

NRCS HISTORIC CLIMAX PLANT COMMUNITIES AS REFERENCE AREAS

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Abstract: Establishing reference areas for western states reclamation invites a host of interesting challenges. Areas adjacent to the mine property may be so poorly managed they are no longer representative of the original plant communities. Additionally, an original reference community may no longer exist. One potential solution is to use the historic climax plant community (HCPC) concept established by the NRCS as a reference area. This paper discusses the process of reference area selection for several areas in New Mexico and compares the historic climax plant community concept to standards established using either a reference area or technical value. Although the use of the HCPC concept as a reclamation standard appears promising, its use invites almost as many problems as it seeks to resolve.

Additional Key Words: disturbance areas, reclamation standards

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