



**Profiles of Adaptive Grazing on Public Lands**  
*Insights from a Research Project*

REGAIN event 2022







PROFILES IN LAND AND MANAGEMENT:  
*Adaptive Grazing on Public Lands*

## U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

### *Sacramento River National Wildlife Refuge*

A 12,000 acre wildlife refuge using adaptive grazing to control weeds and reduce fire risk, and to promote native grass, wildflowers, and wildlife habitat in the heart of a major agricultural region.



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## Goat Green

### *Wyoming Oilfield Restoration with BLM & Chevron*

When nothing else worked to restore a heavily disturbed arid pipeline corridor & oilfields, 1500 mob-stocked goats removed weeds and established perennial grasslands and sage.



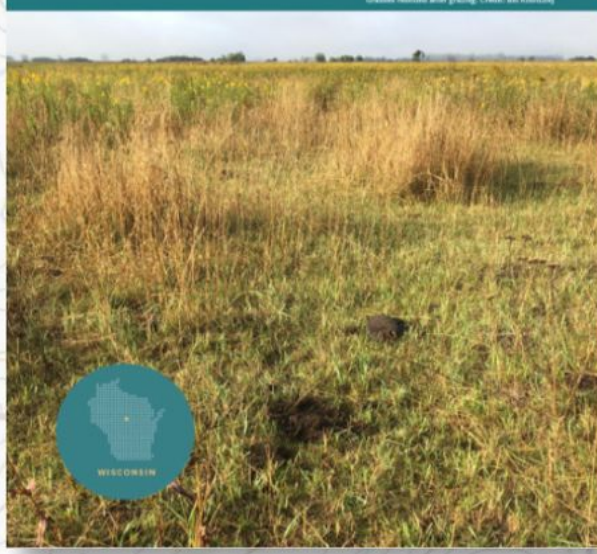
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## Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources

### *Buena Vista Wildlife Area*

Management-intensive grazing with daily moves of the herd to improve habitat for grassland birds, increase plant diversity, and promote grassland health. One of multiple sites across Wisconsin.

Goats released after grazing. Credit: Bill Kistling



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## Missouri Department of Conservation

### *18 sites across Missouri*

15 years of combining prescribed burns and planned grazing provides a mosaic of grassland habitat options for wildlife at sites across Missouri.

Cattle graze a recently burned section of an HSC property



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## Colorado State Land Board

### *Lowry Ranch*

A former bombing range uses year-round adaptive planned grazing to fund Colorado's public schools while promoting wildlife and increasing the health of the grasslands.



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## California Department of Parks & Recreation

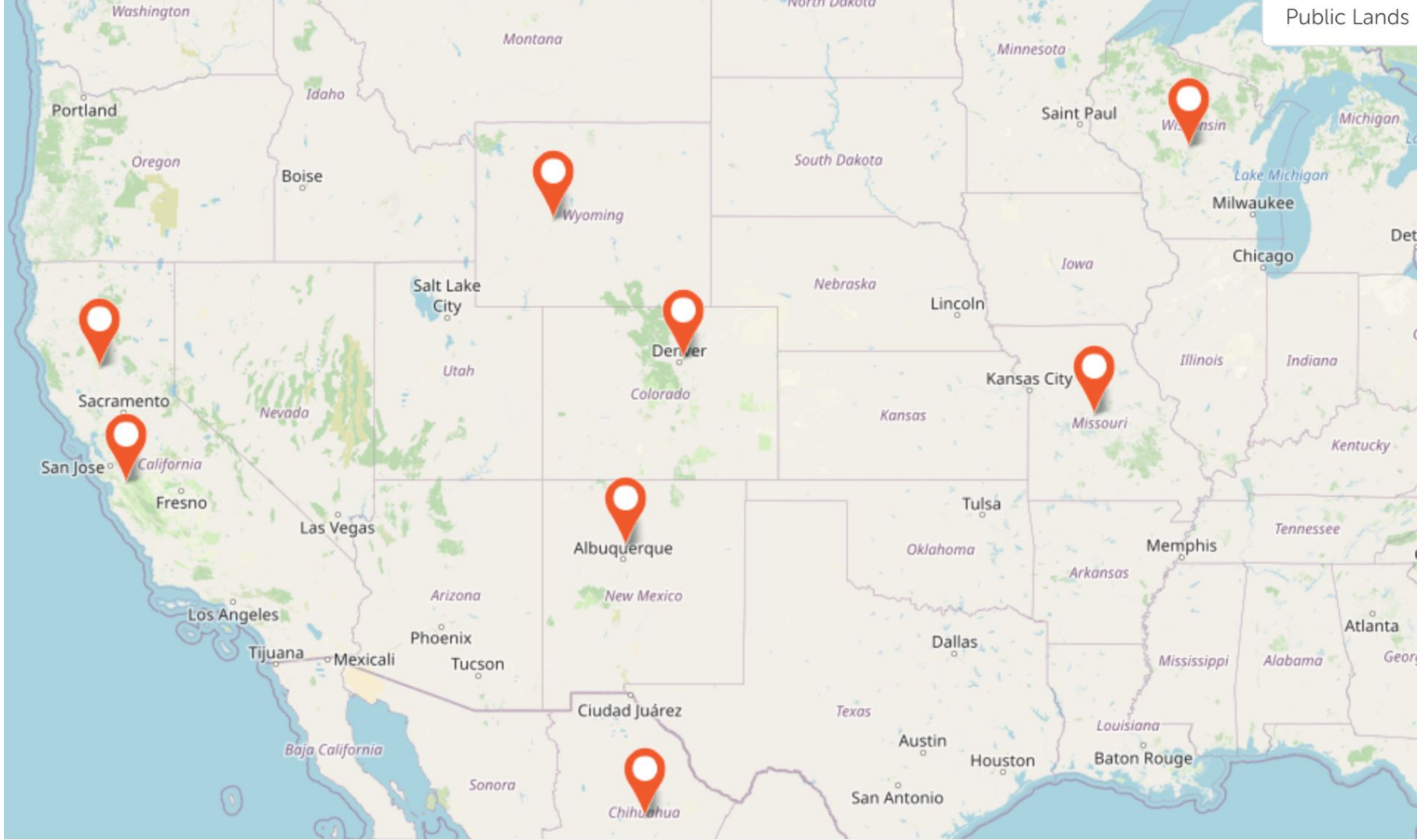
### *Hollister Hills State Vehicular Recreation Area*

