

The following is a brief statement of the principles of the East Bay Chapter of the California Native Plant Society (CNPS-EB) regarding East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD) grasslands habitat management, useful for communicating the chapter's perspective to other agencies, organizations and the general public.

Principles regarding East Bay Regional Park District Grasslands Management

- The California Native Plant Society's primary goal is that EBRPD grasslands be managed for "more native-like" flora-and-habitat values.
- Recreational values of grasslands should be layered on top of "more native-like flora" goal.
- Trails must accommodate the recreational, aesthetic and educational value to a park user of the native flora/habitat for its own sake.
- Fuel load (fire risk) management for public safety is a necessary element of any habitat management operation.
- Soil erosion must be prevented and water quality protected.
- There must be credible scientific measurement of progress toward the goals outlined in these principles.
- The EBRPD should conduct and support research (experiments) designed to develop management strategies that can lead to "more native-like" flora and habitat.

Some Brief Clarifications:

The description and explanation of what CNPS means by "more native-like" is not presented in the above list of principles.

To define the concept within a bullet item in a list of principles is not practical or necessary. The whole ball of yarn is wrapped around the notion of what CNPS (and others) seek to achieve as the "native grasslands" goal, so this term will most definitely be the center of attention in all future discussion.

"More native-like" captures the essence of what CNPS intends to convey. The phrase opens the door to further dialog, and it doesn't lead anyone down the dark path to "you can't go back to 'native habitat'" nor to ambiguous terms such as "open space" and "natural processes". The term "more native-like" forces the very issue that CNPS asserts is paramount: defining one's terms, and establishing methodologies for measuring the status or condition referenced by those terms.

"Grassland" is shorthand for "grasslands and their immediately associated riparian and woodland habitats". (The grasslands were no doubt grazed lands prehistorically, as well as historically, but the term "graze" is confusing because of its current and recent historical context of commercial cattle grazing.)

You'll note, for example, that no mention is made of "grazing" per se, as that activity is perceived to be just one potential tool in a suite of management tools. You'll note also that "preserve the rich cultural heritage of our grazing/cattle-raising history" is not mentioned. Nor are ball fields, picnic grounds, and other uses of grasslands.

rev. 31Dec06