

Wildlife Experts Roundtable Description

Goal

Expert suggestions improve the design and marketing for a stand alone or series of workshops to train people to better manage for and monitor wildlife on central coast rangelands.

Background

For years, the Elkhorn Slough Coastal Training Program has focused on improving central coast grassland conservation through educating key audiences on the latest science. Similarly, the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) has a long history of working to advance the use of science in managing Central Coast rangelands including grasslands. Thus far, the ESCTP has sponsored formal educational events and more informal discussions on such diverse subjects as grassland ecology and conservation, coastal prairie restoration and management, grassland community classification, monitoring for native grasses and residual dry matter, and a system to monitor the sustainability of rangeland stewardship. UCCE has conducted Ranch Planning Courses in the Central Coast and has worked with USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service to develop ecological site description of Central Coast rangeland soil types to assist in conservation planning. But there remains many unmet education needs to move grassland conservation forward. The ESCTP and UCCE's ongoing education program evaluation indicates a strong need by public land managers, private consultants, ranchers, and governmental land management advisors for increased training on monitoring and managing for wildlife.

To meet this need, we are proposing two workshops focusing on wildlife and rangelands. The first will bring experts together to discuss proposed and extant methodologies for measuring and managing for wildlife. The outcomes of this workshop will inform the design and marketing of the second workshop, which will help those working in the field to better conserve wildlife on rangelands through improved management and monitoring. The following describes this first workshop.

Description

The ESCTP will facilitate a discussion amongst a small group of select rangeland wildlife experts to help design and target educational programs for those whose management and monitoring can best improve wildlife conservation on central coast rangelands. The target audience for these educational programs might best include the public and private land managers, ranchers, and consultants who have indicated to the ESCTP and/or UCCE that they want to conserve (and to demonstrate conservation of) rangeland wildlife resources, defined broadly. Dr. Reg Barrett, UC Berkeley, has proposed to the ESCTP a methodology for this broad goal: he suggests using the online Wildlife Habitats Relationship (WHR) database to generate an 'expected' wildlife list for a given management unit and then to compare this 'expected' list with those species actually

found in that area. We would like this proposal to be considered as well as others from the group of invited experts.

Dr. Barrett also suggests that there are some land managers who derive benefits from the harvest of game animals, and methodologies for census of numbers/age class/population structure would be crucial to demonstrating good stewardship of these resources. This would require beyond the expertise of most land managers, who would need to turn to consultants, DFG, etc., to accomplish this. Should the ESCTP and/or UCCE focus its educational programs on monitoring for targeted game animals or, rather, support the more broad goal indicated by its audiences? This is a subject for discussion at the workshop.

As an outcome of this workshop, the ESCTP and UCCE will hold a one day pilot workshop six to eight weeks after this first workshop to test the training methodologies for rangeland wildlife monitoring and stewardship. This workshop will feature leading instructors who will mentor others to teach this workshop in coming years. The ESCTP will work with this pool of presenters and audiences to continually evaluate and modify the workshop for maximum impact.