



Pasture Project

AT THE WALLACE CENTER

CAUTION
Stock Grazing
Electric Fences
In Use!



Conservation Grazing In Progress

**A combination of fire and carefully
managed grazing improves
grassland habitat structure and
benefits many native species.**



Advocacy Toolkit:

Conservation Grazing on Public Lands in the Upper Midwest



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Welcome and Purpose of this Toolkit:

This toolkit, rich in resources on conservation grazing practices for public lands, serves as an essential advocate’s guide across the Upper Midwest. Tailored to empower passionate advocates, this toolkit consolidates resources, strategies, and insights necessary for championing sustainable land management through managed livestock grazing. Equipping land managers, policymakers, stakeholders, and conservationists with actionable insights, this toolkit facilitates informed decision-making, offering guidance on land management approaches, policy development, and community engagement for successful conservation grazing initiatives on public lands.

Conservation grazing can be a vital tool in managing public lands, and this toolkit aims to amplify voices in promoting its benefits while also providing a clearing house of resources on all aspects on conservation grazing on public land from technical grazing resources to stakeholder engagement. Resources include how-to videos, articles, ready-to-use templates, research, and success stories. Not all public land is suitable for grazing. This toolkit provides insights on when and how grazing can be best utilized to generate benefits. Whether you’re an enthusiast land manager, government agency, an organization, or a community leader, this resource arms you with the knowledge, tools, and strategies needed to navigate advocacy efforts effectively. This toolkit outlines practices and management techniques rooted in adaptive grazing, often interchangeably referred to as “regenerative.”

Delve into this toolkit and foster a collective mission to preserve and enhance public natural resources. Join us in championing conservation grazing practices for the ecosystem function of public grassland and the well-being of future generations.



About the Pasture Project:

This toolkit was created by the Pasture Project at the Wallace Center. The Pasture Project works to advance regenerative grazing and grass-fed value-added food chains in the Upper Midwest as a scalable, market-driven solution for building healthy soil, viable farms, and resilient communities. This includes working 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, grass-fed/finished value-added food chains and end markets that yield win-win outcomes for farmers, communities, and the environment. The Pasture Project is part of the Wallace Center at Winrock International.

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Importance of Conservation Grazing in the Upper Midwest:

Conservation grazing in the Upper Midwest can be helpful in restoring and preserving unique public grassland ecosystems. Conservation grazing has the potential to mimic some of the positive impacts that historical native herbivores, such as deer, elk, and bison on grassland ecosystems. Rotating livestock through paddocks via conservation grazing can create beneficial disturbance, if done with the right seasonality, intensity, and extent, followed by adequate periods of rest and recovery for the soil and plant communities. Well-managed grazing on publicly managed grasslands has demonstrated environmental and economic benefits. Cattle manure improves soil health by supporting soil microorganisms and insects that can increase the food resources for game and birds. Grazing can increase the structural diversity of grassland plant communities, which benefits a host of organisms. Conservation grazing can also generate revenue that may offset the public cost of managing the land with burning, mowing, and spraying. Conservation grazing on public lands is a flexible tool that can be customized to meet a variety of objectives, including maintaining habitat for wildlife species and plant communities and providing recreational opportunities. Indigenous peoples were the first regenerative graziers. For centuries, they sustainably managed bison herds throughout the American Midwest and the Great Plains. The values that governed their food systems reinforced an integrated view of human-environmental health and community care and supported productive and resilient food systems.

Today, the fertility of the Midwest landscape owes much to traditional management practices rooted in the stewardship of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous communities in the Midwest implemented controlled burns, strategically harnessing fire to maintain and enhance the landscape's fertility. Controlled burning cleared land for cultivation and stimulated the growth of nutritious grasses and facilitated the regeneration of vegetation crucial for wildlife. Moreover, Indigenous practices of wildlife management, notably the intentional movement of grazing animals, contributed to maintaining ecosystem health. This holistic approach to land stewardship, involving controlled fire and strategic livestock grazing, facilitated the intricate balance of the ecosystem.

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Conservation grazing on public lands in the Upper Midwest, when done appropriately, could offer a multitude of specific benefits that are pivotal for the health and sustainability of these landscapes:

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Biodiversity Preservation:

Conservation grazing mirrors natural grazing patterns, fostering diverse habitats. This approach supports native plant species and a variety of wildlife crucial to the region's biodiversity.

Invasive Species Control:

Grazing, when targeted, can control certain invasive plants by reducing their dominance, allowing native species to thrive. It's an effective, natural method to curb invasive species' spread without relying solely on herbicides or mechanical removal.

Soil Health Enhancement:

Through targeted grazing, soil health is improved. Plant recovery and growth after grazing can break up compacted soils, enhancing water infiltration and nutrient cycling. This in turn promotes healthier vegetation growth and biodiversity.

Fire Risk Mitigation:

Grazing can effectively manage vegetative growth, reducing the risk of wildfires. It helps maintain open landscapes and decreases fuel loads, making ecosystems more resilient to fire events.

Carbon Sequestration:

Conservation grazing contributes to carbon sequestration by promoting the growth of perennial grasses and increasing organic matter in the soil.

Water Retention:

Grazing practices that leave sufficient vegetative cover over the soil help improve water retention. This is crucial for sustaining healthy ecosystems.

Cost-effective Management:

Implementing conservation grazing on public lands offers a cost-effective solution for land management. It leverages natural processes and livestock's grazing behaviors to maintain landscapes, potentially reducing maintenance costs.

Enhanced Livelihoods:

By integrating grazing practices that benefit both the land and livestock producers, conservation grazing creates opportunities for sustainable agriculture, benefiting local economies and livelihoods.

Ecological Balance:

Conservation grazing fosters a balanced ecosystem by restoring natural processes, such as nutrient cycling and grassland dynamics, essential for the overall health of the landscape.

Conservation grazing on public lands in the Upper Midwest represents a holistic strategy for land stewardship, aiming to balance the ecosystem's needs with responsible livestock management. While promoting resilient landscapes, biodiversity, and sustainable land use practices, it's essential to recognize that if not well-managed within structured public/private agreements, livestock can potentially cause damage to these lands. This approach, while beneficial, requires meticulous oversight and adaptation to mitigate risks and ensure the long-term health of the ecosystem.

Implementing conservation grazing on public lands harnesses livestock – like beef and stocker cattle – to improve habitat, lower management costs, and can offer ecological benefits. This approach creates a potential 'win-win' for taxpayers, land agencies, and livestock producers. The Pasture Project's collaboration with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and the University of Wisconsin-Madison from 2014 to 2020 established a structured grazing program. This initiative, rooted in established grazing practices, serves as a model for public land agencies across Wisconsin and the Upper Midwest.

