

The Ranching Sustainability Self-Assessment Project

March 2009 (v3.09)

*A voluntary program developed by California ranchers
for use by the California ranching community*



Sponsored by the San Luis Obispo County Oak Woodland Stewardship Program and the San Luis Obispo County Cooperative Extension Office. Supported by a grant from The California Wildlife Conservation Board's Oak Woodland Conservation Act of 2001. Prepared by J. Zingo, Integrated Hardwood Range Management Program, UC Cooperative Extension, 2156 Sierra Way - Suite C, San Luis Obispo, CA, 18 March 2009.



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Our Mission Statement

To create and implement a voluntary self-assessment program in which we evaluate all aspects of our operations to ensure the sustainability of our production, our lands, and our families. To determine what we do well and also find ways in which we can improve, in order to assure ourselves and the public of our stewardship of our animals and the natural resources.

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Part I. Introductory Materials

Welcome to the Ranching Sustainability Self-Assessment Project! Developed over the last two years by a committee of ranchers with some input from natural resource professionals, and coordinated by UC Cooperative Extension, this project is intended primarily as a ranching self-help tool to stimulate awareness and critical thought about how to achieve sustainability (in other words, to keep ranchers as working stewards of the land indefinitely through successful economic, social, and environmental practices). Secondary benefits that can be realized with voluntary submission of rancher data to the UCCE project coordinators may include proof of participation, documentation of your stewardship efforts within a confidential database, custom comparisons of your operation with anonymous categorical summaries of all participant data, and the ability to identify ongoing information needs of the ranching community and thereby facilitate collaborative learning among ranchers with similar needs and concerns. ***Your participation, expertise, and feedback will help this project to evolve and ensure that it meets the needs of the California ranching community now and in the future.*** The more people who self-assess their operations, provide feedback, and submit their data, the greater the potential benefits not only for the individual but for the industry as well. In other words, the greater the participation, the more we can learn and the better the potential for the widespread adoption or continued use of sustainable practices throughout the California ranching community.

THE SUSTAINABILITY EQUATION

Sustainable = Economically Viable +
Ecologically Sound + Socially Responsible

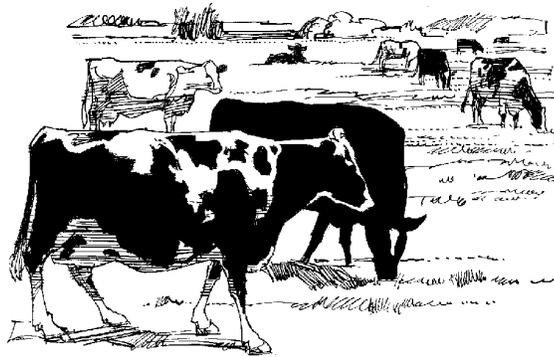
The self-assessment process with a “positive points” philosophy (e.g., as employed to great effect for many years by the Central Coast Vineyard Team) will recognize existing efforts and motivate others to continually strive to enhance the success of their operations. This approach is designed to give credit where it is due, to provide positive reinforcement of effective or otherwise successful practices, and to encourage participation, progress, and innovation. The process will help individuals to identify specific “action items” that they wish to pursue in order to enhance their operations. Providing a means of documenting the good practices being employed as well as the efforts to improve will help the individual rancher as well as the industry to meet both current and future regulatory requirements (perhaps reducing the need for new regulations), demonstrating to themselves, their peers, their customers, agtourism clients, agencies, non-governmental organizations, and the general public their dedication to the stewardship of their livestock, lands, and natural resources. We believe that this can be a powerful non-regulatory tool to guide rangeland owners through everyday decision-making processes, ***and a means for ranchers to shape the future of California ranching on as much of their own terms as possible.***

ASSESSMENT CATEGORIES

Livestock Management, Soil Management,
Forage Management, Biodiversity/Wildlife
Conservation, Regulations and Regulators,
People Management, Economics, Energy,
Monitoring, Pest Management,
and Water Quality.

The self-assessment process guides the producer in asking a series of questions within 11 subject categories about the social, economic, and natural resource management practices he or she is using. These evaluations will be based on the best information available to the rancher at the time, and scores will change over time not only as ranching operations improve but also as our knowledge of sustainability grows. At any given time, our understanding is based on an ever-

growing body of knowledge primarily from the industry but also from scientific, social, and economic studies. Successful range managers will achieve sustainability through recognition of system processes, effective practices, and innovative solutions. This proactive approach will help ranchers maintain the autonomy of their lifestyle and also their role within the larger community, a role which among other things provides significant ecosystem services through good land stewardship. *As a collaborative venture involving rangeland specialists and natural resources professionals alongside ranchers, and at its heart a case of ranchers helping ranchers, this project has broad appeal with tremendous potential to aid private landowners throughout California in implementing sustainable ranching practices.*



Acknowledgments

This project was inspired in large part by the tremendous success of the Central Coast Vineyard Team's "Positive Points System" that has been used by area grape growers since 1998, a system that has been adapted for use by California avocado and citrus growers and that also led to the development of a third-party sustainability certification program. The self-assessment for ranchers was also influenced by information from many other agricultural sustainability programs such as the Lodi-Woodbridge Winegrape Commission's "Lodi Winegrower's Workbook" and "The Lodi Rules," the California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance's "Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices," the El Dorado County & Georgetown Divide Resource Conservation Districts' "Farmland Self Assessment Workbook," the USDA Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (WSARE), and the National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service (ATTRA).

