



GrassWorks, Inc. Strategic Plan

2013 to 2018

April 1, 2013

This five year strategic plan guides our efforts to make GrassWorks, Inc. THE recognized resource for graziers and others interested in managed grazing, not only within the state, but regionally, nationally and internationally.

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Summary

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Current Board members

Peter Arnold, Dairy farmer, Edgar, WI
Cheyenne Christianson, Dairy farmer, Chetek, WI
Kay Craig, *Treasurer*, Dairy farmer, New Holstein, WI
Julie Engel, Rabbit producer, DeForest, WI
Wendy Galbraith, *Secretary*, Dairy farmer, Aniwa, WI
Matt Hartwig, Dairy farmer, Athens, WI
David Johnson, *President*, Sheep producer, Arcadia, WI
Kevin Mahalko, Dairy farmer, Gilman, WI
Daniel Olson, *Vice President*, Dairy farmer, Lena, WI
Dave Vetrano, Beef producer, Bangor, WI
Bob Winkel, Dairy farmer, Waupun, WI

Active past board members:

Jerold Berg, Cascade, WI
Gerald Jaeger, Lomira, WI

Advisors: Paul Daigle, Marathon County Land Conservation; Bridget Holcomb, Michael Fields Agricultural Institute; Laura Paine, WI Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection; Brian Pillsbury, WI Natural Resources Conservation Service

Staff:

Jill Hapner, Executive Director
Heather Flashinski, Sponsor Coordinator
Lanice Szomi, Communications Director

Background, history, current situation

Managed Grazing is an economically and environmentally sound method of livestock agriculture. For twenty years, managed grazing has been a foundation of the sustainable agriculture movement in the upper Midwest and we are proud of the role that GrassWorks has played in its development.

GrassWorks is a grassroots membership association. As a 501 (c)3 non-profit organization, GrassWorks links farmers with the resources they need to be successful graziers. Funding for this work has been acquired through a combination of grants, annual membership dues, donations, seed and livestock sales, and educational publication sales.

GrassWorks provides leadership, education and resources for grass-based farmers and regional organizations that support graziers. We represent graziers and work to make farm policy fair for managed grazing farmers. We increase awareness of the benefits of managed grazing among farmers, policy makers and the general public. We advocate for research and public policy that recognize managed grazing as a tool for improving the quality of our food, the quality of our environment, the stewardship of animals, the profitability of our farms and the respect for farming as an honorable and meaningful vocation.

GrassWorks communicates via a website, fact sheets, presentations, the Grazing Guidebook, a newsletter, the annual Grazing Conference, other agricultural conference and trade shows, field days and pasture walks. We link regional grazing networks in collaborative efforts to share resources and activities.

GrassWorks partners with public agencies in delivering services and programs. We have alliances with other groups including, farm groups, non-profits organizations, consumer groups, environmental groups, education groups and businesses.

GrassWorks facilitates on-farm research by members and collaborates with science professionals to support relevant evaluation of grazing practices. We help to gather and disseminate data regarding the impacts of managed grazing in our communities, our environment and our society. We share this information to support and encourage needed policy changes.

GrassWorks encourages young people to begin farming through our Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Program. We also inspire older people to re-connect with their land and become farmers again. We recognize and support the pioneers and grazing advocates who plant the seeds of a better tomorrow. Our goal is to continue to advance managed grazing as an important component of agricultural production in Wisconsin and the USA.

GrassWorks, Inc.

Board of Directors Geographic Representation



1:2,500,000

January, 2013

Mission statement

GrassWorks is a membership organization that provides leadership and education to farmers and consumers for the advancement of managed grass-based agriculture to benefit present and future generations.

Vision statement

We envision a future in which profitable and viable pasture-based agriculture flourishes in Wisconsin and the upper Midwest, where healthy livestock are raised on well-managed pastures in harmony with the environment, and where managed grazing takes its place as a mainstream sustainable livestock production practice. With reliable, consistent financial support, GrassWorks serves its growing membership by fostering farmer-to-farmer learning, networking and community, providing programs that meet the needs of our members and other stakeholders, and supporting local grazing networks. We will serve as a clearinghouse of grazing information for Wisconsin, the region and beyond. As a result of our work, managed grazing will grow and Wisconsin graziers will meet the needs of a growing number of health conscious consumers who desire healthy pasture-raised meats and dairy products.

