

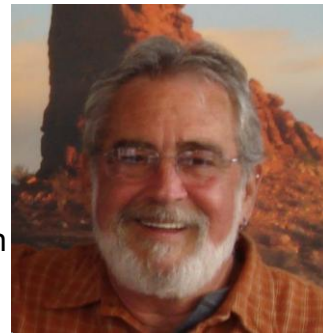
Floribbean Rangelands

Society for Range Management, Florida Section Newsletter

Summer 2009

A Slightly Different Perspective

Well, here it is, the middle of July, and things seem very familiar. The rain that started sporadically in the spring has actually continued and the totals are slightly over normal for the first time, it seems, since 2005. I remember leaving a warning at the end of my last message that it was still very dry and that prescribed fires were acting weird, and they were. That was several months ago and it's not such a problem anymore. Here in Kissimmee, we want to conduct at least one more prescribed burn before we start planning for next year. It only takes three or four dry days and our woods will burn. I mention this because I like to talk about fire as a tool to manage property and I'm just itching to get outside again.



For many reasons, mostly of my own making, I spend most of my time in summer sitting at my computer, catching up on paperwork. For me it's the beginning of a new fiscal year and all the reports, budgets, meetings, planning, etc., and on, and on, happen during this part of the year. Plus, it's hot outside. Have you been out there? Wow, it doesn't seem like it was this hot when I was younger!

So...does it seem like I'm rambling on and searching for a topic for this message? I'm glad I don't have to write an article every week! Let's see, I've talked about membership, and weeds, and the stewardship awards. That's it, the stewardship awards. I can get some mileage out of that.

At our meeting in late May, the council decided, among other business, to join with the Florida Grazing Lands Conservation Coalition (FGLC) to establish a Florida Stewardship Award. I mentioned this in my last president's message, and the council voted to make it happen. It helps that much of the Florida SRM council is also on the Steering Committee for FGLC. The winner of the Florida competition will be nominated for the National Contest.

With that said, **I am soliciting nominations of Florida producers to be considered for this year's Florida Stewardship Award.** Who do you know that does a truly great job of running their operation? You know the drill, an agricultural operation that we can all be proud of, one that is environmentally friendly, efficient, profitable, culturally appropriate, and above all, legal. You can forward your nominations to anyone on the nomination committee, which includes me, Pat Pfeil, Chad Ellis, and Jill Epley. Contact information is located on the website or later in this newsletter. The award will be made in time to submit an abstract for the 2010 Annual Meeting of SRM in Denver, which is in February 2010. That doesn't give much time, so get your nominations in. We will need the name of the landowner/operation, the location and address, contact information, and

the reason you are nominating the operation. Remember, we won't necessarily know this landowner or property, so you must be able to sell the committee on your nomination. The winning entity will receive a nice gate sign to post at their operation telling the world how great they are, and will be nominated for the National Stewardship award. We would also like to hold our fall meeting at their site. That meeting is scheduled for Thursday, October 22, 2009, so a lot has to happen before that date. If the winning entity is not a member of SRM, we will provide them with a complimentary one year membership. That's one way of increasing members.

So get your nominations in!
Bob Nelson, President

Florida Section 2009 Spring Tour **Gaining Ground Through Good Land Stewardship**

Range enthusiasts from across the state recently attended the Spring SRM tour at The Nature Conservancy's Disney Wilderness Preserve located just south of Orlando. The group learned



about the preserve's resident plants and animals and the Conservancy's efforts to restore and protect them. This field trip included a presentation by Bob Nelson and a swamp buggy tour of the preserve.

It is a remarkable place to experience natural Florida. The preserve protects the headwaters of the [Everglades](#) ecosystem. This preserve is an innovative model of ecological restoration and one of the largest off-site wetlands mitigation projects ever undertaken in the United States.

