



NEWSLETTER

A Cockeyed Way of Farming

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On the Cover



Many US Veterans make farming their jobs after returning home. Brandon Breaux is one of those veterans and he hosted a veterans workshop at his new home in Washington, LA. See how the NRCS, LGLCI and Brandon are partnering to do something great.



Four Oaks Farm Owner, Matt Frey sharing cattle operation with other grazers in Morganza, LA. (See pg. 5)

Cockeyed Farms

**September 21st, 2018
Veteran's Field Day**

Brandon Breaux joined the military late in life. His rank – CW3, OH58-Delta Kiowa Warrior Helicopter pilot in Iraq. It was a call he said he wanted to for a long time. But something happened that changed everything.

“War happened, I started having gulf war syndromes, and I was permanently grounded from being an aviator,” Breaux explained.

Not what Breaux or his family expected, but it's what has taken him down a long dirt road they now call home.

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Brandon Breaux standing next to his OH58 Delta Kiowa Warrior Helicopter.

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Two years ago, Brandon purchased some farmland in Washington, La., and is now raising his family on it. Lauren Breaux, Brandon's wife, chuckled when asked how they decided to farm. She said it's farming was nowhere on their radar. "We had a plan," she said. "We thought we would be a military couple, we thought he was going to fly forever." But everything changed when Brandon's health headaches became worse and worse.

"I had a colleague who was talking about the cows he had on his farm," Brandon explained. "And with the unknown future that I had, I needed take a step back and focus on my health, and what better way to do that than to bring my family together on a small farm."

The bright thing about Lauren and Brandon is instead of letting their situation define them, they embrace it, and have even named their farm after it.

Lauren said, "Discombobulation and disassociation is one of the side effects from his headaches. He told me one day, 'babe, I've been cockeyed for like a year, this is crazy!'"

She went on to explain that when they were looking for property, they found the barn to be a little cockeyed, too. Which is how they came up with the name, "Cockeyed Farms" for their business.

In addition to Brandon's health and the cockeyed barn, Lauren said even the way they want to farm is a little cockeyed, too. "We want to head in the sustainably grown, certified organic direction," she said. "And that's something cockeyed, too."

Brandon attests that diet played the largest role of how his health was affected. He said switching his diet to organic allowed him to get off the pharmaceutical drugs the doctors prescribed to him. That is why the Breaux's are choosing to farm organically.



Brandon Breaux explaining to attendees the layout of his property and several concerns he has.



Here you see the cockeyed barn, the centerpiece of Cockeyed Farm.



Attendees examining the water well located on the property.

On top of the challenges of returning from war, Brandon is a first-generation farmer. He says he is making this up as he goes and relying on subject matter experts to guide him in the right direction.

Which is the reason Cockeyed Farms partnered with the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and the LGLCI to host a pasture walk on his farm.

NRCS Area Rangeland Conservationist Stuart Gardner said he believes NRCS people have a lot to learn when it comes to working with veterans, like Brandon, who are recently out of the military and have served active duty around the world.

He said, "Today we were able to bring about a dozen people together who are experienced in not only being producers themselves, but we also had NRCS people here, who have some technical expertise from years of working with producers providing technical assistance on farms and ranches."

Brandon explained, "It's really two great groups of people trying to put farmers together and anybody else who is just starting out to show them, 'hey there's people out here that are just now starting to create this magnificent farm that these other guys have done.'"

Brandon has gone from flying helicopters to learning about farming; however, he's proving he's not afraid of learning something new. "I'd never flown a helicopter before, and I learned to do that, so I figured I can figure out how to make two cows eat some grass and make some income for me."

Brandon and Lauren will be featured on LPB's Louisiana Public Square episode, "Louisiana Veterans Back Home," which will air on Wednesday October 24th at 7pm on LPB, WLAE, plus stream online at same time at www.lpb.org.

We Can't Restore What's Gone. Can We Save What's Left?

By Don Ashford

This land is your land, this land is my land. Only if we are willing to do the necessary work required to keep it. So I reckon the question that we should each ask ourselves is this, what am I willing to do to ensure that this earth will be habitable and productive for our progeny.

The first mountain top removal operation was in Cannelton Hollow in Raleigh County, West Virginia in 1970. Bullpush was the first mountain to die. Since then over 500 Appalachian mountains have joined the carnage. What will happen when the last mountain is taken down? What will be left, can this be called sustainable? I think not. If there has ever been a case of short sighted management there can be no better example than mountaintop removal for the amount of coal delivered. For there to be any hope of sustainability there must be regeneration, if a tree is cut down there is the possibility of another growing in its place but once the coal is gone its gone. If we do not graze our grasses to destruction with rest we can be reasonably assured of regrowth.