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These resources offer essential expertise, from grazing management plans to livestock handling techniques, enabling land managers to make informed decisions. By accessing these resources, land managers gain insights into optimizing grazing practices, fostering biodiversity, improving soil health, and preserving ecosystems, all crucial elements in sustainable land management strategies.

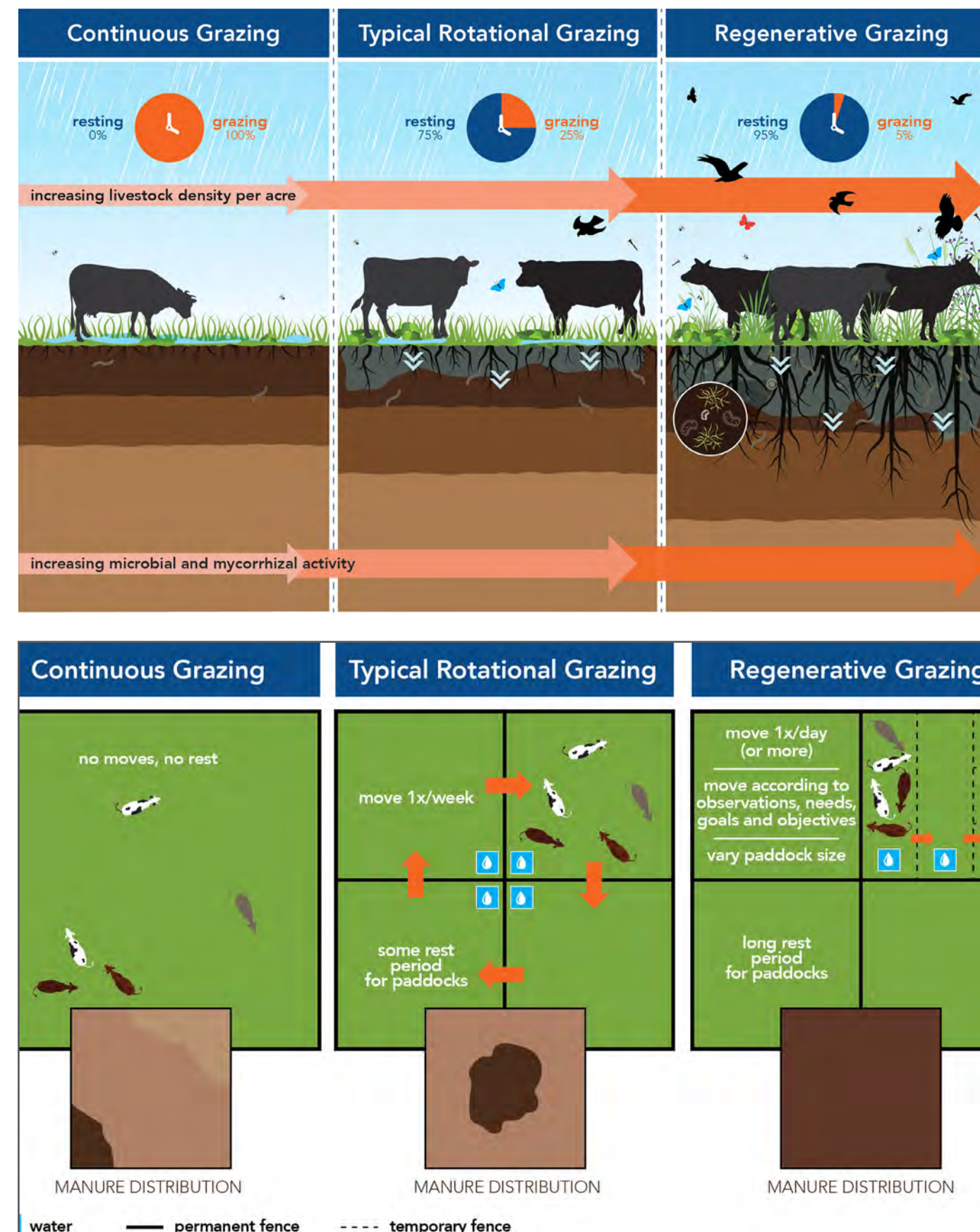
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General how-to resources on grazing as a practice:

Grazing Graphic:

There are several types of grazing systems including continuous, rotational, and adaptive. In continuous grazing systems, cattle remain in one large pasture all year, while in rotational and adaptive systems, they are moved to different parts of the pasture throughout the year, allowing the pasture to regenerate in between grazing periods. Adaptive grazing is similar to rotational grazing but has no set rotation schedule. Rotations are instead based off of ecological health and farmers' or land managers' goals.



[Adaptive Grazing 101: What is Adaptive Grazing?](#)

In this introductory video, Dr. Allen Williams, internationally recognized grazing and livestock expert shares his definition of adaptive grazing. Featuring Steve and Judy Freeman of Hartville, Missouri, this video is a great place to start your adaptive grazing journey.

▶ [Watch the rest of the series for more information about adaptive grazing, from soil health to forage quality and beyond!](#)

[Grassland Management Tools: Grazing, Haying, Burning, Resting:](#)

This resource outlines the use of conservation grazing to enrich ecosystems and enhance grassland management in Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), with a specific emphasis on the Prairie Ecoregion. The strategy involves strategic grazing practices—managing animal presence, timing, and density—to promote vital plant and structural diversity essential for grassland wildlife. Encompassing around 50,000 acres, the initiative implements varied grazing systems and emphasizes tailored, site-specific plans for monitoring and attaining habitat goals, in harmony with the adaptive management principles of WMAs.

[Pasture For Profit: A Guide to Rotational Grazing:](#)

Offering invaluable insights into rotational grazing techniques. This resource provides practical know-how and strategies for optimizing pasture management, enhancing livestock production, and fostering sustainable grazing practices. Developed by NRCS, it's an essential tool empowering farmers with effective rotational grazing methods for improved profitability and land stewardship.

[A Beginner's Guide to Conservation Grazing:](#)

Chris Helzer, Director of Science at The Nature Conservancy in Nebraska, offers an accessible entry point into the world of conservation grazing. Helzer's expert insights provide newcomers with foundational knowledge, outlining the principles and benefits of conservation grazing for fostering healthier ecosystems. This blog post serves as an informative starting point, guiding beginners through the basics and illustrating the significance of grazing practices in conservation efforts.

