



Arizona Section Newsletter

JUNE 2013



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President's Message:

Greetings,
Spring is upon us and I hope most of you are out of your office or home, and are able to be out on the range. We had a good winter here in Pleasant Valley with over 10 inches of rain, and the land is reflecting the moisture we received.



As many of you recall, in 2008 our Section began a campaign to host a SRM national meeting. When SRM researched the possibility of coming to Tucson or Phoenix, they found problems with each location. Phoenix was deemed to be too expensive in February, and Tucson did not have adequately sized facilities for a meeting of several thousand people. There is a possibility that SRM will change the date of the 2017 meeting from mid-winter to a time when Phoenix would be affordable. I will keep you posted on these developments.

We are making progress towards improving the SRM experience for our university students. A recent survey of Tierra Seca (the UofA range club), revealed that they are: interested in giving presentations/poster talks at our meetings, desire workshops that focus on skills they will need in the future, would like future meetings on weekends or periods of "down" time at schools, and, they also appreciate field trips or site tours. It is important that our future stewards of the land are well served by SRM, and we are going to try and accommodate their needs.

Willie Sommers is busy planning our summer meeting, but he is also proposing a one day tour in the fall. This may well be a joint meeting with another society or agency and will be our

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AZ Section Summer Meeting

"Babbitt Ranches Land Ethic & Tour of the CO Bar Ranch"

August 7-9, 2013
Flagstaff



Board of Directors*President*

Mike Hemovich
Mh520@aol.com

President-Elect

Willie Sommers
wsommers@azland.gov

Past President

Doug Tolleson
dougf@cals.arizona.edu

Vice President

Eric Burden
Eric.Burden@az.usda.gov

Secretary

Ashley Shepherd
AshleyS3@email.arizona.edu

Secretary

Sarah Noelle
smnoelle@email.arizona.edu

Treasurer

Ernie Gipson
egipson@fs.fed.us

Director North

Alvin Whitehair
alvin.whitehair@blm.gov

Director North

Shai Schendel
Shai.schendel@az.usda.gov

Director South

Dan Robinnett
dgrobinett@gmail.com

Director South

Steve Barker
SteveBarker.az@gmail.com

U of A Student President

Alanna Riggs
agr1@email.arizona.edu

ASU Student President

Kelly Bedson
kbedson@asu.edu

President's Message...continued from Page 1

first effort at increasing student and Young Professional participation. If any of you have ideas or subjects for more joint meetings let me know.

I have been seeing an increasing amount of national news concerning the wild horse and burro problem. Again, thanks go to Alvin Whitehair, Al Medina and others for bringing the issue to our attention at our meeting last winter.

Our Section will have a booth at this year's annual Arizona Cattle Growers Convention in Phoenix, July 25-27. Between the booth and a Rancher Committee hour, we hope to increase our rancher membership. If you are at the convention, please stop by and pass on the benefits of SRM membership to non-member ranchers.

Thanks to all of you in leadership and committee positions in the Section. Your help is sincerely appreciated and I look forward to working with all of you in the coming months. Let me know if there are issues you want me to address as your Section President.

Mike Hemovich

Fundraising

Thanks to everyone who helped make the annual auction a huge success! The auction netted a total of \$2,475.00. The big ticket items were: a two night stay at the X Diamond Ranch donated by Wink Crigler, which brought in \$400, Ray Tanner's famous Travelling Chihuahua brought in \$300 and included a matching \$300 donation, the Verde Valley six pack of wine donated by the Cottonwood Chamber of Commerce that brought in \$275; and the Baxter Black tickets donated by Bob and Bonnie Benne which brought in \$125.

Our auctioneer, Jim Scott did a wonderful job entertaining the crowd and getting people to open their wallets!

We appreciate everyone who brought a cornucopia of fabulous items, and for those who dug deep to support NRCWAY and the scholarship programs at Arizona State University and the University of Arizona. The Board of Directors AZ Section distributes the money between NRCWAY, ASU and UA.



