



# THE PASTURE PROJECT

## ABOUT US

*The Pasture Project works to advance regenerative grazing in the Upper Midwest as a scalable, market-driven solution for building healthy soil, viable farms, and resilient communities. Pasture Project is part of the **Resilient Agriculture and Ecosystems (RAE) initiative** of the Wallace Center at Winrock International.*

We work with farmers, land managers, public agencies, and farm member-based organizations to build resources, provide technical assistance, and remove barriers for expanding use of regenerative practices that yield win-win outcomes for farmers, communities, and the environment.

## ONGOING PROGRAMS

### Centering Equity

The Wallace Center staff completed a 2-day training with The Justice Collective on centering racial equity in Fall 2018, which culminated in the development of an Equity Action Plan for the RAE initiative and Pasture Project. In the coming year, the team is working to build stronger relationships with allied organizations to advance racial equity through regenerative agriculture and value-chains in the Upper Midwest.

### Grazing Cover Crops

The use of cover crops can be an on-ramp towards the use of regenerative practices that support soil health and water quality. At the end of 2018, we completed a project which built the economic and soil health case for grazing cover crops through on-farm data collection with eight farms in Minnesota and Iowa. Notably, this project found that the practice can result in incremental improvements in soil fertility and significant cost savings from forage production for future cash crops.

With our partners, we released a suite of findings and resources developed through the project, including: a comprehensive [Grazing Cover Crops How-To Guide](#), a [technical bulletin](#) and [full trial report](#) on the project findings, and [a series of 14 grazing cover crops video tutorials](#).

The Pasture Project team is continuing to build the case for grazing cover crops through a new cohort of six cooperating farms in Illinois and Missouri.

### Coordinating Statewide Grazing Strategy Development in Illinois And Indiana

The initiative has been working on multi-tier engagement in Illinois and Indiana to further regenerative grazing:

#### Strategic network development and capacity building.

Pasture Project has been working with a broad range of stakeholders in agriculture in Illinois to identify strategic priorities for expanding regenerative grazing in the state. Thus far, the team has conducted interviews, written a [white paper](#) on the findings and analysis from those interviews, and held an in-person strategy meeting for Fall 2019.

#### Farmer-to-farmer network outreach and leadership development.

Pasture Project is currently identifying current and emerging Illinois farmer-to-farmer networks to assist with capacity building and leadership development to help support the transition to regenerative grazing practice.

**Critical resource and tool development.** The initiative developed a [watershed analysis tool](#) for Indiana and Illinois to assess the enabling environment for regenerative grazing.

**Value chain mapping.** In 2019, the Pasture Project and the Delta Institute [conducted research](#) to understand current grass-fed beef production, processing and end-markets in Illinois. Phase Two of this work will leverage the knowledge of regenerative grazing and grass-fed value chains in Illinois to engage stakeholders in a priority watershed to build localized momentum for regional change.

## CROSSCUTTING STRATEGIES

- Broker grazing deals between public and private landowners and graziers
- Provide direct technical support and education to row-crop farmers to integrate cover-cropping and regenerative grazing into their operations
- Support grass-based farmers and graziers as they become advocates in their communities
- Work with farmer support organizations to help them better support regenerative grazing
- Build grazing knowledge base through on-farm research
- Widely communicate economic, environmental and social benefits of regenerative grazing and supporting practices
- Support shifts in policy, regulation, and funding streams to improve access to land and capital
- Connect impact investment to regenerative grazing practices and grass-fed supply chains

### Public Land Grazing Pilots

The Wallace Center has continued to build a positive working relationship with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WI-DNR) to pilot the use of regenerative grazing as a conservation management strategy on multiple sites managed by the agency. With input from the Pasture Project, WI-DNR hired a Conservation Grazing Specialist in 2018. Since then, the Pasture Project, University of Wisconsin, and WI-DNR have worked together to scale up and solidify the case for grazing public grasslands instead of burning, mowing, or spraying. As of spring 2020, conservation grazing is being implemented on 30 sites and over 400 acres, with additional sites in the WI-DNR approval pipeline. Learn more about the project [here](#).

We are currently developing a spatial tool to support the site selection of future grazing plots, performing an economic analysis to determine the costs and benefits of grazing on several representative sites where grazing has been implemented for several years, and supporting the development of long term plans for monitoring the ecological integrity of these sites. The goal of this work is to develop a public land grazing model to enable replication of WI-DNR's success in other states. Completion of an analysis of public lands suitable for grazing in five other Upper Midwest states will be completed in 2020.

### Place-based, data-backed work in the Kickapoo River Watershed

The Pasture Project is currently implementing a new EPA-funded project in the Kickapoo River watershed in the Driftless region of southwest Wisconsin. Building on

several years of implementation of our behavior change model and transitioning over 20,000 acres to new best management practices, we are now engaging more deeply with a focused goal of moving the needle on water quality through regenerative grazing practices.

This project involves close collaboration with the Valley Stewardship Network and Tainter Creek Farmer-Led Watershed Council to implement a cost-share program for fencing and expand grazing technical assistance, develop a spatial decision support tool that models field and landscape-level environmental and economic outcomes from grazing BMPs, and assess water quality changes during the three-year project period in both Tainter Creek and a control watershed to determine the effect of grazing BMPs on phosphorus and sediment.

### Launch of the Regenerative Agriculture Innovation Network (REGAIN)

The Wallace Center has developed the Regenerative Agriculture Innovation Network (REGAIN), an online community of practice (CoP) platform intended to support the efforts of regenerative agriculture educators, advocates, and leaders in the Upper Midwest and beyond. REGAIN will provide a critical forum for individuals and organizations working in the regenerative agriculture field to learn and collaborate. REGAIN is currently in the final phase of site development and full launch is expected in November of 2020. Learn more about REGAIN [here](#).



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