

Category 2 – Education and On-Farm Demonstration

APPLICATION

- Please type or print neatly
- If typing, use Times New Roman as your font, size 12
- Add additional sheets as necessary

Section A. PROJECT TITLE

Southeast Wisconsin Grazing Education Project

Section B. PROJECT SCOPE

Question 1: Farmers new to grazing. . . How many farmers new to prescribed/managed grazing plans do you intend to involve in your project and (estimate) how many acres this will involve.	Farmers (new grazers): 300	
Question 2: Farmers currently grazing. . . How many farmers currently doing prescribed/managed grazing do you intend to involve during your project and (estimate how many acres this will involve).	Farmers (current grazers): 200	

Question 3: Describe your education or demonstration project. **HOW WILL YOUR PROJECT ADDRESS THE GOALS OF THIS PROGRAM?**

The Southeast Wisconsin Grazing Education Project will provide education on managed grazing to farmers and consumers in a 13 county area comprised of Dane, Dodge, Columbia, Green Lake, Washington, Ozaukee, Milwaukee, Rock, Jefferson, Walworth, Waukesha, Kenosha, and Racine counties.

Town and Country RC&D, Inc (TCRCD) identified the following goals jointly held by the GLCI program and the Southeast Wisconsin Grazing Education Project:

- 1) Increase the number of acres in Managed Grazing.
- 2) Improve the ecological and productive condition of existing pastures.
- 3) Promote Managed Grazing to farmers as a viable, conservation-based farming practice.
- 4) Promote grass-based products to consumers to increase demand.

TCRCD’s Education Specialist will implement the Southeast Wisconsin Grazing Education Project and will work jointly with TCRCD’s Grazing Specialist to reach beginning and existing farmers. The Education specialist will plan 12 grazing-related events each year.

Half of these events will target farmers and include venues such as workshops, pasture walks, and on-farm field days. The events are essential to:

- 1) support and provide information to new graziers.
- 2) recruit farmers to begin managed intensive grazing.
- 3) provide existing graziers with information on improving their pasture condition and yield.

One workshop will focus on the technical aspects of grass-based operations and the second will focus on achieving a financial sustainable operation. Pasture walks, on-farm field days and other events will focus on improving pasture conditions and yields.

At least one event will involve demonstrations with sheep and goats, since a high percentage of sheep and goat farmers are women. The Education specialist will also work with Growing Power to offer trainings on managed intensive grazing to African American, and other minority, immigrant and refugee farmers in urban and/or rural areas.

The other six events will focus on consumers. Consumer-driven demand for products from local grass-fed farm animals must increase for grass-based operations to be financially successful.

TCRCD has become well-known in Southeast Wisconsin for featuring locally produced foods – including grass-based products – and bringing farmers and consumers together at its meetings and events. Graziers and other farmers are featured speakers at TCRCD's Annual Meeting, conference banquets, and other meetings. The Education Specialist will build on RCRCD's past successes by planning at least four Grazing Events: Farm Breakfast, Picnic on the Farm, Evening on the Farm and Wine and Cheese Tasting. Each event will feature different grass-based products and compliment them with other Wisconsin-produced foods.

At least two other events will focus on how to prepare meats produced from grass-fed animals. The Education Specialist will plan cooking demonstrations with sampling opportunities and/or cooking classes. Venues that create opportunities to reach new consumers who have not tasted or cooked with meats produced from grass-fed animals will be selected. These could include small, specialty grocers, farmers markets or community centers.

These events foster opportunities for farmers and consumers to develop relationships that change the food purchasing dynamic into one in which consumers make personal choices to seek and purchase local, grass-based products.

The Education and Grazing Specialists will continue to support efforts to introduce graziers to chefs through the Farmer Chef Connection.

The Education Specialist will work with and be assisted by the TCRCD Grazing Advisory Group, Ag Team and other TCRCD staff and volunteers to plan and hold the events. The Grazing Advisory Group consists of area farmers, representatives from various agencies, local chef and NRCS Coordinator for TCRCD). The TCRCD Ag Team works to promote locally produced foods, support farm land conservation efforts and identify needs within the agriculture community that can be addressed to sustain thriving agriculture enterprises throughout Southeastern Wisconsin.

At all events the Education Specialist will provide information on the environmental benefits of managed grazing to farmers and the general public, including how managed pastures keep surface and ground water clean.

By helping to create an environment in which farmers can become more profitable, TCRCD helps graziers compete more effectively with other lucrative land uses in southeastern Wisconsin, which in turn will make managed intensive grazing a viable option for non-graziers in the area. Ultimately, this will help to promote a healthy balance of agricultural and non-agricultural land uses in the southeast Wisconsin and allow both rural and urban communities to flourish.

Section C. STATEMENT OF NEED Why is your project necessary or warranted?