It's never too early to start gathering items for next year's auction! Please be on the lookout for fun and unique items, artwork, local crafts, or another six or twelve pack of wine (hic)!

Ranching with Drought in the Southwest: A workshop report and invitation to participate

Julie Brugger, Michael Crimmins, George Ruyle, Mitchel McClaran
University of Arizona



“I’ve had two ranching careers. One of them was from the late seventies to the mid-nineties, and the other one has been since then. They were very, very different. And I operate different. Took me – you know, it was like a two-by-four between the head the first few years – to realize this drought isn’t going to go away. But I made the adjustment. If I have to do any further adjustment that could be a problem, but I’m sure we’ll figure something out. . . But there are people who didn’t. They just stuck with the same numbers and they just fed ‘em and fed ‘em and fed ‘em, waiting for these big years to come back. And they had to sell their ranches.”

This is a quote from a rancher who attended a workshop, called “Ranching with Drought in the Southwest: Conditions, Challenges, and a Process to Meet the Challenges,” held February 27 and 28, 2013 on the Santa Rita Experimental Range near Tucson, Arizona. The quote describes the challenges that current drought conditions present to ranchers in the Southwest. The workshop was organized by the University of Arizona (UA) and attendees included ranchers from Apache, Cochise, Coconino, Gila, Pima, Santa Cruz, and Yavapai Counties, representatives from the Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and Arizona State Land Department (ASLD), program managers from USDA and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), University of Arizona research and extension scientists and students, and guests from the Southeastern US and California. This article describes the purpose of the workshop and its key outcomes, and it is an invitation to participate in a new program that addresses the challenges of ranching with drought in the Southwest.

Reasons for the workshop

The region is currently experiencing extraordinary drought conditions that began in the late 1990s and rival any in the instrumental record. Figure 1 shows the Palmer Drought Severity Index, a combination of precipitation and temperature, for the Santa Rita Experimental Range since 1940. It shows that ten of the fourteen driest years since 1940 have occurred since 1995.

