

HOW

WILL THIS BE FUNDED?

- Current and many future projects will be funded through a Cooperative Farming Agreement (CFA) which is essentially a barter system to exchange grazing on WMAs for goods (seed, fencing material) and services (fence work, mowing of firebreaks, etc.) for a WMA.
- In 2012, new legislation established the prairie and grassland grazing program. Legislation allows any revenue generated from grazing to be deposited into the conservation grazing program account to fund future projects.
- Grants will also be pursued to develop infrastructure and for research.



WHO

IS IMPLEMENTING AND MONITORING GRAZING?

- A Grazing Work Group comprised of representatives from various agencies and the MN Cattlemen's Association was established to provide guidance, planning, grant writing, information and education.
- Grazing specialists will assist wildlife managers in developing grazing plans. Grazing plans identify habitat objectives, grazing schedule, contingency plans and monitoring so WMAs do not become overgrazed.
- Minnesota producers, who enter into conservation grazing partnerships with the DNR, will be responsible for moving and caring for the livestock.
- A Prairie Habitat Assessment Biologist is assessing grazing management and developing Best Management Practices in collaboration with the Grazing Science Work Group.



SUMMARY

CONSERVATION GRAZING IS A PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP THAT WILL HELP MEET WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA (WMA) OBJECTIVES, REDUCE COSTS, AND IMPROVE WILDLIFE HABITAT.

CONSERVATION GRAZING

ON WILDLIFE
MANAGEMENT
AREAS



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GOOD FOR RESOURCES

CONSERVATION GRAZING IS AN EXCELLENT GRASSLAND MANAGEMENT TOOL.

Planned grazing can improve plant diversity and habitat structure which benefits wildlife.



WHAT

IS CONSERVATION GRAZING?

Conservation grazing uses livestock to improve wildlife habitat.

WHY

GRAZING?

DNR is committed to grazing as a management tool, similar to bison and elk historically grazing prairies. Grasslands thrive with periodic disturbance (fire, grazing, mowing/haying). A lack of disturbance can lead to a decrease in the quality, diversity, and productivity of grasslands.

HOW

WILL GRAZING AFFECT HUNTING ON WMAS?

- Livestock will be removed, except in rare cases, before fall hunting seasons begin to avoid conflict with hunters and their dogs. Occasionally fall grazing is necessary to meet conservation objectives.
- Hunting is allowed when livestock are on a WMA. Signs will be posted and will include safety warnings.
- Hunter access gates will be located at key entry locations and/or gates will be open to allow easy access, including at boat passage areas.
- While rested areas (no fire, grazing, or spraying) are ideal for pheasant nesting, recently grazed areas provide improved pheasant brood habitat with lighter cover, resulting in higher pheasant densities in the fall.
- Grazed areas can increase diversity and abundance of invertebrates for wildlife food.
- Because grazing will usually end by mid-August, the vegetation will have some time to grow and provide residual spring nesting cover.
- Not all designated grazing areas will be grazed every year.

RESEARCH

HAS FOUND THAT:

- Blue-winged teal nest density is higher in lightly grazed pasture compared to ungrazed grasslands.
- Canvasback broods used lightly grazed wetlands more than ungrazed wetlands.
- Northern shovelers preferred wetlands with lightly grazed margins.
- Prairie chicken and pheasant chicks rely on grasshoppers as a crucial food source and grasshopper abundance is higher in grazed prairie.



WHEN

WILL GRAZING OCCUR ON WMAS?

Timing of grazing will vary depending on objectives. Grazing may start in mid-May and cattle will usually be removed before the fall hunting seasons, generally not later than August 15. Depending on objectives, some areas will be grazed season long, others rotated through a series of paddocks, and others flash grazed for a brief period of time. Current vegetation make-up and management objectives will drive the timing and number of livestock for each site.

WHAT

ARE THE OBJECTIVES OF CONSERVATION GRAZING?

- Provide habitat for an increased abundance and diversity of wildlife species that require a range of grass heights and vegetation density (structural heterogeneity).
- Provide habitat for all stages of bird life; nesting cover, brood rearing cover, etc.
- Improve the plant diversity of native grassland ecosystems.
- Provide opportunities to rest private pastures to improve wildlife habitat on private land in addition to public land.

WHERE

WILL GRAZING OCCUR?

- DNR Section of Wildlife manages 1.4 million acres of WMAs. Wildlife managers have initially identified 50,000 acres of WMA land that is suitable for grazing (less than 0.04% of the WMA land).
- Most of these WMAs are in western and southern Minnesota in the prairie region of the state.
- There are approximately 10,000 acres of WMA land that are currently being grazed, most in northwestern Minnesota.
- Livestock will usually be moved often to create a mosaic of taller and shorter grassland.