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Grazing infrastructure:

[Fencing Systems for Grazing:](#)

In this 13-part video series, fencing expert Kent Solberg, with help from organic dairy farmer Kevin Jahnke, describes the principles and pitfalls of energized fencing in a series of practical how-to videos. If you've ever wondered how to tie a New Zealand fence knot or what you need to outfit your fencing rig, look no further!

[Planning Fencing Systems for Intensive Grazing Management:](#)

This comprehensive guide from the University of Kentucky focuses on designing efficient fencing layouts for intensive grazing. This resource offers practical insights into creating fencing systems that enhance pasture utilization and livestock management in rotational grazing setups. Developed by experts, it provides essential strategies to optimize grazing efficiency and improve overall pasture productivity.

[Providing Water for Beef Cattle in Rotational Grazing Systems:](#)

This resource from the University of Kentucky is a guide outlining efficient water management strategies for cattle in rotational grazing setups. It offers practical insights into designing and implementing water systems that optimize cattle distribution and grazing efficiency. Developed by experts, this resource equips ranchers with essential knowledge to ensure adequate water access and maximize the benefits of rotational grazing for beef cattle.

[How to Build a Mobile Cattle Water System:](#)

This article from Grass Fed Solutions website outlines how to build a mobile cattle watering system for rotational grazing programs.

[Watering Systems for Adaptive Grazing:](#)

In this video tutorial series, fencing and watering experts provide a comprehensive overview of watering systems for grazing livestock – from sourcing water, watering infrastructure, to creating water systems for winter grazing.



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Grazing for Habitat Management:

 [Adaptive Grazing 101: How to Graze with Wildlife in Mind:](#)

In Part 7 of Pasture Project's video series on adaptive grazing, we focus on managing pastures to create habitat for wildlife. Dr. Allen Williams has collaborated with Audubon's Conservation Ranching Program that extends across U.S. ranchlands and provides ranchers with incentives to create and protect habitat.

 [Grazing Public Lands in Practice:](#)

In this session, Greg Hoch (Prairie Habitat Team Supervisor at Minnesota Department of Natural Resources) and Kelly Anderson (Livestock and Grazing Specialist at Minnesota Agriculture Marketing and Development) discuss grazing planning on public land and how conservation grazing impacts both wildlife and staff workload. Greg also digs into the science and ecology of public land grazing.

 [Grassland Birds: Fostering Habitats Using Rotational Grazing:](#)

Learn how the use of rotational grazing can benefit grassland birds. This resource is specific to Wisconsin and offers data on when, how often, and how tall to leave grasses based on different species of grassland birds.

 [Ranch Management for Wildlife:](#)

This article by Chris Helzer, Director of Science at The Nature Conservancy in Nebraska offers practical guidance on optimizing ranching practices to benefit wildlife. Helzer's expertise sheds light on balancing agricultural needs with wildlife conservation, emphasizing strategies for maintaining diverse habitats on ranchlands. This resource serves as a valuable tool for land managers, providing holistic approaches to support both ranching operations and wildlife preservation.

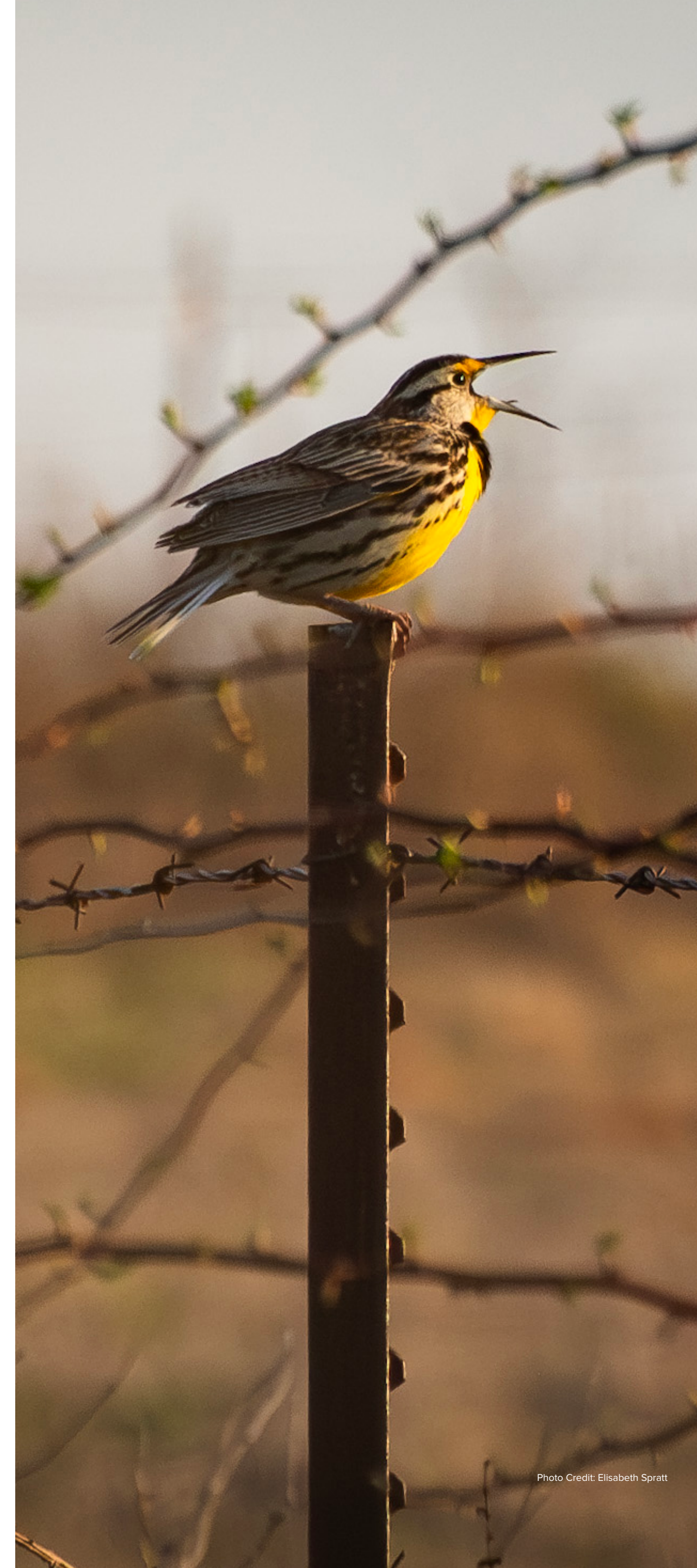


Photo Credit: Elisabeth Spratt

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Grazing Planning:

 [Template for conservation grazing plan](#)

Many agencies require the use of a grazing plan when implementing conservation grazing on a public land site. Using a grazing plan on a public land site is beneficial as it provides a structured approach to manage grazing practices. This plan outlines specific strategies for sustainable land use, ensuring that grazing activities align with conservation goals and ecosystem health. By detailing grazing schedules, stocking rates, and land management objectives, a grazing plan serves as a roadmap, promoting responsible and effective land stewardship on public lands.