Many people contributed to the development of this project by providing helpful comments, reviews, or discussions. Among them are: Ray Allen, D.J. Funk (Executive Director, Upper Salinas-Las Tablas Resource Conservation District), John Garn (Consultant, California Sustainable Winegrowing Alliance's "Code of Sustainable Winegrowing Practices"), Deb Garrison (Central Coast Agriculture Cooperative), Roger Ingram (Placer-Nevada County Cooperative Extension Director and Farm Advisor), Marti Johnson (Upper Salinas-Las Tablas Resource Conservation District), Kris O'Connor (Executive Director, Central Coast Vineyard Team), Vance Russell (Director, Audubon California's Landowner Stewardship Program), and Kyle Weichert (Central Coast Vineyard Team). In addition, many ranchers and other individuals provided feedback during UCCE landowner workshops in 2008. All of your contributions have been most welcome and much appreciated.

This project is sponsored by the San Luis Obispo County Oak Woodland Stewardship Program (through its Working Among the Oaks component) and the San Luis Obispo County Cooperative Extension Office, and was supported by a grant from the California Wildlife Conservation Board's Oak Woodland Conservation Program, promoting oak woodland conservation through good rangeland stewardship.

Future Directions

With your help, this project will evolve over time to meet the needs of the California ranching community and reflect our increasing understanding of rangeland sustainability and good stewardship practices. There are many excellent examples of agricultural sustainability programs that we can draw upon to refine and improve this project, the written components of which may be considered a “living document” that develops and matures over time. Among the plans are:

- a confidential database to serve the ranching community utilizing this resource
- proof of participation (e.g., certificate) for those submitting self-assessment data to the project
- a workbook with informational resources, funding sources, and the ongoing compilation of educational materials on rangeland practices
- self-assessment workshops and other events to address the information needs of ranchers
- a website including a central hub of communications and information, the ability to enter self-assessments online and view custom reports (compare yourself to peers based on size/type of operation, location/region, and statewide), and an interactive “model ranch” to illustrate some of the sustainable practices being used by California ranchers
- more detailed versions of each subject chapter that provide further direction and may be tailored to address specific regulatory requirements or concerns
- collaboration with regulatory agencies to maintain or improve the utility of self-assessments
- partnerships with ranching associations and other organizations
- may lead to third-party certification that would provide unbiased confirmation of the sustainability of your practices for your customers, business associates, peers, regulatory agencies, and the general public

About the authors (in alphabetical order following the committee chair)

George Work (Chair), Rancher, Work Ranch; Technical Advisor to the Upper Salinas-Las Tablas Resource Conservation District; Planning Fellow for Roots of Change; 2004 National Environmental Stewardship Award (National Cattlemen's Beef Association)

Cliff Garrison, Ranch Manager, Hearst Ranches; President of the San Luis Obispo County Cattlemen's Association; the California Beef Cattle Improvement Association named Hearst Ranch the 2008 Commercial Producer of the Year for progressive and sustainable ranching

Kevin Kester, Rancher, Bear Valley Ranch and Vineyards; Vice President of the California Cattlemen's Association (CCA); past President of the San Luis Obispo County Cattleman's Association; past Chair of the CCA Wildlife Management Committee

Royce Larsen, Watershed/Natural Resources Rangeland Advisor, UC Cooperative Extension

Aaron Lazanoff, Beef Operations Manager, Animal Science Department, California Polytechnic State University; Associate Director of the Upper Salinas-Las Tablas Resource Conservation District; 2005 Environmental Stewardship Award (National Cattlemen's Beef Association); 2007 SLO County Native Tree Stewardship Award

Chuck Pritchard, Rancher, Bitterwater Land & Cattle Company; President of the Upper Salinas-Las Tablas Resource Conservation District; Member of the Range Management Advisory Council to the State Board of Forestry; 1998 Biodiversity Conservation Award (California Biodiversity Council)

Steve Sinton, Avenales Ranch & Water Attorney; Board Member and former Founding Chairman of the California Rangeland Trust; 2005 Steward of the Land Award (American Farmland Trust)

Karl Striby, Natural Resources Conservation Service, San Luis Obispo County

Bill Tietje, Natural Resources Specialist, UC Cooperative Extension

Jack Varian, Rancher, V6 Ranch; The Trust for Public Land California Advisory Board Member; 2007 Leopold Conservation Award finalist

Jim Zingo, Staff Research Associate, UC Cooperative Extension

Part II. Personal Contact and Producer Information

Why submit your information to the project?