This is what is meant by the circle of life, everything will die but this is natural. The unnatural is when the circle is broken or destroyed and there is no chance for survival. There is no waste in nature. Nature by definition is cyclical, waste is the result of a linear system which means that the end products of resources and energy inputs are not cycled or returned. In nature all processes supply food for other species. . In 1813 John James Audubon estimated the number of passenger pigeons in a migrating flock as well over a billion. Now it matters very little if this number was vastly overstated. At the time it was thought that nearly 40% of the total bird population of the U.S. was passenger pigeons. On Sept. 1, 1914 Martha the last living passenger pigeon in the world died in the Cincinnati Zoological gardens. She was 29 years old and can be seen today behind a glass in the U.S. National Museum.



The now extinct passenger pigeon.



Mountaintop removal mining devastates the landscape, turning areas that should be lush with forests and wildlife into barren moonscapes.

Now as hard as this is for some to understand and accept when a species is lost no change in price or technology will bring it back. Even with all of our resource extraction and technology and with all of the required capital and will, growth may not always be possible. Even with our love of the latest computers and phones and all of the other miracles of modern technology basic human survival depends a lot more on clean water and air and our ability to sustain soil productivity. This then raises a question that too few want to ask. Is it possible to extend indefinitely into the future economic growth? The theory of ever expanding abundance is not based on science or nature, but solely on self-interest. There are too many examples to believe otherwise. And to quote Edward Abby one more time, It is not enough to understand the natural world , the point is to defend and preserve it. Can we save what is left?

About the Author:



My name is Don Ashford and my wife is Betty and we live in Ethel, LA. It would be impossible for me to write a bio about myself without including Betty in it. We have been together since high school. I was in the senior class of 1955 and she was in the class of 1957. Do the math. We have raised cattle since 1959 except for a little time that I spent with Uncle Sam. We have grazed stockers, owned several cow- calf herds and custom grazed cattle for other folks. I worked as a pipefitter for more than 25 years. Until we went into the dairy business in 1977 we were as most people down here part-timers or week-end ranchers. Later after we had learned enough about MIG to talk about it so that it would be understood by others we put together a pasture-walk group to introduce it to our friends and neighbors. We belong to more farm groups than we probably should but we get great joy working with other people. What makes us most proud are our son and daughter, our 5 grandkids and our 7 great-grand kids. It has been a hell of a trip so far, but we are not done yet.

HIGHLIGHTS

August 18th, 2018

Louisiana Ranchers and Growers Association Pasture Walk

The Louisiana Ranchers and Growers Association, the LGLCI and five other Louisiana agricultural organizations partnered to host a Pasture Walk in at Homerun Herefords in Slaughter, LA. Around 50 people participated in this event. A post from the LRGA's Facebook website said, "We had a great time today at the pasture walk and annual meeting at Homerun Herefords. Thank you Dennis White, owner and Donnie Ashford, manager for hosting us."



September 19th, 2018

Morganza Spillway & New Roads Pasture Walk

Matt Frey, with Four Oaks Farm Quality Crawfish in Morganza, shared how he transformed his crop land in the spillway into pasture land for grazing cattle. He talked about his system of grazing, which is rotational grazing in fixed paddocks, the seeds he plants, his breeding and calving seasons and more. Thank you to Candis Voorhies and Carlyn Morales with the Upper Delta Soil & Water Conservation District in the New Roads Office for being a large part of the workshop, Stuart Gardner with NRCS, Dr. Twidwell and Christine Navarre with LSU AgCenter and all the grazers and farmers who attended.



Stuart Gardner with NRCS talking about grass species on top of the Morganza Spillway Levee.



Candis Voorhies with the Upper Delta Soil and Water Conservation District talking about the transition of Frey's pasture in New Roads, La.

HIGHLIGHTS

August 23rd, 2018 Pollinator Field Day

The LSU AgCenter and the LGLCI partnered to host our second pollinator field day of the year. The event was organized by Ted Miller and Cliff Vining. Dr. Sebe Brown spoke at the workshop along with Dr. Wink Allison. A catered meal was also provided.