This 12,000-acre project located in the pine flatwoods ecosystem started in 1992 as an offsite mitigation project for wetland impacts occurring at Walt Disney World Resort, the Orlando International Airport and various small developments in Orlando. The mitigation involved restoring hydrology on over 4,000 acres of wetlands on a former cattle ranch, re-introducing native vegetation on over 1,500 acres of pasture and re-establishing natural processes (primarily fire) throughout the 12,000-acre site.

In addition, the Preserve performs a great deal of adaptive management data collection, especially to guide stewardship of the Preserve's 16 listed species populations and the fire management and exotic species control programs. It is home to hundreds of wildlife species, many of which are rare, such as bald eagles, Florida scrub-jays, sandhill cranes and gopher tortoises.

This tour was an excellent demonstration of how an ongoing program of land stewardship grounded by strong land ethic will enable us as landowners to carry out the kinds of management needed to restore floodplains, riparian areas and wetlands.

Chad Ellis

Tracking cattle can lead to better range management

Since 2005, the Lotek Cattle GPS Tracking Collars have been utilized on the Longino Ranch near Arcadia, FL. Cliff Coddington, ranch manager, is currently working in conjunction with NRCS to provide viable range data through the use of the tracking collars. Much data has been collected through several months of tracking collar placements on ranch herds.

Projects such as the effect of season on spatial utilization have shown us the grazing position of cattle during the winter and summer seasons. Data suggests during the winter months, cattle spend a larger percentage of time grazing native grass areas including bluestems and wiregrass. While during the summer months cattle spend more time grazing pasture and marsh areas filled with bahiagrass and maidencane.

The current project handles how grazing is affected by conservation management practices, such as roller chopping. The project compares an area that has been roller chopped (61 ac) contrasted with an area (179 ac) where no brush management has been done. It seems that cattle much prefer the treated area at rates of three to four times to one of the non-treated area. This data shows how beneficial management practices can be and this lends confidence to the economic viability of controlling brush through such practices.



Other GPS tracking collar projects are in the works and hopefully, more data will be gleaned from such studies. This data allows both NRCS grazing specialists and cattle producers to be more accurate in cattle stocking rates and better management for our grazing lands. For more information, contact Chad Ellis (FL NRCS State Range Specialist – chad.ellis@fl.usda.gov) or Brandee Williams (NRCS Area 3 Range Specialist - brandee.williams@fl.usda.gov).

Brandee Williams

Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative Bets on Western Venue to Link Ranchers and Conservationists

Grazing lands make up between two-thirds and three-fourths of the national land base. The wise management of these lands has environmental and economic implications that exceed common perception or understanding, says Bob Drake, Chairman of the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI). “Any serious student or practitioner of conservation, land use or ecosystem management cannot reasonably ignore the importance of grazing lands,” Drake says. “The sheer quantity of land involved demands a serious dialogue among ranchers, conservationists, educators, environmentalists, economists, government agencies and land managers. We need to share our understanding of the theory and practical application of grazing land functions and opportunities.”



Increasingly such a dialogue is important not only for the continued viability of ranchers but also for the well being of watersheds and communities who rely on these lands for hunting, open space, groundwater recharge, hiking, habitat for both common and endangered species of plants and wildlife, recreational opportunities, carbon sequestration and energy collection.

The Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative is hosting a forum to facilitate just such a dialogue. On December 13-16, 2009, GLCI will host its 4th national conference in Reno, NV, intended to facilitate the exchange of information on successful “cutting edge” grazing management technologies—especially those with environmental and/or social benefits, applied research on grazing lands, public policy implications of grazing, issues related to the agricultural-urban interface, and the economic and marketing implications of grazing.

One thing that sets GLCI apart from other conferences is its focus on ranchers as presenters. “We know experts come from academia, government, and the non-profit world and we welcome them all, but we also look for the “cowboy expert” who has gained his—or her—expertise through long hours with livestock and first-hand exposure to all sorts of elements—natural, economic and political,” says Drake.

