

Soil Quality Enhancement Activity –SQL19–Management for rangeland soil health



Enhancement Description

Professional assessment of rangeland health by evaluating the presence, descriptions and amounts of rills, water flow patterns, pedestals or terracettes, bare ground, gullies, wind erosion affected areas, litter movement, soil surface loss and resistance to erosion, plant community composition and distribution, compaction, functional/structural groups, plant mortality/decadence, amounts of litter, annual production, invasive plants, and reproductive capability

of perennial plants; and implementing measures that help avoid degradation of the resource.

Land Use Applicability

Rangeland

Benefits

Soil health is defined as the continued capacity of soil to function as a vital living ecosystem that sustains plants, animals, and humans. This definition speaks to the importance of managing soils so they are sustainable for future generations. To do this, we need to remember that soil contains living organisms that when provided the basic necessities of life - food, shelter, and water - perform functions required to produce food and fiber.

Only "living" things can have health, so viewing soil as a living ecosystem reflects a fundamental shift in the way we care for our nation's soils. Soil isn't an inert growing medium, but rather is teeming with billions of bacteria, fungi, and other microbes that are the foundation of an elegant symbiotic ecosystem. Soil is an ecosystem that can be managed to provide nutrients for plant growth, absorb and hold rainwater for use during dryer periods, filter and buffer potential pollutants from running off our fields, and provide habitat for a diversity of soil microbes to flourish which keeps the ecosystem running smoothly.

Conditions Where Enhancement Applies

This enhancement applies to all range land use acres.

Criteria

1. Acquire a Rangeland Health Assessment (RHA) by a qualified Range Management Consultant (CRMC) or Professional in Range Management (CPRM) as certified by the Society for Range Management.
 - a. Utilize Technical Reference 1734-6 “Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health” Version 4 (or version 5 when made available) to complete the RHA.
2. Evaluate current ranch management as related to impacts on Rangeland Soil Health and appraise the alternatives for addressing concerns.



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3. Implement NRCS Conservation Practice 528 (Prescribed Grazing) and other practices as needed to address concerns noted in the RHA.

Adoption Requirements

This enhancement is considered adopted when the above criteria has been implemented on the land use acre.

Documentation Requirements

1. Copy of the RHA completed by a CRMC or CPRM.
2. Copy of the prescribed grazing (528) plan.
3. Records of dates when domestic livestock graze pastures and utilization rates on the key forage species for each pasture (transcribed or photographic).

References

Pellant, M., P. Shaver, D.A. Pyke, and J.E. Herrick. 2005. Interpreting indicators of rangeland health, version 4. Technical Reference 1734-6. U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, National Science and Technology Center, Denver, CO. BLM/WO/ST-00/001+1734/REV05. 122 pp.

Society for Range Management, 2015. Society for Range Management, Education - Certification Programs. Littleton, CO. http://www.rangelands.org/education_cert_professionals.shtml

USDA-NRCS. 2010. Conservation Practice Standard. Prescribed Grazing-Code 528.