

Understanding Opportunities and Challenges

Associated with Grazing Public Grasslands of Wisconsin

(NIFA)

We propose to investigate the potential for grazing livestock on publicly owned and managed grasslands and to analyze the environmental, economic and social outcomes of that activity. The need for this information rests on two primary drivers – the need for cost-effective grassland management and the potential for these lands to increase the profitability of Wisconsin grass-farmers. The work proposed here, designed as a two-phase adaptive research model, will begin to fill these knowledge gaps by investigating the ways in which grazing can be used to meet the goals of various stakeholders, including agency personnel (e.g. WI DNR), conservationists (e.g. The Nature Conservancy, The Prairie Enthusiasts), public land users, and local livestock producers. It is a practical, applied project that embodies the Wisconsin Idea, and the USDA national and state priorities. The way in which the project aims to balance ecological, social, and economic objectives demands a multidisciplinary approach that matches very well with the goals and approaches of the UW CALS Agroecology MS program - interdisciplinary research, education, and outreach. As such, the PIs have agreed to focus any awarded RAs on Agroecology graduate students in an effort to bolster the Program's profile in the University and the State.