State Grasslands Conservation Coalition

Making Headlines in South Carolina...
Coalition's Efforts Lead to Naming of State Grass

By Michael Hall, SC Grazing Lands Specialist

South Carolina has its own state bird, dance, drink, tree, reptile, and now its own grass! In August, Governor Jim Hodges signed House Bill 4015 proclaiming Indiangrass South Carolina's official state grass. The South Carolina Grasslands Conservation Coalition (SCGCC) proposed the idea to Governor Hodges as part of its efforts to educate the public and governmental bodies on the conservation and management of grasslands in South Carolina. SCCGC Chairman Dr. James Riley said, “The designation of a state grass not only calls attention to the grassland resources of South Carolina, but also establishes an identity for the Coalition and its purpose.” The Coalition was formed in 1996 in response to the need to promote improved grassland management, provide research and education, and provide assistance to producers.

The SCCGC proposed the idea of proclaiming Indiangrass the state grass because of its widespread occurrence throughout the state and because of its importance as a forage species for livestock. South Carolina Senator John W. Drummond supported the signing of the bill and assisted the Coalition in its efforts. USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist Walter W. Douglas said, “Indiangrass is one of the state’s most beautiful native grasses. It also provides a readily available source of food for livestock as well as food and cover for game and non-game wildlife species.”

Dr. William Stringer, Clemson University forage agronomist, said that when the first Europeans came through South Carolina in the mid 1500’s they reported large areas of “prairies and savannas” intermixed with forests. These grasslands were prevalent due to regular burning by American Indians. As the plow and axe gave rise to the cotton culture, vast acreages of forestland and remaining grasslands were converted for production. Indiangrass, along with Eastern Gamagrass, and big and little bluestem, were able to survive in protected areas. According to Dr. Stringer, there are no vast acreages of Indiangrass in South Carolina today, but a search would turn up small communities in every South Carolina county.

(Continued on next page)
The Coalition is pleased with their involvement in naming South Carolina's state grass but they won't stop here! They have several projects planned for the months ahead including promoting silvopasture at the 33rd Annual Meeting of the S.C. Forestry Association in Charleston. This will allow the Coalition to promote silvopasture to an anticipated crowd of over 400 South Carolina Forestry Association members and guests representing corporate and independent timber companies, woodland owners, foresters, loggers, and others who share a common interest in a sustainable rural economy. Dr. Hill also sees this as an opportunity to carry the mission of the SCGCC to a non-traditional audience. "The South Carolina Forestry Association is a charter member of the Coalition, and we have been looking for projects that provide a way to bring grassland managers and those involved in forestry together. Silvopasture seems to fit the bill," he said.

The Coalition is also making plans for several workshops and clinics including: a Grazing Management Seminar directed at bringing together livestock producers and wildlife managers interested in Bob-white quail; silvopasture training for government and private foresters along with NRCS field staff and Extension agents; and a Grazing Management Seminar directed at bringing together livestock producers and wildlife managers interested in Bob-white quail.

For additional information contact Michael Hall, South Carolina Grasslands Conservation Coalition, at (864)388-9163, extension 5.

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Georgia Grazing Lands Conservation Coalition Offers Demonstration Assistance to Producers

Hollie Kuekendall, GGLCC Recording Secretary, Athens, GA

Twenty-one producers were selected to participate in 1999, while 22 producers are participating in the 2001 project. To be selected in 2001, producers completed a farm inventory and a cost of production economic survey. The heart of the producers' application, however, was a narrative summary that described their farm goals and the practices needed to achieve those goals. Competitive applications included local cost estimates, photos of resource problems and plan maps. To be selected for the project, producers must be willing to host on-farm tours and talk to fellow producers about the benefits of the applied practices.

The GGLCC's practice demonstration project is by far the most comprehensive program available to livestock and forage producers in Georgia. Producers can receive planning and funding assistance to apply or install a variety of practices. The most commonly requested practices were livestock working facilities, hay storage structures, water supply systems, heavy use areas, and bull pens for controlled breeding. Additionally, pasture and hay field renovation and establishment, intensified record-keeping, and herd health practices were emphasized. As long as producers could justify its need on their farm, a practice was eligible for the project.

Practice demonstration benefits the local community as well as the selected participant. Cattlemen, school, FFA, and Soil and Water Conservation District groups are using the project farms to conduct tours and have field days. There is no spokesperson like a producer. The GGLCC plans to continue this project by accepting applications every other year.

Since 1999, the Georgia Grazing Lands Conservation Coalition (GGLCC), NRCS, and the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service have been working together to offer Georgia livestock and forage producers a competitive process to obtain funding to demonstrate practices that increase production efficiency on their farms. Currently, the GGLCC practice demonstration project receives its funding from the NRCS Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative earmark. To date, $440,000 has passed through Georgia NRCS to the GGLCC for this very successful project.