Long-term Goals

- **Grazier's Gateway.** The Grazier's Gateway serves as a communications hub for grazing resources and related resources within Wisconsin, the Midwest, and beyond.
- **Education.** GrassWorks will continue to be recognized for providing high quality education to advance managed grazing skills via the Wisconsin Grazing Conference and other sponsored educational programs.
- **Research.** GrassWorks will continue to build its partnerships with the USDA Dairy Forage Research Center and University of Wisconsin researchers to develop and implement research projects that address the priorities of graziers, with special emphasis on on-farm research.
- **Community.** GrassWorks will continue to celebrate the community that we have formed; creating opportunities for knowledge and skill sharing among graziers.
- **Public Platform.** GrassWorks serves as the statewide voice for graziers and will continue to speak on behalf of graziers to policy makers (local, state & federal), conservationists, consumers, and the general public.



Grazier's Gateway

The Grazier's Gateway serves as a communications hub for grazing resources and related resources within Wisconsin, the Midwest, and beyond.

GrassWorks has the opportunity to function as a Grazier's Gateway to managed grazing in the upper Midwest. By continuing to improve our quality GrassWorks website, we will connect people in Wisconsin and from all over the world with information, resources, and expertise to help with their grazing needs. This will also allow more efficient and effective farmer-to-farmer communication and exploration of mutual activities to benefit grazing.

Strategy

1. GrassWorks seeks to develop a Grazier's Gateway (clearinghouse or portal) which will involve website improvements and increased annual maintenance costs. New brochures and other outreach materials will be developed and printed.
2. The Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Program, currently supported through grant funds, must be sustained and expanded via permanent and reliable funding.
3. A Grazing Mentor Program will be designed and implemented. This program will establish a database of experienced graziers to provide one-on-one assistance to other farmers in their area. GrassWorks will maintain the Mentor list which will be available on the website.

Partners

1. GrassWorks will work with agency partners to develop and maintain the Grazier's Gateway as well as providing content and links to other related resources.
2. GrassWorks will fully support the efforts of the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship Program and its Board of Directors for the efforts to maintain, expand, and secure this program and future funding.
3. GrassWorks will establish and maintain the application process for grazing mentors with assistance from agency partners.
4. GrassWorks will promote availability of managed grazing technical assistance for all farmers. This effort will include a diverse stream of funding from county, state, federal, and private sources. We plan to work with existing Grazing Specialists and/or Certified Crop Advisors to ensure trained professionals are available to assist producers to develop and implement grazing plans.



Education

GrassWorks will continue to be recognized for providing high quality education to advance managed grazing skills via the Wisconsin Grazing Conference and other sponsored educational programs.

GrassWorks' most enduring activity has been providing educational opportunities for farmers through the Wisconsin Grazing Conference and other educational events. GrassWorks' mission of education is uniquely suited to meeting the needs of graziers by offering a blend of research-based workshops and presentations delivered by farmers.

Strategy

1. The annual Wisconsin Grazing Conference will be maintained and expanded, providing a rich and comprehensive program each year.
2. We will focus our programs to provide appropriate education both to those who are veteran graziers as well as introducing grazing to new producers and the general public.
3. We will continue partnering with the grazing networks and other organizations that are committed to grass-based agriculture and encourage them to use GrassWorks as a resource to support their activities.



Partners

1. GrassWorks will continue to enlist sponsors and seek broader financial support to meet the annual conference costs, and to attract a broader variety of conference attendees, including under-served populations.
2. GrassWorks and its agency partners will develop a Train-the-Trainer program which will provide ongoing professional development for agency staff to become knowledgeable and comfortable with managed grazing. We encourage agencies to assign one, or preferably two, agency staff to act as liaisons to each grazing network.
3. GrassWorks will continue to work with grazing networks to support local organization and the promotion of pasture walks and other network activities.
4. GrassWorks will partner with grazing networks, agencies, and other stakeholders to share guest speakers and other resources for our common benefit.

Research

GrassWorks will continue to build its partnerships with the USDA Dairy Forage Research Center and University of Wisconsin researchers to develop and implement research projects that address the priorities of graziers, with special emphasis on on-farm research.

