

# Voluntary Grazing Permit Retirement

*A Winning Solution for Conflict Resolution*



Elk Meadow, a retired grazing allotment in central Idaho. Photo by Mark Moulton.

**Permitted livestock grazing is by far the most pervasive use of federal public lands, occurring on over 200 million acres — an area larger than all of Texas. Livestock grazing on federal public lands can lead to conflicts with other uses, such as recreation, hunting, and wildlife habitat.**

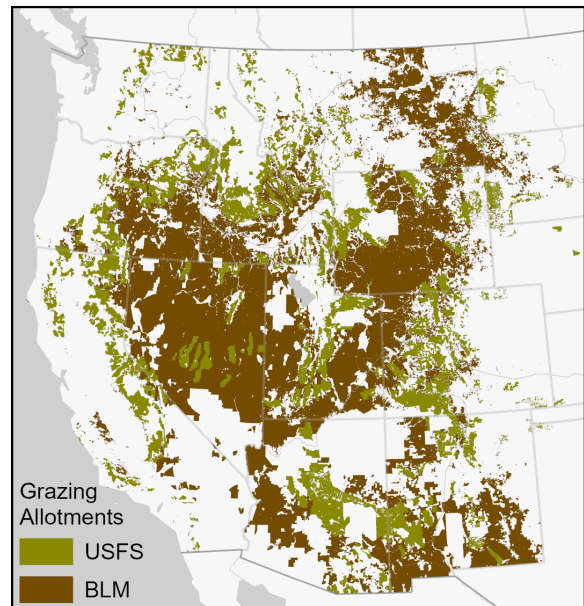
**The Voluntary Grazing Permit Retirement Act (“VGPR”) uses market-based incentives to reduce conflicts on federal public lands and increase flexibility for federal grazing permittees. Current laws and regulations either do not allow for the retirement of grazing permits or else they make the process unnecessarily difficult and uncertain.**

## HOW IT WORKS

The VGPR would allow grazing permit holders the option to voluntarily waive their permits to graze on federal lands in exchange for equitable compensation paid by private parties. The federal agency would then be directed to retire the associated grazing allotment from further grazing activity. The legislation would place a cap on the number of permits that can be retired each year.

There are many reasons ranchers may want to retire their grazing permits. For some, it may be a recognition that grazing on federal land just isn't viable anymore. For others, it might be a desire to change their business model or adapt to changing circumstances in their lives. However, due to the investments made in their permits, this may be financially untenable without compensation.

The VGPR facilitates agreements between third parties and grazing permittees that increase flexibility for the permit holders while ensuring that the conservation gains from removing livestock are permanent.



Grazing allotments cover most western public land, yet only feed 2–3% of American cattle.

## *PAST SUCCESSES*

For decades, Congress has recognized that facilitating the buy-out of federal public lands grazing permits provides a market-based, cooperative tool that is a **win-win for public lands and grazing permittees**.

Congress has authorized the permanent closure of grazing allotments when the permits or leases are voluntarily waived. Successes include **Death Valley National Park, Capitol Reef National Park, Arches National Park, Cascade-Siskiyou National Monument, Oregon Caves National Monument and Preserve, Owyhee Canyonlands, and Boulder-White Clouds Wilderness**.



Desert Tortoise on a retired grazing allotment in Mojave National Preserve. Photo by Western Watersheds Project.

## *CONGRESS CAN HELP*

Expanding this authority to all public lands managed by the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture in the 16 Western states will enhance conservation efforts and provide additional flexibility for livestock producers grazing on federal public lands.

## *RESULTS:*

- Ranchers will have more options.
- Market-based and voluntary conservation opportunities.
- Reduce conflicts between livestock, recreation, hunting, wildlife, and more.
- Can allow appropriate local response to drought and climate change.
- Existing conservation agreements can become permanent.
- Reduces federal government costs, which are not covered by very low grazing fees.
- Allows soils and vegetation to sequester carbon, especially in marginal grazing land.
- Reduces conflict with cougars, grizzly bears, wolves, and coyotes.
- Reduces disease spread between livestock and wildlife (e.g., bighorn sheep).
- Helps create landscape connectivity for wildlife migration corridors.

## *WHAT NEXT?*

To become a co-sponsor or for more information about the Voluntary Grazing Permit Retirement Act, contact Connor Stubbs in the office of Rep. Adam Smith at [connor.stubbs@mail.house.gov](mailto:connor.stubbs@mail.house.gov).