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Community engagement with transformational change

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DRIFTLESS

STORY OF NOW

COMMUNITY

- We have a strong community - neighbors help each other
- We might know the people that rent around us but we don't know the absentee landowners
- Locals and young people want to stay but find it difficult to have access to farmland due to
 - Land changing to recreational uses causing property values to increase
 - Increase in land use for bedroom communities (especially in Iowa County) increasing land costs
 - Zoning in Iowa County prevents subdividing a property into lots smaller than 10 acres
- Poor internet in many areas makes it difficult to attract new people and work remotely
- Recreational areas are attracting people from Chicago and Madison



FARMING

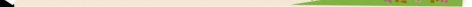
- Consolidation is increasing farm size
- Competition between corn & soybean farmers for rental land, graziers more likely to be a supportive community
- Absentee owners increase land prices and make it hard for young farmers to buy land
- Amish communities are growing which has positive and negative effects including increased land prices
- Much of the ag land that is in cash crops is more appropriate for grazing due to availability and steep slopes
- On most small farms, someone needs to have an off-farm job, especially for health insurance
- Over the past 20 years, lots of conversion from dairy to corn & soybeans, consolidation of dairy operations and some beef cattle operation
- Land is being purchased for deer hunting (raising land prices, also deer can be a problem for grain farmers)
- Role of effective grazing specialist can be critical to getting farmers interested in managed grazing
- Crop insurance policies supports corn and soybean farmers but not horse/hobby operations. "You can't lose growing corn or soybeans."



HEALTH

- Off farm jobs necessary for most farmers to get health insurance

Graziers have seen improvement in their life quality especially having more time for family

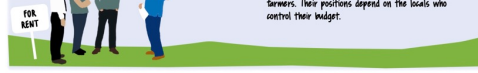


DRIFTLESS

PATHWAYS

COMMUNITY

- Educate & provide access to farmland to new & young farmers
- Team up retired farmers with young farmers possibly allowing a new generation to take over the farm
- Educate absentee land owners about how to work with farmer renters and how to encourage conservation on rented land
- Develop markets and a networked system of farmers, slaughter and butcher facilities to improve throughput and profitability
- Provide high speed internet to attract more people to the area
- Hold a collective dialogue about our community identity, what we want to build onto and how we want to change
- Continue working with our local agricultural agencies because they have more flexibility and contact with farmers. Their positions depend on the locals who control their budget.



FARMING

- Develop cost-share programs that benefit farmers that are already grazing, not just new operations
- Provide training on farm business management
- Find ways for absentee landowners to provide a variety of options for leasing land to young farmers
- Increase training in combination with credit programs to incentivize grazing
- Provide easier access to equipment through sharing equipment and renting to reduce initial input cost
- Increase access and technical service providers in federal and state agencies
- Provide more credit to graziers



HEALTH

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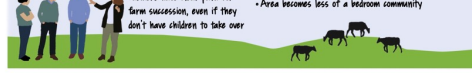


DRIFTLESS

STORY OF THE FUTURE

COMMUNITY

- Local markets have been developed, especially for specialty products like grassfed/finished beef
- Farmers will have many ways to utilize and sell value-added products
- Good internet access will exist attracting young professionals
- Farmers have clear path for farm succession, even if they don't have children to take over
- Farmland becomes more accessible to first-time and younger farmers
- Options will exist so farmland doesn't have to serve as a retirement plan
- CRP is seen as a positive option and not something that takes land out of production nor increases competition for remaining land
- Amish becomes less of a bedroom community



FARMING

- Less consolidation, more smaller farms
- More dairy farms will thrive
- Diversity of animals and plants on the fields
- Policies for first time farmers to more easily rent or buy land will exist
- Training in marketing and business will be readily available to farmers
- Farmers/landowner's will be good stewards of the land:
- Programs & policies will exist to encourage conservation practices & good land stewardship for renters and owners
- Annual lease agreements that encourage investing in conservation practices will be available
- Ecosystem services/carbon credits will become an option with potential to supplement farm income for ecosystem services



HEALTH

Access to health insurance for farmers



Place-based social learning

Collective action

The output is developing the process



grassLAND 2.0

This spreadsheet tool is designed to help you predict and understand the cash flow and longer-term financial outcomes that could result from a decision to raise heifers on pasture. It is meant to help both dairy farmers assess their options for raising heifers and other farmers who might want to start raising heifers as an enterprise.

This tool was conceived and designed by Brad Barham, John Hendrickson, Connor Mulholland, and Jim Munsch for the University of Wisconsin as part of the Grassland 2.0 project. Questions or comments can be addressed to John Hendrickson at jhendric@wisc.edu or Dr. Barham at Bradford.barham@wisc.edu.

The Grazing Heifers Compass has been created, formatted, and protected, so that it does not require advanced computer skills to use. However, if you are new or unfamiliar to Excel spreadsheets, we recommend learning the very basics of Excel prior to using this tool.

OVERVIEW

Making a decision of whether to raise heifers on pasture is discussed in detail in the companion tutorial, **Turning Pasture into Green (\$)**. Reading this document is a useful first step for anyone not already raising animals on pasture. It explains key opportunities and challenges facing farmers interested in raising heifers on pasture and can help guide you in making an informed decision to pursue raising heifers on pasture. **Turning Pasture into Green (\$)** provides the basis for making judgments on information the user will need to enter along the way in this spreadsheet tool.

[Click here for the Turning Pasture into Green \(\\$\) companion tutorial.](#)

The Grazing Heifer Compass is a planning tool for anyone considering the option of raising heifers on pasture and comparing this option with raising them in confinement or sending heifers out to be custom raised elsewhere. It could be of value to:

- Dairy farmers exploring ways to reduce the cost of heifer raising.
- Dairy farmers exploring ways to improve the environmental outcomes on their farms
- Dairy farmers interested in managed grazing with less risk than learning on their milking cows
- Others exploring ways to improve the income and/or environmental outcomes of their farms

The tool examines the financial results of raising heifers on pastures in comparison with other

Click the logos to learn about these organizations and programs

Note: This user manual is formatted for easy printing on standard 8.5 x 11 inch paper. It is 8 pages long.

- [Hyperlinks to Manual Sections](#)
- [Pasture-Heifer Balance](#)
- [Pasture Feeding Plan](#)
- [Pasture Set-Up & Operating](#)
- [Raising Heifer Raising](#)
- [Financial Analysis](#)

