Native Grass Perceptions: Producers and Professionals Surveys in Tennessee

American Forage & Grassland Council
St. Louis, MO - January 13, 2015

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Background

• NWSG research and extension programs need to target knowledge gaps/management needs of producers
• Very little information available on producer attitudes and knowledge with regard to NWSG
• What is our starting point?
• What are the misconceptions (if any)?
Methods

• Randomly sampled 1,620 TN beef producers (20-499 head; 80% of TN farms)
• NASS
• 609 completed surveys (37.6% response rate)
• Survey pre-test Feb, 2011
• Three waves, summer 2011
Methods II

• Compare producer knowledge, attitudes, perceptions to professionals
• Sampled 312 agents, NRCS and SWCD field staff using on-line survey
• Three waves (February 2014)
• 252 responded (80.1% response rate)
• 222 useable responses
Familiarity with NWSG

Bar chart showing the percentage of respondents familiar with NWSG. The categories are:

- Not at all
- Somewhat
- Familiar
- Very

The chart indicates that the majority of respondents are not at all familiar with NWSG.
Familiarity with NWSG

Respondents (%)

- Not at all
- Somewhat
- Familiar
- Very

Prod
Prof

The University of Tennessee
Institute of Agriculture

Center for Native Grasslands Management
Familiarity with NWSG

n = 114 (Ext); n = 81 (NRCS)
Familiarity with NWSG

- **Not at all**: Prod > Prof > Prof on Prd
- **Somewhat**: Prod < Prof on Prd < Prof
- **Familiar**: Prof > Prod > Prof on Prd
- **Very**: Prof on Prd > Prod > Prof
Factors Related to Familiarity

- Familiarity with NWSG related to:
  - Farm size:
    - Small (0-50 ac) = 80.5% not familiar
    - Medium (51 - 150) = 70.2%
    - Large (>150) = 51.4%
  - Replacement heifers (p < 0.001)
  - But not stocker steers (p = 0.79)
  - Full vs. part-time farming (p = 0.011)
    - Full-time 57.3% not familiar
    - Part-time 69.1% not familiar
How Good Are NWSG for Forage?

Margin of error = 1.86%

Respondents (%)

Producers (Prod)

Extension (Prof)

Rounded-off, both NRCS (dotted) and Extension (dashed) consider NWSG “Good” forages
How Good Are NWSG for Forage?

Margin of error = 1.86%

Respondents (%)
How Much Do NWSG Yield?

Margin of error = 1.86%

Respondents (%)

- Less than 2 tons
- 2-3 tons
- 3-5 tons
- More than 5 tons
- Don’t know/No opinion

Producers
Professionals
Interest in Improving Summer Forage

Margin of error = 1.81%
Increased Management (move cattle 2-3 times/month) to Achieve Outcomes

- Scale: 1 = “Would not move”, 5 = “Would certainly move”
Willing to Increase Management to Achieve Improved Outcomes?

- Willingness to move cattle 2-3 X/mo in order to double summer weight gains is not related to:
  - off-farm income \( (p = 0.16) \)
  - full-time vs. part-time farmers \( (p = 0.71) \)
  - growing bermuda \( (p = 0.87) \)
  - summer hay feeding \( (p = 0.11) \)

- But is related to:
  - interest in improving summer forage prodn \( (p <0.001) \)
  - willingness to pay to est summer forage \( (p <0.001) \)
Obstacles to Using NWSG

Respondents (%)

- Establ
- Lost Prodn
- Cost
- Inc Mngmt
- Rotl Grz
- Winter

Not 2 3 4 Signif

Respondents (%)
Recommending NWSG for Summer Forage

n = 108 (Ext); n = 80 (NRCS)
Recommending NWSG More Now Than Five Years Ago

- Much Less
- Less Often
- Same
- More Often
- Much More

Professionals
Conclusions (producers)

• Few use NWSG (5%)
• Few are familiar with NWSG (<25%)
• Benefits of NWSG undervalued, liabilities overestimated (???)
• Interest in improving summer forages (>50%)
• Willingness to spend commensurate with actual NWSG establishment costs (37%)
• Willingness to incur increased management to achieve benefits
Conclusions (professionals)

- Much more familiar w/ NWSG (95%)
- Accurate assessment of attributes of NWSG
- Overestimate producer knowledge, interest in, and willingness to spend to improve summer forages
- Underestimate producers’ opinion of NWSG
- Barriers to producer acceptance: lost prodn year, est issues, est cost
- Benefits valued by producers: fert cost savings, improved gains; higher pasture and hay productivity also considered important
Discussion????