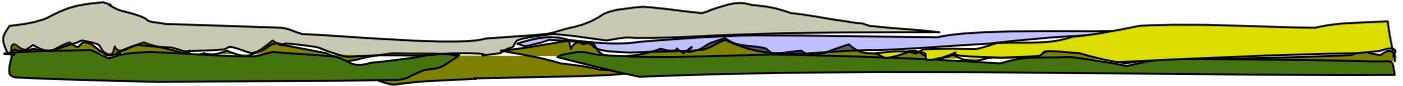


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Colleagues and Clients:

As you know, we are in a severe drought, with no end in the forecasts, and worsening consequences if it persists. This rainfall year is on track to be the driest in California's recorded history, and is already presenting enormous challenges to ranchers and public rangeland managers that use grazing as a management tool.

My rangeland manager clients, colleagues, and I are planning for continued drought by:

- Taking a phased approach to drought response, with defined triggers and deadlines for actions if conditions continue to worsen
- Defining sacrifice (flexible use) fields that can take some "abuse" for extra grazing and concentration for feeding, while excluding the "special habitat" fields
- Bringing in replacement feeds, including hay and agriculture by-products
- Reducing herd sizes; planning to move animals to sacrifice fields or off-site (taking to other fields or to market)
- Checking watering systems and repairing leaks
- Planning to minimize the effects of drought (and any heavy rainstorms ahead) on special resources, such as erosion sites, streams, pest plants, fire hazards, and endangered species habitat
- Monitoring conditions, especially in the "flexible use fields," and planning for additional measures if the drought extends to summer
- Considering 2014 an exception—It's OK if RDM standards aren't met sometimes (especially in the sacrifice fields) because these grasslands are generally resilient; it's an emergency; in many cases the developing drought caught us off-guard last fall--bare places developed that might be at risk of erosion in a heavy rainstorm, and the fall forage is now gone
- Considering how "sustainability" includes accommodating the rancher/grazing lessee's needs during drought (allow extra time to cooperate; collaborate on feasible solutions;

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there are few choices to move livestock; designate a sacrifice field; focus on high-priority risks, such as soil erosion; give credit for extra conservation services)

Here are three sources of California drought information that we've found particularly helpful and relevant:

1. **UC Davis Rangeland Watershed Laboratory**--drought status, survey of rancher perspectives, publications, and UC Coop Extension advice and services

<http://rangelandwatersheds.ucdavis.edu/main/drought.html>

2. **National Drought Mitigation Center** in Lincoln, Nebraska--Vegetation Drought Response Index for California

<http://veg dri.unl.edu/Home/StateVegDRI.aspx?CA>

3. **Time magazine** article--Hundred Years of Dry: How California's Drought Could Get Much, Much Worse

<http://science.time.com/2014/01/23/hundred-years-of-dry-how-californias-drought-could-get-much-much-worse/>

Thank you and good luck, Larry