

See What's Possible: Grazing Reserved Rights Pilot

Overview

Livestock grazing can function as an effective management tool to improve wetland health on certain landscape types in California. In general, grazing can improve vegetative structure, promote the establishment of native plants, improve habitat diversity for many species of wildlife, and offer more preferred habitat for foraging and roosting shorebirds and waterfowl.

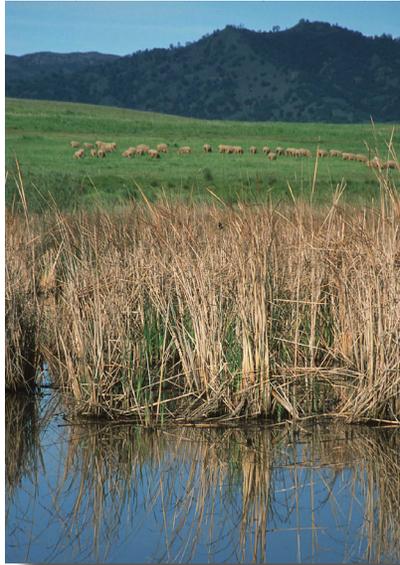
The compatibility between livestock grazing and wetland health depends on the specific ecological site characteristics, long-term wetland protection goals and the appropriate grazing management plan. In many cases, short duration grazing with a high stocking rate during late summer and fall will be the most effective.

In some circumstances, it may be necessary to exclude livestock from certain riparian or wetland areas where grazing may negatively affect wildlife habitat, cause erosion or degrade water quality.

Grazing Reserved Rights Pilot

In 2013, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in California is offering a Grazing Reserved Rights Pilot Program as part of the voluntary Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP). The pilot program allows livestock grazing on enrolled land as part of a NRCS-approved wetlands conservation and rotational grazing management plan.

At this time, California NRCS is offering the pilot program in three geographic areas: Coastal Pastures & Wetlands of the North Coast, California Vernal Pools, and Intermountain Wetlands of Northeastern California. Please read on for more information on each area.



Livestock grazing can improve wetland health on certain landscapes.

The Pilot Program offers either permanent or 30-year easements, and reserves a portion of the grazing rights to the landowner based on an agreed-upon rotational grazing plan. The easement value is adjusted according to the amount of the grazing right that remains unencumbered by the easement.

Landowners enrolled in WRP retain the title to the land, and the right to control access and recreational use. As with all NRCS easements, the land remains on the tax rolls.

Geographic Areas

California NRCS is offering the Grazing Reserved Rights Pilot in the following geographic areas:

Coastal Pastures & Wetlands of the North Coast

(Humboldt, Del Norte counties): Livestock grazing can be used appropriately to manage short-grass coastal habitat for foraging and roosting shorebirds and waterfowl. The moderate coastal climate and relatively long growing season offer an opportunity to create short-grass habitats for wintering water birds while providing sufficient time for grass re-growth and spring nesting cover.

California Vernal Pools in 17 distinct vernal pool regions:

The California Department of Fish & Game has identified 5 vernal pool regions in the Central Valley and 12 regions in the remainder of California. Managed grazing in vernal pool landscapes can help reduce competition from exotic grasses and increase biodiversity. Management for each vernal pool area will vary depending on vegetation species, composition and productivity, and will require that stocking rates be adjusted accordingly.

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Intermountain Wetlands of Northeastern California (all or portions of 9 counties): This region's wetlands and lakes are a vital stop-over and staging area for migratory birds in the Pacific Flyway. Four variables should be considered for managing grazing in these habitat areas: 1.) species of grazing animal, 2.) stocking rate, 3.) timing of grazing and 4.) distribution of grazing across the landscape.

Enrollment Options

Owners of private or tribal lands are eligible for the WRP Grazing Reserved Rights Pilot. The program offers two enrollment options:

- 1.) The **Permanent Easement** is a conservation easement in perpetuity. Under the Reserved Rights Pilot option, compensation paid through WRP for a permanent easement would be reduced by the value of the grazing right retained by the landowner. The NRCS Chief determines this rate annually. For 2013, the easement value will be reduced by 25 percent from the Geographic Area Rate Cap (GARC). The GARC is a set per-acre payment rate that is determined by soil type, land use and regional land values. In addition to the easement payment, NRCS pays up to 100 percent of the restoration costs.
- 2.) The **30-Year Easement** expires after 30 years. Because of the shorter duration, the easement value is 75% of the permanent easement payment and is also reduced by the value of the grazing right retained by the landowner. NRCS pays 75 percent of the restoration costs.

For information on California's GARCs:

http://www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/CA/programs/wrp/2013_GARC.html

For More Information

For more information on geographic areas offered through the Grazing Reserved Rights Pilot as well as land and landowner eligibility, please contact your local NRCS Service Center, or visit:

www.ca.nrcs.usda.gov/programs/wrp/index.html