The primary purpose of this project is to offer a self-help tool to the California ranching community. Submitting your personal contact information, producer data, and self-assessment score sheets is **OPTIONAL**. So why do it? By submitting your information, the project may provide a number of benefits to individuals and the industry, including:

- proof of participation that you can show to customers, agencies, etc.;
- proof of the project's value (based on # of participants) that can be shown to partners, potential partners, agencies, and funding sources to help serve the ranching community long-term;
- anonymous data summaries so you can compare your success and progress with that of other ranchers by location, type of operation, etc. (the more participants, the more meaningful the data summaries will be); and
- educational events and other resources targeted to address information needs identified by the summary data.

Your personal contact information will be kept separate from your producer information and self-assessments; any data summaries will be anonymous. Please read the Confidentiality Agreement on the next page, and feel free to contact us with any questions or concerns you may have. If you choose to submit your data, please read and sign the Confidentiality Agreement and mail the original signature page along with all of your data sheets (photocopies or originals) to us at the below address. Keep a copy of all your documents for your own reference! We are working on a website that will give you the option of entering your own data online rather than mailing a hardcopy.

Please submit all inquiries or correspondence to:

Bill Tietje
UC Cooperative Extension
2156 Sierra Way, Suite C
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
phone: (805) 781-5938; fax: (805) 781-4316
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Confidentiality Agreement

Any information you provide will be kept confidential. Personal contact information will be separated from your other data to preserve the anonymity of your producer information and self-assessment scores. Any hardcopies will be kept under lock and key at the University of California Cooperative Extension Office in San Luis Obispo County (2156 Sierra Way, Suite C, San Luis Obispo, CA 93401). Personal contact information will only be used by project coordinators if necessary to keep you informed about project developments and related events, and to confirm with you any aspects of your self-assessment data, e.g., confirm receipt of data, ensure accurate data entry, and provide proof of participation. Each participant will be assigned a unique code, and thereafter only this code will be associated with an individual's self-assessment information both in hardcopy and electronic form. Self-assessment data may be entered into a password-protected electronic database as a repository of these data, which may be summarized by categories of potential interest and value to participants. In order to further the goals of this self-assessment project, data summaries may be used by project coordinators to guide future educational efforts as a service to the ranching community and these summaries also may be made available to project participants and others during educational events. Broad categorical summary data (not self-assessment scores) may be presented to other organizations or the public in reports, presentations, or online to illustrate the extent of participation in the project (e.g., # producers managing # acres in California). Your data will always be anonymous when used in such data summaries. It is expected that self-assessment data and custom summaries will be made available online to each project participant, but in no case will any one participant be allowed to view another participant's data except as part of the aforementioned anonymous summaries.

RISKS

While all reasonable efforts to maintain confidentiality will be made (as described above), whether housed with UC Cooperative Extension or other public or private organization, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed because documents cannot be protected from subpoena.

BENEFITS

Please refer to the project introductory materials for descriptions of the potential benefits of participation.

COSTS/COMPENSATION

At this time, there are no costs to participate and no direct financial compensation is offered.

RIGHT TO REFUSE OR WITHDRAW

Your participation is voluntary. You may discontinue participation or withdraw your data at any time.

ANY QUESTIONS?

Contact Jim Zingo or Bill Tietje (see top of page).

Signature _____

Date _____

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PERSONAL CONTACT INFORMATION

Why do we ask for this information?

Your personal contact information may be used to confirm receipt of your data, ensure accurate data entry, and keep you informed of project developments. If you choose to submit your self-assessment data to the project, your personal information will be kept separate from all other data to ensure confidentiality. Any of your information used in data summaries will remain anonymous. Please see the confidentiality agreement on the previous page.

Mailing Address

Street address
or PO Box

City

State

Zip Code

Phone Numbers

Home

Office

Mobile

Fax

Email Address

Ranching Sustainability Self-Assessment Project v3.09

PRODUCER INFORMATION

Why do we ask for this information?

The information on this page may be used to summarize rancher self-assessments by geographic or functional categories either to help direct educational events to serve the ranching community or for producer comparisons (i.e., each participant can compare their assessment with summaries of their peers as identified by the below categories).

