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Pacific Southwest Research Station, Albany, CA 94710

Research in Review: Kings River Study

Can forested ecosystems be managed to maintain their essential components and still support a variety of uses? If so, how? To find out, PSW researchers have teamed up with National Forest and other land managers in a study on the Kings River Ranger District, Sierra National Forest, in northern California. The need for such a study became evident from a regional environmental assessment in the early -1990's that new directions were needed for managing forest lands in the western Sierra Nevada for multiple resources and values.

Cooperating with the Forest Service in the study are the University of California at Berkeley and Davis, Humboldt State University, and Southern California Edison Company. The three PSW research units involved in the study are the Sierra Nevada Montane Ecosystems Unit, at Fresno; the Forest Genetics Unit, at Albany; and the Western Forest Management and Ecology Unit, at Redding. Jerry Verner, senior scientist with the Fresno research unit, is serving as the science team leader for the study.

Two adjacent watersheds, each about 32,000 acres, on the Sierra National Forest are the site for the study, which was started in 1994 and is designated as the "Kings River Sustainable Forest Ecosystems Project." On each watershed, a different management option is being tested to identify its effect on forest resources and values. The aim of the two options is to sustain on each watershed all key resources and functions of the ecosystem, while reducing the risks of catastrophic fire, promoting forest health, allowing significant levels of commodity extraction, and supporting recreational use by the public.

Researchers are investigating the demography of the California spotted owl; stand structure and composition associated with spotted owl nest sites; diets of nesting and non-nesting spotted owls; variations in abundance and productivity of forest birds; habitat associations and population characteristics of small mammals; ecological relations of below-ground fungi; plant species diversity, with emphasis on potential threatened and endangered species; soil structure and productivity; and distribution and relative abundance of martens and fishers.

Accomplishments of the project so far include: color-banding more than 500 California spotted owls and noting a significantly declining trend within their population on the Sierra National Forest, but not in the nearby Sequoia National Park; tracking the productivity of hundreds of nests of forest songbirds in ponderosa pine, mixed-conifer, red fir, and lodgepole pine forests; and determining population estimates and microhabitat preferences of small mammals in oak woodlands and estimating occupancy

(continued on page 2)

RM and INT Research Stations Merge

The long-pending merger of the Rocky Mountain and Intermountain Stations became reality on May 7. The combined unit will be known as the Rocky Mountain Research Station, with headquarters at Fort Collins, Colo. More than 4 years ago, the FS had proposed that the two Stations merge, but not until last month did Congress finally approve the Secretary of Agriculture's proposal for consolidation.

"No moves of personnel are anticipated," said Station Director Denver Burns. "My goal is to have the consolidation fully implemented within a year." Denver had been Rocky Mountain Station Director and Acting Intermountain Station Director, at Ogden, Utah. Rocky Mountain already shares services with PSW by distributing publications for the Station under a Memorandum of Understanding.

Denver added that "research units at the two Stations will not experience any direct effect until, at a future time," the shift is made to an organization of three research Assistant Directors. Between the two Stations, five persons now hold that title. Jim Haskell, Assistant Director—Administration, at Rocky Mountain, will continue in that position in the consolidated unit.

The Rocky Mountain Station was established in 1909, and later absorbed the Fremont Station in 1935, and the Southwestern Station in 1953. The Intermountain Station was founded in 1911, and later consolidated with the Priest River Station and the Utah Station in 1954, with several name changes occurring during that period. With this latest merger, the number of FS research stations now stands at six.

Riverside Hosts Citywide Business Program

David Weise, Project Leader—Prescribed Fire/Fire Effects Research Unit, served as host of the Mayor's Business Visitation Program, held April 30 at Riverside. The program was attended by City of Riverside Mayor Ron Loveridge, and other representatives from the mayor's office and city fire and planning departments, and served three purposes: to determine how the City could better serve its business community; to provide the visitors with resource information about PSW in order to effectively interface with other agencies and organizations; and to foster a business climate in Riverside that allows businesses of all sizes to prosper and grow. Discussions included matters of work force availability, factors which limit growth, the relationship between the Riverside lab and its residential neighbors, regulatory concerns such as air quality limitations on fire research, and the lab's relationship with the University of

(continued on page 2)

(Kings River continued)

status of woodrat stick nests.

Other accomplishments include depositing a documentary collection of 350 specimens of fungal sporocarps in the herbarium at the University of California at Berkeley and at Oregon State University; documenting the distribution of martens and fishers in the study area; assaying seedbank samples to help understand the effects of different logging practices on understory flora; and assembling a distributional database of California flora, now available on Internet.

Results to date have been reported at 13 workshops and public meetings, including two sessions with Congressional delegations. A dozen papers based on this work have been published or are in press. And nearly three dozen oral presentations have been made before audiences representing a wide range of public and private interests.

Open Season for Thrift Savings Plan

It's open season again for the Thrift Savings Plan, and employees who are interested in making changes to their tax-deferred retirement plans have until July 31 to do so. For more information, contact Personnel at (510) 559-6350, or visit the TSP web page at <http://www.tsp.gov>.

Meetings/Conferences/Seminars

* Debbie Chavez, Wildland Recreation/Urban Cultures Research Unit, Riverside, presented a paper, "Managing forest products: fern gathering on the San Bernardino National Forest," in the Environmental Policy and Natural Resource Management section of the 39th Annual Conference of the Western Social Science Association, April 23-26, at Albuquerque, N.Mex.

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(Riverside continued)

California, Riverside. Mayor Loveridge then presented the lab with a certificate expressing public acknowledgment of and appreciation for its valuable and distinguished service to the City of Riverside.

Scientists who attended and presented overviews of the lab, its current programs, and descriptions of its five research projects were: Jim Absher, Wildland Recreation/Urban Cultures Research Unit; Andrzej Bytnerowicz, Air Pollution/Global Change Research Unit; Francis Fujioka, Fire Meteorology Research Unit; Irene Powell, Research Support Services; and David Weise.

Personnelly Speaking

Quality-Step Increases

- * Farrell Dernbach, Library Services
- * Thelma Kaduwo, Library Services
- * Vi Orje, Library Services

Appointments

- * Ruth Voltz, FS Region 9; to Deputy Regional Forester—Operations, Region 9.
- * Paul Johnson, FS Region 5; to Deputy Regional Forester—State and Private Forestry, Region 3.

Executive Calendar

May 26-30

Space.....M: *Holiday*; Tu-F: Albany
Aune.....M: *Holiday*; Tu-Th: Ontario, Canada; F: Redding
Bell (Acting).....M: *Holiday*; Tu-Th: Albany; F: Montecito
DeMuth (Backup).....M: *Holiday*; Tu-F: Albany
Ewel.....M: *Holiday*; Tu-F: Honolulu
Mason.....M: *Holiday*; Tu-F: AL

June 2-6

Space.....M: Davis; Tu-F: Albany
Aune.....M-F: Redding
Bell.....M-F: Albany
DeMuth (Acting).....M-F: Albany
Ewel.....M-F: Honolulu
Mason (Backup).....M: Davis; Tu-F: Albany