

# Grazing Lands Assistance

photo: NRCS Oklahoma

## Grazing Lands Assistance

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) helps farmers and ranchers improve range and pasture conditions by managing for forage improvement, weed and brush control, erosion control, and revegetation. They also help landowners enhance fish and wildlife habitat for economic, recreational, and aesthetic benefits.

Six of the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) priority areas are mostly grazing land oriented. The other priority areas have a strong livestock emphasis. Direct technical assistance on plant identification, development of grazing plans that include fencing, watering facilities, windbreaks for shelter, and showing how to manage nutritional balance, are all part of the service.

Grazing land assistance is frequently accomplished in partnership. One organized effort is the:

### Grazing Land Conservation Initiative

The Grazing Land Conservation Initiative (GLCI) is a voluntary effort to enhance privately owned land. Natural Resources Conservation Service provides funds through GLCI to support demonstration projects and educational programs. This effort is led by a local citizen steering committee. A part-time coordinator has been hired to facilitate projects and actions with the committee and others.

## Oklahoma Grazing Lands Technical Assistance - Fiscal Year 2000

Grazing lands, which include rangeland, pastureland, grazed forest, and grazed cropland are the backbone of Oklahoma's agricultural industry. Natural Resources Conservation Service provided assistance to local clients on a variety of matters to improve and/or sustain the health and productivity of Grazing Lands. Oklahoma currently has 11 grazing land specialist positions.

Tours were conducted for local clients on subjects such as mesquite control, thistle control, prescribed burning, sericea lespedeza, wildlife habitat, grazing management, integrated pest management, quail management, rangeland monitoring, and others. These were done as hands-on workshops that were very effective. Over 3,500 clients attended these educational events. Additional one-day training was provided to 650 clients.

Prescribed grazing was completed on 751,081 acres. Additionally, 13 demonstration projects were implemented on 59 operating units. These were joint efforts with other partners including conservation districts and Extension Service. Media activities included 136 newspaper and magazine articles and four TV or radio programs related to grazing lands management.

Emphasis continues to be placed on the management of Juniper in Oklahoma. The acreage of Juniper doubles every 18 years and the Natural Resources Conservation Service is assisting clients with its management. These efforts include technical assistance on prescribed burning and mechanical controls, and financial assistance through Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). Juniper management is important not only because of forage losses and loss of habitat, but also from a human safety standpoint. Using fire as a tool to safely reduce volatile fuel loads continues to be a priority.

A cooperative effort between OSU, The Noble Foundation, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, conservation districts, Extension, and private landowners, resulted in the preparation and delivery of an economic short course. This course, entitled "Dollar\$ and \$en\$e", consisted of a series of four workshops each covering two counties. The workshops provided experiential learning for approximately 60 ranchers, covering topics such as economics, starting with basic budgeting, and electronic spreadsheets.

Oklahoma actively participates in the National Forage Quality and Animal Well Being Project. Natural Resources Conservation Service grazing lands specialists assisted over 80 livestock producers in collecting fecal samples to be analyzed using Near Infrared Spectrometer (NIRS) technology. This provided the Natural Resources Conservation Service and the client an analysis for dietary crude protein and energy to be used as a planning tool, planning supplemental feeding strategies, forage production systems, and grazing management. The goal of this effort is to improve production efficiency of grazing livestock operations through reduced winter feeding costs and improved performance of livestock.

Another use of technology was the development of a web-based program for the management of pest plants in Oklahoma. This program is scheduled for completion in December of 2000.

Range conservationists also conducted youth education activities at the National Rangeland Judging contest and the Youth Range and Wildlife Academy. Numerous Boy Scout, 4-H, FFA and other local youth organizations benefited from presentations on grazing lands.

## Educational Success Stories for 2000

**Noble Foundation Tour and Workshop** – a tour and workshop for livestock producers to learn new and valuable techniques and information to assist in their grazing land management.

**Musk Thistle Education Tour** – an education program on invasive species with answers to solving concerns.

**Cherokee Nation Field Day** – sponsored by the Cherokee Nation and the USDA, an approved meeting for poultry producers to receive continuing education credits and other helpful information with grazing lands.

**Rangeland Monitoring Workshop** – to introduce participants to various aspects of rangeland ecosystem and expose them to some of the benefits of range land monitoring.

**Perennial Cool Season Grasses Workshop and Tour** – to inform and educate participants on the economics, establishment, and management of perennial cool season grasses.



photo: NRCS Oklahoma

*Regina Horton, a Native American Landowner, shown checking construction on her fence. "This will allow us to better utilize our pasture and protect wildlife habitat."*



photo: NRCS Oklahoma

*Robert Lingnau, participant in the Kay County Grazing Land Priority Area, examines area where mechanical brush control has been applied. Brush in the background will be controlled in the future.*