LOCATION

County

San Luis Obispo

Santa Barbara

Monterey

San Benito

Santa Cruz

Other
(please write name of county here)

If within San Luis Obispo County:

North County

South County

Watershed/Livestock Production Zone
(see map on next page)

Zone 1

Zone 3

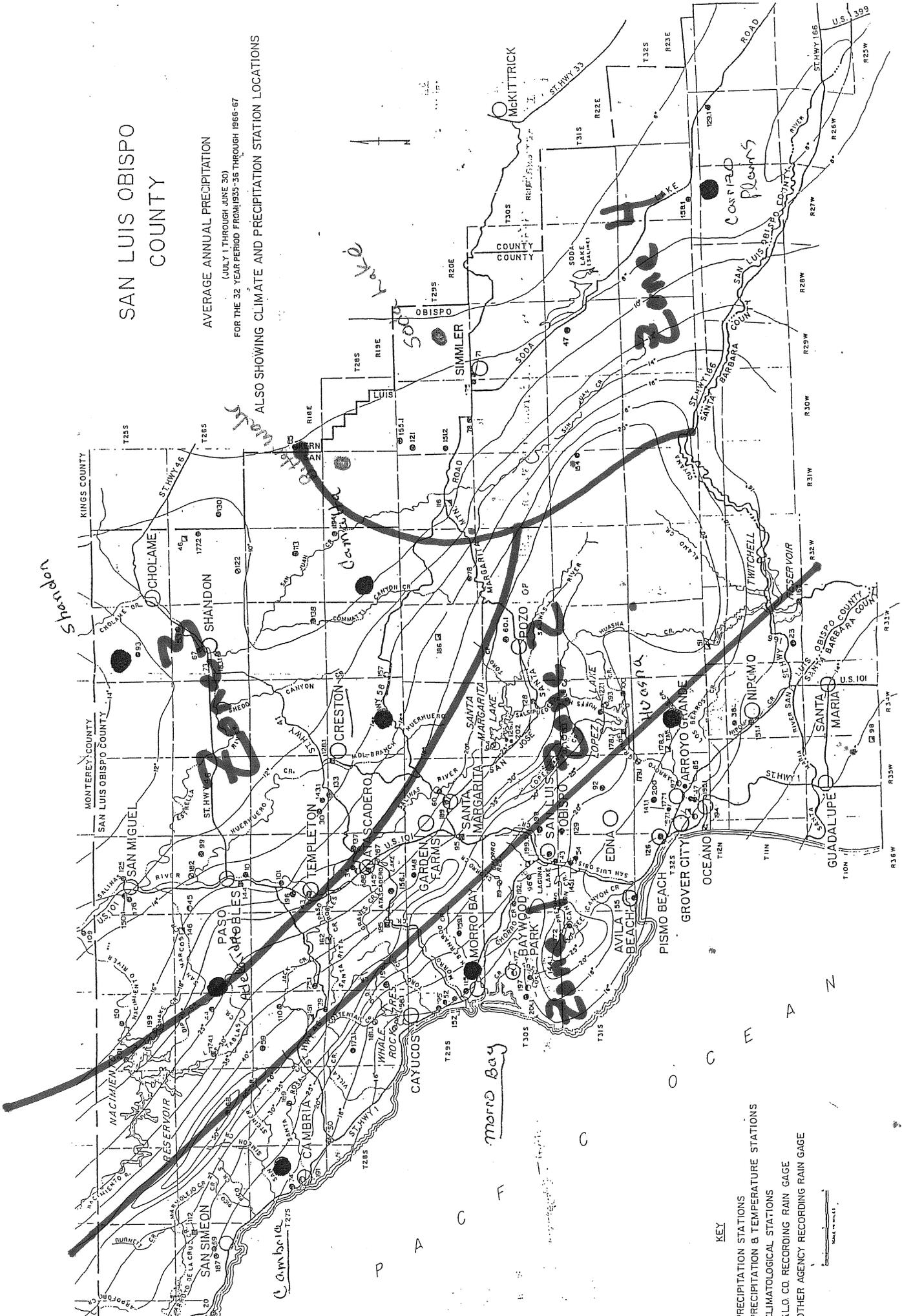
Zone 2

Zone 4

SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY

AVERAGE ANNUAL PRECIPITATION
(JULY 1 THROUGH JUNE 30)
FOR THE 32 YEAR PERIOD FROM 1925-26 THROUGH 1956-57

ALSO SHOWING CLIMATE AND PRECIPITATION STATION LOCATIONS



- KEY
- PRECIPITATION STATIONS
 - PRECIPITATION & TEMPERATURE STATIONS
 - CLIMATOLOGICAL STATIONS
 - S.L.O. CO. RECORDING RAIN GAGE
 - OTHER AGENCY RECORDING RAIN GAGE



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PRODUCER INFORMATION

SIZE AND TYPE OF OPERATION



Amount of Land

0-40 acres

41-200 ac

201-1,000 ac

1,001-5,000 ac

5,001-10,000 ac

>10,000 ac

Land Ownership

Owned

Leased

Combination

Type of Operation & # Head (check all that apply)

Cow-Calf

1-5

51-200

6-50

>200

Stocker

1-5

101-500

6-100

>500

Other Livestock

1-5

>5

Dry Farming

Irrigated Land

Do you have riparian areas?