This education project is necessary because many farmers in the project area are struggling to maintain viable farming operations. In addition, they are unaware that managed grazing is a viable option for them. The general consensus among the agricultural community in southeast Wisconsin has been that “grazing is something that is not done here” and many farmers are unaware of existing grazing organizations (such as grazing networks) located within the area. There have not been sufficient educational grazing resources available to farmers in southeast Wisconsin, thereby making them an underserved group. Through this project, the Education Specialist will reach these farmers and involve them in educational events that will empower them to begin conversion to grazing.

Current food distribution systems of meats, dairy products and poultry products are based on large agribusinesses suppliers, leaving grass-based farmers with little to access to grocery and/or restaurant chains, and consumers with little choice in purchasing food products. In order to maintain viable grass-based operations, farmers must be able to market their products. By educating consumers on the environmental and high-quality value of purchasing locally produced meats, dairy products and poultry products, TCRCD’s Education specialist will be helping to create niche marketing systems and opportunities. These could include increasing number of consumers purchasing directly from farmers at farmers markets or on-farm sales, small and/or specialty grocers and restaurants purchasing from graziers. Once grocers, restaurants and other food venues hear consumers requests for high-quality, locally produced from grass-based operations, additional marketing opportunities will emerge.

The project area, with fifty percent of Wisconsin’s population, is experiencing the rapid loss of farmland. The cost of inputs continues to rise, while profits decline for most conventional family farms. This is apparent from the number of farmers who must hold off-farm jobs to make ends meet. Fifty percent of conventional farming families have a spouse working off the farm, versus 20 percent of grazing farm families (Rodale Institute). The project promotes managed grazing as a profitable alternative to farmers in rural areas and those farming adjacent to developed areas.

Due to development pressure near urban and suburban areas in Southeast Wisconsin, agricultural land is priced according to its value for residential and commercial development. In the project area, agricultural land is sold for an average of four times the price for development compared to similar land sold for continued agricultural use (Wisconsin Agricultural Statistics – 2004). It is often more profitable to sell land for development than to continue farming – even when the desire to continue the farming lifestyle is strong.

Changing agricultural practices in the project area have resulted in fewer acres planted in soil conserving crops such as alfalfa and grasses. This results in increased sedimentation in already degraded streams, rivers and lakes. Manure runoff and phosphorous laden sediment have speeded the eutrophication of surface waters. As a result, all 13 counties in the project area have water bodies listed on the 303(d) Clean Water Act list of impaired waters. The project promotes managed grazing as a way to improve water quality, protect the soil, conserve energy and improve quality of life—to the benefit of the farmer and the community.

Section D. TIMETABLE/WORKPLAN List chronologically (with approximate dates) the major steps/actions or activities that will happen during your project. Provide some description for each step/action or activity.

Draft Event Schedule

- 3rd Quarter 2009: Pasture Walk, On-Farm Demonstration, & Evening On the Farm consumer event
- 4th Quarter 2009: Technical Workshop, Farm Breakfast, & Cooking Grass-based Meats Class
- 1st Quarter 2010: Financial Workshop, Wine & Cheese Event & Cooking Grass-based Meats Class
- 2nd Quarter 2010: On Farm Demonstration, Pasture Walk, Farm Picnic
- 3rd Quarter 2010: Two Pasture Walks, & Evening on the Farm
- 4th Quarter 2010: Technical Workshop, Farm Breakfast, & Cooking Grass-based Meats Class
- 1st Quarter 2011: Financial Workshop, Wine & Cheese Event & Cooking Grass-based Meats Class
- 2nd Quarter 2011: On Farm Demonstration, Pasture Walk, Farm Picnic

For each event, the Education Specialist will use the following timeline:

4-6 Months before: Explore possible event locations and speakers

3 Months before: Finalize event details, develop event information and registration materials

2 Months before: Distribute event information and registration materials

Month before Event: Promote event, confirm all details

Month of the Event: Promote event, hold event, thank speakers and/or hosts

Month after Event: Evaluate event, write summary articles for website and newsletters

Section E. QUALIFICATIONS Provide the names and relevant experience of your project's key staff.

Project Manager Name: TBD, Education Specialist

Town and Country RC&D will hire an Education Specialist to carry out the grazing education activities and Town and Country RC&D's other education programs. The Education Specialist will be hired in the summer of 2009.

Relevant Work Experience/Training/Education:

Ideally, the Education Specialist will have a strong background in grazing and other environmental issues, and will have experience coordinating educational events. If Town and Country RC&D is not able to recruit such an individual, we will develop a professional development plan in order to rapidly bring the Education Specialist up to par. Independent study, attending workshop or trainings, and/or mentoring, may be used to accomplish this.