 [Managed Grazing Flowchart: Seasonal Timing and Target Utilization Rate Based on Management Objectives:](#)

This flowchart, created by J.B. Bright, Wildlife Refuge Specialist with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, matches different management objectives with the time of year (season) and duration (number of days or weeks of grazing). This visual guide can help a land manager determine the stocking rate and duration of grazing with the management objective they are trying to meet, in the Upper Midwest Climate.

 [Minnesota Department of Natural Resources Wildlife Management Areas Grazing Operational Plan:](#)

This grazing operational plan focuses on using conservation grazing to enhance diverse ecosystems and improve grassland management within WMAs, particularly in the Prairie Ecoregion. By strategically employing grazing as a tool—controlling animal presence, timing, and density—the plan aims to boost plant and structural diversity crucial for grassland wildlife. This initiative, spanning approximately 50,000 acres, integrates diverse grazing systems while emphasizing site-specific plans to monitor and achieve habitat objectives, aligning with the adaptive management approach of WMAs.

 [Grazing Planners Speak video series:](#)

Grazing Planners Speak is an 11-part series of informative, on-farm videos featuring experienced grazing planners. The series is designed to provide current and would-be grazing technical service providers with a comprehensive overview of the in-field components of grazing planning. Videos cover everything from grazing infrastructure to pasture layout to animal handling.

Tips and Tricks from veteran land managers:



If you're feeling overwhelmed by the process, start with simple prescriptions. For example, one cow per acre or two acres for a month and see if that works and go from there.

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III. Policy Landscape

The policy landscape can play a pivotal role in shaping the implementation and success of conservation grazing on public land. Clear and supportive policies provide a framework for sustainable land use, ensuring proper grazing practices that benefit ecosystem health and wildlife. Effective policies can establish guidelines for land management, promote conservation partnerships, and allocate resources, crucial in fostering a conducive environment for conservation grazing initiatives on public lands.

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Policy Landscape:

[Prairie and Grasslands Public Grazing Program:](#)

Previous MNDNR Commissioner Tom Landwehr was a supporter of conservation grazing and passed legislation to increase and maintain conservation grazing on public land to 50,000 acres a year. Overall, the statute aims to establish a structured and regulated system for allowing grazing on specific prairie and grassland areas managed by the commissioner. The primary focus is to enhance wildlife habitat while ensuring that the program operates in a financially sustainable manner through revenues generated from grazing activities.

[Missouri's Conservation Sales Tax:](#)

In 1976, through initiative petition, Missourians amended their state constitution by creating a dedicated one-eighth-cent sales tax for conservation.

[Policy Brief: Managed Grazing and Grassland: Policy Trends and Opportunities for Renewal in Wisconsin:](#)

This policy brief highlights the drastic decline of grasslands and managed grazing in Wisconsin, emphasizing the disparity in policy support compared to row crops. With a 39% decrease in grassland area over the past two decades and reduced institutional support, the document serves as a resource for stakeholders and decision-makers. It calls for renewed attention to grasslands, proposing recommendations for statewide planning, prioritizing grasslands and grazing in agricultural and conservation programs, and advocating for support in supply chains and land access. The aim is to revitalize commitment to grasslands, farmers, and consumers in Wisconsin by addressing policy gaps and providing strategies for enhancement.



Tips & Tricks

Establishing relationships with elected officials as a land manager or public agency representative can be helpful for advancing conservation grazing on public land. These connections offer opportunities to advocate for supportive policies, secure necessary funding, and garner political backing for conservation initiatives. Engaging with elected officials fosters understanding about the benefits of conservation grazing, ensuring alignment between land management goals and broader governmental objectives, ultimately facilitating smoother implementation and sustained support for these practices on public lands. For example, some states, like Illinois, need legislative changes from the general assembly for longer lease agreements with producers on public land. Producers might be more inclined to graze on public land if they were guaranteed longer leases.

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a. Calculating Costs for Conservation Grazing Programs

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Financial planning forms the backbone of conservation grazing on public land, encompassing crucial facets like determining infrastructure costs, establishing fair charges for graziers, and exploring available funding opportunities. Financial planning is integral for implementing and sustaining grazing initiatives, facilitating essential land management, infrastructure development (such as fencing or water systems), and educational outreach programs. Adequate financing empowers land managers to invest in comprehensive grazing plans, helping to ensure the long-term impact of conservation grazing programs on public lands.



IV. Financing

- a. Calculating Costs for Conservation Grazing Programs
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Calculating costs for conservation grazing programs:

Input plan figures here		Customize AU and deduction rates here	
Calculate Grazing Fee		Animal Units	
100	number of mature cattle	100	Animal Units per head
100	number of calves	20	Animal Units per head
	number of yearlings or background cattle	0	Animal Units per head
	Total AU	120	
\$22.00	AUM fee		Range .8-1.4
30	number of days grazed		.2-.6
	Number of AUMs	120	.7-.9
	Cost of grazing	\$2,640.00	
Calculate Deductions			
Fencing		Deduction	
	Feet of permanent fence installed	\$0.00	\$0.20 Permanent Fence Installation Rate .15-.55
	Feet of permanent fence removed	\$0.00	\$0.20 Permanent Fence Removal Rate .15-.55
	Feet of permanent fence maintained	\$0.00	\$0.20 Permanent Fence Maintenance Rate .12-.25
1000	Feet of temporary fence installed	\$100.00	\$0.10 Temporary Fence Installation Rate .05-.15
	Feet of temporary fence removed	\$0.00	\$0.10 Temporary Fence Removal Rate .05-.15
	Total Fencing Deduction	\$100.00	
Livestock Rotations		Deduction	
3	Number of Rotations	\$72.00	\$0.20 Cost Per head, per Rotation .15-.25
Water Hauling			
\$0.00	Cost Per AUM (enter 0 in not needed)	\$0.00	\$1.00 Cost Per AUM .5-2.0
Short Term Grazing			
	(automatically Calculated)	297.6	
Equipment moving during rotations			
	Number of Rotations	0	30 Cost per rotation \$20-40
Other deductions as required			
	Enter extra deduction		
	Total Deductions	\$469.60	
	Net Grazing Fee	\$2,170.40	

Grazing-Fee-and-Deduction-Calculator

Grazing-Fee-and-Deduction-Calculator:

This excel spreadsheet, developed by Kelly Anderson at Minnesota Department of Agriculture, is a tool to help calculate what an agency might charge a producer for grazing on a public land site. This spreadsheet is based off standard rates per county, per animal unit.

