

SUCCESS STORY
HECTOR COOPERATIVE GRAZING ASSOCIATION
53 YEARS OF PUBLIC GRAZING FACILITIES
FINGERLAKES NATIONAL FOREST
August 3, 1999

Hector Cooperative Grazing Association is one of the oldest public grazing facilities in the country. They were incorporated in April 1946 for area farmers, who utilized 1700 acres of grazing land of the State of New York. From 1939 through 1971, the cooperative made use of other resources of the land by harvesting timber, cutting and selling posts, leasing hay lots and cutting and selling Christmas trees and firewood.



District Ranger Martha Twarkins, Forest Supervisor Paul Brewster, and Bernie Buckamier, Ranch Manager at the field headquarters of the Hector Grazing Association.

In 1941, sheep were the primary livestock grazed by the Co-op. The cattle included both beef and dairy and small herds of horses. The initial numbers of members were 138 but dropped with time to 64 in 1992. Currently there are 35 dues paying members.



Cattle seek shade in the pasture on a hot summer day.

Today the Association grazes 4,500 acres with 35 pastures and 80 miles of fence. The Association is administered under one Term Grazing Permit and manages the allocation of the cattle to the members. The Association provides the greatest flexibility and ease of management of the Fingerlakes National Forest.

The required range improvements are constructed and maintained through the utilization of Fee Credits allowed toward the annual grazing fee in accordance with Forest Plans and Allotment Management Plans. National Forests and Land Utilization Projects in the Eastern United States strategically utilize this direction to maintain needed range improvements and grassland openings. Each year District Ranger Twarkins and her staff works with the Association Board of Directors to negotiate the range improvements to be maintain or constructed and the amounts of Fee Credit needed. Usually, up to one year of Fee Credit is allowed.

Mowing is an approved practice. Pastures are mowed to keep in check invasive species (ragweed and goldenrod). Mowing is coordinated with the nesting requirements of birds species. A distinct habitat relationship with upland birds exist with the grass and forb communities. The mowing of tall-grass forb pastures was found to be critical for the Henslow's and Grasshopper sparrows according to Dr. Charles Smith, Cornell University.



Without mowing, ragweed and goldenrod will become dominant.



Mowing allows the grass to become dominant.



An example of mowing practices in one of the pastures. Note the height of the forbs.



General view of one of the pasture.



District Ranger Twarkins visits with Hector Cooperative Grazing Association Directors during the annual summer meeting.



The Association members' families enjoying the annual barbeque.



A picture of some of the Directors of the Association



Family members enjoying the early evening at the barbeque.



A picture of a corral newly constructed by the Association.



General view of a newly acquired parcel of land (farm).



Picture of Association member with cattle waiting in the corral

