

Ecological Site Description/Applications Workshop, August 23-25, 2011, Shortgrass Steppe Research and Interpretation Center, Nunn, Colorado and High Plains Grasslands Research Station, Cheyenne, Wyoming

I had the opportunity to attend the ESD workshop held near Nunn, Colorado and Cheyenne, Wyoming during August 23-25, 2011. The workshop was sponsored by SRM, ARS, NRCS, and BLM with participants from other federal and state agencies, universities, and private landowners and businesses.

I am involved in both classroom teaching and range extension programs. I attended this workshop with the idea that I need to be current in my understanding of ESDs and their development so that I can help inform students, practitioners (both producers and agency personnel), and interested publics on ESD development and applications. The current generation of ESDs has limitations in terms of the information provided, but the next generation being developed now include more information that will help us better understand the systems we work in and will help us become better managers. Even the current generation of ESDs has much useful information contained in one place that can help managers plan appropriately. Often a management unit will contain more than one ESD. That too is useful information for management purposes.

The workshop effectively combined classroom presentations with field-based exercises and discussions. As is often the case, the field-based portions of the program were the most informative, but the presentations helped set the stage for effective discussions in the field.

The teaching team consisted of several individuals with a great deal of experience in developing and using ESDs. Additionally, a number of participants were able to contribute to the discussions based on their experience, which in some cases was substantial.

I was very satisfied with what I was able to learn and experience in the workshop. I think it is important that those of us involved in the Range discipline understand how ESDs are developed and what they can provide us so that we can do a better job of managing rangelands. I encourage any who are able to attend the ESD workshops at the SRM annual meeting in Spokane and the upcoming workshops in Florida and Nevada (Reno) this fall and spring.

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