

**1) In 3 minutes, tell us about your agency's grazing program and your role and experience with public lands grazing.**

The Open Space Authority historically would purchase the land and would keep the current rancher and create a partnership through hand shake deals with very limited restrictions and zero pay. This all worked well. We were fortunate in having grazing families such as Fields, Miller, Cofelt and Bianchi on the lands we purchased. As our agency grew and as we gained more public observation and often scrutiny for our grazing practices, we started having to be more formal and create policies, plans and also an actual grazing lease. I began doing my research and looking at what other agencies had for leases. I read through EBRPD, MROSD and County Parks. I compiled parts of each and presented to our legal counsel who then created our "OSA version". Once the new lease was approved by our Board of Directors, we then had to start the new process of appointing grazing tenants and fulfilling the new lease agreements. We went through the request for proposal process (RFP). We held property tours for interested grazing tenants, then completed the process with an interview of our top choices. It was a very long, complicated and awkward process for both the ranchers and for us. In the end we partnered with Justin Fields, Clayton Koopmann, Alan Renz, Janet Burback and Mike Miller. Two were current tenants and the other three were new.

Our new lease institutes the work credit program of which all grazers used/use and our returning two tenants started off with credit from our previous leases with them. We have a 5-year lease with the ability to re-sign the lease for additional 5 years based off of a good tenant relationship. We require monthly AUM numbers to be sent in for tracking, as well as a yearly Stocking Work Plan that states the grazers plan for the year such as number of cattle, pasture rotation and any large improvement projects they hope to tackle.

We charge per AUM and base our AUM numbers are off the previous years Cattle Fax numbers for 500-800lb Steers and Heifers for May through end of July. Once I gather the AUM rate based off that number, I then take 65% of that number. Example if the full rate I came up with was \$20.91 per AUM, I multiply by .65 and then charge \$13.61 per AUM instead. Also, if the previous year was stellar for meat price and made for a huge increase in AUM rate, then we apply a "wont charge more than 10% increase" rule. We understand that our grazing tenants need this stellar year to help pay off possible loans they had to take out for not so great years, or years we had drought and they had to reduce heard size and now can use the extra profit to purchase more cattle. Since our new leases were instituted in 2013, our average AUM rate has been \$15 per AUM, when it could have been \$24 if we did not apply the 65% rule and not to increase over 10% from previous year rule.

**2) What are the biggest challenges your agency faces related to improving the sustainability of the grazing program (not ecological sustainability, but sustainability of the grazing program itself)?**

The biggest challenge is continuing to collect all information in regards to the benefits of grazing, stick to the leases and the obligations we set forth, and to be prepared to defend the grazing program to concerned public and or concerned conservation groups who may not be educated on the importance of grazing. Other challenges are staff time to respond to tenant concerns, work on infrastructure projects, educate the public and other tasks.

**3) What has your agency already done, or what steps would you like to take, to sustain the grazing program and support livestock production?**

Our agency has already implemented a reduced AUM rate. In a survey done by MROSD staff of rates charged by local open space agencies, ours was the lowest. We do this in order to offset challenges with grazing on public lands.

I would like to see us create a program that allows for a credit in the event of a confirmed or possibly assumed predation. Example; 56 live births observed by rancher; 54 calves observed down the line. No reason to suspect disease or abandonment. Assumption and or preferred confirmation of predation, then the two heifers that are calf-less are not counting as AUM for the season, and potentially there can be a credit of a set price from the loss of that calf.

**4) What processes are you using to change the grazing program and improve its sustainability?**

We are starting to create educational opportunities to help inform our public of the importance of grazing and ensure we have their support in our grazing program. We have started to educate our volunteer docents on the importance of grazing and why we graze, so they can in turn educate the public they lead on hikes. We are working on school programs to institute all aspects of land preservation and taking care of our environment of which cattle grazing will be a part of. Public support on anything we as an agency does equals sustainability.