

Educating Land Managers on Practices and Benefits of Cattle Grazing

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Introduction

The State of Florida owns 4,940,120 acres which is about 14.2% of land area of Florida. Local governments own more than 500,000 acres of the more than 12 million publicly owned lands in Florida.

Objectives: An educational program and tour was designed to accomplish the following objectives: 1) increase the knowledge land managers on the ecosystem services provided by cattle grazing, 2) increase knowledge of best management practices cattle producers follow to increase productivity, manage forage, and sustain the environment, and 3) increase acreage available for cattle grazing leases

Methods

Educational seminars with tour of publicly-owned property currently being managed with grazing. Topics covered:

- Soil testing
- Invasive weed management
- Wild hog management
- Cattle management and body condition
- Ecosystem services



Management of publicly-owned lands with grazing by cattle can enhance wildlife habitat, control invasive species, maximize carbon sequestration, and provide economic benefit for Florida



“will definitely stimulate conversation about changes”

“Change our organizations views on cattle grazing in wetland areas”

“will discuss with team”

Results

Knowledge Gain:

- Preserving Natural Resources & Cattle Grazing- 67% increase
- Phosphorus & Nitrogen Budgets and Soil Health – 81% increase
- Stocking Rates and Forage Management – 58% increase
- Body Condition Scoring and Cattle Physiology – 93% increase
- Invasive Plant Management – 60% increase
- Wild Hog Management – 62% increase

Impacts

93% stated they felt more equipped in their land management role

83% stated they have a more positive view of cattle grazing leases as a tool for land management

30% indicated they would be newly adding cattle grazing to their land management program

- Managers of one county-owned property opened additional acreage to cattle grazing which added 500 acres for the cattle producer because of the educational program.
- Managers in another county, who had eliminated all grazing on county-owned property, made the decision to explore developing leases for their properties once again (nearly 10,000 acres.)

Land managed with cattle grazing helps improve plant diversity in wetlands, helps to control invasive plant species, increases wildlife habitat, and provides habitat for grassland bird species.