As a membership organization, GrassWorks will serve the role of providing access for researchers to grazing farmers and provide input to those researchers on topics of interest to the grazing community. GrassWorks has its roots in the Southwest Wisconsin Sustainable Farmers Research Network, a group whose goals were to develop reliable methods of evaluating new technologies, encourage information exchange among farmers, and build relationships with University research personnel. This original goal remains valid today.

Strategy

1. GrassWorks will maintain a database of graziers who are willing to host research on their farms, to be made available to researchers.
2. GrassWorks will serve as a clearinghouse for grazing research results so that they will be effectively shared with the grazing community.

Partners

1. GrassWorks' relationship with University and Dairy Forage Research Center researchers will be maintained to ensure that graziers' research needs are known. We will continue to explore grant funding opportunities for mutually beneficial grazing research projects.
2. We will seek partnerships with other entities for grazing research and demonstration opportunities. One example is a proposed partnership with Taliesin Preservation, Inc. (managing the Spring Green estate of Frank Lloyd Wright) to develop a grass/grazing education and demonstration farm. Details and a budget are in preparation.



Community

GrassWorks will continue to create opportunities for knowledge and skill sharing among graziers and for taking time to celebrate of the community that we have formed.

The Wisconsin grazing community has always been characterized by farmers helping each other. Since the very first grazing networks formed in the 1980s, farmer-to-farmer learning, community building, and mutual support have been its hallmarks. GrassWorks will provide a forum for farmers and other grazing advocates to celebrate our unique community. Many of our education programs can also be designed to incorporate this purpose.

Strategy

1. Our annual Wisconsin Grazing Conference will include community building and sharing activities such as farmer panels and mentoring, as well as social activities. The GrassWorks annual membership meeting will provide an opportunity for graziers to support and celebrate our community.
2. Activities such as the annual picnic will provide additional settings where fellowship and community among graziers are promoted.
3. The Grazing Mentor Program will provide experienced graziers a chance to give back to the community by helping others get started in managed grazing.

Partners

1. GrassWorks will work with the grazing networks to incorporate community building activities into pasture walks and workshops.



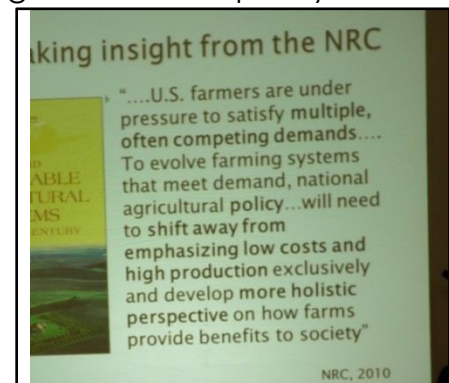
Public Platform

GrassWorks serves as the statewide voice for graziers and will continue to speak on behalf of graziers to policy makers (local, state & federal), conservationists, consumers, and the general public.

GrassWorks is well-positioned to represent and serve as a voice for graziers to advance public policy, conservation, and consumer interests. We seek to educate our membership and the general public on policies that support managed grass-based grazing and its products while partnering with advocacy groups to enact necessary legislation and influence governmental decision-making. GrassWorks will also support those farmers and businesses that wish to market grass-based agricultural products.

Strategy

1. GrassWorks will develop trained staff to engage in governmental policy initiatives with likeminded partners.
2. A key benefit of grass-based agriculture is conservation of natural resources. This information will be shared with conservation organizations for whom managed grazing would be an effective tool for meeting their goals.
3. The Grazier's Gateway will enrich communication with all organizations who share our common goals.
4. GrassWorks' new Speaker's Bureau will make available experienced graziers and grazing educators to provide presentations that increase public awareness of the benefits of managed grazing in Wisconsin. Our speakers will provide evidence that grass-based managed grazing is an economically, environmentally, and socially sound practice for Wisconsin farmers. Customized themes will be delivered to diverse audiences throughout the state, resulting in a more knowledgeable and informed public.
5. We will create a model for implementing outreach for managed grazing by organizing a broad group of farmers around a common topic or issue, for which grazing is a reasonable and practical answer.
6. We will explore opportunities to help reduce the barriers of marketing grass-based products. This could include outreach and education or sponsoring a branding program.



Partners

1. GrassWorks will build greater understanding of, respect for, and participation in grass-based agriculture within the larger agricultural community.
2. GrassWorks, the grazing networks, and the entire managed grazing community will develop a stronger working relationship with the local, state, and national civic groups, educational institutions, and agencies.