4x4s and ATVs meet cattle where the California Department of Parks & Recreation seeks to reduce fire risk at this multi-use park on the San Andreas fault. Adaptive planned grazing increases perennial grasses and listed species, keeps the neighbors happy, and saves the land management agency time and money.

Credit: Paul Blum Conservation Science









# Lowry Ranch Extreme Makeover

*“We’re running a herd of 600 cows year-round here—but if you go out on the ranch in summer you can’t tell if you’re on a site that has been grazed that year or not!”* —William Woolston, Colorado State Land Board





# Lowry Ranch, CO

“This earns us money for the school system”



## *Benefits of adaptive grazing*



### **Increased Revenue**

CSLB is mandated to produce long-term sustainable revenue to support the Colorado Public Schools.



### **Natural Resources**

Planned grazing aligns with protecting and enhancing natural resources, including wildlife and native plants.



### **Maximize Forage Quality & Quantity**

Eight years of recovery (without grazing) didn't help this site; four years of planned grazing has improved the forage and the native plant diversity.



### **Improve the water cycle**

This site now captures and holds nearly all of the rainfall it receives. Runoff has been eliminated and the extra water has extended the grazing season by two months, allowing them to handle drought years without destocking.



# Sacramento River National Wildlife Refuge



# Sacramento NWR

*“Livestock are perfect: you can write prescriptions and move them on, and then move them off”*

—JOE SILVEIRA, WILDLIFE REFUGE MANAGER

*“Once you can get away from the fear of impact, you can really start to see positive benefits on the diversity of vegetation”*

—BREANNA OWENS, REFUGE GRAZIER;  
CSU, CHICO CENTER FOR REGENERATIVE  
AG AND RESILIENT SYSTEMS

## Benefits of adaptive grazing



### Efficiency & Cost Savings

Without grazing, the refuge staff would spend considerable time and money on mowing, which would be less effective



### Wildlife

Grazing improves forage quality and stimulates new grass growth, which increases nesting and concealment cover



### Reduced Fire Risk

By reducing thatch, RDM and ladder fuels, grazing decreases fire risk



### Native Plant Diversity & Abundance

Spring and summer wildflowers are more abundant in areas grazed by cattle



# Advice from Scott Soares, Environmental Scientist



**“If you can demonstrate specific goals, it makes a better case for why you want to use grazing on a site.”**

**“Success is measured on a long-term scale.”**

**“A successful partnership between grazier and manager is key; it is important to relay your goals to the grazier.”**

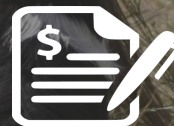




Reduced bare ground  
by 60% to 90%



Increased stocking  
capacity 100% - 300%.



Received ~50% discount  
on leases because of  
commitment to grow the



# VIDEO



# *Takeaways from 22 interviews*

*“Flexibility from the refuge staff makes  
[working together] much easier—and that  
goes both ways”*

—BREANNA OWENS, POINT BLUE CONSERVATION  
SCIENCE PARTNER AND REFUGE GRAZIER

“Don’t be afraid to try it, but be careful in your selection of a lessee or grazing manager for the project”



## Takeaways from 22 Interviews

*“No other management technique can produce patchy cover to benefit wildlife like well-managed grazing.”*

— MAX ALLEGER

*“This showed that intensive grazing can be an effective tool for reclamation projects when the underlying conditions are appropriate.”*

— BLM WYOMING

## *Takeaways from 22 Interviews*

**“There are different ways to do things, not just the old ways” - Donny Benz, Goat Green**

**“I don’t believe there is a downside” -  
William Woolston, CO State Lands Board**



*“There is virtually no risk to the public with  
the animals we are grazing”*

—JOE MORRIS



# Major Themes

% citing Cost Savings, Efficiency, or Revenue: 100%

Wildlife or Natural Resources: 100%

Native Plants or Perennial Grasses: 85%

Reducing Bare Ground or Controlling Invasives: 85%

Water Cycle Benefits / Resilience: 100%

# Questions, Comments, Thoughts?

## Contact Information:

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