

Interesting Facts & Anecdotes

from your District Operations and Member Services Committee

June 2015

This month's issue of Did You Know is devoted to highlighting one of NACD's partner organizations.

Did you know?...

National Forage Week is June 21st – 27th?

Watch the National Forage Week video developed by the American Forage & Grassland Council, a member of the National Grazing Lands Coalition (NatGLC) -

<https://vimeo.com/130812854>.

NACD was one of the first national organizations that suggested the formation of a national body to specifically represent America's grazing lands. Created in the late 1980's as the Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative (GLCI), in 2013 the organization changed its name to the National Grazing Lands Coalition (NatGLC), so as not to be confused with many other conservation initiatives established by USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). J.K. "Rooter" Brite, a Soil and Water Conservation District Supervisor from Bowie, Texas, currently represents NACD on the NatGLC Steering Committee.

The History of the National Grazing Lands Coalition (NatGLC)

Grazing lands can be thought of as giant buffers, long recognized for their environmental benefits. Properly managed, these lands improve the environment and convert energy from the sun into protein, something we all need for our very survival.

The NatGLC is a nationwide group of individuals and organizations working together to maintain and improve the management and health of the Nation's private and public grazing lands. The Coalition is driven by agricultural producers and conservation and scientific organizations, for the benefit of America's grazing lands resources. NatGLC seeks to carry out its activities through local, state and national partnerships. It informs the public of the contributions well-managed grazing lands make to the quality of life of every citizen. NatGLC was founded on the principles of voluntary action by those who own and manage grazing lands and a respect for private property rights. It emphasizes high quality, science-based, voluntary technical assistance, expanded grazing lands research and education, and a more knowledgeable and informed public. How the NatGLC, formerly GLCI, came into existence is an interesting story.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service (SCS), now called the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), called two meetings of their range specialists and producers to discuss deficiencies producers were experiencing after passage of the 1985 Farm Bill. For many producers, that Bill was designed to aid humid area, row-crop agriculture, and ignored everything else. The first meeting was September 12-16, 1988 in Ft. Worth, Texas. The second meeting was in Bozeman, Montana June 3-7, 1991. NatGLC was established after the Bozeman meeting. Representatives of state and national agricultural, conservation, wildlife and scientific organizations attended the Bozeman meeting. They were concerned about the declining level of technical assistance being provided by NRCS to owners and managers of non-federal grazing lands. They believed NRCS resources had been diverted from grazing lands, to conservation compliance and other programs established in the 1985 Farm Bill.

Twenty-two states were represented at the Bozeman meeting. Six national organizations agreed to sponsor NatGLC. They were the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF), American Forage and Grassland Council (AFGC), American Sheep Industry (ASI), National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD), National Cattlemen's Beef Association (NCBA), and the Society for Range Management (SRM). NACD and SRM were the first to suggest NatGLC be formed, and the other four organizations agreed later. Since that time, four other organizations have joined NatGLC: the Dairy Industry, the National Farmers Union (NFU), the Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS), and the Noble Foundation. These nine organizations now comprise the NatGLC Steering Committee or Board of Directors. Each NatGLC member organization appoints members and alternates to be its representatives on the Steering Committee. Steering Committee members and alternates are producers and respected leaders within their organizations. They all volunteer their time to serve on the committee and many pay their own expenses.

The NatGLC Steering Committee is dedicated to America's grazing lands resource and its sustainability. They encourage and work to establish local, state, and regional partnerships that foster grazing lands conservation and stewardship. In addition they are provided some support by the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). NRCS, the Agricultural Research Service (ARS), the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), the U.S. Forest Service (USFS), and the Department of Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) have supported the NatGLC's National Conferences on Grazing Lands. A primary activity of the NatGLC Steering Committee has been to have our nation's grazing lands needs recognized in the 1995/6, 2002, 2008, and 2014 federal farm bills. This legislation assigns primary responsibility for private land grazing assistance to the NRCS. Assistance is provided at the request of private and other land users in partnership with local soil and water conservation districts (SWCD's) and others. Another objective is an expanded federal research and education program. Increasing support for research and education is an equal priority to that of having adequate, scientific technical assistance available to producers.

NatGLC has sponsored six National Conferences on Grazing lands since 2000. These conferences, held every three years, provide information that influences the political and policy discussions concerning agriculture and the environment reflected in federal farm bills and programs. They also highlight management and business practices that producers can take home and use, demonstrate the latest in research, and point out areas where additional research is needed.

It is critical that conservationists work together to maintain this national treasure – our nation's private and public grazing lands.

For more information about NatGLC please visit their website at www.grazinglands.org/