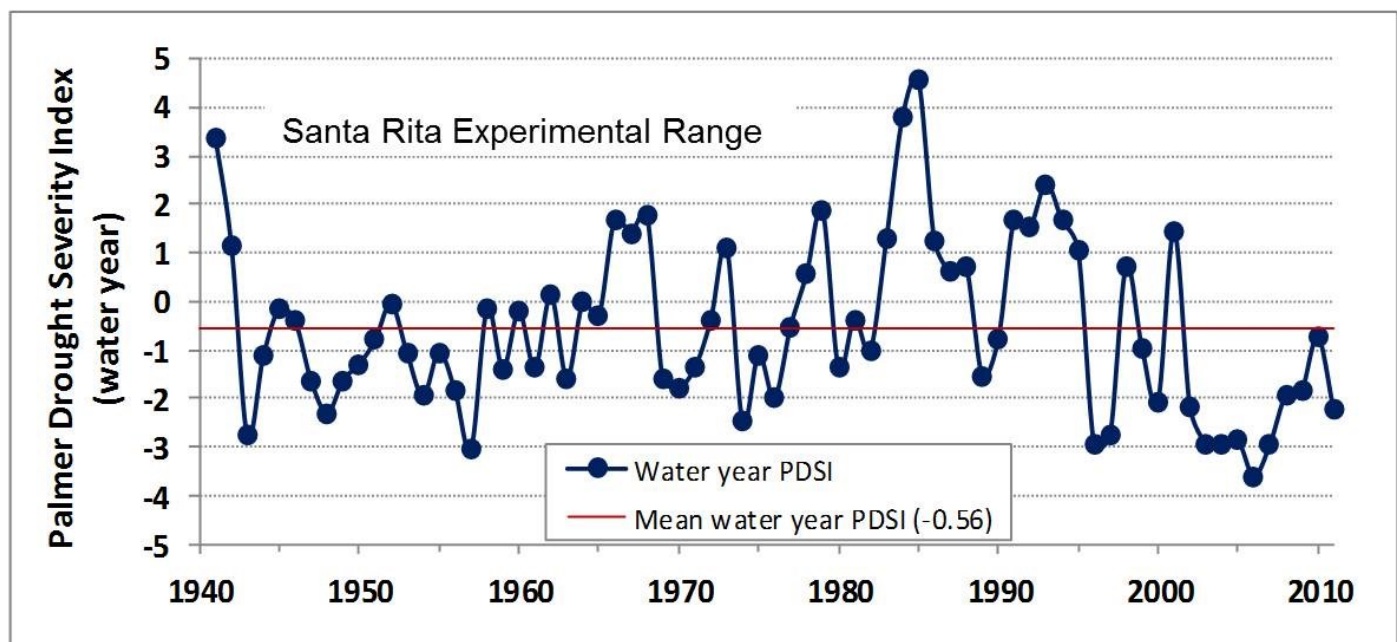


Figure 1. Drought patterns on the Santa Rita Experimental Range, near Tucson AZ since 1940. Palmer Drought Severity Index includes precipitation and temperature in the calculation, and a “water year” is the period from October through September (for example, water year 1960 starts in October 1959).

