
Foreword

The National Range and Pasture Handbook (NRPH) constitutes Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) basic policy and procedures for assisting farmers, ranchers, groups, organizations, units of government, and others working through conservation districts in planning and applying resource conservation on non-Federal grazing lands throughout the United States. This handbook may also serve as a general reference for grazing lands resource information. It was prepared primarily for NRCS use, but others who are interested in grazing lands conservation may find it useful.

The NRPH was developed by NRCS grazing lands specialists using their experience and many textbooks, scientific publications, manuals, and other references. The authors of the National Range and Pasture Handbook thank the many authors of these references for their work and contribution. The NRPH does not use scientific reference notations or citations in the text unless a direct quote is used. It does list references in a reference section. This format was chosen to make the NRPH a resource manager, field-user friendly, easy-to-read handbook and reference.

There are 634 million acres of non-Federal (privately owned, state and local publicly owned, and tribally owned) grazing lands in the United States. Non-Federal grazing lands are in every state. These rangelands, pasturelands, haylands, grazed forest lands, grazed croplands, and naturalized pastures constitute about half of the total lands on which the NRCS provides technical assistance, through conservation districts, at the request of the cooperator (the owners or managers of these lands). This technical assistance provides a source of expertise to guide cooperators in solving resource problems and in sustaining or improving their grazing lands resources and operations. Guidance for developing conservation plans with cooperators on grazing lands is based on current NRCS policy relative to consideration of all soil, water, air, plant, and animal resources, as well as, the cooperator's objectives.

This handbook replaces the National Range Handbook (1976), which was only applicable to rangelands and other native grazing lands. In addition to providing guidance for rangelands, the NRPH includes information and guidance for pasturelands, haylands, grazed forests, grazed croplands, and naturalized pastures. The ecological principles used in the former handbook are updated, and new ecological principles have been added. New technology is included for enterprise diversification and grazing lands hydrology. Technical guidance for livestock husbandry, nutrition, and behavior science, as well as wildlife habitat management has been expanded. Economic analysis tools and their interpretations are explained.

This handbook, along with other appropriate NRCS technical and policy guidance manuals and handbooks, contains information to assist the NRCS conservationist in providing technical assistance to cooperators in all phases of the planning and application process. The NRPH deals with the policy and procedures for the study, inventory, analysis, treatment, and management of the grazing lands resources.

The appendixes in this handbook are to be considered an official part of the handbook. As time passes and the need arises, more appendixes will be added.

This handbook is included in the references section (Section I) of the Field Office Technical Guide in all NRCS field office locations with grazing lands.

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National Range and Pasture Handbook

Contents:	Chapter 1	NRCS Authority, Mission, Goal, and Policies for Private Grazing Lands Assistance
	Chapter 2	Grazing Lands Resources
	Chapter 3	Ecological Sites and Forage Suitability Groups
	Chapter 4	Inventorizing and Monitoring Grazing Lands Resources
	Chapter 5	Management of Grazing Lands
	Chapter 6	Livestock Nutrition, Husbandry, and Behavior
	Chapter 7	Rangeland and Pastureland Hydrology and Erosion
	Chapter 8	Wildlife Management on Grazing Lands
	Chapter 9	Grazing Lands Enterprise Diversification
	Chapter 10	Grazing Lands Economics
	Chapter 11	Conservation Planning on Grazing Lands
		References
		Glossary
		Appendixes
		Index
