

Voluntary Grazing Permit Retirement

A Winning Solution for Conflict Resolution

The Voluntary Grazing Permit Retirement Act (VGPRRA) expands upon a very successful model of landscape conservation. For several 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.

The VGPRRA provides 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.

Background

Permitted livestock grazing occurs on over 200 million acres of federal public lands. It is by far the most pervasive use of federal public lands. Many of these landscapes are impacted by changing climatic conditions including prolonged drought and an increase in invasive annual grasses. Additionally, expanding wildlife populations, changing attitudes about public lands management and increased recreational use may lead to conflicts with livestock grazing. Meanwhile, the federal public lands grazing program is expensive to administer, and the fees paid by grazing permittees only cover a small fraction of the costs.

Voluntary permit retirement offers a path forward that allows ranchers to make decisions that work for them while also creating tangible benefits for public lands and wildlife. In some cases, federal grazing permittees may want to give up their grazing permits simply because it's the best choice for their business model or their life circumstances. However, due to the structure of the grazing program and the investments made in their permits, this may be financially untenable without some form of compensation. VGPRRA 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

Specifically, the Bill:

- Any grazing permit or lease related to Federal land in the 16 Western States may be voluntarily waived by a grazing permittee or lessee with the intent of permanently ending livestock grazing on the allotment or portion of that allotment.
- Any voluntarily waived permit or lease will not have any new grazing permit or lease reissued.
- No more than 100 grazing permits, in the aggregate for all 16 Western States, or 25 grazing permits for land located in an individual State may be accepted per year.
- Create market-based and voluntary conservation opportunities.
- Reduce conflicts between livestock, recreation, hunting, wildlife, and more.
- Help create landscape connectivity for wildlife migration corridors.

For more information about the Voluntary Grazing Permit Retirement Act, contact Rob Kelly in the office of Rep. Adam Smith at robert.kelly@mail.house.gov.