Wisconsin Public Land Grazing: Financial Analysis of Six Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources Grazing Program Site:

This paper presents a financial analysis of selected public land grazing sites managed by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WIDNR) through their conservation grazing program. The Pasture Project conducted the analysis in collaboration with WIDNR and with input from the University of Wisconsin (UW) as part of a three-year project funded by the Cedar Tree Foundation to support public land grazing in the states of the Upper Mississippi River Basin (UMRB). This financial analysis and the recommendations included within are part of a broader set of project outcomes that include summaries of the WIDNR conservation program, as well as the status of public land grazing in each of the UMRB states.

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Funding Opportunities:

[Pittman-Robertson Wildlife Restoration Act:](#)

also known as the Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Act, is a significant piece of U.S. legislation enacted in 1937. It was named after its sponsors, Senator Key Pittman of Nevada and Congressman A. Willis Robertson of Virginia. This act imposes an excise tax on firearms, ammunition, and archery equipment. The revenue generated from these taxes is then apportioned to the states by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to fund conservation efforts, wildlife habitat restoration, hunter education programs, and related activities. The funding supports state wildlife agencies in various conservation initiatives, helping to restore and manage wildlife populations and their habitats across the United States. To obtain funding, state agencies must submit proposed projects to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). Several agencies have used Pittman-Robertson funding for fencing and water infrastructure.

[America the Beautiful Challenge:](#)

This competitive grant program aims to fund locally led projects focused on ecosystem restoration aligned with the America the Beautiful Initiative. Consolidating funds from federal agencies and private philanthropy, this initiative simplifies the application process, allowing entities like states, Tribes, local groups, and NGOs to apply for multiple funds through a single application. This initiative supports projects concentrating on watershed restoration, equitable access, workforce development, and collaborative conservation efforts in line with the core focus areas outlined in the Conserving and Restoring America the Beautiful report. It encourages large-scale projects that promote conservation plans and incorporate Indigenous Traditional Knowledge where applicable. This is a nationwide program and projects on public lands are eligible!

[Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\):](#)

EQIP provides technical and financial assistance to agricultural producers and forest landowners to address natural resource concerns. EQIP primarily focuses on private agricultural lands, but certain programs may allow public lands to participate. Connect with a [National Resource Conservation field office](#) in your area to check.

[Regional Conservation Partnership Program \(RCPP\):](#)

RCPP is a collaborative effort between the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and various partners, including agricultural producers, businesses, nonprofits, and state and local governments. It is a grant program that aims to promote conservation and address environmental challenges by leveraging public and private funds to support innovative projects. RCPP focuses on addressing natural resource concerns at the regional or watershed scale, encouraging locally-driven conservation solutions and fostering effective partnerships to achieve shared conservation goals. Eligible conservation activities may be implemented on public lands when those activities will benefit eligible lands as determined by NRCS and are included in the scope of an approved RCPP project.

[Conservation Innovation Grant \(CIG\):](#)

CIG is a competitive grant program that supports the development of new tools, approaches, practices, and technologies to further natural resource conservation on private lands. Through creative problem solving and innovation, CIG partners work to address water quality, air quality, soil health and wildlife habitat challenges, all while improving agricultural operations. While CIG grants are primarily for private lands, agencies can collaborate with organizations that work with private landowners to further conservation efforts on both private and public lands.



Tips & Tricks

Producers that graze their livestock on public land may become more eligible for funding from United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) [Conservation Stewardship Program \(CSP\)](#) or [Environmental Quality Incentives Program \(EQIP\)](#). This in turn could make it easier to negotiate costs for infrastructure on public land.

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Photo Credit: Elisabeth Spratt

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Stakeholder engagement and education are the bedrock of successful conservation grazing on public lands. Involving diverse stakeholders - from land managers to local communities, farmers, and conservationists - fosters understanding and collective buy-in. Education empowers stakeholders with knowledge, cultivating informed decision-making and collaborative efforts that drive effective land management. By engaging and educating stakeholders, we sow the seeds for a shared vision of sustainable stewardship, ensuring the longevity and success of conservation grazing initiatives on public lands.

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- b. Strategies for Engaging Farmers, Ranchers, and Land Managers
- c. Tips and Tricks from Veteran Land Managers
- d. Communicating the Message
- e. Engaging the Hunting Community

Identifying key stakeholders in the Upper Midwest:

 [Midwest Grazing Exchange:](#)

The Midwest Grazing Exchange is a free service that aims to connect graziers and landowners by matching livestock to land. Graziers can search for forage to graze and landowners (and public land managers) can search for livestock to graze their land.

 [Minnesota Conservation Grazing Map:](#)

The Conservation Grazing Map helps farmers and ranchers find public lands that are available for grazing livestock. The tool is a joint effort by the MDA, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and The Nature Conservancy (TNC).



Tips & Tricks

Build relationships with your local extension agents. They possess valuable insights into the needs of area producers and hold economic data that aids in determining appropriate charges for graziers using the public land for grazing purposes.

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Strategies for engaging farmers, ranchers, and land managers:

 [Grazing Public Lands 101: From the Ground up :](#)

Erin Grossman (Wildlife Biologist at Wisconsin DNR) discusses how to facilitate connections with graziers to grow your grazing program. Mary C Anderson (Grassland and Conservation Specialist at Wisconsin DNR) then reviews the essential components and process of building a successful grazing program.

 [Public Lands Grazing 101: Public/Private Partnerships:](#)

Chris Trosen (Deputy Project Leader at USFWS St. Croix Wetland Management District) discusses strategies for building relationships with both producers and public users.



Tips and Tricks from veteran land managers:

Engage with state-based and other nonprofit organizations like, which sometimes have research funding to aid wildlife biologists or producers with studies or inquiries. They may also facilitate testing initiatives on their lands before implementing them on agency properties. For example, TNC in Iowa is currently conducting a trial involving no-fence collars for cattle.

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Communicating the message:

Communicating the message in conservation grazing on public land is vital for raising awareness and understanding among stakeholders, policymakers, and the public. Effective communication helps elucidate the benefits, goals, and methods of conservation grazing, fostering support and engagement. It ensures clarity in conveying the importance of sustainable land management practices, encouraging collaboration, informed decision-making, and active participation in preserving ecosystems and wildlife habitats on public lands.



