Louisiana Grazing Lessons
Three-day, hands-on workshop helps southeastern livestock producers learn about total resource management.

By Kindra Gordon

Few would argue that there is a better classroom than the great outdoors. And, that was the setting for a Grazing Land Management Workshop held in mid-June near Amite, Louisiana. The workshop is an annual event that is held in different locations around the state each year to help teach producers about sustainable livestock production.

This year’s workshop was organized by the Louisiana GLCI Coalition and the Capital RC&D Council, and held at the Bald Cypress Cattle Company, a working livestock grazing enterprise operated by Hank Schumacher and his family.

“The goal of the program is to give an overview of livestock production from managing soils and forages to ultimately improving livestock production,” says Craig Pate, who is the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Area Range Management Specialist at Amite, LA.

Producer Hank Schumacher who hosted the group on his farm is a testament to the success of such workshops. A few years back Schumacher attended a similar event where he and his son learned about intensive grazing. Working with NRCS and GLCI, they implemented an intensive grazing system on their 80-acre operation five years ago, and now run a herd of 50 Brahman cows. “I’ve got lots of forage,” says Schumacher who moves the herd daily and plans to break his five-acre paddocks down to 2.5-acre paddocks for even more grazing efficiency.

“A lot of producers don’t believe how intensive grazing works until they can see it on someone’s place. My son and I were the same way five years ago. So, we were pleased to host this event and help share what we’ve learned about grazing management,” Schumacher says.

Pate reports that over 50 people participated in the three-day workshop, including livestock producers, NRCS personnel and University staff. The program began with a focus on how

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livestock management affects soils and organic matter in the soil profile, then covered details on how to determine a proper stocking rate, pasture health and pasture conditions.

In addition to the practical field exercises, classroom sessions were held to supplement the information. Ron Morrow and Ann Wells from the National Center for Appropriate Technology in Fayetteville, AR were the primary instructors for the course.

At the conclusion of the course, a local producer shared his perspective of grazing management and the economic impact it has had on his operation. Discussions also focused on animal health and nutrition.

Hank Schumacher, left, and Dan Tilton explain the grazing and livestock management programs on their ranch, Bald Cypress Cattle Company in Hauser, Louisiana.

Pate says the workshop has definitely helped generate more interest in grazing management. “We’ve had several producers contact us about implementing cross-fencing and water developments. This conference helps producers think about total resource management that includes soil quality, forage quality and water quality – rather than solely focusing on just the livestock production,” he says.

The Louisiana GLCI Coalition plans to host a similar “Sustainable Livestock Production” workshop next year. For more information, contact state coordinator Kevin Blomquist at 318-473-7808.

Top-Notch Managers

Seven ranching operations across the nation are being honored for their efforts in environmental enhancement and preservation, as regional winners of the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association’s Environmental Stewardship Award (ESAP) program.

The regional winners are:
Region I: Llangollen Farms – Middleburg, Virginia
Region II: Carlton 2x4 Ranch – Arcadia, Florida
Region III: M&M Cattle Company – Carthage, Missouri
Region IV: Canyon View Farms – Geary, Oklahoma
Region V: Frasier Farms, Woodrow/Limon, Colorado
Region VI: Work Family Ranch, San Miguel, California
Region VII: Barentsen Red Angus Ranch – Powers Lake, North Dakota

Sponsored by Dow AgroSciences, the Environmental Stewardship Award Program recognizes cattle producers whose stewardship practices are inventive, cost-effective and contribute to environmental conservation. Recipients are selected by a committee of representatives from university faculty, federal and state government agencies, and conservation and environmental organizations.

“Our ESAP winners demonstrate how good business and environmental protection can go hand in hand. They are role models for all of us,” says NCBA spokesperson Stephanie Timsley.

The award winners will be formally recognized at the 2004 Cattle Industry Convention and Trade Show in Phoenix, Ariz., next January, when the national award winner will be announced.

Correction:

Louisiana’s Jack Cutshall, who represents NCBA on the National GLCI Steering Committee, serves as chairman of the Private Lands and Environmental Management Committee in Louisiana. It was incorrectly stated that he was chairman of the NCBA committee.


Plan to Attend!
GRAZE THE WEB

Find answers to grazing management questions at these helpful websites.

Forage research, fencing ideas, weed control. If you’ve got questions relating to these and other range and pasture topics, there’s plenty of information on the Internet. Here’s a listing of some of the cream of the crop:

Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (www.glci.org) - This website provides links to all nine GLCI member organizations, contact information for GLCI regional coordinators and steering committee members and includes archives of past issues of the GLCI news. An up-to-date calendar of coming grazing events around the country can be found at the site, as is registration information for the upcoming Second National Conference on Grazing Lands.

Forage System Research Center (www.nrs.missouri.edu/FSRC) - Universities are a wealth of information, especially for site-specific research by region of the country. For producers in the central and eastern part of the U.S., this site has a long list of publications in downloadable pdf format. The site is coordinated by the University of Missouri's research center at Linea and offers some of the most practical information available.

