

# North America Regenerative Grazing Lands

RESTORING THE ENVIRONMENT | ENHANCING FOOD PRODUCTION | COMBATTING CLIMATE CHANGE



Livestock grazing on intact, working grasslands can help achieve conservation goals, including securing clean water, enhancing wildlife habitat, and storing carbon in the soil. Ensuring the sustainability of livestock agriculture is not only vital to feeding a growing world, but it's essential to a sustainable future. © Ami Vitali

From the grasslands and savannas of California to the prairies of the Great Plains and pastures of Florida, grazing lands are found throughout the United States. These iconic lands—totaling about 775 million acres nationwide—and the ranching families who care for them are the backbone of rural economies, as well as a crucial key to a healthy future. Grazing lands provide food for people, secure clean water and wildlife habitat, and store carbon in the soil, which helps to mitigate climate change.

However, grasslands are the least protected habitat on earth. They are rapidly disappearing due to a number of threats, including urban sprawl, agricultural conversion and energy development. In 2015 alone, 3.7 million acres were lost to make way for more row crops in the Great Plains. Many remaining lands are overworked and at risk of degradation exacerbated by climate change.

As the global population is expected to reach more than 9 billion people by 2050, agriculture production worldwide will need to increase by 60 percent to meet the demand, which has enormous implications for ranchers, grasslands, and agricultural land use in the future.

The Nature Conservancy is working with key leaders in the beef supply chain to adopt a sustainability framework that keeps grasslands ecologically intact and economically productive, safeguarding the future of ranching families and feeding a growing world.

In collaboration with ranchers, businesses, government agencies and others in the supply chain, TNC is helping to guide the multi-billion dollar beef industry toward a sustainable future and achieve conservation outcomes at an unprecedented scale across U.S. grazing lands.

**Our goal is to improve management on 240 million acres (30%) of U.S. grazing lands by 2025, resulting in enhanced wildlife habitat, soil carbon storage, water quality, and rural economies.**

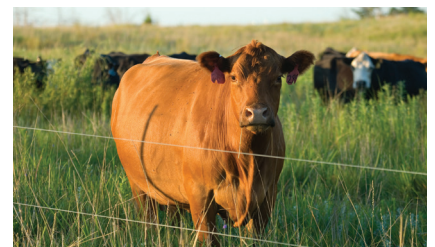
To achieve this goal, we are working with ranchers and the beef supply chain to conserve intact grasslands and ensure our nation's grazing lands benefit from improved management practices to conserve natural resources, while producing food and sustaining ranching communities.



Healthy, intact grazing lands sustain communities in the rural U.S., whose livelihoods and way of life depends on 770,000 cattle operations, over 90% of which are family-operated ranches and farms. © Blake Gordon



An icon of America's grasslands, the greater prairie-chicken makes its home in the Great Plains, but its numbers are declining. Many ranchers manage their pastures to provide habitat for the species, which also makes good foraging for their cattle. © Harvey Payne



The U.S. has the largest fed-cattle industry in the world and is the world's largest producer of beef, making it essential that sustainable practices are used throughout the supply chain. © Chris Helzer/TNC





Ranchers are among our greatest allies in conservation. The owners of the Alderspring Ranch in Idaho manage their land with conservation practices that help to protect a stretch of the Pahsimero River that contains as much as 40 percent of the chinook spawning areas for the entire river. © Bridget Besaw

### Growing Collaborations, Resources and Science

Our goal to effect long-term change within the beef industry is ambitious and our window to achieve it is small. To do so, we are collaborating in new and innovative ways across business, science and policy sectors.

Specifically, TNC is working with diverse partners to:

- Provide producers and ranch advisors with innovative tools and resources to develop and implement sustainable management plans;
- Foster private and public partnerships to rapidly scale up the adoption of sustainable grazing practices; and
- Launch pilot projects to identify, test and promote science-based sustainable grazing practices;
- Align corporate and government policies and programs to support land managers seeking to improve their ecological, social and economic outcomes.

These strategies will expand the collaborations, resources and science needed to achieve sustainability at a scale that is meaningful for the people, wildlife and the natural communities that depend on healthy grazing lands.

### Together, We Can Make a Difference

The Nature Conservancy—which owns 500,000 acres of U.S. grazing lands and has helped to conserve millions more through easements and collaborative management—has worked for years to develop strong, trusting relationships within the ranching community and the beef supply chain. We use our lands to work with and support neighboring ranchers and to develop and test cutting-edge, science-based management practices.

Food companies and other supply chain stakeholders are seeking TNC’s expertise to achieve sustainability goals while driving accountability within the industry, positioning our staff to help guide national initiatives that have the potential to make a lasting impact.

We are at a critical moment in time. Grazing has the largest footprint of any agricultural activity, making it imperative that we manage these lands for clean water, climate benefits, global food security and vibrant rural communities. Together, we can help safeguard an enduring part of America’s heritage while protecting natural resources and ensuring a sustainable future for a growing world.

## Proven Success

### Supply Chain

TNC is helping some of the world’s largest purchasers of beef take proactive steps to achieve sustainability within their supply chains, including supporting producers in the widespread adoption of regenerative practices. Our work with McDonald’s and Walmart, for instance, led TNC scientists to develop a roadmap to help other companies identify opportunities, make supply chain improvements, and track progress toward their sustainability goals.

### Sustainability Goals

TNC is a founding member of the U.S. Roundtable for Sustainable Beef (USRSB), an initiative to advance sustainability in the beef industry. In spring 2022 the USRSB launched sustainability goals for the nation’s beef supply chain to help producers and industry bring the most sustainable beef products to market.

TNC provided scientific expertise to the development of the goals, ensuring conservation priorities—ecosystem health, water quality and quantity, and reduced GHG emissions—are prioritized outcomes.

### Collaborative Research

TNC and partners launched a 5-year project in 2022 at three working ranches to research how virtual fencing can help managers improve soil carbon storage, biodiversity, and economic outcomes. Virtual fencing is an innovative technology that enables the precise control of cattle movement.

At scale, virtual fencing may unlock the use of practices that regenerate land health and help address climate change and biodiversity loss.



Ranchers have an enormous opportunity to address some of the greatest environmental challenges facing the world today: water, biodiversity and climate. © Blake Gordon



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