COMPLETING Your STEPS Worksheets

Reference TIPS brochure, pg. 1

Worksheets

Once you have established your land management goals and have inventoried your property, you are ready to complete the STEPS worksheets on the following pages.

As you go through the following worksheets, keep in mind that helpful information can be found in the TIPS brochure. Also consider contacting local natural resource professionals and conservation groups to locate additional information that may be useful.

As you answer the questions provided on the STEPS worksheets, you will begin to assess conditions on your land and learn about a number of management options. Keep in mind that the alternatives provided are general in nature. The distinct features of your land—and the specific uses and goals you have for it—make each situation unique. As you begin to identify actions that may be appropriate, consider whether you can begin to make these improvements on your own. Many options will require specific considerations pertaining to the unique geography, hydrology, plants, wildlife and other features and conditions on your property. Some of these activities could require technical expertise; you may want to contact a natural resource professional for detailed assessments, conservation planning and recommendations. Sources for more information and assistance are listed in each section.

In addition, you should know that regulations and permit requirements vary depending on location, land use and other factors. As a landowner, it is your responsibility to learn about the regulations applicable in your area.

As you move forward with your land management goals, remember that an abundance of information and assistance is available through natural resource agencies and businesses.

If You Want to Go a Few More Steps

You may find that while the STEPS worksheets have helped you advance your land management goals, you would also like to address additional objectives or more complex issues.

More detailed evaluation processes are available through a variety of outlets. In addition, more comprehensive technical assistance is available through businesses and local, state, federal and non-profit entities. If you would like to additional assistance, contact one of the entities listed below:

- *Local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD):* **www.oacd.org**
- *Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS):* **www.or.nrcs.usda.gov**

Additional information and assistance can also be found through the many other organizations listed in the worksheets and the ***Resources*** section on page 57.

GRAZING Assessment

Worksheet

Reference TIPS
brochure, pg. 3-5

With good management, your pastures will produce vigorous grass stands with sufficient forage for the type and number of livestock you keep. The amount and quality of forage will depend on how you manage your land for grazing.

It is important to understand that livestock will graze less in areas that: contain plants that are not palatable as forage, are too far from water and mineral supplements, or are too large in size to encourage even use of the entire unit. With proper management, however, you can control how your animals graze and, therefore, improve pasture conditions and herd health. For example, many livestock owners fence large pastures into smaller units. Animals can then be rotated through the pastures on a planned schedule that gives forage time to rest and regrow vigorous stands. With rotational grazing, ranchers also have the opportunity to inspect animals more frequently and are often able to detect health problems in their herds earlier. At the same time, the soil benefits with less erosion and damage in heavy use areas. Also, controlling livestock movement results in better distribution of manure as plant fertilizer and reduces the risk of water contamination from concentrated nutrients in runoff.

Instructions: The following questions will help landowners conduct a basic self-assessment of their grazing management. Answer the questions below to identify areas where you may be able to improve grazing with pasture management strategies.

Site	Date

Grazing Assessment

1. On pastures and grazed land, how many of the plants are grazed by livestock, as compared to plants that livestock do not touch?

☐ **more than 80 percent**

↳ You are managing for uniform grazing use and likely have a healthy mix of plants.

☐ **50 to 80 percent**

↳ Grazing may be slightly improved with additional watering points, smaller grazing units, and/or targeted placement of salt/mineral supplements.

☐ **20 to 50 percent**:

↳ Grazing would likely be improved by incorporating additional watering points, smaller grazing units, and/or targeted placement of salt/mineral supplements.

☐ **less than 20 percent**:

↳ Consider replanting with forage species that are more suited to your livestock. Also consider adding additional watering points, smaller grazing units, and/or targeted placement of salt/mineral supplements.

2. Do you have a problem with livestock eating or coming into contact with noxious, invasive or undesirable plants? Check all that apply below, and then refer to the ***Weed Management Strategy*** section for information on weed control.

☐ **Noxious plants** (plants which are on state/county noxious weed lists)

↳ Consider control measures as recommended by a licensed pesticide consultant. Change management practices to favor desired plant species.