Ranching with Drought in the Southwest.....continued from page 3

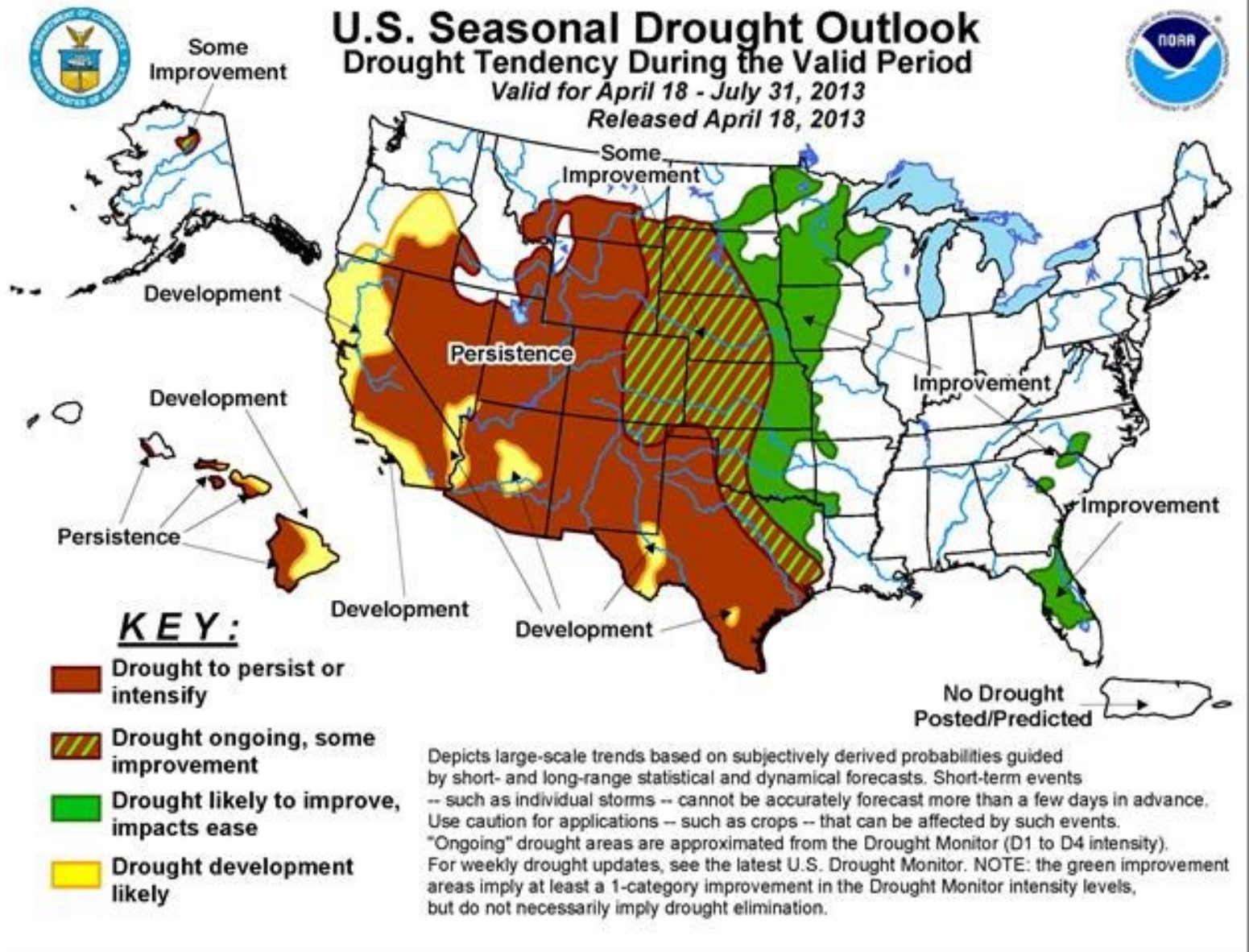


Figure 2. Three month drought outlook provided by the National Weather Service Climate Prediction Center on April 18, 2013 (http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/expert_assessment/seasonal_drought.html).

Figure 2 is the current Seasonal Drought Outlook for the region, which shows that the drought is not going to end any time soon. Projections of longer-term drought (more than 10 years) are supported by patterns of sea-surface circulation and temperatures in both the Atlantic and the Pacific oceans, which is reminiscent of conditions during the drought of the 1950s. Therefore, a decade or longer of continued drought conditions is not out of the question. While Southwest ranchers have been remarkably successful in adapting to drought, new strategies may be needed in the face of more extreme drought conditions.

Developing new strategies is challenging because ranching systems in the Southwest are extremely complex, as Figure 3 indicates. They include bio-physical and economic factors, such as rain, forage, and markets, as well as the government institutions responsible for managing public lands, and the livelihoods of rural communities that provide employees,

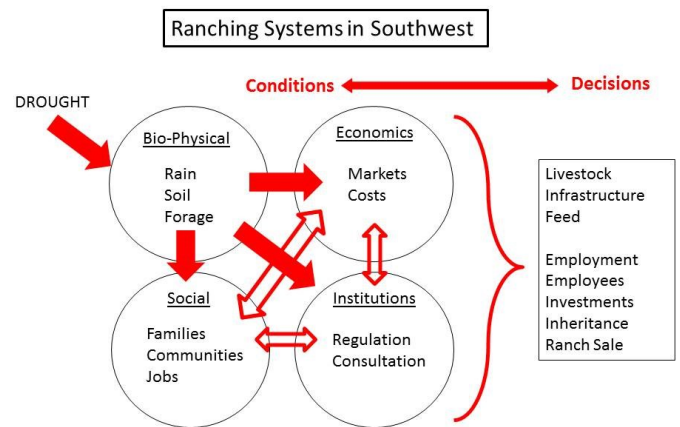


Figure 3. Drought impacts on ranching systems in the Southwest.

Ranching with Drought in the Southwest.....continued from page 3

schools, and other services, all of which are impacted by drought. Decisions about livestock management include not only the rancher, but the public land management agencies (USFS, BLM, and ASLD), as well as the consultative and cost-sharing programs provided by the NRCS. Developing new strategies to improve preparation for and response to drought will require the participation and collaboration of all parties - ranchers, land management agencies, extensionists, and scientists – in a “co-development” process that will ensure the relevance, usefulness, and viability of these strategies (Figure 4). Including all these parties in the co-development process provides a format where all can learn from: 1) the ranchers’ long-term experience of meeting challenges of drought, 2) the land management agencies’ requirements in their decision processes, 3) the coordinated planning cost-sharing expertise of the NRCS, and 4) the new information available from research and extension. The workshop brought these parties together to begin to design and initiate a co-development approach to developing strategies for ranching with drought in the Southwest.