Project Staff 2 Name: Peter G. Pitts, Grazing Specialist

Relevant Work Experience/Training/Education:

Education and Training

- Bachelor of Science Degree, Agriculture Economics, Animal Science, Western Illinois University, Macomb, Illinois
- 16 hours of graduate credit in Agronomy, Pastures and Forages, UW Madison, 1990
- Continuing Education at American Breeder Service, (ABS Global), Genetic Management Evaluator School, 2006

Licenses and Accreditation

- Certified as a Grazing Lands Planner in 2009

Relevant Work Experience:

- Grazing Specialist for Town and Country RC&D, September 2008
- USAID Farmer to Farmer Volunteer assignments, 1999-2008. (Presented President George W. Bush Volunteer Service Award, 2007.)
- USDA Small Business Innovative Research award 1994; Developed and patented a new variety of winter hardy grass, Spring Green Festulolium; developed germplasm in research;
- Involved in three forage breeding trials with USDA Forage Research Center, Madison, Wisconsin
- Raised livestock 1980-1994, Clyde, Wisconsin
- Farm Advisor, Environmental Resources Center, UW Madison

Languages

English, Spanish, German

Project Staff 3 Name:

Relevant Work Experience/Training/Education:

Section F. OBJECTIVES List in order of importance the top three objective you intend to accomplish with your education or demonstration project. Describe how you will evaluate the success of each objective.

Objective 1: Have 40 farmers request grazing plans, including 10 women farmers.

Town and Country RC&D's Education Specialist will convince more dairy, beef, poultry, sheep, and goat farmers to utilize pasture-based production systems to increase the number of new graziers and the number of acres of managed pasture in Southeast Wisconsin.

EVALUATION PLAN:

The Education Specialist or Grazing Specialist will complete a Grazing Plan Request Questionnaire with the farmer when he or she requests the development of a Grazing Plan. In addition to the basic contact and farm information, the Questionnaire will ask why the farmer is switching to grazing, if the farmer has attended any of grazing events, and if they have read of the grazing articles or information published by Town and Country RC&D. This information will tabulated every 6 months.

Objective 2: Involve 500 existing, new, and/or potential graziers in grazing education activities

The Town and Country RC&D Education Specialist will fortify the technical assistance provided through the Southeast Wisconsin Grazing Technical Assistance Project (Category 1) with educational and networking opportunities for farmers (both new and existing graziers) to continue growing their expertise in managed grazing.

EVALUATION PLAN:

All event attendees will complete a Sign-In sheet with their name and contact information, and will indicate if they are currently grazing livestock, are interested in grazing livestock, or have a grazing plan. This information will be interested into a database after every event and analyzed every 6 months.

Objective 3: Involve 600 members of the general public in grazing education events

The Grazing Specialist will educate consumers and the general public about the variety of benefits of farms using managed grazing in order to increase demand for pasture-raised products and increase the profitability of grazing farms – especially as it relates to improving public awareness of the environmental benefits of managed grazing and how consumer choices can help sustain this environmentally-friendly practice.

EVALUATION PLAN:

All event attendees will complete a Sign-In sheet with their name and contact information, and will indicate if they have purchased grass-based products, if they have purchased other local foods, and where they have purchased the products. This information will be interested into a database after every event and analyzed every 6 months.

Section G. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (Optional) Please provide any additional details about your project that will help the reviewers assess its need and merit.

1. Town and Country RC&D is committed to maintaining agriculture in the project area. One of the organization's main goals is to "Value and build a strong, sustainable agricultural community for the benefit of the local economy, farming businesses, the environment, and for the protection of our food sources."
2. The grazing advisory committee will add value to the project by ensuring that the ideas and topics for grazing education events come from the types of people that the project serves. Currently, experienced graziers (both men and women), grazing network representatives, a local chef, and a few agency representatives from across the 13 county area actively serve on this committee.
3. The need to continue to promote managed grazing and coordinate with existing organizations is great as the Town and Country region contains 15,000 farms and 3 million acres of farmland. Agriculture is an integral part of the area's economy. The majority of the project area is rural in character with forty-five percent of the population living in rural and suburban areas. The project area also contains the urban centers of Milwaukee, Racine, Janesville, Waukesha, Kenosha, and Madison. Management grazing is a perfect fit for both the rural and suburban areas since it can be profitable on large and small areas of land and is a practice seen as friendly to non-farming neighbors.
4. Because the project serves 13 counties, it will bring together graziers who have never met and will help them widen their circle of grazing connections. It will allow farmers to share grazing expertise on a regional level.

Thank You!

Applications must be postmarked no later than April 10, 2009. Mail 10 copies, including the cover and budget pages, to Laura Paine, Division of Agricultural Development, DATCP, P.O. Box 8911, Madison WI, 53708-8911