...mostly wet?

...or mostly dry?

Are you in a special designation watershed, e.g., TMDL?

Do you operate a hunting program?

Do you operate a recreation/agtourism program (other than hunting)?

Part III. Self-Assessment Categories, Questions, & Feedback Form

General Information and Instructions

- The self assessment questions are organized into 12 sections – 1 for a ranch plan and 11 subject categories. Basic scoring instructions are on each sheet.
- For each question within subject categories, you will rate yourself on a scale of 0-10 (poor to excellent) based on your understanding of sustainable ranching practices and how well you think your operation meets the best possible practices for your situation. Knowledge of “best management practices” may be helpful, but if they are not well defined or not applicable to the question or your situation, it may be best to think in terms of results and feasibility more so than commonly defined “best” practices. That is, ask yourself what practices bring you closer to achieving sustainability.
- Choose n/a for “not applicable” if the topic or practice is not relevant to your operation. Do not count those questions in your within-subject count of # questions scored.
- To obtain your average score for a subject, first sum your scores for all questions, then count the # questions scored (omitting those which you checked off as “n/a”), and finally divide the sum by the count.
- Please note that as your understanding of your property and operation changes over time, your scores may go up or down even if you have not made any changes or even are always improving. For example, you thought you were doing well in one regard but learned over time that you weren’t doing as well as you first thought; your subsequent score may be lower but your practices may be the same or better than before. Your self-assessments are very much unique, so only you can truly understand your individual scores and track your progress. This might be an argument for an additional data column for each question to answer whether your performance has improved since your last evaluation (i.e., tracking your progress independent of fluctuating scores).
- Depending on the nature of your operation, you might want to complete the assessments solo or involve family and employees to whatever extent you desire. Discussions with various members of your operation might help you complete the self-assessment. Recognize also that other members of your operation may have specific insight or expertise to offer suggestions for improvement in certain areas.
- There is a certain amount of overlap among categories that reflects fundamental interrelationships. Some questions (or similar ones) have been included in more than one section if different aspects were considered particularly important or relevant to more than one subject.
- Each subject category has a customizable question (“Is there some aspect of your...that you could change to improve the social, economic, or natural resources of your practices?”) that allows for individuals to specify their own question of particular interest. This can be used to identify an action item to address before the next evaluation, above and beyond improving your performance as needed for the standard questions. During that next evaluation, you can evaluate how successful your efforts were to implement that action item and continue to use this aspect of the project structure for your own specific needs.
- Please note that the preliminary drafts of this self-assessment project contained more questions per subject than are contained herein. Our intent is to make a longer version available for those interested in greater detail or more ideas, and also to adapt portions of this document (or longer versions) to better meet regulatory guidelines or fill other needs as appropriate or useful for both the ranching community and the agencies with which ranchers conduct business.
- Suggestions for how this project can be improved are not only welcome but vital to our success. Consider also the future directions you feel this project should take. Please consider submitting your comments, corrections, and suggestions using the Feedback Form at the end of this packet, but also feel free to call, write, or email at any time. Information we receive will be circulated among all project authors.

Please submit all inquiries or correspondence to:

Jim Zingo or Bill Tietje
UC Cooperative Extension
2156 Sierra Way, Suite C
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
phone: (805) 781-5938; fax: (805) 781-4316
e-mail: wdtietje@nature.berkeley.edu
e-mail: jzingo@co.slo.ca.us

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Ranching Sustainability Self-Assessment Score Sheet v3.09

RANCH PLAN

Rate your ranch plan as indicated below.

	score
Do you have a written ranch plan? <i>If No, score 0. If Yes, score a point for each of the below 11 categories addressed in your plan.</i>	
Do you have a map or set of maps that you can use as a planning tool? <i>Score 0 for No or 10 for Yes.</i>	

Self-Assessment Categories (check off each topic covered in your Ranch Plan)



LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT	
SOIL MANAGEMENT	
FORAGE MANAGEMENT	
BIODIVERSITY/WILDLIFE CONSERVATION	
REGULATIONS AND REGULATORS	
PEOPLE MANAGEMENT	
ECONOMICS	
ENERGY	
MONITORING	
PEST MANAGEMENT	
WATER QUALITY	

LIVESTOCK MANAGEMENT

Thoughtful and careful animal handling will improve productivity from the ranch to the plate. Proper control of livestock will improve forage growth and utilization, water quality, and animal nutrition, and also plays an important role in maintaining plant and wildlife diversity. Demonstrating good livestock management practices is rapidly becoming important in the marketing of ranch animals.