The workshop was organized as informal discussions in which ranchers, agency managers, and other participants shared their experiences with the challenges of drought and then used this understanding to begin to describe what a co-development process for ranching with drought in the Southwest would look like. As a way of introduction, the workshop included presentations by two groups of researchers, extensionists, and farmers from the Southeastern US and California who had experiences with similar processes. In addition, managers from funding programs in USDA and NOAA were invited to suggest where the group might obtain funds to support the process.

Workshop outcomes

The key outcome was that improving preparations for and responses to drought will require developing better communication and relationships among ranchers and agencies. One way to do this would be “scenario planning,” in which ranchers and agency personnel consider and discuss possible actions that could be taken under a range of possible future drought conditions and how to be prepared to take those actions. Some participants compared this to emergency preparedness training where hospitals, police and fire departments coordinate their responses to a simulated disaster, and lessons from the simulation are used to improve existing infrastructure as well as procedures for responding to future disasters. With the understanding gained from scenario planning, it would be possible for ranchers and agencies to co-develop drought management plans for the lands managed by the agencies, reducing the uncertainty that both ranchers and agencies face under drought conditions.

Participants also identified other activities that a co-development group could address. They include:

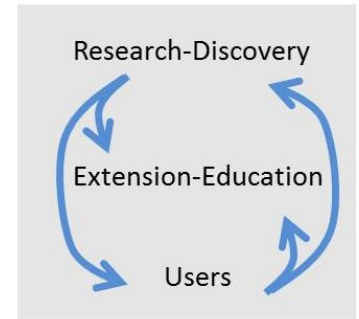
- learning how to interpret seasonal and longer-term weather forecasts
- identifying trigger points for action in drought plans
- developing and sharing a list of drought planning and response tools
- performing research to evaluate innovative practices applied by ranchers

Finally, participants felt that there is an urgent need to encourage and support the next generation of ranchers, agency managers, extensionists, and researchers, and that including them in a co-development process would provide mentorship and continuity of place-based knowledge within agencies and the ranching community.

Next steps

The workshop organizers – Mitch McClaran, University of Arizona (UA) Professor of Range Management and the Director of Research at the Santa Rita Experimental Range; George Ruyle, UA Range Management Extension Specialist; Mike Crimmins, UA Climate Science Extension Specialist, and Julie Brugger, a social scientist with UA Climate Assessment for the Southwest – are now in the process of

Co-Development



INCREASED IMPACT?

Figure 4. Co-development process of generating and disseminating information among researchers, extensionists, and users, rather than a one-way flow to users.

Ranching with Drought in the Southwest.....continued from page 5

evaluating the workshop and considering next steps. Workshop evaluations indicated that most participants found the workshop valuable and most ranchers and all agency personnel who attended were “very interested” in participating in a co-development process to address the challenges of ranching with drought in the Southwest. They preferred meetings in person, semi-annually, and one-half to one and a half days in length.

The organizers will seek funding from USDA, NOAA and other sources to support a continuing co-development process. Meanwhile, they will schedule a meeting with workshop participants who wanted to play an organizing and leadership role in the process. We would like to hear from others who have suggestions for addressing the challenges of drought on Southwest rangelands or would like to participate in the group’s activities. For more information or to express your interest, please contact Mitch (mcclaran@email.arizona.edu, 520-621-1673) or George (gruyle@gmail.com, 520-621-1384).

We thank all the workshop participants (Figure 5) for their time and their contributions, and Kelsey Hawkes and Amber Dalke for logistical support.



Figure 5. Participants in the Ranching with Drought in the Southwest: Conditions, Challenges, and a Process to Meet the Challenges workshop.

Director South Report by Steve Barker

Rangeland Resource Management Systems

I believe that every rancher should have a conservation plan that documents how the condition of their rangeland has maintained or improved while under their stewardship. Every conservation plan is a story about a unique combination of resources that are managed by that ranch, and how the rancher balances the health of the rangeland resources with harvesting a product from the land while maintaining an economically viable operation.

