

What is Livestock Grazing?

Grazing with sheep, cattle, and goats is a viable option for many landowners who are planning on retiring lands from irrigated agriculture. Grazing leases can generate \$10 or more per acre of income for the landowner on an annual basis. There is an option to own animals and build herds with the anticipation of land being restored to wildlife habitat in the San Joaquin Valley (SJV). Grazing animals are already an important part of a stewardship economy that supports agriculture in the SJV and given several years of transition time will help convert formerly irrigated lands to pasture and wildlife habitat. Potential hurdles of transitioning to livestock grazing include low rainfall years, livestock price fluctuations, and wildland fire.



Benefits to the Grower/Landowner

- Income from Leasing Lands
- Income from Owning Livestock Herds
- Stewardship Economy

Benefits to Other Stakeholders

- Providing local communities with healthy protein
- Providing jobs in a Stewardship Economy
- Improving Wildlife Habitat and Soil Health in formerly tilled and irrigated fields

Examples of Livestock Grazing

The following are some examples, for illustration purposes, but do not reflect all possible options.

JB Jaureguy Sheep Herd in San Luis Obispo and Tulare Counties:

JB Jaureguy grazes multiple bands of sheep on irrigated crop stubble - alfalfa and grains, private property with non-irrigated pasture, and in the California Valley Solar Ranch (CVSR) in the Carrizo Plain area. At CVSR JB's sheep graze under the panels and outside the arrays in 4000 acres of pasture. Sheep herds are managed by a full-time herder.

Joe Paesano Goat Herd in Tulare County:

Joe Paesano's Goat herd grazes federal lands around Lake Success, private canal company land, and for Sequoia Riverlands Trust. The goat herd is excellent at reducing fire risk and consuming weeds in areas that are impossible for cattle to reach (poor fences/lack of water). Goat herds are managed by full-time herders.

Rodger Guess Cattle Herd in Tulare County:

Rodger Guess maintains a cow/calf operation on native pasture owned by Sequoia Riverlands Trust in vernal pool and salt grass habitats. With a combination of prescribed fire, herbicides, and grazing we can control weeds and help Rodger focus on the genetics of pure-bred Angus Cattle.

Kern Water Bank:

The Kern Water Bank near Bakersfield lets recharge basins grow vegetation that is suitable for cattle grazing when the basins are drained. Areas between the basins are also grazed and produce habitat for Giant Kangaroo Rat/San Joaquin Kit Fox, both endangered species.

Existing Uses of Livestock in Southern San Joaquin Valley:

- Grazing cover crops in orchards
- Grazing alfalfa fields for crop rotations
- Cleaning up weeds in marginal areas between oil/gas and agriculture
- Maintaining habitat in Wildlife Refuges (Pixley)
- Utilizing lands that are too alkali/salty for farming.
- Grazing within solar farms (California Valley Solar Ranch)

Potential Alternative Uses for Livestock:

- Put emphasis on local control to focus restoration efforts and to market livestock.
- Opportunity for experimentation by local farmers, ranchers, and residents to improve air quality, soil health, wildlife habitat, etc.
- Co-management with local land trusts and tribes to use grazing and fire as tools in habitat restoration.
- Monitoring that includes one-size-fits-all methods (e.g. remote sensing, Open ET, NDVI, etc., well levels)
- Monitoring that includes success criteria appropriate to the individual experiments, including economic
- Opportunities to share learning (face-to-face, on the ground), peer-to-peer learning, develop a shared intelligence on what works

Things to Know

In some cases, it may make sense to combine solutions, to generate more benefits and funding, on the same property. You can also do it to take advantage of the different features and qualities of the property.

General examples include

- Grazing to improve wildlife habitat – and to help the landowner and grazer generate income.
- Creating a recharge basin and switching to grazing to maintain vegetation and habitat.
- Include grazing in a solar field under arrays and conservation lands adjacent to the development.
- Using goats in areas where there is fire danger and difficult weeds like Five Hook Basia.
- Improving soil health by grazing and removing tillage.

Resources

- californiawoolgrowers.org
- calcattlemen.org
- ucanr.edu
- quiviracoalition.org