

Grazing Broker Introduction
Green Lands Blue Waters Conference
Midwest Perennial Forage Working Group
November 29, 2017

Hello, I'm Robert Bauer, the Grazing Broker for Southwest Badger RC&D in Dodgeville, Wisconsin. Southwest Badger is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit working in the Southwest Wisconsin region on economic development and natural resource conservation.

The Grazing Broker project started with the Southwest Wisconsin Grassland and Stream Conservation Area, which is an area of 21 townships in Southwest Wisconsin that was identified as a high priority for grassland bird conservation by the Wisconsin DNR, and a partnership of agency staff and farmers. The Grazing Broker and Grazing Broker team, some of whom are in the room, worked to develop alternative for landowners with expiring Conservation Reserve Program, or CRP, acres.

As Kent discussed, I think the two greatest barriers to getting livestock on the land are

- (1) communication between landowners and livestock producers or renters, that landowner piece that the Grazing Broker team identified, and
- (2) access to technical assistance and conservation planning expertise.

That said, Kent mentioned the Cropland Grazing Exchange, so I'd like to show you a project we've been working on and just launched, grazingbroker.org. Like I mentioned about the barriers to getting livestock on the land, we've designed the site to feature ways to list yourself as a source of expertise on grazing and grazing planning. Landowners and livestock producers can also post the land, livestock, labor, or learning opportunities that they are seeking or offering.

Once you're on the website, click on Connect. The, if you just leave everything blank and click Go it will pull up all the results and you can see how many acres or hours per week each person is offering or seeking. And then you would click on the eye symbol to see more details and contact the person. Also under Experts, the setup is similar so you can search by areas of expertise or list yourself.

Before I forget, Randy Jackson and others talked a lot during the conference about converting cropland to pasture or perennial cover. I think you should know about this opportunity through Southwest Badger. We offer a farmer-to-farmer mentorship program and we're in the final of three years. In the past we've paid our mentors hourly for the time spent mentoring. In this final year we're offering lump sums for accomplishing each of three objectives, successfully getting a beginning farmer through the steps of accomplishing these things: converting cropland to pasture in a rental scenario, contract grazing, or simply getting started farming with no background in farming, including working on another person's farm. One thousand dollars is available for each of those outcomes that the mentors can accomplish by August 15th.

Beginning farmers face a lot of barriers to getting started and mentors are important to helping the next generation. Earlier Jacob Marty touched on how humble or arrogant he is. He was very humble and didn't mention the great mentorship that he has provided to help other farmers. We've put together this mentorship toolkit to structure the mentorships and help the farmers to assess their own resources to farm and goals.

Our panel today has worked with Southwest Badger in several ways. Claudia has been a great mentor and

support for several farmers in her community, coaching one farmer who is taking over the farm for her spouse. Amy Fenn and I have mainly worked on her grazing plan together to apply for financial assistance from USDA. Dick Cates and Eric Cates have participated in our prescribed grazing demonstration program, demonstrating the conversion of former CRP to productive grazing.

With that, I'll let the panelists introduce themselves, we'll take questions, and then we'll discuss what are the barriers to getting livestock on the land and what can the perennial forage working group do to speed the conversion of cropland to pasture?