

Title: Managed Rotational Grazing in Wetland Area

Project coordinator: Hannah Sessions

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Participants: Patti Wilson – USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

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State(s): VT

SARE funds: \$4650

Matching Non-federal funds: \$5687

Project number: FNE01-389

Type: Farmer/Rancher Project

Region: Northeast

Report Year: 2002

Summary:

The goal of this project was to incorporate a seasonal wetland into a rotational grazing system.

Hannah installed a six-strand high-tensile wire fence around the boundary of open pasture. The pasture area was divided into paddocks and wetland and wooded paddocks were also created. Very strong grass growth occurred in the pasture in June and July, outpacing the demand of 70 goats and 32 sheep. The wetland and wooded paddocks were incorporated into the grazing system in August. The goats grazed in the wetland two days per week, and in the woodland, three days per week.

Hannah kept track of the number of grazing days in the wetland area, estimated the dry matter consumed, and calculated the amount of dollars saved by not needing to purchase feed or use stored feed. Ten weeks of grazing from August into October created a feed cost savings of \$350. Expenses for fencing and labor amounted to \$380.

Even though the expenses were greater than the income, Hannah feels the wetland grazing is worthwhile. There were no direct foot problems on the goats due to moist ground. She notes that the cost of the fencing is depreciable and the supplies will be usable for many years to come. The moist growing season resulted in plenty of grazing in the pastures; something that will not happen every year. The wetland grazing will enable Hannah to graze the goats through drier seasons, possibly doubling the value of

the saved feed costs. Lastly, seeing the success of the wetland grazing made Hannah decide to convert some of her pasture to hay fields, with the potential to provide some additional income to the farm. The only concern Hannah has with the system is the liability of having grazing animals far from the barn and sometimes out of sight.