August 30th, 2018 Cool Season Pasture Workshop

Minden Farm and Garden, Trailblazer RC&D along with the LGLCI partnered to host a Cool Season Pasture Workshop. Topics discussed included drought assistance programs, grazing systems, cool season and forage varieties, and a time for questions.



September 22nd, 2018 Bogalousa Pasture Walk

Grant Estrade and Kate Estrade are soil health conscience grazers and farmers in Bogalousa, LA at their businesses Local Cooling Farms and nursery, Laughing Buddha Nursery. This weekend they hosted a awesome pasture walk on their farm and taught people about the benefits of adding quality compost to pasture, establishing silvopasture, and so much more. A great day to meet new people and connect with fellow producers and consumers.

OTHER NEWS

It's been an exciting year for the LGLCI! We've hosted 18 events this year and had the opportunity to reach more than 500 people at these events, and the year isn't over yet. Another exciting venture in 2018 was the LGLCI was awarded three grants. The National GLCI awarded the LGLCI a mini-grant, which will send six Louisiana producers to the National Grazing Lands Convention in Reno, NV in December of 2018. There, all six producers will give presentations on stage about their farms. Those producers include, Anna and Caleb Stokes from Sulphur, La., Cooper and Katie Hurst from Woodville, Ms., and Grant and Kate Estrade from Bogalousa, La. This grant will also partially contribute to the "Louisiana Grazing Lands" documentary series we are producing. LGLCI was also awarded a grant to receive board training from "The Matrix Group," out of Texas from the National GLCI, which will happen on November 9th, 2018 in Alexandria. All partners of LGLCI are welcome to attend the training. Please contact Taylor Frey at info@louisianaglc.org if you are interested in attending this training. The Louisiana Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) also awarded the LGLCI a \$150,000 grant titled, "Multifaceted Support for Grazing Land Conservation" for 2019 - 2020, which we have many exciting things planned! Stay tuned for those upcoming events and videos. Follow us on Facebook - Louisiana Grazing Lands Coalition and visit our website, Louisianaglc.org, to subscribe to our quarterly newsletter.



UPCOMING EVENTS:



Friday December 7th, 2018
Louisiana Forage and Grassland Council
Annual Conference - Alexandria, LA

The conference will be held on Friday, December 7 in Alexandria. The meeting site will be the LSU AgCenter's Woodrow Dewitt Livestock Barn Facility, located on the south end of the campus at LSU-A in Alexandria. The campus is located south of Alexandria off of Highway 71.

Presentations will be made on topics such as the importance of forage testing in livestock operations, new available forage legume varieties and research findings on the benefits of using diverse forage species as cover crops. The topic of soil health in pastures will be discussed by a producer and a soil health research project will be discussed by an LSU graduate student.

Registration and viewing of commercial exhibits will begin at 8:15 a.m. The meeting will begin at 9:00 a.m. and conclude with a lunch at 1:00 p.m. Lunch will be included in the \$10 registration fee and anyone interested in forage production and management is invited to attend.

Membership in LFGC will be available at the meeting for \$35. Membership in LFGC is not required for attendance.

October 22nd - 26th, 2018
12th Biennial Longleaf Conference
Alexandria, La.

The Longleaf Alliance is hosting their Longleaf Conference at the Holiday Inn in Alexandria on October 22nd - 26th. Pre-registration is closed, however walk-ins are welcome to attend the conference. To view the agenda, visit <https://projects.ncsu.edu/mckimmon/cpe/opd/lac/>.

October 29, 2018
Land Management for Waterfowl
Workshop

The Trailblazer RC&D is hosting a land management for waterfowl workshop on October 29, 2018, at 6:00 pm at the Sheriff's Substation in Bossier City, Louisiana. For more information or to register, e-mail ceo@trailblazer.org.

October 30, 2018
Land Management for Waterfowl
Workshop

The Trailblazer RC&D is hosting a land management for waterfowl workshop on October 30, 2018, at 6:00 pm at the Lincoln Parish Library in Ruston, Louisiana. For more information or to register, e-mail ceo@trailblazer.org.

January 2019
LGLCI Louisiana Grazing Lands Video Launch

In January 2019, the LGLCI will publish the first of eight mini-documentaries highlighting Louisiana grazers and ranchers who practice conservation. The first video will highlight Jay Duhon's ranch in Sulphur, La. He will talk about using prescribed burning before planting, stock pile pastures in substitution for hay, and his native prairie grasses he has growing on his land. You can watch the mini-documentary on LGLCI's YouTube Channel: Louisiana GLCI

