

# impact

University of Idaho Extension programs that are making a difference in Idaho.

## Three Rivers Grazing Conference returns to North Central Idaho

### AT A GLANCE

An annual staple educational event, paused during COVID-19 restrictions, returns in 2023 following reassurance from area producers of its importance and value.

### The Situation

In the early 2000's, it was realized by a member of the Idaho Soil & Water Conservation Commission that there was a distinct need to provide educational programming designed for producers grazing cattle in the region. With the assistance of University of Idaho Extension, a planning committee was created to meet this need. The planning committee was primarily producer based, to ensure that topics covered and speakers selected genuinely appealed to the area's producer base. The first conference was organized in 2003 and continued to be offered annually through 2020. During the pandemic, the conference was suspended due to limitations on holding public events. In the fall of 2022, producers began to request that the conference be reinstated to meet the needs of those grazing cattle and managing forages in the North Central Idaho region.

### Our Response

To initiate the planning of a 2023 offering, UI Extension faculty from Idaho and Lewis counties invited original conference planning committee members as well as several new individuals to be involved in the process. Historical planning information was provided along with an explanation of the event set up itself.



Opening remarks were delivered with help of former organizer and committee member, Jim Church.

Additionally, Idaho Soil & Water Conservation Commission representatives were included in the discussion process. Following the gathering of input from the planning committee members, subjects were determined and speakers were suggested. UI Extension faculty then worked to execute the vision of the planning committee, hosting the 2023 Three Rivers Grazing Conference in March. Subjects covered included vegetative monitoring, direct seeding of cover crops, regenerative grazing and virtual fencing technology.

### Program Outcomes

Though the time of year and location of the event had changed from previous years, over 100 producers attended along with a dozen vendors. An evaluation survey was conducted at the conclusion of the conference,

with 55 being completed and returned for analysis. The survey revealed that over half of the attendees were livestock owners, with the rest being made up of forage and grain producers as well as agency individuals. Many of these respondents have also regularly attended the conference (65%) in years past with most indicating they used information from previous conferences in decision making (60%) for their profession or operation.

- In total, the management decisions of respondents influence over 16,000 acres annually. Respondents together were responsible for the management decisions of over 16,000 acres.
- A moderate increase in knowledge of vegetative monitoring was indicated, while a definite increase in knowledge was demonstrated for regenerative grazing and direct seeding. The greatest increase in knowledge was seen in knowledge of virtual fencing (Table 1).
- Though the greatest increase in knowledge (45%) was seen in virtual fencing (Table 1) the intent to implement this technology was rated mostly as uncertain (67%) (Table 2).
- 74% of respondents indicated a probable likelihood of communicating new information and/or ideas learned with their peers. they would at least possibly communicate with their peers what they had learned about different practices from attending this event.

## The Future

Planning for a 2024 offering will begin in the fall of 2023, again relying on the planning committee’s guidance. Additionally, the organizing committee for a similar program offered in the southern part of Idaho will be consulted with to determine opportunities for partnership.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

**Meranda Small**, Extension Educator • University of Idaho Extension, Idaho County • 208-983-2667 • msmall@uidaho.edu

**Audra Cochran**, Extension Educator • University of Idaho Extension, Lewis County • 208-937-2311 • audrac@uidaho.edu

43-23-msmall-grazing-conference • 10/23

Table 1. Increase in knowledge of practices.

	Vegetative monitoring %	Regenerative grazing for soil health %	Direct seeding of cover crops in field residue %	Virtual fencing %
Most Definitely	12.5	21	14.5	52
Definitely	18	32	28	22
Moderate	33	29	27	11

Table 2. Implementation/improvement of practices

	Utilizing vegetative monitoring %	Applying direct seeding of cover crops %	Using virtual fencing %	Use regenerative grazing %
Yes	35	28	4	33
Probably	32	19	15	34
Uncertain/No	21	26	10	13

## Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

A big thank you to our partners, Idaho Association of Soil Conservation Districts Division II and Idaho Soil & Water Conservation Commission as well as the many sponsors and participating vendors.

Finally, thank you to the conference planning committee: Joe Slichter, Grangeville; Denny Dau, Lenore; Tom Gehring, Cottonwood; Eric & Shelia Hasselstrom, Winchester; Don Halvorson, Kendrick; Bruce Hanson, Lewiston; James Boggan, Riggins.