Grass Roots: 21st Century Prescribed Grazing

Project Partners: Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), County Conservation Districts, Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI), Penn State, PA Forage and Grasslands Council (PFGC), South Central Project Grass, Fair Food Philadelphia.
Funding Source: National Fish and Wildlife Foundation; **Grant Award:** $509,000
Time frame: Summer 2009 – Summer 2012
Location: Fourteen counties in the South Central Region including Adams, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Fulton, Huntingdon, Juniata, Lancaster, Lebanon, Mifflin, Perry, Union, Snyder and York.
Priorities: Agriculturally-impaired watersheds in the region, including but not limited to the Lower Juniata River Watershed.

Program Objectives:

- Increase energy efficiency for operators by decreasing economic inputs as well as identifying/modeling carbon sequestration and nutrient trading credit values on-farm;
- Improve the economic position of landowners, particularly for farms with small acreage;
- Develop improved marketing capabilities for hay and grazed livestock;
- Achieve better utilization of land and water resources for improved environmental quality.

Program Elements:

- Accelerate the planning and implementation of prescribed grazing systems, targeting impaired watersheds for nitrogen and phosphorous with a goal of 5,000 acres;
- Install associated practices by supplementing existing cost-share programs such as EQIP, DEP and CREP. The budget includes $260,000 in infrastructure cost-share;
- Provide one-on-one assistance to at least 80 participating farms using “grazing advisors” along with existing technical assistance resources such as NRCS Grazing Specialists and conservation district personnel;
- Develop grazing mentoring networks throughout the region;
- Support the provision of 5-6 regional programs annually offered by GLCI;
- Support at least 50 local county-based on-farm field walks and demonstrations through SC Project Grass partners;
- Test the efficiency of the grazing BMP for the Bay Program by collecting data to substantiate the estimation of nutrient/sediment reductions;
- Focus on economic tools and incentives, including enterprise cost data collection, provision of tools for carbon and nutrient credit generation; training workshops to support the marketing of grass-fed products.

Project Contact:
Susan Richards, Program Manager; Email: Susan.richards@rcdnet.net
Or Susan Parry, RC&D Coordinator; Email: Susan.parry@pa.usda.gov
Capital RC&D Area Council; 401 East Louther Street, Suite 307; Carlisle, PA 17013
Phone (717) 241-4361; www.capitalrcd.org