


Trout-fishing with Livestock





Hilly Southeast Minnesota has the perfect landscape for serious livestock grazing . Pastures do double-duty by filtering out sediment and chemical run-off before such contaminants make it into the Root River and other trout streams.



But wait, what about when cows traipse into those streams for a drink – isn't that bad for the water? It sure could be if you didn't pay attention.

Land Stewardship Project has been advocating for managed rotational grazing for a long time, including along streams. Excuse the pun, but yes, streamside grazing runs amuck with the usual practice of fencing out animals from open water.

MANAGEMENT is the key – to healthy water, fish, cows, and the land. Here's a story about how...



THE BACKGROUND – A 3000-foot stretch of Trout Run Creek runs through Earl and Judy Prigge’s pasture near Chatfield, MN. They graze a herd of beef cows to maintain the 2010 restoration project that has increased the trout population 10-fold. The Prigges host grazing enthusiasts and skeptics alike to talk about why riparian grazing is critical to the health and wealth of the stream, the land, and themselves.





MANAGEMENT – Cows graze streamside for short periods of time – often less than a day - in order to control invasive species that would otherwise destabilize the banks and negatively challenge all creek life.





MANURE – Cows use gently-sloped pads to wade into and out of Trout Run Creek. Manure in this biologically active tributary of the Root River decomposes quickly.





FISH need sheltered areas but otherwise, trees aren't required to keep spring-fed creeks cool. In fact, grassy banks provide better soil stability and income from grazed livestock.





MONEY - After three years of streamside grazing, the pasture supports a larger herd (by 50%) that is healthier than Earl's home herd. This is money in the bank, he said.





Despite heavy rains this past spring, grassy stream banks left Earl and Judy's pastures virtually untouched by eroding soil. "Dirt is dirt," Earl said. "You have to know how to use it to keep it in place."





Trout Unlimited is actively promoting careful streamside grazing as its best guarantee against failure of its stream restoration projects. Trout fishing is worth \$1.1 billion in the Driftless region.





Managed grazing, especially along a riparian corridor, requires attention to both herd and sward health. Said Earl: “We’re happy. But it takes management. You can’t ignore it.”



Listen to some of the voices behind these photos as they describe why and how grazing streamside is a win for the cows, the grass, and, yes, the trout.

<http://landstewardshipproject.org/posts/podcast/477>



LSP staff member (and sheep grazier) Caroline van Schaik helps people put their land ethic to practice in the Root River watershed. You can find her here:

Land Stewardship Project

180 E. Main St. in Lewiston, Minn.

507-523-3366

caroline@landstewardshipproject.org

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starting at \$35 a year.**

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