☐ **Invasive plants** (these plants may or may not be grazed, but will spread over time)

↳ Consider control measures as recommended by a licensed pesticide consultant. Change management practices to favor desired species.

☐ **Undesirable plants** (plants may be grazed, but are not the best option)

↳ Consider improving grazing uniformity. Replanting with more desirable species and adding additional watering points, smaller grazing units, and/or targeted placement of salt/mineral supplements may help.

continued on next ➡

Grazing Assessment

3. At the beginning of the grazing season, usually in April, how tall is the forage on your pastures?

☐ **more than 8 inches**

↳ If the forage is leafy, this is a good height to begin grazing. If stems are present in the spring, you may consider earlier management activities, such as clipping, haying or increasing grazing to leave 4 to 8 inches of leafy material at the end of the season.

☐ **4 to 8 inches**

↳ Try to allow the forage to reach 8 inches in height before grazing.

☐ **less than 4 inches**

↳ Consider allowing more time without grazing in the summer/fall to encourage better regrowth of leaves and roots. This will improve the vigor of your grass stands in the spring.

4. During the grazing season in spring and summer, how tall is the forage when you typically decide to move livestock to graze a different area?

☐ **more than 8 inches**

↳ It may help to extend the grazing time in the pasture, reduce the size of the pasture, graze with more animals, or use one or more pastures for hay to increase grazing intensity.

☐ **4 to 8 inches**

↳ Depending on the grazed plant species, a height of 4 inches is preferable before you remove livestock from the pasture.

☐ **less than 4 inches**

↳ Consider reducing the grazing time and/or animal numbers, enlarging the grazed area, or adding supplemental feed.

5. When grazing is finished at the end of the season, usually in October, how tall is the forage?

☐ **more than 8 inches**

↳ If the forage is leafy, 8 inches is a good height to stop grazing in the fall. If stems are present, clipping, haying or increased grazing earlier in the season to leave 8 inches of leafy material in the fall may be useful.

☐ **4 to 8 inches**

↳ Try to allow forage to reach 8 inches in height before winter.

☐ **less than 4 inches**

↳ Allow more time without grazing in the summer and fall for better regrowth of leaves and roots.

continued on next ➡

Grazing Assessment

6. Are livestock allowed to graze on a pasture continuously, or do you rotate them from pasture to pasture to allow forage to rest and regenerate?

☐ **Livestock graze one pasture continuously.**

↳ Consider combining livestock into fewer groups and rotating them among your pastures. To do this, you may need to subdivide existing pastures. Rotational grazing allows the plants' leaves and roots to grow back prior to being grazed again.

☐ **Livestock are rotated among pastures.**

↳ Allow for 4 to 8 inches of plant height (mostly leaves) to improve forage quality and plant health.

7. How would you describe the condition of your livestock?

☐ **Livestock appear to be underweight or unhealthy for part or all of the year.**

↳ Work with your veterinarian to determine the causes. Contact a professional for help if poor animal health is associated with grazing conditions.

☐ **Livestock appear to be in good condition year round.**

↳ Maintain your grazing system and re-assess animal health whenever changes are made.

The Next Steps for Better Grazing Management:

As you review your responses on the ***Grazing Assessment*** above, consider taking actions to provide healthier conditions for your animals while protecting the soil, water and plants on your grazed land. There are some common actions you may consider taking to improve your pastures for livestock:

- ☐ Add permanent or temporary fencing to control grazing patterns and movement of livestock.
- ☐ Balance grazing pressure with plant growth by rotating animals among pastures based on the number of animals, height of grasses and timing of scheduled grazing.
- ☐ Re-plant pastures with more desirable forage species.
- ☐ Add or develop sources of water for livestock.
- ☐ Reduce the number of animals on your land.
- ☐ Graze less and increase the amount of feed you purchase.
- ☐ Secure additional pasture land.
- ☐ Control weeds.
- ☐ Implement a fertilizer program.

↳ For more information and assistance to identify additional measures or to design a customized grazing plan, contact one of the entities listed below:

- Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
- Local Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD)
- Oregon State University Extension Service
- Other natural resource professional

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NOTES: