

Little Missouri Grazing Association  
201 Inman Street  
Amidon, ND 58620  
[lmga201@hotmail.com](mailto:lmga201@hotmail.com)  
701-523-6471

**Little Missouri Grazing Association Grasslands Grazing Grant Program**  
**Support for Senate Bill No: 2368**

Title: Senate Bill No. 2368 – Grasslands Grazing Grant Program

Senate Bill No. 2368, if authorized by the 69th Legislative Assembly, would provide grants to the ND Grazing Associations through the Grasslands Grazing Grant (GGG) Program. The grant funds would build infrastructure on National Grasslands for water development, fencing, conservation initiatives, professional services, and supplies. These practices will enhance wildlife habitat, carbon capture, and grasslands health.

The Little Missouri Grazing Association (LMGA) lies within Slope County and part of Golden Valley County. Much of the federal land was farmland purchased by the United States in 1939 and seeded to crested wheatgrass. Many of these tracts are 320 acres or 160 acres and are surrounded by private land.

With the GGG program, the Little Missouri Grazing Association identified ten (10) allotments or pastures that relied on creeks (riparian areas) for livestock water. Declining riparian area conditions have been a concern for ranchers, federal land managers, and environmental groups for decades. Land Use Practice funding from federal grazing fees was never enough to drill a well. The LMGA members provided wells on their private land to pipe water to federal land. The Forest Service required members to sign a Water Use Agreement that their wells would provide water to that allotment in perpetuity. Controversial and contentious decisions by federal agencies to take water rights from ranchers in the west concerned the LMGA and its members that they would lose their individual water rights.

The 2021 GGG funded 75% of the cost to drill wells on eleven allotments. Six creeks and their riparian areas have livestock grazing and loafing pressure reduced. Sixteen projects were funded with the 2021 GGG funding.

The LMGA is extremely grateful for that 2021 funding and the peace of mind that sixteen allotments met the 2002 Dakota Prairie Grasslands Land and Resource Management Plan's goal that *"Move at least 80 percent of riparian areas and woody draws toward self-perpetuating plant and water communities that have desired diversity and density of understory and overstory vegetation within site capability"*.

The Dakota Prairie Grasslands staff are updating the 2002 plan. The first proposed Plan (2001) called for a 35% reduction of AUMs. The ND Grazing Associations succeeded in eliminating the destocking Plan. Still, the LMGA is concerned that a new Land and Resource Management Plan would permanently reduce AUMs if the Plan's goals are not met. Riparian areas are a successful target for environmental groups to sue federal agencies and force livestock removal from the National Forest and National Grasslands.

Through 2016-2019, the Bird Conservancy of the Rockies completed part the Northern Great Plains grasslands songbirds survey on two LMGA allotments. The US Fish & Wildlife Service identified

the Baird' sparrow and Sprague's pipit as species of concern and the Bird Conservancy provided a baseline survey to determine the birds' survival in their typical habitat. The results showed that the Baird's sparrow survival of monitored birds was 76% and that the Sprague's' pipit survival of monitored birds was 79% over the three years. While this study is a snapshot in time, the study indicates that the allotments provided the grasses necessary and the vegetation height necessary for these birds to survive. The 2021 GGG funding had a tremendous impact on better grazing utilization needed to maintain viable habitat for all the wildlife the Forest Service is charged with providing.

Additional GGG funding would allow the LMGA to implement more conservation practices across the grazing association. GGG funding expedites infrastructure in a way the Land Use Program cannot. The legacy between the family ranches and the National Grasslands has preserved these Grasslands, but the ranch livelihoods are stressed by increasing threats of radical "environmental" lawsuits.

The Little Missouri Grazing Association is committed to partnering with the US Forest Service to implement various grazing management tools on the allotments. The LMGA will provide administrative assistance, such as obtaining required permits, procuring contractors, buying project materials, and invoicing projects.

The Little Missouri Grazing Association is grateful for the time and dedication of the North Dakota Department of Agriculture staff and the Medora Ranger District for working with the LMGA Board of Directors to improve and sustain the LMGA allotments.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Nick Brown  
President  
Little Missouri Grazing Association