

PRESCRIBED GOAT GRAZING IN URBAN SETTINGS: A PILOT STUDY OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK IN NINE U.S. CITIES

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1 ABSTRACT

This paper provides a preliminary assessment of how municipal codes affect prescribed grazing efforts in U.S. cities. Throughout the U.S., landscape architects, planners, and other land management professionals are experimenting with the use of goats and sheep as biological agents for controlling invasive plants and assisting in the restoration of ecological function in woodland and riparian environments—a land management technique known as prescribed grazing. Recent experiments in public settings such as park systems and airports have spurred interest in this practice, and generated growing market demand for prescribed grazing services on private lands. In responding to this demand, however, land planners and prescribed grazing contractors enter a legally ambiguous terrain. To assess how municipal ordinances may affect the use of prescribed grazing as a method for managing invasive vegetation, the authors conducted a literature review and a review of land-use regulations in nine U.S. communities where prescribed grazing activities are underway. Among these municipalities, few regulations currently are in place to allow and effectively govern prescribed grazing on privately-owned urban lands. Consequently, many prescribed grazing efforts in these cities may be illegal or only quasi-legal—a situation that may limit further testing of prescribed grazing methods while also potentially placing animals, humans, and the environment in jeopardy. The paper concludes with suggestions for how public policy-makers, planners, environmental contractors, and landscape architects may collaborate on research and environmental remediation via prescribed grazing, and how existing codes might be altered to support this emerging frontier of urban land management.

1.1 Keywords

goats, law, land management, livestock, prescribed grazing