

Writing and Assembling a Grazing Management Plan



*Schedule appointment and meet with the producer on the day scheduled. Don't be late and also remember that this may be the first time the producer has had an in depth discussion with someone from NRCS or a grazing management specialist. Before your visit take time to review the **National Range & Pasture Handbook, Chapter 11**. It will provide policy guidance on the "how to" of the grazing land resource conservation planning.*

1. Gather materials:

- Two aerial photos of the property, with one given to the participant during interview.
- Pasture Stick
- A "blank" Pasture Condition Score Sheet with instructions.
- A **Grazing Management Plan (GMP) site Inventory & Preplanning Assessment form**.

2. Once at the producer's farm, sit down with the producer and go over the basics of their operation before walking the farm.

The basics will include:

- A short list of three to four goals and objectives the producer wants to work towards, i.e. Goals could be increase herd size, extend the grazing season, produce more forage, improve water distribution or begin a pasture rotation.
- Get an inventory of what is already on the farm and draw the inventory on the aerial photo. This includes existing fence, water troughs/tanks, undeveloped and developed springs, heavy use pads, access roads and other existing points that are of interest to the plan.
- Complete the animal inventory in the GMP site Inventory & Preplanning Assessment form.
- Make any notes about livestock health concerns at this time.
- Record any supplemental feeding they do including when they feed hay and the source of the hay.
- Collect soil test results from producers that have been taken within the last five years.

3. Go to the field with the producer at this point.
Include the following:
 - Find out what the current grazing system consists of. This could be continuous grazing until the grass is gone. Find out what type or intensity of a grazing rotation the producer would be comfortable with. Explain the advantages and disadvantages of more or less frequent rotations.
 - Point out resource concerns and offer possible solutions. Ask the producer if he has any ideas to correct the resource concerns.
4. Complete the **Pasture Condition Score Sheet** at this time. Follow the instructions. Fields that are alike can be scored together if they have the same resource concerns.
5. Discuss the number of paddocks the producer has and the number needed to achieve the rotation he wants, and address the related resource concerns.
6. Discuss the watering system and how to get water to the designed pastures. Water availability will determine the number and placement of pastures.
Note:
To prevent trailing, livestock should not have to travel more than 600 to 800 feet to a water source.
7. Discuss the fencing to be constructed. Determine if fences are to be temporary or permanent and discuss advantages and disadvantages of fence types.
8. Include in your discussion with the producer while in the field other needed practices to address resource concerns such as access roads, heavy use pads, gutters and downspouts, winter distribution of hay and/or winter grazing, etc.
9. Discuss weeds and weed control, including invasive, native and non-native.
10. After the site visit, (If NRCS is doing the GMP, complete 6 notes) and finish filling out the **GMP site Inventory & Preplanning Assessment form**.
Note:
NRCS will complete engineering designs for needed structural practices
11. Complete a toolkit map or equivalent map which includes practice inventory, roads, soils, paddock layout, and labels. Place new conservation practices on the map.
12. Print out two new conservation plan maps, two soils maps from toolkit; and two soils descriptions, and forage yields from Soil Data Mart.
13. Using the percentage of each soil type found within each pasture from the soil inventory and the forage yields for non-irrigated pasture, calculate the weighted yield per acre for each pasture.

14. Complete the **Graze 5** worksheet using the animal size and planned number of livestock for the operation, the pasture size from the Soil Inventory Report, select the forage makeup from the drop down menu for each paddock, and correct grazing efficiency. This should be done for current and planned rotation to show the benefits of rotational grazing. For smaller grazing operations you can use the **LIVESTOCK, FORAGE, AND FEED WORKSHEET** instead of the Graze 5 worksheet.

Note:

*Utilize the Soils Inventory Report and the yields from soildatamart to enter data into the **Pasture/Hay Yield Calculation Spreadsheet** to get a weighted yield for each field/paddock, which you'd then enter into Graze 5.*

15. Print out two copies of **Graze 5** and all of its attachments. Give the producer one copy of the charts and graphs from this document.
16. Fill out the **GMP Template** from all information gathered in the field and print two copies. Also print out two copies of the **GMP Information Sheet**, to be included with the GMP
17. Assemble two, **three part** conservation plan folders with the following documents:
- First tab, **Grazing Record Sheet** along with **Pasture Condition Score Sheets**, soil tests and Completed 6 notes.
 - Second tab, a copy of the GMP write up in the new template along with the **GMP Information Sheet**. (Completed GMP template goes on top)
 - Third tab, from top to bottom, place the Pasture Inventory map, the Soils map, Map Unit Text (from Soil Data Mart), Non-irrigated Yields by Map Unit, Soils Inventory Report, **Pasture/Hayland Yield Calculations**, and the three **Graze 5** worksheets.

Note:

NRCS GMP Sample Map gives you an idea of type and quality of map expected

18. Review the Natural Resource Conservation Service's **National /Statewide Grazing Management Plan "Content Requirements"** to ensure the GMP has all the required documentation.
19. Schedule a time to meet with producer and go over their plan to ensure that the plan is suitable for their operation. This is a good time to review the use of the **Grazing Record Sheets** and how it should be utilized by the producer. **Grazing Record Sheets** are intended to have one sheet maintained per paddock. These sheets are also required as documentation for conservation program payments for prescribed grazing (528).

***If no changes are needed, and the producer agrees with the GMP, have the producer sign both copies of the GMP Plan, and give the producer his copy.**