

Illinois Forage and Grassland Council

2012 Annual Report

The mission of the Illinois Forage and Grassland Council is to provide the framework that unites industry, producers, and educational/governmental institutions for the production, marketing, and wise use of forages and grasslands. It is this mission statement that guides the activities of the Illinois Council and its board members. Each year the IFGC sponsors or co-sponsors a variety of events that help fulfill this mission. In addition, we participate in a number of ag-related events that further our mission. While 2012 created many challenges for Illinois farmers due to a widespread drought throughout the year, the Council was able to react with educational information and to help livestock producers to access hay.

Key events – The Illinois Forage Institute and Illinois Forage Expo are annual programs that the Council sponsors. The sites move to different locations throughout the state each year to bring educational material and field demonstrations to as many members as possible.

Illinois Forage Institute was held March 8 at the John Wood Community College. Illinois board member Kendall Guither spoke on his experience producing quality baleage. Richard Hungerford, USDA-NRCS, spoke on proper species selection for pastures. Board member Doug Hanson talked about his use of annual forages on his farm. Illinois Extension Specialist, Robert Bellm spoke on proper soil fertility to improve forage production. Board member Roger Staff, USDA-NRCS, presented information on evaluating pastures next spring. We concluded the day with 2 farmers, Ken Sutter and David Otte, sharing their experiences using rotational grazing. We also had an update on the beef research being conducted by the University of Illinois at their Orr Research Center. There were 40 farmers in attendance.

Illinois Forage Expo was held July 10 at the Bale Band-it manufacturing facility in Pittsfield, IL. The day opened with an educational program featuring 4 presentations. Roger Staff made a presentation on the proper methods to sample hay and pastures. Robert Bellm spoke on weed control in pastures, David Otte spoke on pasture renovation and Travis Mateer, U of I Extension Beef Specialist, spoke on dealing with the drought. Following the presentations, the group toured the Bale Band-it manufacturing facility. Field demonstrations included mowing, raking, baling and accumulating bales. What caught my attention was that the crowd stayed with us all day. The last demonstration was as well attended as the morning presentations. Attendance was excellent with 200 farmers registering. One aspect of the Expo that I am particularly pleased with is that the Council tries to use as many local church, 4-H or FFA groups as possible. A local 4-H club served lunch as a fund raiser and assisted the Council with directing parking in the morning.

Co-Sponsored Events

Southern Illinois Rotational Grazing School (w /Jackson County Soil & Water Conservation District, Missouri Forage and Grassland Council and Illinois Cooperative Extension Service) was held May 23-24.

The Brown County Pasture Walk was held in March. Thirty five farmers participated in the event that was hosted on a cow/calf operation. The focus of the session was ways to stretch pasture during drought periods. IFGC co-sponsored this event with the IL Cooperative Extension Service

The Adams County Pasture Walk had thirty five farmers look at feeding and calving structures constructed as part of the USDA EQIP program.

Northwest Illinois Grazing Conference co-sponsored with the Northwest Illinois Forage and Grassland Council, was held February 16. Presenters on this program included Matt Bunger, IFGC Past President, Elton Mau, IFGC Forage Spokesperson in 2012, Richard Hungerford, past IFGC board member and Jim Morrison, past IFGC board member.

Heart of America Grazing Conference was held January 25 & 26 in Mt. Vernon, IL. The IFGC co-sponsored this event with Councils from Indiana, Kentucky, Missouri, Ohio, plus USDA and a number of mid-west Extension Services.

Ag Community involvement

Illinois Beef Expo was held February 23-26 in Springfield, IL. The IFGC has a booth each year at this premier event for the Illinois beef industry. The Expo brings in cattlemen from throughout the state. The cattle auction is second only to the Illinois State Fair.

Farm Progress Show is held every two years in Illinois. IFGC hosted a booth in the Illinois Department of Agriculture tent. Though the targeted audience is the farm community, this large farm show draws many visitors from urban and suburban homes.

Illinois Ag Legislative Day was held on March 28 at the Illinois State Capitol. President Dave Gentry and past board member Don Brown represented the IFGC at this event. It provides an opportunity for representatives from farm and agricultural commodity organizations and other diverse agriculture interest groups to meet with their respective state senators and representatives. In addition to creating an Ag Day at the Capitol, participants have an opportunity to become better acquainted and to establish networking relationships to impact issues that affect Illinois agriculture. A working breakfast is served for the sponsoring organizations and state legislators. The Illinois Farm Bureau hosts a briefing on the Round Table Discussions that were held earlier in the year. This briefing covers the various issues that were

determined to be priorities for the current legislative session. Each organization attending the event is responsible for contacting a set of legislators (one senator and two corresponding representatives) to communicate the Illinois Agriculture's legislative priorities for the year. Photos with legislators were posted on the IFGC website and in the IFGC newsletter.

The IFGC is a member of the Illinois Council on Food and Agricultural Research (CFAR). The lack of current funding from the State of Illinois has severely limited the ability of this group to fund quality research. However, the IFGC believes in the mission and maintains its membership.

Communication

The IFGC host a website, www.illinoisforage.org. The site is managed by Emily Hartman. This was Emily's first full year managing the site. She has refreshed the look and kept it up-to-date. It presents the IFGC in a favorable light with members and guests. The website allows us to promote upcoming events as well as to present important information concerning forage topics.

The quarterly newsletter, Forage Feed, is published under the direction of board member Jeff Hyett and Emily Hartman. The newsletter goes to all IFGC members. Topics in the past year have covered forage seed production information, dealing with drought damaged pastures, and USDA fire ant warnings. Copies are handed out at events like the Illinois Beef Expo, Farm Progress Show, Illinois Forage Institute and Illinois Forage Expo.

Annual Meeting – The IFGC Annual Meeting was held March 7, 2012 at the Pike County Farm Bureau office in Pittsfield, IL. Matt Bunger completed his term as President and David Gentry replaced him for a 2-year term. Kendall Guither was elected Vice-President. Kendall represented farmers on the board. Roger Staff was re-elected as Secretary and Jerry Millberg was re-elected Treasurer. Larry Blumeyer from Kings, IL was elected to the board to replace Kendall.

AFGC - At the AFGC Annual Conference, Elton Mau represented IFGC at the Forage Spokesperson competition.

The Council would like to recognize the contribution that Ron Atherton has made to AFGC and IFGC, serving on both boards. Ron has been a well recognized voice for forage and hay production in the Mid-west for many years. His willingness to serve and give guidance to both organizations is worthy of acknowledgment. Ron will close his service to AFGC at the 2013 Annual Conference.

Affiliate - The Northwest Illinois Forage and Grassland Council is a very active affiliate. They sponsor a hay and straw auction twice a month from November through March. It provides members with a market for their products plus allows them to monitor the strength of the market and quality of available hay. Each winter they hold a bus tour to visit an ag-related facility.

Awards – National Pasturelands Conservationist of the Year – Richard Hungerford, USDA-NRCS. Richard is a regular contributor to the Illinois Forage Institute and Illinois Forage Expo. He served for 6 years as a board member of IFGC. His expertise in grazing and grassland management has made him a recognized figure throughout the US.



In summary, the IFGC remains very active in Illinois agriculture. In a row crop world like Illinois, the Council needs to be seen before it can be heard. Our continued efforts are focused on being a presence in Illinois agriculture in order to be a voice for livestock and forage producers.

David Gentry, President