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Module 8D continues the discussion of the homework assignment from the April 2006 broadcast.

Let's go back to Pat and.

Yes, we'll wrap this up here pretty soon, we are about to the end of the time we had allotted to this discussion, so, I just want to briefly talk about some of the things that were common themes and we, it seems like perhaps we've beat the functional / groups issue of using species as opposed to other kinds of names to death, but, but, it's a common theme that comes up over and over and over again and I would urge you all, please think about what you're doing when you set these functional / structural groups up, think about how it's going to be used and make sure that the information that's in there is stuff that others can use that did not have the luxury of listening to your discussion and conversations when you develop those things. The use of quantitative information again, use quantitative information as much as possible, but, make sure that there is something behind that quantitative information. The range of variability, we've talked about that a lot and, and the a risk again of beating that one to death, talk about that range of variability, use that state and transition model, use that ecological site description, use the expertise that you have sitting in the room to talk about what goes on, on that ecological site, how does it function, how does it change from one plant community in that reference state to another plant community and what are the, what is happening there and how you can build that

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into these reference sheets so that when I go out there and look at it I don't have to guess what you mean when you say the range is from 300 pounds to a thousand pounds of annual production. I want to talk now and address some questions that came in and the folks in Prineville did a good job of lining this out and describing some of the problems that they're having and encountering. Many of the rest of you mentioned this one way or another and so I wanted to take this last time in this discussion to, to talk a little bit about ecological site descriptions, about the currency of those description, about the, the progress in getting site descriptions updated, reviewed, renewed and this process that we're all involved in, in putting these things together. What's on that overhead is, is again the Web addresses for some places to go and look for current ecological site descriptions. A couple of the comments that came in said I'm using this old 1980 site description and it doesn't have any of this kind of information and while that's exactly right, it didn't have any of that kind of information. In many of those cases, I was able this morning to get on the Internet and find a new updated site description for that site that they had listed on the top of the page, so, make sure you're using the current ecological site description and the best way to do that, actually, the best way to do that is to make sure you have a relationship with the area and state range specialist with NNRCS and that you all are working together and bringing these things up current. As many of you know and I hope most of you know there is an interagency group now, BLM Forest Service, NRCS, developing a joint ecological site manual that will line out procedures and policies on how to put these things together and while it'll also put in there I'm sure

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procedures and policy on how to keep agencies current and communicating, that communication in the end is going to end up with you in the field talking to your counterparts in the field. The example that Prineville sent in where they had an old site description, well, actually, they had the current site description, they've made comments on that site description, they've changed some of the composition and that's a good thing to do, you need to do that as you work in the field, but, at the same time you need to make sure that that information get sent in to the NRCS and not because NRCS controls the site description, that's not it at all, NRCS houses the library for the site description and they're on those Web pages.

Pat, just as you were doing that we just had a call that came in and the question was is there a password to get into those NRCS sites with those ecological site descriptions, it sounds like maybe somebody has tried and maybe ran into a password and couldn't get some access.

Good, good question, and for the, for, on the, if you could put those Websites back up there, if we could go back to the overhead and let me talk to those specifically. On the one that Jeff has the pin on that's the ESIS and eventually that will be where they are all housed and it will be the easiest place to get to, to get to the site descriptions that have been approved for general use, no, there is no password, now, there's probably five times more site descriptions in that system than you can get access to through that system because they're in

