

TECHNICAL NOTES

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

BOISE, IDAHO

SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

June 16, 1980

TN - RANGE NO. 16

COLLECTION OF RANGE SITE DATA

The attached WTSC Technical Note, Range No. 5, contains characteristic guidelines developed by the SCS soil-range team for relic areas. The list was prepared by Durwood Ball, Range Conservationist, West Technical Service Center, Portland, Oregon.


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Attachment

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West Technical Service Center-Portland, Oregon

Range No. 5

May 1980

COLLECTION OF RANGE SITE DATA

The demand for range conservationist time has accelerated in part because of the increasing number of soil surveys. Documentation of the vegetation by soils is most important. Relic areas are increasingly difficult to find, and in many instances we will collect data from ranges that have been well managed and approximate the potential plant communities. In the areas where relic areas cannot be found, the selection of sites for range site documentation is very important. These characteristic guidelines were developed by the SCS soil-range team for relic areas and are for your use.

Characteristics of Relic Areas

1. Vegetation Composition - Kinds and relative proportions of plant species; based on considerable experience and a lot of looking; does it compare with similar area of soils and climate.
2. Total Amount of Vegetation Present - Is the stand fully stocked in relation to the climate; is the vegetation in balance with the soil producing it.
3. Distribution Pattern of Species - Especially those that are palatable to grazing animals.
4. Age and Size Distribution - Proper ratio of seedlings, mature old and dead plants (woody); plant vigor.
5. Extent, Kind and Amount of Plant Litter.
6. Cryptogams - Presence or absence.
7. Exotic Plants - Presence or absence.
8. History - Protection, grazing use, droppings, trailing, trampling, and erosion.
9. Natural Disturbances - Fire, insects, rodents, game use, etc.
10. Should have a good reason for being there - Protection, long ways from water, etc.

Selection of Any Site for Range Site Documentation

Be consistent. Look for and be aware of these things.

1. Near potential vegetation from one soil unit (relatively uniform poly pedon).
2. Avoid transition areas of both vegetation and soils.
3. Reasonably complete plant list.
4. Record rooting depth of plants. Strive to understand the "edaphic environment" and the plant community.
5. Age of some shrub species is often indicative of their position in the potential plant community.
6. Special attention should be given to amount, distribution, and storage of moisture and soil characteristics that influence them, such as content of coarse fragments, textures, structure, and depth to moisture-inhibiting layers or horizons. Attention must be given to runoff and runoff from surrounding areas.