

**“Managed grazing
is a low cost
practice that is
unmatched in soil
and water
conservation
benefits”**



MANAGED GRAZING IN MARATHON AND LINCOLN COUNTIES FIFTEEN YEARS OF PROGRESS

“To promote the feasibility of grazing-based farming as a profitable way of farming that enhances lifestyles and protects and improves the environment.”



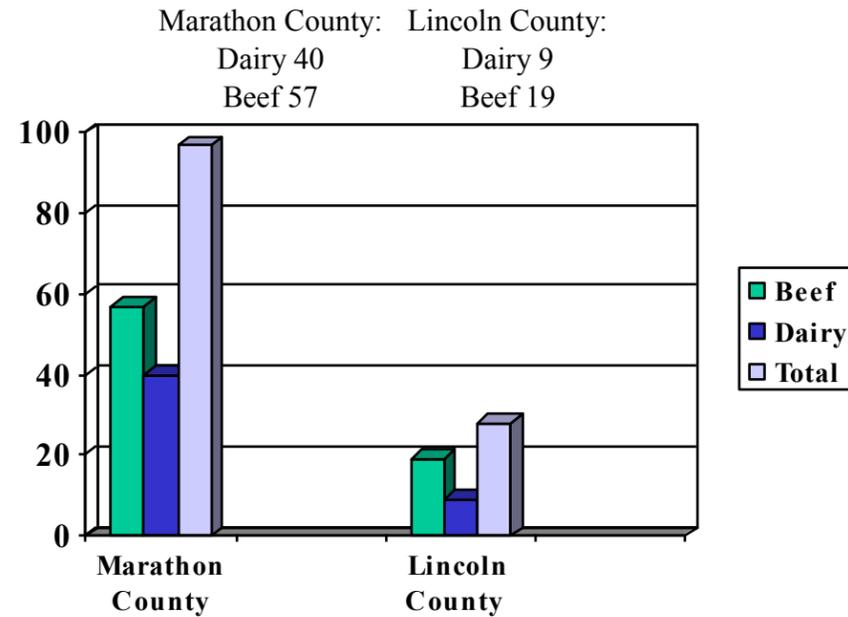
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Acknowledgements: Major contributors to this project’s long-term success include the Marathon and Lincoln County Land Conservation Departments and Committees, UW-Extension, and the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service.



Graph 2. Number of New Farm Start-ups (1998-2012)



In summary, the managed grazing project in Lincoln and Marathon Counties has received over half a million dollars of state and federal funds to provide technical and educational assistance to landowners. These funds have leveraged an additional \$750,000 in county and non-profit contributions directly toward staff and educational funding. In return, over 350 grazing plans have been developed on over 26,000 acres. These changes have had unmatched environmental benefits, leveraged nearly \$2.5 million in direct landowner grants, and assisted 125 new farm start-ups. The cumulative effect is that these farmers generate nearly \$50 million in direct economic input into the local communities because of the investment in public resources to start and maintain this project, all while helping to meet the soil and water resource objectives of the counties.



Partnerships/Fiscal Contributions: The grazing project has represented a collaboration of several private and public partnerships that have contributed time and funding to sustain the project. Table 2 identifies contributing agencies and associations to the project. Marathon and Lincoln Counties' Land Conservation departments also receive significant support from the University of Wisconsin-Extension, as well as help from Grassworks, and Central Wisconsin River Graziers Network.

Table 2. Partnership and Contribution (1998-2012)

Agency or Organization	Assistance	Administrative In-kind Costs	Technical and Educational Assistance	Landowner Grants
Marathon County Conservation, Planning, and Zoning Department	Project administration and technical assistance	\$24,750	\$450,000	
Lincoln County Land Conservation Department	Project administration and technical assistance	\$7,500	\$205,000	
WI Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP)	Land & Water Resource Management Grants			\$492,468
USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)	Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)			\$839,290
	Conservation Security Program (CSP)			\$1,059,330
State (DATCP) and Federal (NRCS) GLCI grants		\$22,000	\$512,886	
DNR-Priority Watershed	Big Eau Pleine and Lower Big Rib River			\$82,672
Upland Chapter of Pheasants Forever	Habitat Grant/Seed Drill		\$8000*	
US Fish and Wildlife	Habitat Grant		\$4,500*	
Wisconsin Waterfowl Association	Habitat Grant		\$1,000*	
Sustainable Agriculture Research & Education (SARE)	Agricultural Sustainability Grant	\$1,250	\$25,000*	
Total		\$55,500	\$1,206,386	\$2,473,760

*Funding secured during initial project start-up period (YR 1998-2000).

Project Outputs: Project success has been recorded in a number of ways including successful educational activities, acres planned, environmental benefits, new farmers, and overall outcomes.

Educational Output: The grazing project has emphasized educational outreach to landowners and their support systems (schools, lenders, and nutritionists) to promote grazing, to transition into grazing management, and to develop technical plans and practices for successful implementation. Pasture walks, newsletters, conferences, and one-on-one assistance remain the vehicles to support landowners.

