



# **The Virginia Forage and Grassland Council**

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## **Strategic Plan 2022 - 2027**

### **Introduction**

The Virginia Forage and Grassland Council (VFGC) was formed June 9, 1977, in Afton, Virginia by 25 individuals representing Virginia agriculture. We are an affiliate member of the American Forage and Grassland Council, an affiliate member in the Virginia Agribusiness Council and a non-profit organization of the Commonwealth. Activities of the council are financed by membership dues, event registration fees, gifts, industry sponsors and grants from partners organizations.

### **Our Mission**

The mission of the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council is to educate producers, policy makers, and the general public about the economic, environmental, and social benefits of forage-based production systems.

## **Objective 1**

**Promote, expand, and improve the use of forages and forage systems as a desirable and efficient means of utilizing land resources for food, fuel, and fiber production to improve the economic and social well-being of all Virginians.**

Strategy 1: Organize and facilitate educational events and resources.

Strategy 2: Support other organizations and individuals in their forage-based educational efforts and research through efforts including letters of support, scholarship support, and providing speakers at events and workshops.

Strategy 3: Provide forage information to partnering agencies and organizations.

Strategy 4: Provide and disseminate timely and research-based information regarding forages and forage systems through the Virginia Forager newsletter.

Strategy 5: Provide “for sale” resources such as books and grazing sticks.

## **Objective 2**

**Provide forums for networking and opportunities to expand and enhance forage-based production systems.**

Strategy 1: Hold annual winter conference.

Strategy 2: Conduct field days, pasture walks, and grazing schools.

Strategy 3: Continue the grazing mentor program and expand upon it by developing regional grazing groups.

Strategy 4: Expand virtual networking opportunities.

Strategy 5: Host the American Forage and Grassland Council (AFGC) conference and/or tour on a periodic basis.

Strategy 6: Promote pasture-based animal products.

### **Objective 3**

**Promote the value of using forage crops for producing healthy food products while sequestering carbon, abating soil erosion, improving water quality, and enhancing biodiversity and wildlife habitat.**

- Strategy 1: Protect pollinators and their habitat through educational efforts in partnership with other agencies and organizations.
- Strategy 2: Work with groups to estimate the value of forages to include not just the economic value of the forages themselves, but also grazing value, environmental value through carbon sequestration, reduced erosion, and increased biodiversity, and social value.
- Strategy 3: Develop infographics for use in social media, newsletters, educational presentations, and other platforms.
- Strategy 4: Produce content for use in social media.

### **Objective 4**

**Inform public perceptions and help shape policy that protects the sustainability of forage-animal production systems.**

- Strategy 1: Contribute ideas about policy and advocacy to our affiliated organizations.
- Strategy 2: Seek membership in other bodies such as the Virginia Agribusiness Council to better voice support for forage-animal production systems.
- Strategy 3: Support groups with common goals who have stronger advocacy efforts than ours.
- Strategy 4: Encourage dialogue around public policy issues by including it in workshop offerings at winter conference.
- Strategy 5: Advocate for positions and personnel that support the forage industry.
- Strategy 6: Write and submit articles to journals and other news sources, both internal and external to the forage industry.
- Strategy 7: Advocate for cost-share programs to DCR's Technical Advisory Committee and NRCS' State Technical Committee, and for applied forage-animal research.
- Strategy 8: Invite policy makers to attend programs and educational events.

## **Objective 5**

### **Encourage and recognize outstanding achievements, and develop leadership in the forage industry.**

Strategy 1: Encourage and recognize outstanding achievements in the forage industry.

- Recognize outstanding forage producers.
- Review and award educational scholarships.
- Nominate producer for the American Forage and Grassland Council Forage Spokesperson Contest.

Strategy 2: Develop leadership in the forage industry

- Nominate forage producers for the National Cattlemen Beef Association Environmental Stewardship Award.
- Send Virginia forage leaders to the American Forage and Grassland Council and National Grazing Lands Coalition meetings.

Strategy 3: Work with groups of young farmers and students to...

- Provide them with mentorship and exposure to the VFGC.
- Develop scholarships/financial incentives for youth and young adults interested in forages.
- Offer to provide VFGC speakers at meetings.
- Volunteer to provide tour stops for their educational programs.

Strategy 4: Support professional development and educational opportunities for VFGC Board members through paying registration fees for programs offered outside of VFGC.

Strategy 5: Nominate members for and appoint them to leadership roles within VFGC.

## **Appendix 1: The Strategic Planning Process**

The Strategic Plan is a document that will enable the Virginia Forage and Grassland Council to be well positioned to support forage crops and forage-animal production systems in their roles in Virginian's quality of life. This strategic plan was developed over the course of three work sessions with input from board members, partners, and industry representatives. The VFGC Board gave the final approval of the plan which recognizes future priority issues, with set objectives and strategies identified to accomplish within the next five years.

## **Appendix 2: VFGC Strategic Planning Steering Committee**

Keith Tuck, VFGC Board President, Producer Director

Shawna Bratton, VFGC Board Vice-President, Industry Director

Leo Tammi, VFGC Treasurer, VFGC Producer Advisor

Matt Booher, VFGC Educational Advisor, VCE ANR Agent, Rockingham County

J.B. Daniel, VFGC Technical Advisor, NRCS State Grassland Agronomist

David Jesee, VFGC Board, Industry Director

Pat Burch, VFGC Board, Industry Director

Jerry Jennings, VFGC Board, Producer Director

John Fike, VFGC Educational Advisor, VCE Forage Specialist

Gabe Pent, VFGC Educational Advisor, VCE Forage Specialist

Alston Horn, VFGC Educational Advisor, Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Jon Repair, VFGC Producer Advisor

Jacob Gilley, VFGC Technical Advisor, American Farmland Trust

Luke Longnecker, VFGC Technical Advisor, SWCD

Scott Baker, VFGC Technical Advisor, VCE ANR Agent, Bedford County

Ruth Wallace, Facilitator