

Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative in Illinois

FY 2021 Appropriations

Reinvigorating support for smart and sustainable grazing nationwide

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Illinois has over 1 million acres of privately owned pasture and rangeland, and there are over 440 million acres in the USA.

Several decades of research has documented that well managed rotational grazing systems build soil health, protect water quality, store carbon in the soil, improve wildlife habitat, and increase forage available for livestock. Yet in 2017 just 21 percent of farmers and ranchers with private pasture or rangeland used management intensive rotational grazing, and that number has been dropping for a decade. Farmers and ranchers need technical assistance to develop and implement grazing plans that are profitable, practical, and optimize conservation benefits and that work in their location, climate, and soils.

The Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI) provides local and regional resources for farmers and ranchers interested in better grazing management systems. This includes technical support, education, and funding for partnerships between the Natural Resources Conservation Service, farmers, ranchers, and researchers.

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For FY 2021, we urge Congress to provide \$10 million in dedicated funding for the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative in the NRCS Conservation Technical Assistance budget. This will help bring technical expertise to farmers and ranchers in Illinois and nationwide to help them succeed.

Why It Matters

- Counties with dedicated NRCS grazing staff show marked differences in the use of practices such as managed rotational grazing than nearby counties with no dedicated staff.
- Well-managed grazing operations provide public benefits including clean water, storing carbon in the soil, and improved wildlife habitat.
- Well-managed grasslands soak up rainfall like a sponge, reducing heavy runoff and avoiding expensive damage to roads, bridges, culverts and other tax-funded infrastructure.
- Better grazing systems benefit farmers and ranchers – healthier, and more plentiful forage means more production per acre and reduced veterinary bills.
- \$10 million for GLCI would help to ensure farmers and ranchers interested in better grazing systems get the technical help they need to succeed.



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