Table 3. Educational Activities (1998-2012)

Activity	Number	Notes
Newsletters (12/yr)	180	Circulated to 550 landowners/year
Winter Conferences	15	Average Attendance 95 farm producers/year
Pasture Walks (15/yr)	225	Average attendance 25 producers/walk
“Official” Tours	12	Tours to State Senators and Governors, Agency Secretaries
High School and Vo-tech Curriculum	Completed	Distributed statewide in YR 2000
Farm Technology Days YR 1996	Completed	Featured Guralski Farm during 3 day event
“Incubator” Farm Opportunity Development	Completed	Assessment and business tools featured on “You can farm” website; used in Beginning Grazing Farming Program
Farm Profitability Analysis	42	UW-EX assistance with farm profitability analysis and economic benchmarks
UW School for Beginning Dairy Farmers and UW Stevens Point students distance education trips to grazing farms	60	Education sponsored by UW-EX and CPZ staff to prepare and assist new graziers resource managers



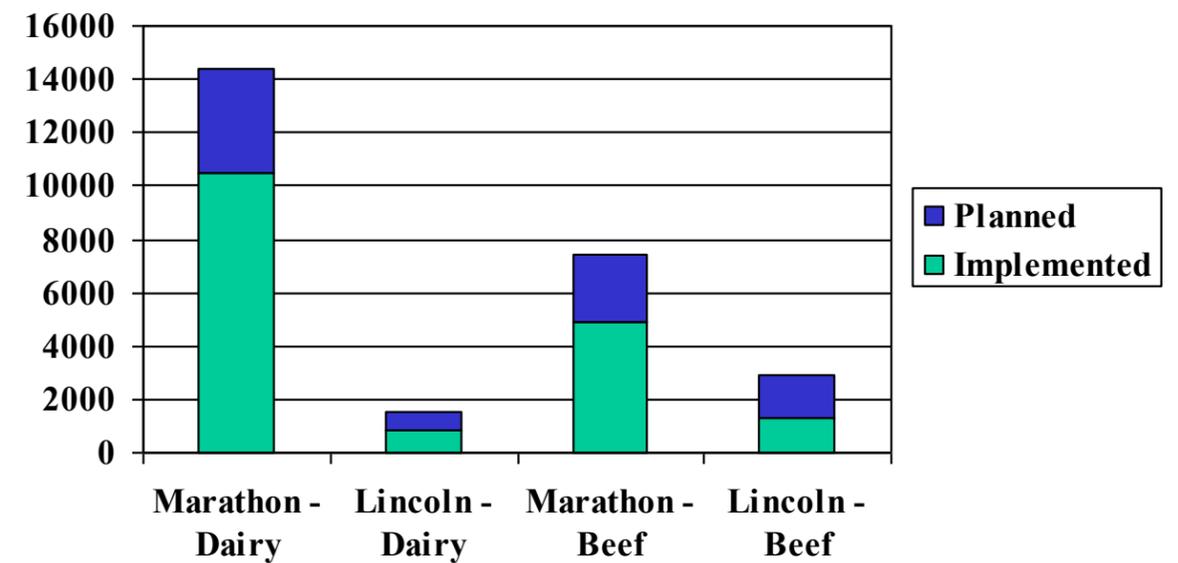
Environmental Benefits: Managed Grazing is recognized as a best management practice. Some of the benefits include reduced chemical use by 76% per cow versus confinement operations, reduced fuel costs by 31% (Kriegel, 2006), increased nesting habitat by 1400% per acre versus row crop farming (Undersander, 2000), increased soil organic matter, and carbon sequestration (Donovan, 2008). Most importantly to this project were the impacts on land and water conservation efforts. The reductions in phosphorus and sediment losses were key measuring parameters. Included in the table are the cumulative impacts.

Table 4. Environmental Impact of Implementing Managed Grazing (1998-2012)

Management Practice	Number	Average Reduction	Nutrient Loading Reduction/year
Barnyard Runoff Control Systems	353 systems	40 lbs. of Phosphorus/Barnyard	14,120 lbs. Phosphorus
Permanent Vegetative Cover	18,219 acres	Sediment: 2 tons/acre/year	36,438 tons
		Phosphorus: 8 lbs./ton/year	145,752 lbs.

- Notes: 1. Reduced barnyard nutrient loading from runoff by 70%.
 2. Twenty-five percent of soil movement is delivered to surface water.
 3. Phosphorus loading from sediment is eight pounds per ton of sediment.

Graph 1. Planned and Implemented Grazing Acres by Livestock Type (1998-2012)



County	Dairy Planned (acres)	Dairy Implemented (acres)	Beef Planned	Beef Implemented
Marathon	14,380	10,487	7,458	4,899
Lincoln	1,518	880	2,926	1,638