



Indiana Forage Council, Inc. 2019 Activities Report Keith D. Johnson, Secretary

The Indiana Forage Council had an active year in 2019. The first success story of the year began at the American Forage and Grassland Conference in January. The Conference was held in St. Louis, Missouri. Bryan Eash received first place in the Forage Spokesperson competition (Figure 1.). Bryan is a family member of Country Meadows Farm, a sixth generation grazing dairy located in northeast, Indiana. Four Purdue University undergraduate students represented the university at the conference's Forage Bowl competition (Figure 2). The team was outfitted with Purdue apparel purchased for them by the Council.



Figure 1. Bryan Eash received first place at the American Forage and Grassland Conference Forage Spokesperson competition.



Figure 2. Purdue University Forage Bowl team (left to right) Jason Kikkert (Fair Oaks, IN), Kyle Fogle (Greensburg, IN), Karson Harris (Sullivan, IN) and Hannah Padgett (Lafayette, IN).

On January 22nd and 23rd, many months of hard work paid off as the council was the organizer and host of the multi-state “Heart of America Grazing Conference” (Figure 3). The “Heart of America Grazing Conference,” is an educational effort among Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky and Missouri university, government, industry, and producer representatives. The event’s purpose is to provide livestock producers with the most current regional grazing information and resources. The conference is a unique opportunity as there are no other grazing-based multi-state conferences like this one in the Midwest USA. Attendees were livestock/forage producers, personnel from seed, machinery, fencing/water, fertilizer/chemical agribusinesses, and agency employees that serve farmers. Held at Ferdinand, Indiana’s community center, the educational event attracted 142 individuals. The conference was deemed very successful because a post-conference survey indicated 98 percent agreed or strongly agreed that they have a deeper understanding of the subject matter as a result of the conference, 98 percent agreed or strongly agreed that they have situations in which they could use what they learned at the conference, and 90 percent agreed or strongly agreed that they will change practices.



Figure 3. Miles Kuhn and Susannah Hinds prepare to meet attendees at the Heart of America Grazing Conference.

The annual meeting of the Indiana Forage Council was held on February 28 in conjunction with a meal and seminar at the Turkey Run State Park located near Marshall, Indiana. Seminar topics were “So I Bought a Farm” and “Integrating Wildlife on the Farm.” Sara Creech, relatively new to farming, focused her discussion how personal tragedy led to healing through farming and how working with nature led to restoration and hope. What began as a garden project for growing quality healthy produce for the family grew into a fully functioning farm growing all kinds of produce as well as pasture-raised meats (Figure 4). Jared Brooke, Purdue University Wildlife Specialist, discussed common farmland wildlife, their habitat needs, and steps forage producers can take to integrate wildlife into their farm operations (Figure 5).



Figure 4. Guest speaker Sara Creech discusses her story on how she became a farmer at the annual meeting.



Figure 5. Jared Brooke, Purdue University Wildlife Specialist, informs attendees at the annual meeting how wildlife can become part of a forage enterprise.

At the annual meeting and seminar, the Outstanding Forage Producer Award was presented to the Feldun-Purdue Agricultural Center for their dedication to the production and utilization of quality forage systems for beef cattle enterprises (Figure 6). Anna Morrow, The Midwest Cover Crop Council’s program manager and a Director of the forage council was awarded the Maurice E. Heath Award. Anna was recognized for her dedication to the development and distribution of the Indiana Forage Council’s quarterly newsletter (Figure 7).



Figure 6. On behalf of the Feldun-Purdue Agricultural Center, Brad Shelton receives the Outstanding Producer Award from Jason Tower.



Figure 7. Anna Morrow receiving the Heath Award from Jason Tower.

The Indiana Beef Cattle Association and the Indiana Forage Council teamed together and planned and conducted a Beef-Forage Management Tour on July 6 in Putnam County. The charter bus tour visited three diverse beef farms including Willer Timber Ridge Farm, J&K's Birt Farm, and Hodgen Farms (Figures 8 and 9). Education centered on producing high quality beef cattle with forage, grain, and byproduct resources. Approximately 45 people attended the tour.



Figure 8. Participants at the Beef-Forage Management Tour listen to Jerry Birt discuss his beef cattle feeding business.



Figure 9. President Susannah Hinds informs tour attendees about the benefits of becoming an Indiana Forage Council member.

Improvements continue to be made to the Indiana Forage Council website (indianafortage.org). A quarterly newsletter complete with a feature article about a forage-focused person, upcoming events and forage management tips for the quarter is sent to the membership (Attachment 1). Past newsletters are archived at the website. Shailin Heckard, a Purdue University Agricultural Communication student was selected as an intern with the Council. As part of the class requirements and the internship, the student interviewed individuals and wrote feature articles about them, which are published in the Council's quarterly newsletter.

Many of the officers and directors of the Indiana Forage Council volunteered time to help the Indiana Beef Cattle Association at the food tent the beef cattle organization manages at the Indiana State Fair (Figures 9 and 10). This has been a successful venture as much networking occurs among those working the event.



Figures 9 and 10. Time to network occurs when volunteering at the Indiana Beef Cattle Association's Food Tent at the Indiana State Fair.



The Council was awarded an Indiana State Department of Agriculture Livestock Promotion Grant in early November. The council is beginning to plan and will host two June 2020 grazing workshops, one in northern Indiana and another in southern Indiana. The theme of the two-day workshop is "Making a Difference on the Farm with Improved Grazing Systems." The educational event will address best management practices that are necessary to have an effective grazing component of a livestock business. The intention is that those that attend the event will be more attentive to the management of pastures so productivity can be optimized.

Another need that was accomplished in 2019 was the updating of the membership brochure (Attachment 2). An attractive brochure was developed by several members of the council and will be used to encourage new forage interested people to join the organization.

The Council looks forward to an active year in 2020.



The Indiana Forage Council's Leadership Team.