All good resource management systems start with an inventory. An ecological site map with an inventory of current production and plant composition is the most important part of the inventory. With an understanding of the potential of each ecological site to produce vegetation, and an assessment of the current production and composition, the rancher has the foundation needed to develop a resource management system. Accurate maps of pasture fences and water locations, with descriptions of their capacity and reliability are critical to planning the location, timing, duration, and frequency of grazing. Maps and descriptions of noxious weed locations, gullies, and other resource issues, along with livestock numbers, production, and animal husbandry practices add the final bits of information needed for the plan.

I don't do ranch plans if the rancher is not with me during the inventory. It does not work. I learned a long time ago, that if the rancher hasn't developed a management strategy in their head by the end of the inventory, any plan we put on paper probably won't work. The inventory process is a classroom in the field, and it is my favorite part of the planning process. My goal is to make sure the rancher has an understanding of the ecological sites, the important plant species they manage for on each site, and how grazing management decisions affect the balance of grasses, forbs, shrubs and trees. I pass on the grazing management principles I have learned over the years from the best range specialists and ranchers in Arizona. Every rancher I have worked with has taught me new things about what it takes to run a ranch, how they do it, how their animals have responded to grazing strategies, their animal husbandry methods, and the basic realities of operating the business. Most of the learning, discussion, ideas, and initial solutions come from the inventory.

The key to a good resource management system is to develop a specific prescription for each and every pasture or grazing area on the ranch. If there are clear management goals for each grazing area, then the day to day grazing management decisions will be based on achieving the specific goals for that area. (This article will be continued in the

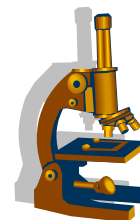
EVENT NOTICE

June 8 Science on the Sonoita Plain Symposium (near Elgin, Arizona).

Contact youth@cienegea.org for event information and lkennedy@audubon.org for directions.

Topics:

- Climate Change
- Drought
- Montane
- Riparian
- Uplands/Desert
- Cultural



2013 New Mexico SRM Section Summer Meeting and Field Tours

June 20 - Optional field tour in Willcox, AZ at the Todd Ranch (9:00 to 12:00 NM time) (8:00 to 11:00 AZ time) – Business meeting in Silver City, NM

June 21 - Field tour at the Evans Ranch from 8:30 to 3:00 NM time (lunch provided)

For additional information, contact NM SRM President-Elect Derek Bailey

(dwbbailey@nmsu.edu).

Topics and Activities:

- New insights on managing livestock grazing distribution.
- Use of targeted grazing to manage fine fuels and enhance ecosystem services
- Grazing management during drought
- Todd Ranch tour – Innovative water developments and grazing behavior research



Native Range Report by Alvin Whitehair, Native Range Committee Chair



I would like to continue to stress all the members to continue to try and reach out to recruit new members, we especially need more members in the Native Range group.

Al Medina and I are currently trying to work on another meeting regarding Wild/Feral Horses. Please stay tuned! This topic has increased the SRM attendance dramatically.

In addition to this, I am also reaching out to American Indian communities to join the Society for Range Management, a worthwhile contribution as a learning tool for practical applications and passing this knowledge on to future generations.

"Till we meet again on the Range!"

Director North Report by Shai Schendel

Greetings from Northern Arizona!

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as Director North for our section. I am looking forward to serving in this role and learning a thing or two along the way.

As we all know this time of the year brings quite a bit of wind, highway closures, trampolines disappearing over the fence and dry conditions. It is something we have come to expect during this season. It seems like each day whether is on the news, internet or part of our casual conversations. There is quite a bit a uncertainty and dread in the outlook of our current drought and fire conditions. Not helping the situation, this years monsoons are expected to be below average.

Given our climatic conditons, now is the time to look at the flexibility in managing our rangelands and being prepared for the future. What steps can be put in place and implemented in emergency situation? What can we do? Being proactive in the planning and decision making process to try and stay one step ahead may alleviate issues along the way. Monitoring tools are available to allow us to keep track of current and future outlooks.