Tips & Tricks

Connect with local National Conservation Resource Service (NRCS) or Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD) to help promote the use of conservation grazing to local stakeholders, especially users of public land. Attending workshops, trainings, and gatherings can help with public relations and outreach so local communities understand the benefits of conservation grazing across the landscape.

Crafting localized key messages on conservation grazing:

A strong recommendation from public land managers and researchers is to invest in putting up a large sign on the property to notify people of the change to management and the associated benefits! These signs have been noted to be extremely helpful in detailing the purpose, longevity, and benefits of this change to community members. For example, communicating and educating hunters that managed grazing can result in better hunting grounds can pre-empt some of the backlash of the operation. Here is an example of a “Managed Grazing in Progress” sign from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.

MANAGED GRAZING IN PROGRESS

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) is evaluating the use of cattle grazing to improve public lands. If done correctly, managed grazing can:

- Limit the spread of invasive plant species
- Improve diversity and root systems of native grasses and wildflowers
- Increase habitat for ground nesting birds and other species
- Improve soil health and reduce run-off
- Increase water retention and improve water quality

Managed grazing can mimic some of the positive impacts of the once great bison herds of the North American grasslands. Rotating livestock through paddocks can create beneficial disturbance, if followed by adequate periods of rest and recovery for the soil and plant communities. Manure left behind by cattle supports soil microorganisms and insects that increase the presence of game and birds. Grazing can generate revenue or services that may reduce the public cost of managing the land with burning, mowing, cutting, and spraying.

Wisconsin DNR and its partners continue to monitor the effects of managed grazing on the plants, animals and soils of this site. For more information or to make a comment, please visit: dnr.wi.gov/topic/lands/grazing.html

Logos: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, College of Agricultural & Life Sciences, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Extension, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Pasture Project, Wallace Center.

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Engaging the Hunting community:

Engaging the hunting community: Hunters are important stakeholders in conservation grazing on public land due to their deep connection to wildlife and natural areas. However, misconceptions and negative reactions can arise when grazing occurs on these sites due to concerns about perceived habitat disruption, changes in game movement patterns, or alterations to hunting experiences. Effective communication and engagement are crucial to address these concerns, highlighting the mutual benefits of conservation grazing in enhancing wildlife habitats and ultimately promoting healthier ecosystems that support diverse game populations.

 [Conservation Grazing on Wildlife Management Areas:](#)

This grazing brochure is an example of messaging around conservation grazing to a key target audience; hunters. Hunters are common users of public land and often have misconceptions about the use of grazing and its effects on wildlife habitat and species.



Tips & Tricks

Find ways to get involved in the local hunter safety programs in your area. See if there is an opportunity to present on the importance of conservation grazing to these key stakeholders at hunter safety trainings and other events to address concerns and dispel myths about the use of grazing as a management tool.

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- b. Documenting Positive Impacts on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health

Showcasing success stories in conservation grazing on public land is crucial as it highlights tangible, real-world examples of effective land management practices. These stories serve as compelling evidence of the benefits and outcomes of conservation grazing, encouraging broader adoption by demonstrating its positive impacts on ecosystem health, biodiversity, and sustainable land use. Sharing success stories also inspires and educates land managers, policymakers, and the public, fostering support and enthusiasm for implementing similar practices and initiatives.

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Highlighting successful grazing projects in the region:



 [Success Story: Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources; Buena Vista Wildlife Area:](#)

Discover the transformative impact of adaptive grazing on public lands through the Buena Vista Wildlife Area case study. Spanning 15,600 acres in central Wisconsin, this site harbors critical grasslands hosting the state's largest population of threatened greater prairie chickens. By implementing management-intensive grazing practices across 320 acres, this initiative harnesses daily herd movements to rejuvenate grassland health, enhance biodiversity, and promote a conducive habitat for grassland birds.

 [Success Story: Missouri Department of Conservation:](#)

Explore the synergy of prescribed burns and planned grazing through the Missouri Department of Conservation's (MDC) groundbreaking approach across 18 sites in Missouri. Over 15 years, this innovative strategy has curated diverse grassland habitats benefiting wildlife and vegetation. Combining prescribed burns and strategic grazing, MDC creates mosaic-style landscapes fostering a plethora of wildlife habitats with varied grass heights and densities.

 [Minnesota Prairie Conservation Plan:](#)

State, federal agencies and conservation organizations are working together to advance conservation grazing in the state. Through collaborative public and private partnerships, the Minnesota Working Group was formed including members from Audubon Minnesota, The Conservation Fund, The Nature Conservancy, MNDNR, Minnesota Department of Agriculture, Pheasants Forever, and others. In 2010, this group wrote a 25-year strategy plan which focuses on enhancing, restoring, and protecting 2 million acres of native prairie and grassland and 1.3 million acres of wetland habitat across Western Minnesota. One of the four steps included in the plan is enhancing prairies and other grasslands and wetlands via a suite of tools, including conservation grazing, on 603,000 acres annually.

 [Dunn Ranch Prairie:](#)

Dunn Ranch Prairie, owned by The Nature Conservancy in Missouri, is one of the last remnants of tallgrass prairie on deep soil in the Central Tallgrass Prairie Ecoregion. Dunn Ranch Prairie symbolizes a pivotal opportunity for conserving this unique ecosystem. Purchased by The Nature Conservancy in 1999, its ongoing restoration spanning two decades has witnessed remarkable transformations—from reclaiming lands once dominated by fescue to reintroducing bison as a vital part of grassland management. Collaborative efforts with various conservation teams have brought about the revival of native species, such as the federally endangered Topeka shiner and greater prairie chicken, while serving as a hub for innovative research on prairie restoration and wildlife conservation. With prescribed burns and diligent management to combat invasive species, Dunn Ranch Prairie stands as a testament to the resilience and potential of restoring diverse grasslands and their invaluable ecological contributions. It is also free and open to the public year-round!

 [Grazing Public Lands: Cultivating a Conservation Grazing Program:](#)

In this webinar Lesa Kardash, Wildlife Biologist with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources discusses how to cultivate and grow a conservation grazing program.

 [Grazing Public Lands: Lessons in Persistence:](#)

In this webinar Erin Grossman, Wildlife Biologist with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, shares her successes and challenges with conservation grazing on public land she manages.

