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CALIFORNIA TECHNICAL GUIDE 450-VI

TECHNICAL GUIDE NOTICE NO. 120

SUBJECT: Issue New and Revised Documents to the electronic Field Office Technical Guide, Sections I.

Purposes:

1. Issue Range Technical Note CA-57, various WHEGs, and an updated CA-NRCS Fish and Wildlife Plan to eFOTG, Section I

Effective Date: When contents are received.

Explanation:

Section I:

- A Technical Note “California Rangeland Monitoring and Mapping: Focusing upon Great Valley and Carrizo Plain Grassland Habitats” has been posted to Section I > Technical Notes > Range > Range Technical Note 57.
 - California Native Plant Society (CNPS) has completed a project with funding from both Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and CNPS to assess grassland vegetation types and invasive plants on grazing lands in the Great Valley and the Carrizo Plain National Monument of California across a three-year timeframe. Field survey data were compiled and analyzed statistically to develop a vegetation classification and to assess intra- and inter-annual changes of grassland communities across an environmental gradient.
- Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guides have been updated / added to Section I > Resource Assessment Tools > Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guides
 - CA WHEG
 - WHEGs for Southwestern Willow Flycatcher and Sage Grouse
- Pollinator Habitat Assessment Guide posted to Section I > Resource Assessment Tools > Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guides
- The CA NRCS Fish and Wildlife Habitat Plan was updated and posted to Section I > Reference Lists > 5-Biology

Summary of Changes:

Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (CA-WHEG)

1. Name changed to Wildlife Habitat Evaluation Guide (WHEG) (from WHAG).
2. Second worksheet is Form Notes which contains some key information and example evaluation.
3. The workbook now has the Rice worksheet included.
4. Grassland/Savannah – added snags assessment to the worksheet this habitat is defines as “Land on which the historic climax plant community is predominantly grasses, grasslike plants, forbs or shrubs, and the tree composition is less than 25% foliar coverage. Such lands may be grazed by livestock.”
5. All worksheets with snags were modified with reduced dbh that may be more appropriate for the site potential.
6. All worksheets with downed wood have a better classification and schematic.
7. All riparian worksheets have Species Composition broken down in to two Habitat Elements of “Overstory Composition” and another that evaluates the “Mid-canopy, Understory and Groundcover Composition”.
8. The Forest&Woodland Worksheet element of Forest Size Class was replaced with “Stand Diversity” which is expected to better evaluate the site potential for wildlife habitat diversity.
9. Shrubland worksheet criteria of Brush Management was clarified to assess only browse by livestock and not that of deer and other natives wildlife where land managers have less of an ability to manage that behavior.
10. As developed last year, the riparian sections are associated with those non-cropped habitats like Grassland&Savanna, Forestland &Woodland and Shrubland. Planners will use the Riparian Habitat Worksheet where riparian areas exist adjacent to croplands.
11. There are some additional improvements to the instructions.

Sage-grouse Habitat Evaluation Guide

1. Minor changes to format with all content the same.

Southwestern Willow Flycatcher Evaluation Guide

1. We updated this regional WHEG to be consistent with biological assessment for the development of Biological Opinion and modified Safe Harbor Agreement.

Pollinator Habitat Assessment

1. Xerces Society and NRCS cooperatively modified the planning criteria from 140 down to 90 points. There are some additional changes to habitat elements and values.
2. The form is a fillable PDF
3. One such change is the elimination of points for bee blocks. This was requested by Xerces Society entomologists.

CA NRCS Fish and Wildlife Plan

1. Added back in the Rare and Declining Habitats as priorities for assessment and management of wildlife habitats. The plan contains a partial list of example habitats. For additional plant communities to be considered as Rare or Declining habitats concurrence by NRCS Area or Local Biologists will be determined when documentation meets minimum criteria

Location of Documents

The California eFOTG, located on the web at <http://efotg.sc.egov.usda.gov/treemenuFS.aspx> It is being updated to reflect these changes and additions to Section I. If a service center would like copies sent via email, please request them from Terryl.Kocsis@ca.usda.gov. The Wildlife / Assessment Tools files are 9MB, the Range Technical Note is 10MB.

Optional Filing Instructions (for hard copies of FOTG maintained in Field Offices)

Place the Range Technical Note into Binder with other Technical Notes, Section I.

The Log of Technical Guide Notices (Section I) has been updated.

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TOM HEDT
State Resource Conservationist

ATTACHMENTS: (electronic)

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