One of the tools available to access our water availability is the Snow Survey. Each year NRCS and partner agency personnel throughout the West participate in the Snow Survey program. The data collected from the surveys is used in water supply forecasting, reservoir management, precipitation maps, drought monitoring, wildlife management and may other uses. Both SNOTEL sites along with the manual survey sites are used to summarize the data. Below is a summary from this years snowpack in Arizona.

Water Year 2013 Precipitation and Snowpack Summary As of May 17, 2013

Courtesy of Dino De Simone, Water Supply Specialist with the NRCS Phoenix State Office

Cumulative precipitation to date for Water Year 2013 (which began October 1, 2012) is below normal throughout the mountainous areas of the state, ranging from a low of 63 percent of average in the San Francisco-Upper Gila River Basin to a high of 93 percent of average in the Little Colorado River Basin.

Water Year 2013 Precipitation (as of May 17, 2013)

Major Basin	Percent of 30 year Average Precipitation
Salt River basin	80%
Verde River Basin	84%
San Francisco-Upper Gila River Basin	63%
Little Colorado River Basin	93%

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Snow and rain accumulation during the winter season (December through March) was also below normal in the basins. Major storms early in the season brought the snowpack to above normal levels through the end of January. However, for the remainder of the season, snow water equivalent levels remained below the 30-year median.

According to Dino De Simone, Water Supply Specialist with the NRCS, *“This is the third winter in a row of below normal snow water equivalent in the mountains of AZ. This translates into low soil moisture conditions and poor plant growth during the current spring growing season.”*

Although the forecast is less than favorable, Arizona is a resilient state. By implementing flexibility and contingency plans with our rangeland management we will have the ability to adapt to any bump in the road along the way.

Resources available:

NRCS Drought Assistance

<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/detailfull/national/home/?cid=stelprdb1048530>

Arizona DroughtWatch- Arizona's Drought Impact Reporting System

<http://azdroughtwatch.org>

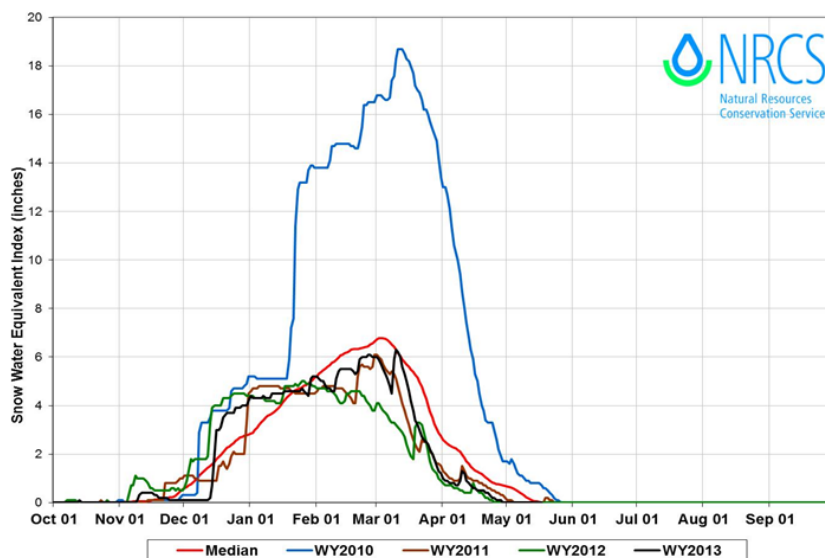
CLIMAS- Climate assessment for the Southwest

<http://www.climas.arizona.edu/>

SNOTEL Data

<http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/snow/>

ARIZONA STATEWIDE Time Series Snowpack Summary
Based on Provisional SNOTEL data as of May 17, 2013



Test and renew your plant ID skills at the 2013 Arizona Section Summer Meeting!!!

