

Have you ever been faced with a decision that will affect not only you but others as well? Often times, we are required to thoroughly analyze our choices, seeking out the benefits and disadvantages, while trying to figure out which decision will be the best. Society is constantly urging us to solve these complicated decisions, and we must rise to the challenge. For example, a serious decision we must make will discuss how to efficiently use the undeveloped land in South Carolina. Should we build a golf course? Or perhaps, a landfill for electronic waste? I believe the most rational proposal would be to lease the land in order to graze cattle, sheep, and pigs.

From an environmental point of view, grazing animals is the best possible solution. For instance, when sheep graze, they clip pastures, and eat weeds. Sheep also produce about \$1.00 from each pound of wool they produce. Another benefit from grazing is that sheep, pigs and cattle diseases do not carry the same infective pathogens. Hypothetically, if one species were to become ill, the other would not be infected at all. Next, multi-grazing animals help provide the grass with positive results one would not get from grazing only one species. Grazing cattle, sheep and pigs is a better alternative resource for protecting our watersheds, since the runoff from golf courses pollutes watersheds, and it is hard for golf courses to control their use of using pesticides. Turf grasses on golf courses do not generally hold surface water/ground water very well, causing pesticides to runoff into the watershed. Similarly, runoff from the gravel used in parking lots of shopping malls deeply pollutes the watershed. Since many cars would come to the mall, the air would be polluted, causing acid rain to pollute our watersheds. An Electronic-waste facility would also cause a considerable amount of damage to our watersheds as well, since the lead from the computers would leak into the soil.

However, we need to address a serious concern. There is a growing problem with grazing facilities not disposing of their waste properly. The excess feces and fertilizer may seep through

the soil into the ground and become groundwater, or it may become surface water and runoff into our lakes and streams. The soil is unable to sustain these contaminants, since it does not have a strong system of roots. But, there is a possible solution. For example, if you plant forage crops such as perennial grasses, their deep system of roots would help to soak in the animal wastes and fertilizer. You would need to make sure the grass is not overgrazed so it will be able to filter harmful pollutants. To prevent the grass from being overgrazed, proper pasture rotation should be encouraged. Another solution to this problem would be to create riparian buffers, which are like wave breakers at the beach. These buffers that are created along the side of the watersheds help to soak in some of the excess fecal matter and fertilizer. Riparian buffers also help block out some noise that result from road traffic.

The costs of grazing would include, but would not be limited to: Fencing, farmers and farm hand, cost of cattle, sheep, pigs, feed, shelter and water systems. Economically, grazing cattle, sheep and pigs, is not the most efficient short-term solution. It would take at least half a million dollars to create this facility along with its essentials and the beginning of grazing animals may take a few years until money is earned back. Grazing animals may not cause hundreds of tourists to flock towards South Carolina, but it helps provide meat, dairy, and wool for many people locally, instead of having goods being imported from different countries, which can help prevent some health issues that have arisen during recent years. We can also convert these grazing lands into educational facilities for children to learn about domestic farm animals, as well as protecting the environment.

All in all, grazing animals may not be the best decision to protect our watershed. Nevertheless, with precise planning, we can reduce the potential effect grazing animals may have on the environment. Grazing animals may have an economic flaw, but it is justified by the

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improving quality of life. We cannot validate our decisions with economy alone. We must also consider the environmental benefits, and how it affects our watersheds. Otherwise, it doesn't matter how much money you make, if there is no clean water, there will be no life on earth to enjoy. Watersheds are essential for the survival of any kind of life form on earth. We need to keep in mind how valuable our watersheds are to us, and remember our obligatory duty to protect them.