Rate your practices on a scale of 0-10 (poor to excellent), n/a = not applicable

POSITIVE POINTS QUESTIONS

✓
n/a

score

Does your class of livestock match your environment?		
Do you calve in synchronization with your feed conditions?		
Do you evaluate your success by the number of lbs/acre of beef sold?		
Do you value each cow?		
Do you maintain a herd health program?		
Do you implement a low cost program?		
Do you leave the proper amount of RDM for its many benefits, such as moderating soil temperature, preventing erosion, and enhancing soil organics?		
Is there some aspect of your livestock management that you could change to improve the social, economic, or natural resources of your practices?		
<i>Write your Action Item here:</i>		
If you've completed this evaluation previously, how well did you accomplish the action item you identified?		

Total Score

--

Questions Scored

--

Average Score

--

SOIL MANAGEMENT

Good stewardship of the land and soil is a prerequisite to good ranching. Soil structure and nutrient content affect forage health and vigor. A healthy, as opposed to unhealthy, soil profile will better favor good forage over noxious weeds. The objective is to conserve and improve naturally occurring beneficial soil characteristics and use best management practices to correct any deficiencies in the soil.

Rate your practices on a scale of 0-10 (poor to excellent), n/a = not applicable

POSITIVE POINTS QUESTIONS

✓
n/a

score

Do you leave the proper amount of RDM for its many benefits, such as moderating soil temperature, preventing erosion, and enhancing soil organics?

Do you regularly monitor areas of your ranch that are at risk for erosion (e.g., every 3 years)?

Do you have baseline soil information (e.g., pH, type, organic matter, and fertility) from NRCS, other soil surveys, or your own testing?

Do you monitor for soil health, e.g., for pathogens, nutrients, bacteria, and fungi?

Do you understand the value of pastureland for carbon sequestration?

Do you utilize practices that maximize carbon sequestration?

Are you aware of the difference in soil building capability between annuals and perennials?

Is there some aspect of your soil management that you could change to improve the social, economic, or natural resources of your practices?

Write your Action Item here:

If you've completed this evaluation previously, how well did you accomplish the action item you identified?

Total Score

Questions Scored

Average Score

FORAGE MANAGEMENT

Good management of rangeland forage provides many important advantages. It not only provides food for livestock, but food and cover for wildlife, a filter to slow and cleanse runoff as well as increase percolation, and protection of the following year's emerging forage. Public perception of rangeland stewardship is usually most influenced by how much of the available forage that landowners leave.

Rate your practices on a scale of 0-10 (poor to excellent), n/a = not applicable

POSITIVE POINTS QUESTIONS

✓
n/a

score

Do you implement practices that will enhance native grasses or forbs?		
Do your grazing practices allow native plants, e.g., oaks, wildflowers, and grasses, to regenerate?		
Do you leave the proper amount of RDM to provide new grass protection from frost, heat, and moisture loss?		
Are you familiar with the potential benefits of managed grazing?		
Do your plants have adequate recovery time after grazing?		
Do you understand the terms overgrazing, overbarring, and biological overgrazing?		
Do you have a range improvement program that might include methods such as management intensive grazing, seeding, fire, and monitoring?		
Do you budget for and maintain the infrastructure, e.g., fences, roads, water troughs, etc., that enable successful forage management?		
Is there some aspect of your forage management that you could change to improve the social, economic, or natural resources of your practices?		
<i>Write your Action Item here:</i>		
If you've completed this evaluation previously, how well did you accomplish the action item you identified?		

Total Score

--

Questions Scored

--

Average Score

--

BIODIVERSITY/WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Good stewardship of the land will foster diverse plant and animal communities and will enhance economic opportunities involving wildlife. This not only provides for game species and watchable wildlife, which can be the foundation for economically viable hunting and/or tourism programs, but also demonstrates a recognition of the important role played by private lands in protecting and enhancing biological diversity.

Rate your practices on a scale of 0-10 (poor to excellent), n/a = not applicable

POSITIVE POINTS QUESTIONS

**✓
n/a** **score**

Do you provide artificial habitat enhancement, such as nest structures, bat boxes, or raptor roosts?		
Do you leave some standing and downed dead wood for habitat, such as snags for cavity-nesting birds, large logs in streams for fish cover, or downed branches for small mammals?		
Do you follow accepted guidelines to avoid unintentionally damaging live native trees?		
Do you conduct a hunting program to manage game populations?		
Do you meet the habitat needs of economically important game species?		
Do you provide wildlife with their basic needs, i.e., food, water, cover, territory, and protection?		
Do you provide for non-game, beneficial species that offer both instrumental and intrinsic values, such as insectivorous birds that may control pest species?		
Do you use grazing to enhance native forbs and wildflowers to support native pollinators?		
Have you considered using a conservation easement to protect habitat?		
Do your game and nongame wildlife contribute environmental, economic, and social values to your ranch operation?		
How well do your management practices create habitat, natural or artificial, which would be necessary for healthy species diversity and numbers from the soil microbes and the plants up through the larger species that all share a place on your ranch.		
Is there some aspect of your biodiversity management that you could change to improve the social, economic, or natural resources of your practices?		
<i>Write your Action Item here:</i>		
If you've completed this evaluation previously, how well did you accomplish the action item you identified?		

