

2018 Northeast Pasture Consortium Conference Poster Paper Abstracts

Grazing Guide: What can the Northeast Pasture Consortium website offer?

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The Consortium website (<http://grazingguide.net>) presents NEPC information and newsletters, research and extension updates organized by state and by keyword, and a calendar of events. New additions include short-, medium-, and long-term weather forecasts, updated daily, and the second edition of the book, *Pasture Plants of the Northeastern US*. The Grazing Guide has space for photos and videos. It can also be found on Facebook and Twitter.

We invite you to submit photos, research and farm reports, and upcoming events. What else would you like to see?

Pasture Plants of the Northeastern US

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The first edition of the *Pasture Plants of the Northeastern US* book was prepared over ten years ago, based on what ARS scientists found on farms in the region. Since then, it has been used by producers, NRCS, and universities. Now it has been completely updated, adding more species, new photos, and black-and-white line drawings, to complement the same farm distribution maps. The new edition is available from the Northeast Pasture Consortium website at <http://grazingguide.net/pages/pasture-plants.html> (*Editor's Note: This is a very comprehensive pasture plant key having nearly every plant species known to be in northeastern US pastures. Other pasture plant keys or guides generally have only the major forage grasses and legumes found in pastures making them of limited value when looking at naturalized "native" pastures as most pastures are in the Northeast and across much of the Nation.*)

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Upper Susquehanna Coalition Comprehensive Riparian Buffer Program

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The Upper Susquehanna Coalition is a network of 17 Soil and Water Conservation Districts in New York and 4 Conservation Districts in Pennsylvania. Our mission is to protect and improve water quality and natural resources in the Upper Susquehanna River Basin with the involvement of citizens and agencies through education, partnerships, planning, implementation and advocating for our water resources.

To increase the implementation of riparian buffers in New York State, the Upper Susquehanna Coalition (USC) developed a Comprehensive Riparian Buffer Program which complements its nationally acclaimed wetland team, stream team, and agriculture team. It's a plan to bolster new and current efforts to reforest riparian areas recognized for their water quality benefits in the Chesapeake Bay Forest Restoration Strategy.

To achieve this important mission, Buffer Coordinator, Lydia Brinkley and the USC has partnered with the U.S Forest Service and The Natural Resources Conservation Service in a Joint Chiefs Landscape Restoration Initiative to improve the health and resiliency of large scale landscapes and priority forested watersheds. The goal is to add riparian forested buffer corridors and seek innovative ways to implement practical conservation measures on the ground.

The ongoing work develops and demonstrates a multi-faceted, flexible buffer program with innovative tools and programs to fill niches not met by traditional programs while installing riparian buffers, livestock exclusion, grazing and other practices through conventional programs and standards using the USC Grazing Initiative integrated approach.

The approach offers fresh incentives to farmers hesitant to participate in traditional buffer programs while continuing to use conventional programs to provide a variety of cost share options. The program seeks to offer financial and resources assistance to increase the implementation and restoration of riparian forest buffers and associated water quality BMPs in the headwaters of the Chesapeake Bay. Input for program development was provided by federal, state and local partners on how best to complement current programs. However, funding from this program can be utilized as the sole source to implement riparian buffers and associated grazing practices.

Current Initiatives include:

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Project Title: An Approach for Natural Infrastructure Restoration. (NFWF)

Project Abstract: We propose two tasks. One is to develop 3 designs for large-scale natural infrastructure projects that will have significant flood water storage, nutrient and sediment reductions and increased habit acreage and quality. These projects are excellent examples of how, over time, the natural landscape has been modified and reduced in functions and services while still looking “natural.” We hope to begin the process to analyze rural landscapes and find sites that can be restored to a more functional, natural state that does not require “maintenance.” Our second task is to use key species habitats to locate specific sites, when restored, will not only provide excellent habitat for one or more species on our list but also reduce sediment and nutrient loading. As many of the BMPs needed to rehabilitate a site are tried and true sediment/nutrient reduction practices (e.g., riparian buffers) we believe this cross-cutting approach will be an effective way to combine biological with pollutant objectives.

Project Title/Name: Buffer Project Tracking and Prioritization Tool (NFWF, NYSDEC)

Project Description: Using ArcGIS, remote sensing technology, and a developed priority scheme to identify and rank riparian buffer opportunity areas that should disproportionately contribute to the water quality and habitat functions of the greater watershed, pending the implementation of forested riparian buffer strips. The analysis is intended to inform resource management decisions of engaged conservation organizations, and is therefore, designed to rank the existing riparian conditions as opposed to attempting to specifically quantify them. A series of maps will be produced that present the results of several geospatial analyses to rank the existing buffer opportunity areas based on specific conservation values.

The buffer tracking tool is an USC internal tool providing staff the necessary information to follow up with landowners in monitoring and helping to maintain their riparian areas.

Project Title/Name: USC Buffer Program – PILOT (NFWF)

Project Description: The USC Comprehensive Riparian Buffer Program, funded through NFWF, seeks to offer financial compensation and resource assistance (planning, design and plant material) to increase the implementation and restoration of riparian forest buffers and associated water quality BMPs through conventional, as well as new programs. All projects require the implementation or restoration of a riparian buffer to be eligible for Buffer Program funding. Implementation of riparian forest buffers at least 35' in width for streambank stabilization and/or pasture system development are priorities for this funding, however, all projects will be considered; applications will be funded according to USC ranking criteria. A USC staff site visit is required prior to award confirmation.

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Project Title/Name: Assessment and Maintenance of Riparian Forest Buffers in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed (NYS DEC)

Project Description: This funding from NYS DEC is to support USC member district personnel to perform riparian forest buffer site assessments, facilitate maintenance projects, and provide outreach relating to riparian forest buffer management. Funds can support supplies and contractors for maintenance activities.

Project Title/Name: Coordination of the DEC's Trees for Tributaries Program in the Upper Susquehanna Watershed (EPA/ NYSDEC)

Project Description: The goal of New York State's Trees for Tributaries Program is to reforest tributaries of New York by providing free or low-cost plant stock and materials throughout the state. The Susquehanna Trees for Tribs (tributaries) program engages volunteers to restore streamside buffers through native tree and shrub planting. Technical assistance is available to help prioritize plant selection, in designing a planting plan, and provide other technical support to improve the odds of success for projects. Currently, the USC Buffer Coordinator submits plant and material requests to the DEC by December for Spring projects within the Susquehanna Watershed. The USC Buffer Coordinator also coordinates supply delivery and project implementation. USC member SWCDs can participate by submitting plant and material requests to the USC Buffer Coordinator.

Project Title/Name: NRCS and USC Contribution Agreement for CREP buffer plans. (NRCS)

Project Description: The purpose of this agreement is to provide funding to SWCDs to develop CREP conservation plans in the Upper Susquehanna River Watershed. The agreement is for the development of 40 conservation plans focusing on CP 22 and CP 29.

Project Title/Name: Upper Susquehanna Coalition led Riparian Restoration on Protected Lands (NYS DEC)

Projects will restore approximately 80 acres of riparian buffer and 350 linear feet of streambank along Mud Creek in Birdseye Hollow State Forest and in the Lower Butternut Creek watershed in Otsego County.

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