Other universities with useful listings of forage research publications include:

Oklahoma Forage Extension Publications
www.agr.okstate.edu/forage/publications/forage-pubs.htm
University of Wisconsin Forages
www.uwex.edu/ces/crops/uwforage/uwforage.htm
Kansas Forage Web Site
www.oznet.ksu.edu/pr_forage/
Purdue Forage Information
www.agry.purdue.edu/ext/forages/
Mississippi State University
www2.msstate.edu/~ddlang/foragesms.html
Texas A&M
www.intensivegrazing.tamu.edu

Rangelands of the Western U.S. (rangelandswest.org/index.html)
- For livestock producers in the Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, and westward, this site is a gold mine. The site is a collaborative effort of land-grant universities in 17 western states. It includes detailed definitions about rangelands, articles about current rangeland policy issues, and an education page with useful ideas.

Best of all, under “general resources” the comprehensive site includes forage-related publications from the Extension service, links to each of the participating state land-grant universities, as well as links to forage experts by state.

Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation (www.noble.org) - The Noble Foundation is a well-known authority on range and pasture research as well as beef production and ag economics topics. You’ll find all that information and more by clicking on the “ag division” box at the bottom of their home page. An added bonus on this site is the best plant image gallery on the Web. It includes color photos and detailed information on hundreds of range plants, forages and forbs.

Hay & Forage Grower magazine (www.bayandforage.com) - This popular magazine is produced six times a year and primarily caters to alfalfa growers. But, its website offers a variety of timely forage-related news, research and upcoming events. Online, you can search the archives of back issues by specific topics and find links for up-to-date hay prices as well.

Forage Information Systems (www.forges.orst.edu/default.cfm) - This site is maintained by Oregon State University, and includes information and links about hay, pasture and even silage from across the U.S. It includes a searchable database that allows you to type in the name of specific forage or topic and it will pinpoint the information for you. Also, included is an in-depth list of vendors by category (seed, hay, fertilizer, fencing, etc.).

Pasture Management (www.pasturemanagement.com)

This common sense, how-to-do-it website offers suggestions for managing land and people. The information is provided by Montana-based consultant Wayne Burdson who draws on real-life experiences. He covers no nonsense topics like “7 principles to a healthy pasture” and “21 common mistakes to avoid when building a fence.”

The Ranch (www.dowagro.com/therranch/) - Operated by DowAgroSciences this site includes the most comprehensive database of weeds and management strategies available for range and pasture settings. The pull-down menus allow you to select the weed you want information on, then shows a picture, offers a description about the plant and offers application rates for chemical control.

Allan Savory Center for Holistic Management (www.holisticmanagement.org)

For those interested in a sustainable management approach toward the entire ranch, this is your resource. A highlight of this site is the “library,” which includes a lengthy list of articles about holistic management.

Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas (www.attra.org)

This site provides fodder for “out of the box” thinkers. The information is geared toward sustainable farming practices, alternative crop and livestock enterprises and innovative marketing.

Lastly, there are several organizations dedicated to providing grazing management information to producers. They include:

Center for Grassland Studies (www.grassland.unl.edu)

Grazing Lands Technology Institute (operated by the Natural Resources Conservation Service) (www.ffw.nrcs.usda.gov/glrit/homepage.html)

American Forage and Grassland Council (www.afgc.org)

Society for Range Management (www.rangelands.org)

U.S. Government Research (www.science.gov)

Tips When Surfing The Net
1) Often the “research” or “publication” button on a site’s homepage will take you to the most useful information.
2) Always check a site’s “links” button to locate more detailed information.
3) Most sites include contact information for experts in a certain field that allows you to call or e-mail these specialists.
I have been busy meeting with our partner organizations. In June, I traveled to Washington, DC to meet with various agency leaders to gather support for the 2nd National Grazing Conference set for Dec. 7-10 in Nashville. It was encouraging to meet with so many who are supportive of the efforts of the National GLCI Steering Committee.

All of our partner members are having association meetings. I am able to attend some of the member meetings in the surrounding states to foster technical assistance and Farm Bill programs.

The National GLCI Steering Committee will be holding their fall meeting Sept. 5-6 in Rapid City, South Dakota. A tour will be held Sept. 5 of western South Dakota ranches, with the business meeting on Sept. 6.

Don’t forget that the early registration deadline for the Second National Conference on Grazing Lands is Nov. 1. See www.gldi.org for details.

Bob Drake, Chairman
National GLCI Steering Committee

New in the Northeast

Rob Ziehr joins GLCI as the regional coordinator in the Northeast. He fills the position formerly held by Jana Malot. Ziehr has worked as a Rangeland Management Specialist with NRCS since 1997 in Louisiana, Colorado and Oklahoma and, most recently, as a District Conservationist in Maryland. A graduate of Texas A&M University, Ziehr has worked with beef cattle all of his life and hopes to forge new territory in the northeast by helping build new partnerships in grazing lands conservation.

“My goal is to have active GLCI Steering Committees in all 12 states of the East Region and hope that from there the much needed technical assistance and education for grazing lands will be met,” Ziehr says. He is stationed in Beltsville, MD, and can be reached at 301-504-2344 or rob.ziehr@ea.nrcs.usda.gov.