



## Northern Kenya Improved Grasslands Project

April 2020

**Project Type:** Soil Carbon Sequestration

**Location:** Savanna grasslands in Northern Kenya (Mt. Kenya and north)

**Start Year:** 2017

**Standards:** Verified Carbon Standard (VCS) Climate, **Triple Gold Verified** Community & Biodiversity Standards (CCB Standards)

**Area:** 2 million hectares

**Volume:** 1.7 million tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>E/year

*Photo: Grasslands at the Namunyak Conservancy in northern Kenya*

In many of Kenya's rural lands, wildlife and people coexist in a delicate, historical balance—sharing the resources that feed them as well as Kenya's tourism and livestock economies. Here, conservation endures when it also enables communities to secure peace, provide for their families, and reap the benefits that come from caring for shared resources.

Across northern Kenya's communal lands, NativeEnergy, The Nature Conservancy, and Northern Rangelands Trust (NRT) launched a first of its kind carbon project that will not only create a sustainable, new income stream for people and community-led conservation efforts, it will also sequester greenhouse gases, make this vulnerable region more resilient to the impacts of climate change and protect wildlife habitat. This project presents a new solution to the challenges of overgrazing, tensions over scarce land, and frequent droughts by providing revenues to local communities to improve grazing practices.

This project has also received a "Triple Gold" status under the Climate, Community, and Biodiversity Alliance (CCBA) as it is considered to be likely to provide exceptional benefits to communities, their ability to adapt to climate change, and to enhance biodiversity. Over the thirty year project lifetime, the project is anticipated to remove more than 50 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere.

### **Project Description**

Reliable carbon funding enables pastoralists, who are dedicated to permanently protecting land in each individual conservancy or physical grassland area, to develop and implement strategic rotational grazing practices. Grazing "assistants" in each conservancy advise herders in the field and monitor results. These new grazing practices translate into healthier grass, greater root depth and increased soil carbon. This change is monitored every year, by analyzing satellite imagery of biomass and herd locations and measured every 8-10 years with physical soil samples to track and verify rangeland condition and change across the full project area over the 30-year project. This methodology for verifying soil carbon accruals tied to grazing practice changes is the first of its kind. It is a carbon methodology by Verra approved in 2015. It allows NRT conservancies to model the amount of carbon stored in their grasslands annually with improved grazing practices and then reward pastoralists for improving the ultimate source of their livelihood, soil. After-cost revenues from carbon credits enable communities to invest in infrastructure, education, health programs and other community-identified priority projects.

### **Impacts & Benefits**

This project impacts environmental conservation, community, and biodiversity, and has been validated to Community & Biodiversity CCB Standards. Activities restore

perennial grass cover and increase soil organic carbon which would result in increased infiltration and retention of limited precipitation. Healthier grasslands produce improved livestock grazing that will lower the likelihood of catastrophic livestock loss during drought, promote sustained meat and milk production, and raise heavier livestock that are saleable.

Grazing plans should also lead to a stronger community connection to land and reduced conflicts over grazing. Planned rotational grazing practices will largely remove livestock from continuous grazing in areas near settlements, thereby reducing grazing pressure on forage in these areas. Women and male children are typically responsible for husbanding small livestock (sheep and goats) to provide milk and meat for families. Longer-lasting green forage would drive more sustainable production practices, less time required for herding animals long distance, and more time for children to attend school.

Studies clearly show shifts from continuous open, to planned rotational, grazing can improve biodiversity of multiple taxonomic groups. The ecological vegetation and soil changes from the implementation of the project will enhance the region's role as a High Conservation Area for key endangered species such as the Grevy's zebra, elephant and the critically endangered black rhinoceros, as well as other endemic bird and ungulate species in the project area's biogeographical position. (The project region is home to the Eastern Black Rhino which currently numbers only 740 rhinoceroses and is the rarest of the remaining three Black Rhino subspecies.)

The project should also protect "sky island" forests on mountain ranges adjacent to the project area, such as the Mathews and Mukogodo Forests. Improved grazing practices and improved grasslands will reduce the need for herders to use the forests to provide forage for livestock during drought.

### Project Participants

This project is a collaborative effort among NativeEnergy, Northern Rangelands Trust, The Nature Conservancy, and Soils for the Future.



### Validation & Verification

The Northern Kenya Rangeland Project is designed to follow the Verra Agricultural Land Management – Sustainable Grassland Management through Adjustment of Fire



and Grazing methodology. This methodology allows Verified Carbon Units (VCUs) to be earned for the activity of improved grazing management, and thus verified as a consequence of demonstrating such improved management by measuring altered grazing intensities, records of the time, timing and number of livestock grazers using the project area, and vegetation.



### **For More Information**

NativeEnergy  
*A Public Benefit Corporation*

Jeff Bernicke  
nativeenergy.com  
3 Main Street, Suite 212  
Burlington, VT 05401  
1-802-861-7707  
jeff.bernicke@nativeenergy.com

*Certified BCorp*