Who: Everybody
Where: SRM Summer Meeting
When: August 7-9
Why: For Fun!!!

First Prize: Plant ID Buckle
Second Prize: Illuminated Hand Lens

A table with 15 -20 important rangeland plants will be on display somewhere at the summer meeting (it's a treasure hunt too!) for you to identify at your leisure.

No books allowed this year so study hard!



Imagine the buckle with a 2013 date instead of 2012

To the Arizona Section, Society for Range Management:

First, I would like to thank everyone who helped fund my trip to the Society for Range Management Annual Meeting in Oklahoma. It was an experience that I will never forget. I met so many great people who have taught me a lot. I learned so many things in such little time. The field trips that we went on were very interesting and I have gained more interest in the rangelands. I fell under the weather on the last night of the forum but thanks to the forum staff I returned home safely and was feeling much better within a couple of days.

Thank you again and I look forward to this summer at NRCWAY!

Cheyenne Stetson

Field Follies

By Andrew Brischke



We have all heard the quote, “You learn something new every day.” Just recently I did, indeed, learn something new about monitoring. I learned that you can, in fact, monitor in flip flops - though I don’t recommend it. I’m not talking hefty name brand flip-flops with thick, rubbery soles either, I’m wearing \$2 dollar Wal-Mart specials (give me a break, my dogs eat them).

I am well known around the Arizona monitoring circle for my casual monitoring style. I do take credit and pride for my use of the “monitoring chair” (I’m not even the one usually sitting in it), but what many other people may not know is that I typically show up in flip flops on field days. There is a practical reason for this; my boots munch on the top side of my ankles, particularly when driving. So knowing that I usually have a 2 hour or more drive to most of my key areas, I see no benefit to wearing vicious field boots when I can wear a comfortable pair of slippers until I need to hike.

I was loading up my truck with all my field gear and had to go to my car to retrieve my boots and a jacket as the morning breeze was still biting. It was at this point that my boss walked up to me and said, “you look like a homeless person living out of your car.” To be fair, the assessment was more accurate than it should’ve been. Anyway, I grabbed my jacket and headed out to the field.

After about a 2 ½ hour drive we arrived at our key area and I went to put on my boots. I had my socks with me, but no boots, anywhere. I was distracted and left them in my car, oopsie! It would have been a wasted day to go back and get them, especially when I had help for the day so we decided to charge on. Luckily the key areas weren’t far off the road and my partner decided to read the first key area and I could sit in the monitoring chair and record. To punish and assure myself this wouldn’t happen in the future, I read the next site. All was going well until I had to go through a small drainage where I could feel small stickers and thorns starting to poke through the sole, nothing more serious than a small ouch though. At the end of the day I consider myself ahead... Wisdom - 1, Stickers and Thorns - 0.



Calendar of Events



- June 8 Science on the Sonoita Plain
- June 20 New Mexico SRM Section Summer Meeting and Field Tours
- June 21 New Mexico SRM Meeting Field Tour Evans Ranch
- June 21-23 Arizona Cowpunchers’s Reunion Rodeo, Williams
- June 24-28 Natural Resources Workshop for Arizona Youth, James 4-H
Camp at Mingus Springs
- June 29 Majestic Desert Bighorn Presentation AGFD Pinetop
regional office
- July 13 Babbitt Ranches Colt Sale, Spider Web Camp on CO Bar
(35 NE Flagstaff)
- July 25-27 ACGA Summer Convention, Wild Horse Pass Resort &
Casino, Chandler
- August 7 - 9 AZ Section Summer Meeting, Flagstaff
- August 7-10 National Cattlemen's Beef Association Summer Meeting,
Denver, CO
- August 10 Coconino County Cattle Growers Annual Meeting &
Roping, Williams
- August 10 Deer of the Southwest Presentation AGFD Pinetop regional
office
- August 24 Greenlee Cattle Growers Annual Summer Meeting, TBD



Arizona Section-Society For
Range Management
1195 Solar Heights Dr.
Prescott, AZ 86303

