



**DATE:** December 1, 2025

**MEMO TO:** Paul Frank, Chair  
Planning Committee

Sara Knizhnik, Chair  
Operations Committee

Gina Roberts, Chair  
Finance Committee

**FROM:** Pati Vitt  
Director of Natural Resources

**RECOMMENDATION:** Provide policy direction regarding a request to launch a pilot program utilizing grazing as a means of invasive species management.

**STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS SUPPORTED:** Leadership, Conservation

**FINANCIAL DATA:** There are no financial impacts at this time.

**BACKGROUND:** The 100-Year Vision for Lake County is a plan for a healthy and resilient landscape with restored and preserved natural lands. One of the greatest threats to natural areas across the region is invasive species. Buckthorn and other woody invasive species comprise approximately 52.2% of all trees in Lake County. Restoring more acres and prioritizing oak ecosystems are part of the Steward Healthy Landscapes objective in the Road Map to 2025, while managing buckthorn is a specific objective of the 100-Year Vision document.

Livestock grazing, specifically with goats and/or sheep, could provide an opportunity to manage areas with woody invasives such as buckthorn that might not otherwise be prioritized for cost-prohibitive woody invasive control, such as our SITS (Small Invasive Tree and Shrub) control program. While grazing is not anticipated to fully replace herbicides or other invasive control practices, it could provide a potential alternative to accomplish objectives in a cost-effective manner.

Staff are requesting Policy Direction to expend time on exploring this opportunity.

If policy direction is given to move forward with this pilot program, the process would be as follows:

- District staff would develop the details of a proposed pilot program, including its proposed location.

- In accordance with that program, District staff would prepare, negotiate, and execute a Research Permit or other form of agreement with a third party, granting permission for goat/sheep grazing to proceed. Staff anticipates that the permit/agreement would allow six to eight sheep/goats to graze on two or three acres of District land, for a term of up to four years to fully evaluate the program's efficacy.
- During and following the performance under the permit, Natural Resources staff would evaluate reductions in invasive species cover and overall effectiveness of the grazing pilot program.
- During and/or after performance under the permit, Natural Resources staff would report back to the Committee with the results of the pilot program and, if appropriate, to seek further direction. For example, if the grazing activity is successful in reducing the cover of woody invasive species without unduly damaging native vegetation or other undesirable collateral effects, staff would bring forward to Committee and to the Board of Commissioners (i) a Grazing Program, possibly as an extension of the Farm Management Program or as a stand-alone program and/or (ii) one or more permits/agreements that would allow one or more third parties to graze their livestock on (potentially larger portions of) District property for natural restoration purposes.

**REVIEW BY OTHERS:** Executive Director, Chief Operations Officer, Director of Finance, Manager of Board Operations, Corporate Counsel.