GLC News
Nov-Dec 2001
Alabama Hosts Silvopasture Workshop

To learn more about silvopasture and the potential for our customers, Alabama held a multi-agency training session for NRCS and Alabama Cooperative Extension System technical specialists at the Auburn University Solon Dixon Forestry Center demonstration site, September 25-27, 2001. The session incorporated technical presentations dealing with establishment of silvopasture, wildlife considerations, forage plant physiology and interactions, grazing management systems, and silvopasture economics. Presenters included NRCS employees Jerry Johnson, Sid Brantly, Jeff Thurmond, and Ken Rogers, Auburn University professors Rhett Johnson, Mary Goodman, Darrell Rankins, and David South. George Owens, landowner in Chipley, FL; Jim Robinson, Agroforester with the National Agroforestry Center; and Mark Hainds, with the Dixon Forestry Center, also participated. Field demonstrations at the Dixon Center and at the Owens ranch in Florida were also a part of the workshop.

Ken Rogers (GLCI Coordinator) and Steve Musser (Resource Conservationist) demonstrate the installation of a fence corner at the Silvopasture Training Workshop for Extension Agents and NRCS Conservationists from Alabama. Photo - Julie Best (Public Affairs Specialist, NRCS, Alabama).

Making Hay Stand the Test

Yes, there is a difference between shelter stored hay and hay stored outside.

Holly Kaykendall, NRCS, Athens, Georgia

Since 1996, Georgia livestock producers have been busy demonstrating the benefits of intensified animal and forage management through the NRCS Model Farm Project. There are currently 14 Model Farm demonstrations located throughout the state. An article describing Jerry Fleming's Hart County Model Farm demonstration was published in the January-February 2000 issue of GLCI News. The construction of a new hay storage facility was among the many items Fleming received conservation planning and cost-share assistance on.

As an integral part of Fleming's Model Farm demonstration, he performed a test to measure loss differences for barn versus outside stored hay. Fleming continued to store a sample of his hay bales outside on the ground in addition to making full use of his new hay storage facility. Hay bales destined for outside and inside storage were weighed and tested for quality prior to storage and again just prior to feeding. Additionally, refused hay collected from the feeding area was weighed to capture feeding losses.

For tall fescue hay, dry matter loss for hay stored in the barn averaged 2.2%, while dry matter loss for hay stored outside on the ground was 7.4%. Including feeding losses, dry matter loss for tall fescue hay stored in the barn averaged 6.7%, while dry matter loss for hay stored outside on the ground was 14.6%. These results were obtained in 1999-2000, a period with well below normal rainfall. In a normal rainfall year, the benefits from storing hay under cover and on a dry surface (in the barn) on the feed value of harvested forage would be even more striking.

The savings from preventing hay quality and dry matter losses, and reducing the amount of hay that has to be put up can pay for hay barn construction within just a few years; or the savings can be applied to other worthwhile purposes.
THE CHAIR’S CORNER

The National GLCI Steering Committee will hold its fall business meeting in Nashville, Tennessee on October 19th and 20th. A grazing lands tour will be held on Friday October 19th, and the business meeting will take place on Saturday October 20th. Topics to be discussed will be the 2003 National Grazing Lands Conference, NRCS National Plant Materials Program, Public-Private Land Concerns, Rangeland Health, Animal Feeding Operations, Farm Bill legislation, and conclude with the annual business meeting.

The National GLCI Steering Committee has started working on the Second National Conference on Grazing Lands to be held in Nashville, Tennessee in 2003. We are partnering with the Society for Range Management to put this conference on. John Peterson will again serve as conference manager. His leadership and expertise helped make the first conference a success.

- Last month I attended the Arizona Association of Conservation Districts meeting in Prescott and gave a talk about GLCI. The following are some activities that our state GLCI coalitions are involved in:
  - The Wisconsin Grazing Coalition met with the Wisconsin State Technical Committee, Pat Leavenworth, State Conservationist chaired the meeting. Discussion focused on GLCI progress and activities in Wisconsin. The meeting concluded with a tour of a grass-based dairy operation. Gerald Jaeger, National GLCI Steering Committee member, discussed issues facing GLCI.
  - In the South Central region, a new GLCI Emphasis Area has been established in the Gulf Coast region of Texas. The Coastal Bend joins the Northeast Texas and Edwards Region as special GLCI Emphasis Areas in Texas. Oklahoma GLCI is going to host a Grazing Lands Symposium in the spring of 2002.
  - In the Northern Plains Region the Colorado Grazing Land Conservation Initiative will sponsor two Grazing Land Conservation Workshops next winter. The workshops will target ranchers, farmers and land managers with the theme “Implementing Economically Feasible Rangeland Improvements to Sustain Land Stewardship.”

On a final note, Dennis Neffendorf, National GLCI Coordinator has taken another position with NRCS. I want to thank Dennis for his support and interest in GLCI and wish him the best in his new position. Rod Baumberger, Northern Plains GLCI Coordinator will serve in the position until a new coordinator is selected.

Bob Drake, Chairman
National GLCI Steering Committee

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

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