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Documenting positive impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem health:

 [Northern Bobwhite Breeding Season and Nest Survival are Greater on Native Grasslands:](#)

This study investigates the declining population of Northern bobwhites (*Colinus virginianus*) and their demographic dynamics in southwest Missouri, USA. Using known-fate daily survival models, researchers examined the impact of land cover composition, woody cover, and management practices on adult breeding season survival and nest survival across five study sites from 2014 to 2018. Findings suggest that nest and adult breeding season survival were influenced by factors like percent native grass and agricultural cover, distance to shrubs and trees, and land management strategies. Specifically, higher survival rates were associated with greater distance to trees and increased native grassland cover, indicating that managing to maintain or enhance native grass cover while reducing tree cover could positively impact bobwhite population dynamics in these landscapes. One of the main techniques used in managing to enhance native grass cover was conservation grazing.



Organizations like **Pheasants Forever**, **Quail Forever**, and **Ducks Unlimited** have been supporters of conservation grazing due to its role in fostering diverse habitats crucial for pheasants and other wildlife. By strategically managing grazing practices, they enhance grassland health, which directly impacts nesting, cover, and food sources for these species. This approach aligns with their mission to conserve wildlife habitats, making conservation grazing a valuable tool in sustaining healthy ecosystems on public lands. They are unique organizations given that their target members are hunters that are often users of public lands in the Upper Midwest. Below are a few articles from Pheasants forever that outline some of the benefits to wildlife with the use of conservation grazing to the hunting community.

 [Outcome Based Grazing and What it Means for Conservation:](#)

Working with Livestock Operators on those Open Landscapes Extends the PF Mission Westward ad eium volorerita dolorer.


 [Brightest Sunlight to Darkest Soil:](#)

How Grassland Wildlife Habitat is Part of the Climate Challenge Solution

 [Part of the Deal:](#)

Emergency Haying and Grazing on Conservation Lands is of Vital Importance to Producers in Drought Times

Tips & Tricks

 When communicating the message, highlight the multifaceted benefits of conservation grazing, emphasizing its positive impacts on local communities. From supporting farmers to enhancing habitat management and fostering environmental conservation, conservation grazing can be a win-win scenario for various facets of community well-being.

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VII. Resources & Future Reading

Below are additional resources that explore conservation grazing across the region and country including unique programs and partnerships.

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Additional Resources and Further Reading:

 [Grazing Public Lands 101: Beyond the Upper Midwest:](#)

Greg Horner (Principal at Greg Horner Consulting) has researched and interviewed public land managers utilizing grazing across the country. In this session, Greg discusses the perspectives, goals, and challenges from land managers outside the Midwest.

 [Just Transitions to Managed Livestock Grazing:](#)

Midwest farmers and members of the managed grazing community are working toward a future in which the food system supports community and environmental well-being. Grassland 2.0 produced a report and a series of briefs that synthesize recommendations from nearly 130 people in the sustainable agriculture community on how to create a 'just transition' in agriculture. This report shares ideas on how to support managed livestock grazing in a way that addresses inequities and creates a food system that supports everyone.

 [Preserving Watersheds: The Little Sioux Watershed Conservation Partnership:](#)

In this webinar hosted by the Pasture Project, Amy Crouch (The Nature Conservancy) shares the story of the Little Sioux Watershed Conversation Partnership, including the Little Sioux Grazing Network, in Iowa. Watch to uncover the transformative initiatives shaping the sustainable future of this vital ecosystem. Explore how collaborative efforts are safeguarding water quality, enhancing biodiversity, and fostering community engagement within the Little Sioux watershed.

 [Conservation Grazing on Public Land in the Upper Midwest:](#)

This report sought to understand the current landscape of public land grazing activities in a six-state region in the Midwest and assessed the challenges and opportunities to advancing conservation grazing on public land. States in the region included: Minnesota, Illinois, Missouri, Iowa, Indiana, and Wisconsin.

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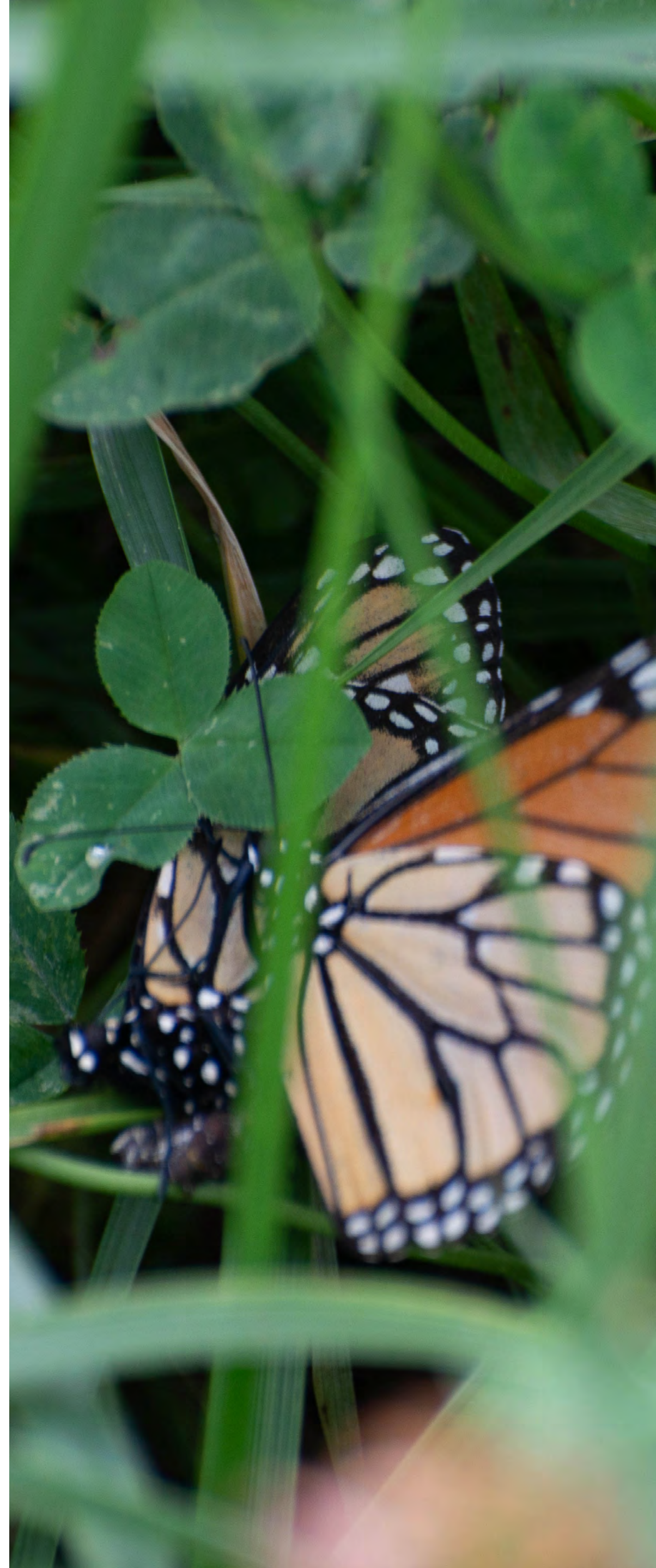
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Photo Credit: Elisabeth Spratt

VIII. Key Contact List

a. Contact Information for Experts and Stakeholders
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This list is a compilation of individuals in the realm of conservation grazing on public land in the Upper Midwest. This directory is meant to serve as a valuable resource, connecting you with key stakeholders, experts, and decision-makers who play pivotal roles in shaping the landscape of sustainable land management. Whether you're seeking collaborative opportunities, expert insights, or valuable partnerships, this contact list is meant to serve as an entry point to fostering meaningful connections within the conservation grazing community on public lands.

