



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Contact:**

Amy Barrilleaux (608) 251-7020 x328 | [abarrilleaux@cleanwisconsin.org](mailto:abarrilleaux@cleanwisconsin.org)

Laura Hensley (517) 652-4524 | [lhensley@voiceofmilk.com](mailto:lhensley@voiceofmilk.com)

Alex Madorsky (608) 516-5174 | [a.r.madorsky@tnc.org](mailto:a.r.madorsky@tnc.org)

Kristin Teston (608) 441-2677 x407 | [kristin@wisconsinlandwater.org](mailto:kristin@wisconsinlandwater.org)

## **Bipartisan grazing bill will help Wisconsin farmers implement more grazing practices**

Wisconsin Republicans and Democrats are coming together to help farmers incorporate more grazing practices on Wisconsin livestock farms. The Senate and Assembly recently introduced legislation to create a “Transition to Grazing” program at the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection that provides grant money and technical assistance to help farmers establish managed grazing systems for livestock. The program is a priority of the Clean Water Initiative, a joint effort from Clean Wisconsin, the Dairy Business Association, the Nature Conservancy and WI Land+Water to find common ground on water and agricultural issues.

Managed grazing is a farming practice where livestock are systematically rotated through pastureland to provide the nutritional resources the animals need. In addition to providing nutrition to pastured livestock, managed grazing can enhance animal health, soil health and water quality benefits. Because well-managed pastureland provides year-round vegetative cover, it acts like a sponge, capturing and filtering water and nutrients that flow through the soil. Additionally pastureland can also reduce flood risk in rural areas by increasing organic matter in the soil and absorbing stormwater before it can run off. Pasture raised livestock can also save farmers money through reduced feed management costs.

While many of Wisconsin’s beef and dairy producers practice some form of grazing to capture the benefits of using pastureland to feed their animals, the demand from Wisconsin farmers for grazing assistance has grown significantly in the last decade. [Senate Bill 113](#) and [Assembly Bill 118](#) will help more livestock farmers get the financial and technical help they need to incorporate grazing land into their management system.

Thank you Rep. Todd Novak, Sen. Jesse James, and all the legislators who have supported this important effort so far. **Clean Water Initiative** partner groups hope to see widespread support as this bill makes its way through the legislative process. The bills have been referred to the

agriculture committees in both the Assembly and Senate. The Clean Water Initiative is glad to see the program is already getting a hearing in the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Revenue on Thursday, April 3, and is hopeful the bill will also be taken up in the Assembly Ag Committee in the coming weeks.

“Putting livestock out on the land may sound like a move back to a simpler time, but for some farmers it is an efficient way to raise their animals and protect our environment, resulting in healthier soil, waterways and animals,” said **Clean Wisconsin Water and Agriculture Program Director Sara Walling**. “Farmers who want to transition some or all of their livestock to a managed grazing system will have support they need to diversify their operations and adopt additional sustainable land management practices. This bill is a win for all of us.”

“Wisconsin is home to dairy farms of all types and sizes,” said **DBA CEO Tim Trotter**. “This legislation provides incentives for farmers to try something different and find what works best for them. We firmly believe in encouraging farmer-led innovation rather than overly prescriptive rules dictating how farmers should run their business.”

“Grazing lands total about 775 million acres in America yet are some of the least protected spaces in our state,” said **Matt Dallman, Deputy State Director of The Nature Conservancy in Wisconsin**. “Providing resources for farmers to adopt regenerative grazing practices results in more diverse habitats for critical species, soil capturing more carbon, cleaner water, and a stronger rural economy.”

“Wisconsin's dairy and beef processors need improved access to managed rotational grazing,” said **WI Land+Water Executive Director Matt Krueger**. “This bill provides that pathway, while also ensuring our landscapes are more resilient to large storm events and flooding.”

### **More about the bills**

The Transition to Grazing program will provide grants to farmers to:

- Provide technical assistance through certified grazing specialists to develop grazing plans, including support determining field and paddock layout, infrastructure setup, seed selection, and establishment of rotational grazing patterns.
- Assist with establishing perennial forages for rotational grazing of livestock on marginal areas of the farm to provide supplemental feed for the animals.
- Provide financial assistance for managed grazing system infrastructure needs, including fencing, watering, and other livestock management infrastructure, as well as incentives to offset costs for any implementation challenges during the first three years of pasture establishment.
- Assist farmers in navigating grazing system and livestock research, market development initiatives, and market opportunities to meet consumer demand for pasture-raised livestock products.

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*For more than 50 years, **Clean Wisconsin** has been working to protect all that makes our state special — breathable air, drinkable water, fishable, swimmable lakes and rivers, and thriving ecosystems. With an active membership and advocacy base 20,000-strong, Clean Wisconsin's dedicated staff of experts conducts sound science, engages in public policy, takes legal action, and fosters strong partnerships to advocate for laws and practices that ensure a healthy future for all Wisconsin communities. Learn more at [www.cleanwisconsin.org](http://www.cleanwisconsin.org).*

*The **Dairy Business Association** is Wisconsin's leading dairy advocacy group, championing smart and sensible regulations affecting the dairy community. The nonprofit organization is comprised of farmers, milk processors, vendors and other business partners who work collaboratively to ensure that dairy farms of all sizes have the support they need to keep America's Dairyland strong. More information: [www.dairyforward.com](http://www.dairyforward.com).*

*The **Nature Conservancy** is a global conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that nature and people can thrive together. In Wisconsin, we help farmers improve soil health and protect clean water while sustaining profitability. We also collaborate with communities, governments, business and other nonprofits to protect Wisconsin's most outstanding natural areas, address climate change and its impacts, and help make cities more sustainable. To learn more, visit [www.nature.org/wisconsin](http://www.nature.org/wisconsin).*

***Wisconsin Land and Water Conservation Association** (WI Land+Water) is a nonprofit organization that supports the local and statewide efforts of all county Land Conservation Committee supervisors and Land Conservation Department staff across Wisconsin. WI Land+Water's members work directly with landowners, farmers, and citizens to improve land and water management. This boots-on-the-ground approach provides all Wisconsinites with direct access to technical assistance and professional expertise. Learn more at [www.wisconsinlandwater.org](http://www.wisconsinlandwater.org).*