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various stages of review and not improved for general use. The second Website there, the State NRCS Website, that's the one that you should be able to go to and requires no password and all of the current site descriptions that are being used in the field should be available in that Website and there is a couple of things that need to be pointed out there. First of all, you have to be Java enabled. I was on my computer this morning, no, we tried with Dave's computer this morning and we couldn't pull it up because his computer is new and it hadn't been Java enabled and he couldn't get it, so, that has to be done and then I went over to Mike's computer and I couldn't get it to come up on Mike's computer because he had all pop-ups blocked, so, I had to go down and say temporarily allow pop-ups, so, you have to do both of those things or ensure both of those things to be able to access those site descriptions. What that Website will do, will bring up a page that says electronic field office tech guide, there'll be a map, pick your state, that'll go to a state map, pick your county and really it doesn't matter which county you pick because it's going to take you to the same place, just tap on the map and it'll take you to a menu, then, on the left side of that menu there'll be, it'll say EFOTG section one, two, three, four, five, select section two and it's going to probably be in roman numerals II, that'll bring up a pop down menu and some place in there will talk, these are not all standard, but, it will talk about an ecological site description that may actually say that, hopefully, it may say, plant information first and then take you to the ecological site description, that's where that information resides and that's how to find the most current information that's available online. I hope that helped and the folks in Prineville, I

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hope that's addressing partly what your comments were. One of the other things I want to say specifically to you, but, to everyone else out there. As you revise these site descriptions or as you, you make your comments on the site description and we encourage everyone that's out there in the field working with these things to do just what you've done and you've made some very interesting additions or comments to this particular site description. In the soil section it says, the soils to this site are shallow and well drained, you all had said and moderately deep, shallow and moderately deep and well drained. Well, there is a considerable difference between shallow and moderately deep, so, that's a good addition. Then, you've gone down in the plant table and you've changed, the bluebunch wheatgrass was the dominant, it was listed at 40 to 50%, you've changed that to 30 to 50%, good change and then Thurber's needlegrass was five to 15%, you've actually changed that one to 20 to 40%, that's a pretty major change, I'm going to come back to that, then, on the basin big sagebrush, you've changed that from 20 to 25% to 10 to 15, dropped that a little bit and then on the production table you've changed that from favorable years of 1200 and unfavorable years of 600 to favorable years of 900 and unfavorable years of 400, pretty considerable changes and, and I'm not questioning whether your information is right, but, the question that I would ask is, are you really on the same site or are we on a different site? If you go to the National Range and Pasture handbook in pasture three, or in pasture three, you know where my mind is, it's a beautiful day outside and in chapter three of the National Range and Pasture handbook, it gives some guidance on when you know you're on a

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different ecological site and as you know the sites are defined by kinds, amounts and proportions of vegetation and so the guidance that's given in the, in the site description and I don't know if we, I mean in the handbook, can we put that up?

Yes.

Can we go to the overhead and look at this, maybe better than me just reading it off? It talks about presence or absence of one or more species, first, it talks about significant differences in species and species groups, presence or absence of one or more species up to 10% or more in the historic climax plant community, a 20% absolute change in composition between any two species or a difference in average annual herbaceous production of 50% if your production is 200 to 500 pounds, 30% if it's 500 to a thousand pounds and 20% difference if it's over a thousand pounds and so the way I read the site description that you all have modified and again, this is a good job, this is the kind of thing that we want you to do, but, I would say that perhaps you've identified really another ecological site and so the next step is to, is to sit down with the NRCS range folks in Oregon and say, this is what we have, this is what the data shows, this is what your data shows, do we have the same site, do we need to expand the site concept or do we have two ecological sites here and we need to develop another description for this other site? Jeff, I think you had a comment.

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Yes, I just add that one other possibility is that you want to go back and check and see where those data were, were collected and what the precipitation was, not just the amount as Pat pointed out, but, when that precipitation fell, how intensely it was, how intensely it fell and so forth and also we've looked at a number of sites recently where the plant community has not changed, but, productivity has changed due to soil degradation and so again, if you collect the new data on some sites that you'd like to use for reference which is what we're talking about here, we're developing the reference sheet, when we're modifying the ecological site descriptions we want to be fairly certain that we're collecting those on true reference sites.

Pretty well went through the summary, I think what we'll do now is maybe move on to the next, next topic. Before we do that, just two quick notes, one relative to the Websites and problems getting into them another resource is just to call the State NRCS range specialist and I'm sure he or she will be very helpful in getting that information if you can't get in to that website.