Prescribed Grazing - 528

Annual Grassland Residual Dry Matter (RDM) Evaluation Guide

California

November 2014

Client Name: _____ **Completed By:** _____

Location: _____ **Date:** _____

Soil and Veg Site: _____

Considering the potential of the site, rate the following indicators by giving each a rating of 0 to 4 (4 being best). High and low example descriptons and photos are included to assist with interpolating scores between 0 and 4.

Indicators for a Residual Dry Matter Evaluation

Scores

Residual Dry Matter:

At the end of the grazing season RDM levels meet appropriate levels based on percent slope and percent oak canopy cover. *(Example: High Score of 4)*

At the end of the grazing season RDM levels fall below or exceed recommended levels based on percent slope and oak canopy cover. (UCANR # 8092 & RDM Pictures). *(Example: Low Score)*

Grazing Intensity:

There is present evidence that management of grazing animals is causing moderate levels of use and meeting RDM guidelines, plant community is near the desired vegetative state. During the fall, yellow grass is seen covering 60 to 80 percent of the range site. Annual grasses do not appear mowed, but patchy. Bare ground, small rocks, gopher and squirrel mounds are partially masked by yellow grass within a distance of 20 feet. *(High Score)*

There is present evidence that past management of grazing animals is causing heavy use exceeding RDM levels (or) no grazing use, plant community is not desired or near the naturalized plant community; heavy use is observed by a mowed apperance of 1 to 2 inches. Bare ground, small rocks, gopher and squirrel mounds are visible within a distance of 20 feet. (UCANR Publication 8092 and Grazing Intensity Pictures). *(Low Score)*

Plant Species Composition Change:

There is present evidence that current management of grazing animals and enviromental conditions are causing plant composition changes towards the desired or naturalized plant community. *(High)*

There is current evidence that preferred plants species are reduced and less desirable species are increasing based on the desired or historic naturalized plant community. Prolonged drought, invasive species, poisonous plants or grazing disturbances have reduced the plant community to less desirable species. (See Plant Species Composition Change Pictures). *(Low)*

Condition of the Soil Surface:

There are no visible signs of accelerated erosion, past erosion is being healed by proper management of RDM levels and season of use. Bare ground, sheet, rill erosion, gullies, soil movement and soil stability is what is expected for the site. *(High)*

Accelerated erosion is obvious and past erosion is not being healed by proper management of RDM. Bare ground, sheet, rill erosion, gullies, soil movement and soil stability are not what is expected for the site. (UCANR Publicaton 8064 Watershed Function, Soil Pictures). *(Low)*

Grassland Production Potential:

During the rapid spring growth period, (late winter to early spring), expected precipitation and temperature regimes were realized. There is strong evidence that annual grassland productivity reached the naturalized site potential or desired vegetative state. *(High)*

Due to limited rainfall and temperature variation within the rapid spring growth period, annual grass productivity did not reach the naturalized site potential or peak standing crop. (Documented annual rainfall & temperature snapshot, need for potential resource base/contigency plan). *(Low)*

Developed by the University of California Cooperative Extension & California USDA-NRCS
Julie Finzel, Livestock & Natural Resources Advisor, UCCE
Michael Higgins, Rangeland Management Specialist, NRCS
Ceci Dale-Cesmat, State Range Specialist, NRCS

Field notes describing condition of each indicator

Residual Dry Matter:

Grazing Intensity:

Plant Species Composition Change:

Condition of the Soil Surface:

Grassland Production Potential:

Potential Resource Base/Contigency Plan:

Examples of Residual Dry Matter (RDM) and Grazing Intensity Levels

Low RDM & High Grazing Intensity

(example score = 1)

Moderate RDM & Moderate Grazing Intensity

(example score = 2)

High RDM & Low Grazing Intensity

(example score = 4)

Examples of Plant Species Composition Change

Medusahead
(Annual Grass)

Yellow Starthistle
(Winter Annual Forb)

Indicators of plant species composition change

Invasive grasses, shrubs, trees
Medusahead, Yellow Starthhistle, Italian thistle, etc.
Overall change from palatable to unpalatable species.

Examples of Soil Surface Condition

Gullies *(Score = 2-3, depending on trend)*

Sheet & Rill Erosion *(Score = 0)*

Rills after Hillside Brushing *(Score = 0)*

Soil Erosion with Low RDM *(Score = 1)*

Grassland Production Potential

Documented climatic condtions affecting the four phases of forage growth

Break of Season

Rapid Spring Growth

Winter Growth Period

Peak Forage Production

Annual Production (Check One)

- ☐ Less than 20% of potential production
- ☐ 20-40% of potential production
- ☐ 40-60% of potential production
- ☐ 60-80% of potential production
- ☐ Exceeds 80% of potential