

f for Your information



Caring for the Land and Serving People

<http://www.psw.fs.fed.us>

Pacific Southwest Research Station, Albany, CA 94710

Blacks Mountain—What's Happening There?

Ten years ago, Station scientists and their cooperators started a unique long-term study at Blacks Mountain Experimental Forest, in the Sierra Nevada of northeastern California. The study was designed by a self-directed team of scientists from many different disciplines. Scientists were in on the “ground floor” in designing the study. They came together on their own without directions from management, and with no startup funds to motivate them. They soon recognized that such a study could be undertaken only if many disciplines shared costs, labor, and data. In the absence of funding, each scientist was willing to contribute his or her salary, and that of assistants, and the operating funds needed to make the study happen.

The design that the scientists came up with was unique in having such large plots (minimum of 40 ha) in a replicated field design. This design allows the researchers to analyze statistically ecosystem responses to the test treatments, and provides a unique opportunity for wildlife ecologists to conduct cause-and-effect research.

The goals of the Blacks Mountain Ecological Research Project, as it is officially called, are to better understand the effects of structural complexity on the health and vigor of interior ponderosa pine ecosystems, quantify the ecosystem's resilience to natural and human-caused disturbances, and determine how these ecosystems can be managed for sustained resource values.

The project covers 3,000 acres, and required the removal of the equivalent of 23 million board feet of timber. It has taken 10 years to install fully all of the test treatments. During this period, baseline data have been collected on passerine birds, small mammals, vegetation, and bark beetle populations, among others. Some of the early results from the study are:

- Species richness of passerine birds increased immediately after tree thinning. This result is probably a short-term response caused by open forest birds moving in while dense forest birds maintain their old nesting territories.
- Down logs contribute few nutrients to the soil. Their main contribution is to soil organic matter.
- The vegetation treatment designed to enhance structural diversity combined with prescribed fire has created stand structures similar to those believed to be common before European colonization

A report by Bill Oliver on “Ecological Research at the Blacks Mountain Experimental Forest in Northeastern California” has just been issued as the Station's General Technical Report PSW-GTR-179. Bill is a research silviculturist with the Station's Western Forest Management Research Unit, at Redding, Calif.

“Now that all treatments are in place, we hope to attract other researchers—both in-house and from other agencies and academia,” says Bill. “We would like to have participation by

(continued on page 2)

Dombeck Retires as Forest Service Chief

Mike Dombeck retired as the Forest Service's 14th Chief on March 31, ending a tenure that began on Jan. 6, 1997. He succeeded Jack Ward Thomas, both of whom were career appointees to the agency's ranking post. FS Chief Operating Officer Phil Janik will serve as Acting Chief until Mike's successor is chosen by the Secretary of Agriculture.

Upon leaving the agency, Mike said he planned to spend more time with his family, spend time in the woods or on the waters, and continue to advocate “the importance and benefits of healthy, diverse, and productive lands and waters.”

Besides being FS Chief, Mike also served as Acting Director of the nation's other major land management agency—the U.S. Bureau of Land Management.

As perhaps the only Chief to have actually grown up in a National Forest, Mike started his FS career in 1978 as a fisheries biologist in Michigan and Wisconsin, and later served in the FS Pacific Southwest Region, in San Francisco, as the fisheries program manager.

In his departing letter to employees, Mike wrote: “Above all, allow your commitment to your conservation ethic and the lands and waters that sustain us to take precedence over other political or organizational fealties.”

FS R&D Offices Relocate to Virginia

The offices of the FS Deputy Chief—Research and Development and his staffs are being relocated from the Yates Building, in Washington, D.C., to Rosslyn Plaza Building C, in Arlington, Va., effective Apr. 15. After the move, Deputy Chief Robert Lewis, Jr., has asked that his office be referred as the R&D National Office rather than R&D Washington Office.

New to PSW

Martha Shibata is the Station's new visual information specialist, at Albany. She is responsible for the design, layout, and production of publications, reports, visual presentations, and other graphics products. Born (“almost in a taxi cab,” she says) in Oakland, she earned a B.S. degree in education, with a major in biology, at Concordia Teachers College, in Seward, Neb., and then taught elementary school.

