

# Tulare County Office of Education

*Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools*

January 25, 2010

## **Press Advisory**

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## **Fifth Annual Field Science Weekend Planned for Circle J-Norris Ranch in Springville**

**January 22, 23 & 24, 2010 from 5:00 p.m. Friday to 1:00 p.m. Sunday**

The Circle J-Norris Ranch and SCICON will host a Field Science Weekend January 22-24, 2010, for 85 area high school students who have identified an interest in field science and conservation careers. High school students and their science teachers will roll up their sleeves to perform a variety of studies during this two-day event. Schools involved include: Granite Hills High School (Porterville), Strathmore High School, Monache High School (Porterville), Oroshi High School, Tulare Union High School, and Tulare Western High School.

The Circle J-Norris Ranch Field Science Weekend is a fun and educational event that involves students in hands-on science and exposes them to exciting career opportunities in the field sciences and conservation. The event also reinforces the importance of students staying on track with science and math courses necessary for success in higher education. The Field Science Weekend is organized by the Tulare County Office of Education's SCICON outdoor education program with support provided by *Building Bridges to the Outdoors*, a joint project of the Sierra Club and The Sierra Club Foundation.

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Circle J-Norris Ranch is a 627-acre ranch in Tulare County's blue oak woodlands, near of Springville. An important feature of the ranch is Heron Pond, a large man-made pond created in the 1940s with a grant from the USDA. Heron Pond supports a wide variety of wetland species including ducks, hawks, frogs, toads, fish, turtles and aquatic invertebrates. Currently, the ranch is grazed year-round as part of a cattle operation leased to a local ranching family. The Field Science Weekend event supports the ranch management goals to maximize the quality of wildlife habitat, improve the range conditions while providing for the cattle operation and improve the water quality of the pond and stream.

## **Study Teams**

Groups of 10 students and one or two teachers will be assigned to a study team. The team will work together with the scientist(s), focusing on one aspect of the ranch. On Saturday, students will perform field science experiments and work to collect data. The students present a synopsis of the group's work Saturday evening and then develop sustainable solutions for ranch management. Sunday morning, everyone will be involved in restoration service projects designed to improve conditions on the ranch.

## **2010 Study Projects:**

- 1.) **Grazing Management** with Fletcher Linton, M.S., Forest Botanist, Sequoia National Forest
- 2.) **Wildlife Survey** led by Robin Galloway, Wildlife Biologist, Sequoia National Forest, and Eric Johnson, E & M's Reptile Family
- 3.) **Fish & Their Food** led by Kelly Aubushon, California Department of Fish & Game and Justin Ward
- 4.) **Water Quality Monitoring** led by Mike Milanesi of Tulare City School District and a representative from California Department of Water Resources
- 5.) **Silviculture: Age and Condition of Oak Woodland** led by George Powell, Silviculturist, Sequoia National Forest
- 6.) **Hydrology/ Stream Survey** with Josh Courter, Hydrologist, Sequoia National Forest
- 7.) **Vernal Pool & Grazing Assessment** with Bobby Kamansky, Principal Biologist, Kamansky's Ecological Consulting
- 8.) **Art & Circle J –Norris Ranch** led by Frances Pyles, artist
- 9.) **Archaeology & Stewardship** TBA

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## **2010 Service Projects:**

1. **Nesting Boxes:** Create bird nesting habitat by building and placing bird boxes for Western Blue Birds and American Kestrels.
2. **Planting for Wildlife:** Plant berry-producing shrubs and wildlife plants in an enclosure inside the restoration area. Set up irrigation system.
3. **Christmas Trees for Fish:** Improve fish habitat by sinking Christmas trees in the pond. This gives the little fish a place to hide!
4. **Floating Islands 4.0:** Build and launch new and improved floating islands. The islands provide basking places for turtles and can serve to purify the pond water.
5. **Planting in the Restoration Area:** Plant native plants such as willows, California blackberry, and many other native plants.
6. **Weed Warriors;** Remove noxious weeds in the restoration area – conquer the Himalayan blackberry and bull thistle rosettes.

Students will be fed and housed at SCICON (the Clemmie Gill School for Science and Conservation.)

“We appreciate all of the scientists and teachers who come together to make the Field Science Weekend possible,” says Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak. “Their efforts help students consider the many important career opportunities that exist in field sciences and conservation.”

For more information, contact Robert Herman, Public Information Officer, at (559) 733-6606.

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