Total Score

Questions Scored

Average Score

REGULATIONS AND REGULATORS

To learn and stay ahead of the latest developments is crucial to successful ranching. Careful compliance with regulations will help landowners avoid conflict with regulators and may help reduce the imposition of additional regulations. In addition, the intent behind most regulations makes compliance in the best long-term interest of the landowner.

Rate your practices on a scale of 0-10 (poor to excellent), n/a = not applicable

POSITIVE POINTS QUESTIONS

✓
n/a

score

Do you consistently follow label directions when using vaccines, medications, and chemicals?		
Do you properly dispose of chemicals, containers, and biological waste (e.g., needles)?		
Are you familiar with secondary effects and life cycle of any chemical products that you use?		
Do you regularly update your labor law and OSHA/safety employee notices?		
Do you have a safety plan on file that complies with OSHA requirements?		
Are you aware of applicable regulations affecting your operation and do you have the plans to meet the current regulations, e.g., a water quality plan?		
Are you part of the regulatory/political process?		
Is there some aspect of your approach to regulations that you could change to improve the social, economic, or natural resources of your practices?		
<i>Write your Action Item here:</i>		
If you've completed this evaluation previously, how well did you accomplish the action item you identified?		

Total Score

Questions Scored

Average Score

PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

You can enhance your operations via thoughtful management of all employees, contractors, suppliers, regulators, visitors, purchasers of your products, and consumers. Compliance with federal and state employment laws, including postings, safety meetings and procedures, training, and other worker protection measures, are important to avoid legal conflicts, injury to your workers, and the resulting adverse effects on your productivity. Providing a healthy and pleasant work environment with opportunities for personal and career growth will improve worker productivity and retention, saving ranchers time and money. Maintaining a good relationship with those who provide outside services to the ranch will help promote your products and retain customers. Healthy family relationships also foster satisfaction with the ranching lifestyle and continuity of land ownership.

Rate your practices on a scale of 0-10 (poor to excellent), n/a = not applicable

POSITIVE POINTS QUESTIONS

✓
n/a

score

Do you provide safety talks at least annually, e.g., on proper handling of herbicides, vaccines, medications, and other chemicals?

Do you send your employees to relevant courses in their native language at least annually?

Do you provide other educational opportunities for employees, yourself, and your family to improve, advance, and increase their contributions to your organization?

Are you active in any trade organizations or other collaborative groups?

Have you and your family established written goals for the ranch, and are your goals clearly defined and inclusive of everyone in your operation?

How would you rank the quality of communication within your organization as it relates to advancing the common good?

Do you have a workable succession and estate plan in place?

How do you rate the creativity of your operation?

Are you willing to change the way you look at things to better achieve long-term goals?

Do you have a written checklist (e.g., like pilots use before each flight) that provides guidelines to assure that your decisions will lead your operation towards sustainability?

Is there some aspect of your people management that you could change to improve the social, economic, or natural resources of your practices?

Write your Action Item here:

If you've completed this evaluation previously, how well did you accomplish the action item you identified?

Total Score

Questions Scored

Average Score

ECONOMICS

Profitability ultimately drives the ranch business. Producing livestock that buyers want is essential to success. Being a low cost producer requires an understanding of cost-benefit decision making. Landowners also need to consider alternative income streams for their property: hunting leases, agricultural related tourism, and other opportunities may be as important an income opportunity as raising livestock.

Rate your practices on a scale of 0-10 (poor to excellent), n/a = not applicable

POSITIVE POINTS QUESTIONS

✓
n/a

score

Do you have an efficient record-keeping system, e.g., computerized data?		
Do you have a diverse income, e.g., multi-species operation, rental property, hunting, agtourism, etc.?		
Are you in an alliance for purchasing, marketing, or production?		
Does value-added marketing have a place in your operation?		
Are you being economically rewarded for sustainable practices?		
Do you have a drought plan to protect your current and future investments in the land and livestock?		
Do you evaluate your success by net dollars/acre?		
Do you reinvest some of your income in the maintenance and improvement of your infrastructure, e.g., fences, water, roads, buildings, and equipment?		
Is there some aspect of your economics that you could change to improve the social, economic, or natural resources of your practices?		
<i>Write your Action Item here:</i>		
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If you've completed this evaluation previously, how well did you accomplish the action item you identified?		

