



BRAD PFAFF
STATE SENATOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 5, 2024

Contact: Sen. Pfaff

608.266.5490

When Old Becomes New

Sometimes the greatest innovations are not actually new, but are old practices viewed in a new light. We see many of these innovations today in the way that we care for our land, whether it's supporting the growth of native plants or a resurgence of agricultural practices such as grazing.

The Driftless Region has long been a leader in both production agriculture and caring for our environment. Nestled among our rolling hills, coulees, and valleys are the roots of conservation in America.

The Coon Creek Watershed in Vernon County was the home of the country's first erosion control project in the early 1930s. This incredibly successful project was led by state conservationists, the U.S. Soil Erosion Service, and FDR's New Deal-era Civilian Conservation Corps on local farmland in Coon Valley. Using the tools and methods applied in Coon Valley, farmers and landowners across the country learned how to better care for and protect our land from erosion.

Today, there are three different producer-led watershed groups in my district. Each provides valuable leadership and an intimate knowledge of our landscape.

We have seen concerning weather trends over the last decade, with 100 year floods occurring all too often. As our climate evolves, we need to continue to support local watershed groups and conservation efforts that seek to mitigate flooding and other harmful impacts.

At the State Capitol, I'm working to enhance our natural environment and benefit production agriculture.

Grazing isn't a new, flashy innovation. It's an age-old practice that has been proven to benefit our soil and nutrients, while combatting landscape altering floods.

It's time to get back to the basics. I'm a proud cosponsor of legislation which would create the Transition to Grass Pilot Program, which would offer financial assistance to farmers who wish to start managed grazing on their land.

This funding would make it easier for people to begin managed grazing, helping them with initial startup costs like fencing and ongoing costs as their landscape develops to support grazing. The benefits of grass-based agriculture and managed grazing are profound.

Shifting the landscape to perennial vegetation for livestock to graze on will hold soil and nutrients in place, and allows water to soak into the ground instead of running off and causing greater flooding.

As we continue to experience devastating floods, managed grazing on perennial vegetation can make a positive impact by mitigating this runoff in the Driftless Region.

Economically, it helps farmers too. For newer farmers, managed grazing can be a less expensive and more accessible gateway to begin farming at a time when Wisconsinites are becoming further and further removed from the farm.

Estimates show that on average, Wisconsinites are 3 to 5 generations removed from farming. Managed grazing will not reverse this trend, but it provides a more financially feasible way to enter the field of production agriculture while supporting our environment.

Wisconsin's landscape is diverse, and the way we address conservation should continue to reflect that. What works in Northeast Wisconsin may not work in Southwest Wisconsin, but we can ensure everyone has the tools to improve their soil and water regardless of where they live.

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Senator Brad Pfaff represents the 32nd Senate District, which includes La Crosse, Vernon, Crawford, and southern Monroe County.