

Comparison of meadow assessment protocols

We completed a comprehensive comparison of meadow assessment protocols and developed a process for land managers to select the most appropriate method for evaluating meadow condition and restoration need.

Project

Growing recognition of the importance of meadow ecosystems has resulted in numerous organizations prioritizing meadow conservation and restoration. Developing effective management and restoration programs for meadows requires an understanding of their current condition and what factors are contributing to degradation. Multiple assessment methodologies currently exist to evaluate meadow condition; however land managers are often unaware of what protocols are available and unsure of which protocol to use. We identified 11 protocols that can be used to assess meadow condition in California and implemented each protocol in a set of common meadows. Based on the protocol descriptions and the results of our field data collection, we describe differences in how each protocol assesses meadow condition and provide a worksheet to help practitioners chose an appropriate protocol for their specific needs and objectives.

The worksheet leads practitioners through a series of steps:

Step 1. Why am I doing this assessment?

Step 2. What data do I want to collect?

Step 3. How am I going to do the assessment?

Key Outcomes

- ◇ Protocols differed in their ratings, primarily due to variability in the metrics used, spatial extent and location of area sampled, and specific objectives.
- ◇ No single protocol was better than the others; the best protocol for any given meadow depends on the specific goals of the assessment and the ecological context of the meadow.
- ◇ We developed a worksheet with a series of questions to help practitioners identify a protocol that will work best for their specific goals.
- ◇ Our technical report provides detailed summaries of the 11 protocols, including the purpose; key questions; strengths and limitations; indicators and metrics; and results format and interpretation.

Key Partners: American Rivers, Desert Research Institute, California Rapid Assessment Method/ California Wetland Monitoring Workgroup, USDA Forest Service, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDI Bureau of Land Management, USDI Fish and Wildlife Service, and USDI National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration



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