Total Score

Questions Scored

Average Score

ENERGY

Successful ranching requires managing costs, and energy is becoming an increasingly significant portion of ranch expenses. Examining ranch energy efficiency is critical to the long term viability of operations, including use of vehicles, fertilizers, alternative fuels, and travel plans. Ranchers need to consider energy opportunities, including solar, wind, and biofuel production, and incentive programs.

Rate your practices on a scale of 0-10 (poor to excellent), n/a = not applicable

POSITIVE POINTS QUESTIONS

✓
n/a

score

Are you aware of ways to lower your dependency on fossil fuels?		
Are you using alternative fuels or power sources, e.g., solar, wind, and biofuels?		
Do you use energy efficient vehicles and power equipment?		
Do you reduce, reuse, and recycle to lower your energy demands?		
Are you producing energy as a source of income?		
Are you aware of BEHAVE principles to reduce energy use, e.g., teaching cattle to eat weeds so you can reduce your use of herbicides or using goats instead of machines to mow lawns?		
Is there some aspect of your energy management that you could change to improve the social, economic, or natural resources of your practices?		
<i>Write your Action Item here:</i>		
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If you've completed this evaluation previously, how well did you accomplish the action item you identified?		

Total Score

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Questions Scored

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Average Score

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MONITORING

A simple monitoring plan will provide a record of your range conditions. This will better enable a rancher to recognize both positive and negative trends in the range conditions. Any observed long term declines in the range can be remedied only if the landowner can first recognize that change. Monitoring will also provide a record to demonstrate your positive stewardship of the land.

Rate your practices on a scale of 0-10 (poor to excellent), n/a = not applicable

POSITIVE POINTS QUESTIONS

✓
n/a

score

Do you monitor your rangeland using photographs (aerial, infrared, standard, or digital)?		
Do you record your observations of range conditions?		
Do you keep records describing your annual management practices?		
Do you monitor water quality, e.g., turbidity and temperature?		
Do you monitor your finances regularly?		
Do you monitor your relationships regularly, e.g., family goals, estate planning, and employees?		
Is there some aspect of your monitoring that you could change to improve the social, economic, or natural resources of your practices?		
<i>Write your Action Item here:</i>		
.....		
If you've completed this evaluation previously, how well did you accomplish the action item you identified?		

Total Score

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Questions Scored

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Average Score

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PEST MANAGEMENT

Understanding which pests can cause damage and under what conditions damage is likely to occur is a key objective. Healthy soils and grasslands will better resist invasive plant species, but knowledge of appropriate active management practices may enable landowners to prevent such plants from spreading. Rodent and predator control can improve forage conditions, but can cause unintended alterations of life cycles of non-target species. Thoughtful and informed use of control techniques can maximize benefits while limiting undesired and unintended consequences.

Rate your practices on a scale of 0-10 (poor to excellent), n/a = not applicable

POSITIVE POINTS QUESTIONS

✓
n/a

score

Are you familiar with and do you provide for beneficial natural predators, such as owls, bats, and insectivorous songbirds, that prey upon pest species?

Do you manage to control rodents by means that limit secondary impacts?

Do you use fish in water troughs to control mosquitoes?

When dealing with predators, do you first strive to avoid problems with troublesome predators, and second, hunt with non-lead projectiles or dispose of lead shot and use trap or bait stations with little or no effect on nontarget species or individuals?

Do you incorporate weed management into your operation, e.g., training your livestock to eat weeds?

Are you careful to avoid dispersing noxious or diseased plants or animals, e.g., sudden oak death, invasive plant seeds, etc.?

Is there some aspect of your pest management that you could change to improve the social, economic, or natural resources of your practices?

Write your Action Item here:

If you've completed this evaluation previously, how well did you accomplish the action item you identified?

Total Score

Questions Scored

Average Score

WATER QUALITY

Healthy grasslands and woodlands will absorb water and slow its pace, reducing erosion and siltation of waterways. Maintaining residual forage cover at the beginning of seasonal rains is important to assuring that the water leaving your land is as clean as possible. Proper road construction and maintenance is essential to preventing unnecessary siltation of nearby water bodies.

Rate your practices on a scale of 0-10 (poor to excellent), n/a = not applicable

POSITIVE POINTS QUESTIONS

✓
n/a

score

Do you implement management practices to limit sedimentation?		
Have you designed, modified, or maintained your roads to minimize sedimentation?		
Do you use livestock production methods to limit pathogens and sediments reaching waterways?		
Do you implement practices to stabilize stream banks?		
Do you maintain ground cover to filter and slow water?		
Are you in a watershed of special designation?		
Is there some aspect of your water quality management that you could change to improve the social, economic, or natural resources of your practices?		
<i>Write your Action Item here:</i>		
.....		
If you've completed this evaluation previously, how well did you accomplish the action item you identified?		

Total Score

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Questions Scored

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Average Score

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