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Contact information for experts and stakeholders in the region:



Contact information for experts and stakeholders on conservation grazing on public lands in the UMRB Region

State	Agency or Organization	Title	Name	Email Address	Phone Number
Illinois	Pheasants Forever	Illinois State Coordinator	Katie Kauzlarich	kkauzlarich@pheasantsforever.org	(309) 264-1678
Illinois	Illinois Department of Natural Resources	Farm Program Manager	Bob Caveny	Bob.Caveny@Illinois.gov	(217) 785-8773
Illinois	Illinois Department of Natural Resources	Program Manager for Agriculture/Wildlife & Habitat Lease Management	Mike Chandler	Mike.Chandler@Illinois.gov	(217) 785-8774
Indiana	Indiana Division of Fish & Wildlife	Southwest Public Lands Supervisor	Dan Eckstein	deckstein@dnr.IN.gov	(812) 512-9176
Indiana	Indiana Natural Resource Conservation Service	Grazing Lands Specialist	Robert Zupancic	robert.zupancic@usda.gov	(812) 953-4172
Indiana	Indiana Natural Resource Conservation Service	NW Grazing land Specialist	Susannah Hinds	susannah.hinds@usda.gov	(765) 474-9992
Indiana	Pheasants Forever	State Coordinator	John Kinney	jkinney@pheasantsforever.org	(877) 773-2070
Iowa	The Nature Conservancy	Little Sioux Project Director	Amy Crouch	acrouch@TNC.ORG	(712) 229-5082
Iowa	Iowa Department of Natural Resources	Special Projects Manager	Ryan Harr	ryan.harr@dnr.iowa.gov	(712) 250- 0818
Iowa	Pheasants Forever	State Coordinator	Josh Divan	JDivan@pheasantsforever.org	(515) 708-2371
Iowa	Iowa Department of Natural Resources		Lucas Straw	lucas.straw@dnr.iowa.gov	(712) 330-5689
Iowa	Iowa Department of Natural Resources	National Resource Tech 2	Josh Rusk	josh.rusk@dnr.iowa.gov	(641) 783-2166
Iowa	Buena Vista County Conservation Board	Director	Greg Johnson	director@bvcountyparks.com	(712) 295-7985

204 E. 4th St. | North Little Rock, Arkansas 72114 | wallaecenter.org | 2451 Crystal Drive, Ste. 700 | Arlington, Virginia 22202
p 1 501 280 3000 | f 1 501 280 3090 | p 1 703 302 6500 | f 1 703 302 6512

Visual example only. Please click on the Key Contact List link to view actual.

Key Contact List:

This list is a compilation of individuals in the realm of conservation grazing on public land in the Upper Midwest. This directory is meant to serve as a valuable resource, connecting you with key stakeholders, experts, and decision-makers who play pivotal roles in shaping the landscape of sustainable land management. Whether you're seeking collaborative opportunities, expert insights, or valuable partnerships, this contact list is meant to serve as an entry point to fostering meaningful connections within the conservation grazing community on public lands.

Disclaimer: This list is current as of date of publication. If you receive a bounce back email, follow up with the agency listed.

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Suggestions from veteran land managers, wildlife biologists, graziers, and other advocates for further research and gathering of information to persist in promoting the benefits of conservation grazing.

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Recommendations:

Additional research and analysis are essential to explore the economic aspects of grazing concerning stormwater retention, road repair benefits, and broader cost-effective ecosystem services attributed to conservation grazing. This further examination could quantify the financial advantages linked with grazing practices, specifically in mitigating stormwater impacts, reducing road maintenance costs, and perhaps to the broader economy. By delving deeper into these economic dimensions, this information could provide concrete data and insights crucial for assessing the cost-effectiveness and long-term financial gains associated with conservation grazing methods. [Banking on Nature](#) from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is an example of such analysis. This resource examines the broad economic contributions of National Wildlife Refuges to local communities.

Additional research on the effects of conservation grazing to game bird populations could help with allaying misconceptions hunters have about grazing on public land. Hunters are some of the most frequent users of public land and having more data available could help support these conversations with hunters and other users of public land.

While conservation grazing could hold promise for various societal benefits like bolstering land health, biodiversity, and community engagement, the precise measurement and quantification of these advantages remain a complex task. Additional research on the societal benefits of conservation grazing on public land could provide more nuanced and accurate assessments of how conservation grazing influences aspects such as ecosystem resilience, carbon sequestration, water quality enhancements, and its economic impact on local communities. This deeper understanding could be crucial for substantiating claims and effectively advocating for the widespread adoption of conservation grazing practices.



Photo Credit: Elisabeth Spratt

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Conservation grazing in the Upper Midwest holds significant importance as it plays a pivotal role in restoring and maintaining diverse ecosystems. Within this region, grazing serves as a crucial tool for managing grasslands and sustaining habitats for native species. By implementing conservation grazing on public lands, it helps enhance soil health, promote plant diversity, and supports wildlife, contributing to the overall health and resilience of the Upper Midwest's natural landscapes.

Get involved and support conservation grazing on public lands! Active participation in conservation efforts and advocacy make a tangible difference in preserving ecosystems, promoting biodiversity, and sustaining wildlife habitats. By supporting these efforts, you contribute to healthier landscapes, aiding in the long-term health of grasslands and prairies for generations to come. Share this toolkit and resources public land decision-makers, including state agencies, policymakers, public land users, and the media, to enhance their understanding of conservation grazing practice. Your involvement matters—join the movement for sustainable land management through conservation grazing on public lands!

This toolkit was made possible by the generous support of [Cedar Tree Foundation](#).
Our ally and partner in grazing.



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