the calves weaned and fed on-farm to about 800 pounds. Irrigated crops include alfalfa, corn silage, barley, and grass hay. The Rambouillet sheep operation also includes marketing wholesale cuts of lamb through Mountain States-Rosen Lamb and Wool Cooperative. The lamb-processing cooperative has members throughout the Western states and is being organized with leadership from the Wyoming Woolgrowers’ Association.

Frank Philip has served in the Wyoming House of Representatives for 10 years. He currently serves on the Select Water Committee, the Appropriations Committee and the Rules and Procedures Committee. Rep. Philip previously served on the Agriculture, Public Lands and Water Resources Committee, and the Tourism, Recreation and Wildlife Committee.
**THE CHAIR'S CORNER**

The National GLCI Steering Committee held their annual spring meeting in Washington, DC on March 4 at the Holiday Inn, Rosslyn. Forty-two people, including steering committee members, advisory board members, speakers and guests, attended the meeting. Some of the topics and decisions of the National Steering Committee include:

- **Second National Conference Grazing Lands** - Nashville Convention Center, December 7-10, 2003. The National Committee will sponsor a conference pin. The program committee determined the four speaking categories. The exhibit committee will distribute information on commercial and non-profit booth spaces in June.

- **Research and Education** - Ev Byington, Agriculture Research Service, reviewed what is happening with research in the ARS and A.J. Dye, Cooperative Research and Extension, reviewed funding and research for extension.

- **Farm Bill Update** - Rosemarie Watkins, American Farm Bureau, and Ed Burton, NRCS, reviewed the key elements of the 2002 Farm Bill.

- **Jason Campbell** - National Cattlemen's Beef Association spoke on behalf of the Sportsmen and Ranchers for Land Stewardship, which consists of producers and other groups. This group's major focus is agency budgets, range management concerns, range monitoring, multiple use of public lands and weed control.

- **Office of Management and Budget** - Jason Weller listed OMB responsibilities which included: Advising the President on Economic Issues; evaluating Federal programs; his principal assignment to NRCS and FSA; auditing cost-share programs and budgeting processes.

- **Merlin Bartz** - Special Assistant to USDA Undersecretary Mark Rey - Reviewed the FY-02 Appropriations language and 2002 Farm Bill. Mentioned the importance of GLCI input in implementing the Farm Bill.

- **Pearl Reed** - NRCS Chief - Reviewed his speech that he delivered for the Appropriations Committee Hearing emphasizing the importance of conservation on the ground. Partnerships are important and the conservation operations account underpins the entire national private lands conservation infrastructure. It leverages more than a billion dollars annually in state and local conservation investments.

- **GLCI Fall Meeting** - National Steering Committee, October 24-25, 2002 in Wisconsin. There will be a tour of Pasture-based Dairy Farms on Friday and business meeting on Saturday.

The GLCI National Steering Committee would like to thank Pearl Reed for his support for GLCI over the past several years. We look forward to working with the new Chief of NRCS, Bruce Knight, on grazing land issues.

Bob Drake, Chairman  
National GLCI Steering Committee

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**GLCINews**

Contact these affiliated organizations:

- **American Farm Bureau Federation**  
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- **National Association of Conservation Districts**  
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- **National Cattlemen's Beef Association**  
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- **National Farmers Union**  
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- **Society for Range Management**  
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