

FOUR-LEGGED ECOREVELATORY AGENTS OF ENGAGEMENT: PRESCRIBED GRAZING AS A TOOL FOR COMMUNITY BUILDING, ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION, AND PUBLIC INTERACTION

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1 ABSTRACT

This paper describes the results of an ongoing, university-initiated project, The Tanyard Creek Chew Crew, which utilizes sheep and goats to catalyze community involvement in urban ecological restoration. Throughout the United States, 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 technique known as prescribed grazing. For urban conservationists, prescribed grazing may be a cost-effective, non-toxic, non-polluting, and effective technology for managing pest plant species. Aside from these benefits, however, domesticated animals may offer opportunities to engage the public in the process of rehabilitating and re-inhabiting neglected urban green spaces. Using a degraded riparian woodland as a test site, the authors initiated a prescribed grazing program in a highly visible section of the University of Georgia campus. The effort was designed to capitalize on the charismatic nature of goats to attract students, curious passers-by, neighborhood children, and other community members to the site. The results of the project suggest that landscape architects should consider how domesticated animals may become valuable partners in managing urban cultural landscapes. The paper includes case-based suggestions for how landscape architects might design prescribed grazing initiatives to promote to greater knowledge of local nature, attachment to place, and participation in environmental stewardship.

1.1 Keywords

community engagement, ecological restoration, goats, landscape management, prescribed grazing