Upon moving to California, she embarked on a career as visual information specialist in San Francisco: 11 years with the U.S. National Park Service, and 5 with the General Services Administration. Before joining PSW, she worked for 6 years as a freelance graphics designer, and for a time, as a database manager/graphics designer for the Japan Society.

Martha lives in San Francisco. Her hobbies include cooking, cross-country skiing, and bicycling (which is how she commutes to work in the East Bay).

(continued on page 2)

(Blacks Mountain—continued)

forest pathologists and range scientists—disciplines not represented on the present study team. And, of course, more funding would allow us to conduct more complete investigations in disciplines already on board. Funding for small mammal studies is especially deficient.”

Besides Bill, other Station professionals on the study team are Bill Laudenslayer, Fresno; Sylvia Mori, Albany; Nancy Rappaport, Albany; Martin Ritchie, Redding; Pat Shea, Davis; Carl Skinner, Redding; and Phil Weatherspoon, Redding. Others on the study team are Luke George and Steve Zack of Humboldt State University, at Arcata.

According to Bill, the Blacks Mountain study does not have a stated life-span. The team anticipate that retreatment of the vegetation will be necessary in 15 to 20 years. Although such long duration may seem optimistic, Bill says he expects that “after immediate post-treatment investigations are complete, activities can be in pulses as funding and interests allow.”

Copies of Gen. Tech. Rep. PSW-GTR-179 are available from the Station’s Publications Distribution Center, 240 West Prospect Road, Fort Collins, CO 80526-2098; phone: (970) 498-1370, or e-mail at: rschneider@fs.fed.us.

Employee Council Discuss Station Issues

At its March 6 teleconference, the Employee Council discussed a variety of topics. These included a web site for the Council on the intranet; transportation reimbursement program; changes in the way temporary non-professional employees are hired; the Training Integrated Personnel System; use of credit hours involving leave and travel; and doing work unrelated to a position description.

Employees having questions about these issues should contact their local Council representative, says Teri Conway, Council coordinator.

Pacific Southwest Research Station
Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture
P.O. Box 245
Berkeley, CA 94701-0245

(New to PSW—continued)

“Scientists and others who have need for visual products are urged to call Martha to discuss her services,” says Sara Garetz, acting communication director of PSW.

Meetings/Conferences/Seminars

- Nancy Rappaport, Soil Productivity Research Team, Albany, presented two papers and two posters at the Joint Annual Meeting of the Societe d’Entomologie du Quebec, Entomological Society of Canada, Entomological Society of America, Dec. 3-6, Montreal, Quebec, Canada. Titles of the papers are: “From Systematics to Semiochemicals: Discoveries Along the Seed and Cone Trail,” and “Biological Assessment of the Link Between Mitochondrial DNA Sequences, Dioryctria Morphology and Larval Host.” The two posters are: “Responses of Nontarget Insects to Cone Beetle Pheromones” and “Arthropod-Mediated Decomposition of Ponderosa Pine: Blacks Mt. Experimental Forest, California.” Several co-authors collaborated with Nancy in these presentations.

- Bob Powers, Team Leader—Soil Productivity Research, Redding, presented a keynote address entitled “Sustainable Productivity and the Role of Planted Forests in a ‘Green Certified’ Century” at the 28th Annual Meeting, Inland Empire Tree Improvement Cooperative, Mar. 14, Couer d’Alene, Idaho.

Personnelly Speaking

Promotions

- Elizabeth DeHoyas, budget analyst, Budget/Financial Management Group, Albany
- Bret Harvey, research fisheries biologist, Hillslope Processes/Fishery Research Unit, Arcata.
- Pam Suda, computer specialist, Information Management/Technology Group, Albany.
- Keiko Williams, computer systems specialist, Information Management/Technology Group, Albany.
- Anna Wong, grants/agreements specialist, Budget/Financial Management Group, Albany.

Reassignment

- Amy Lind, from Timber/Wildlife Research Unit, Arcata; to Sierra Nevada Framework Research Unit, Davis.