In conjunction with hosting the conference in Reno, GLCI in 2009 will give increased focus to western grazing issues. However, the conference will continue its past format of providing information along four “tracks” that will also include Eastern, Midwestern and dairy grazing issues. Some of the issues to be highlighted include the value of rotational grazing and of riparian habitat, carbon sequestration, and the flexibility within grazing systems.

Information on registration and/or exhibitor opportunities is at www.glci.org . GLCI is accepting abstracts for papers and posters to be presented at the December conference until May 1, 2009. Early bird registration of \$260 is available through Oct. 1, 2009.

GO VIST our Partners' Florida Grazing Lands Coalition NEW WEBSITE At <http://www.ces.fau.edu/fglc/>

The Florida Grazing Lands Coalition (FGLC) is a network of grassroots organizations and individuals working together to ensure a healthy future for our state's dynamic grasslands resource. Formation of the Coalition was facilitated in part by the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) of 1991 which increased funding for grazing technical assistance through NRCS Range and Pasture Specialists. FGLC works to bring together the best solutions for the producer incorporating both environmental and cost considerations.

Florida Grazing Lands Coalition seeks to:

- Promote voluntary action and respect off private property rights
- Strengthen partnerships between grazing lands managers and others who support the purpose of GLCI
- Encourage diversification to achieve multiple natural resource benefits
- Increase economic, environmental, and social stability on private grazing lands
- Close the gap between the availability of knowledge and the application of knowledge on private grazing lands
- Enhance the private landowner's ability to achieve greater profitability on ecologically sound and sustainable basis
- Educate the public through the dissemination of scientific knowledge on the conservation and management of grazing lands in Florida

For any more information on FGLC please contact: Pat Pfeil - pfeil@4partners.com
Or Chad Ellis - Chad.ellis@fl.usda.gov

**63rd Annual Meeting of the Society for Range Management and the
50th Annual Meeting of the Weed Science Society of America
Sheraton Denver Hotel Denver, Colorado February 7-11, 2009**

Abstracts for volunteer oral and poster papers, organized oral sessions, and symposia are to be electronically submitted no later than September 1, 2009 via <http://www.rangelands.org/denver2010/>.

The theme of the meeting is "Working Landscapes". Technical and poster sessions will cover a diversity of issues represented by both societies. Paper and poster submissions from all levels, from local to international are encouraged.



WORKING LANDSCAPES

Providing for the Future

First Call for Volunteers

Volunteers to assist with the running of the day-to-day events and programs are needed. Most of the volunteer work will focus on assisting the moderators and accommodating the speakers.

If you have a desire to help, please contact:

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USDA – NRCS

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Fort Morgan, CO 80701

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Cell Phone: 970-554-1002

Email: <mailto:josh.saunders@co.usda.gov>

Thank you so much and I look forward to hearing from you!

Florida Section Officers:

President - Bob Nelson - rbnelson@tnc.org

President Elect - Jill Epley - jill.epley@fl.usda.gov

Secretary /Treasurer Pete Deal - pete.deal@fl.usda.gov

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Chad H. George - chad.george@fl.usda.gov

Newsletter Editor, Webmaster Marilyn Samuel - flsrms@embarqmail.com (Use this one for FLSRM)

The next issue of the FL Section SRM newsletter is "scheduled" to come out a few weeks before our fall tour, Thursday, October 22nd. We welcome all articles concerning rangeland issues from members or non members. **Thank You** to all who helped with this issue.

Please feel free to pass the link or this newsletter on to those you might think interested.

The Society for Range Management (SRM) is the professional society dedicated to supporting persons who work with rangelands and have a commitment to their sustainable use. Rangelands comprise almost one-half of all the lands in the world. They are extremely important to society for the goods and services they produce and for the ecological services they provide. SRM is dedicated to the conservation and sustainable management of rangelands for the benefit of current societies and for future generations.

If you have an interest in any aspect of rangelands we would love to have you join us. Go to:

<http://www.rangelands.org/> Click on the "Membership – Join Now!" link in the green box in the upper left corner of the page.