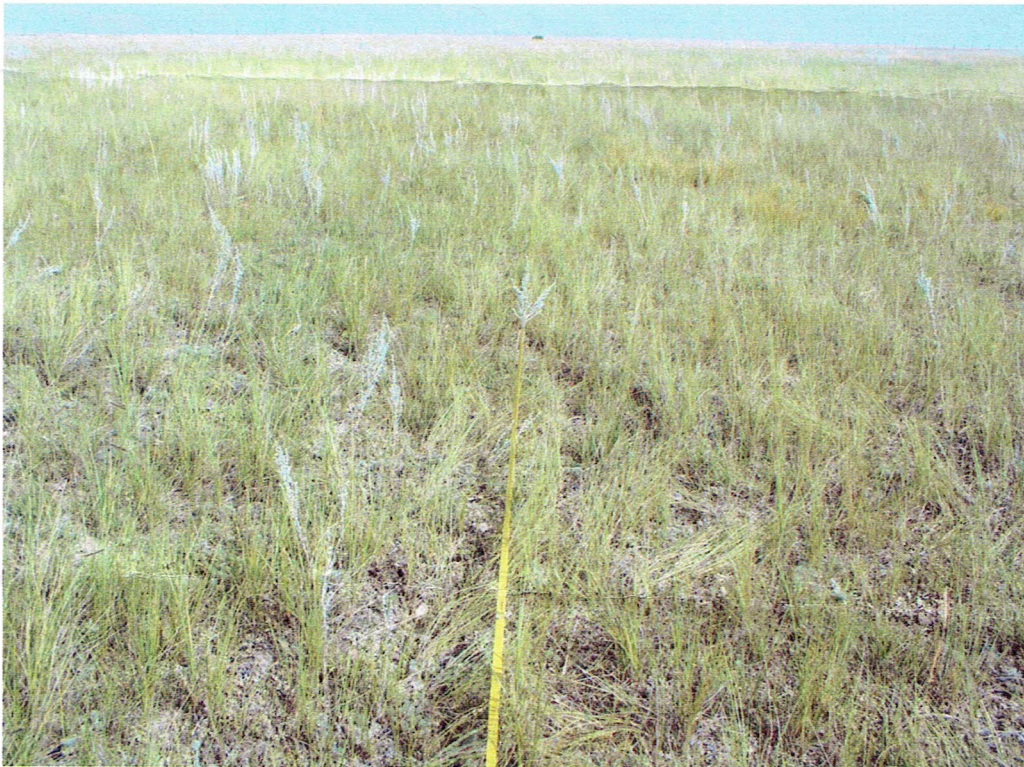


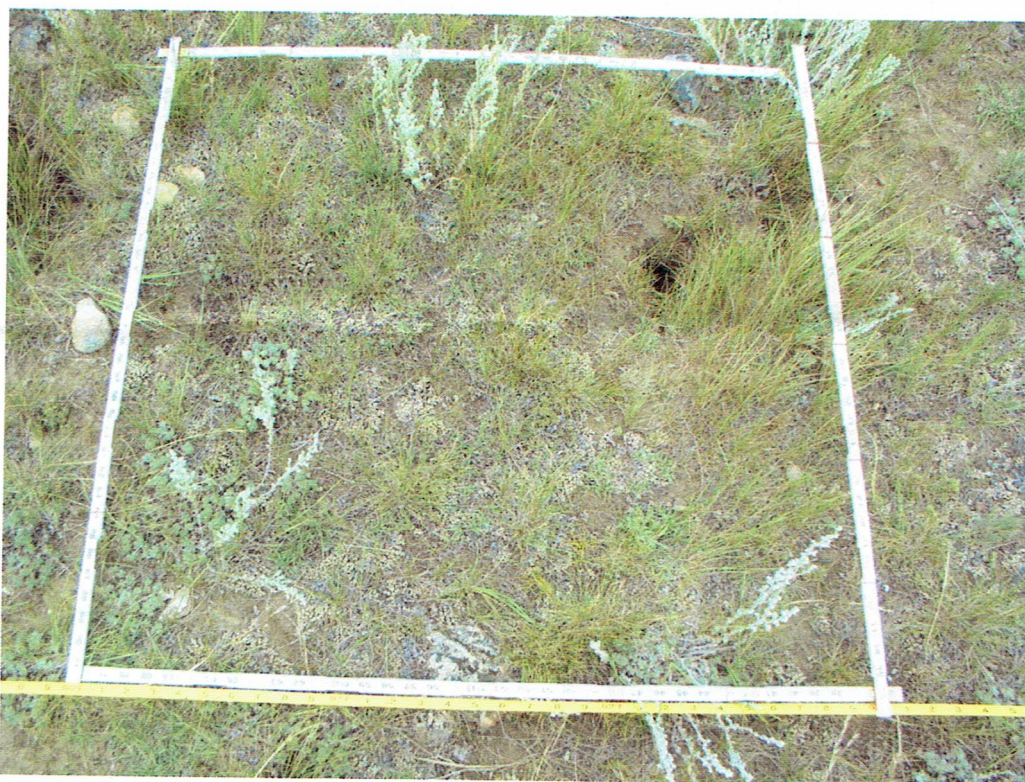
Photo Monitoring - Getting Started

- **Why Monitor?...Think in terms of your specific operation goals!**
 - ✓ *Determine the effects your current management is having on your grazing lands*
 - ✓ *Improve grass vigor, production, and rangeland health*
 - ✓ *Improve livestock health*
 - ✓ *Improve critical areas in a pasture*
- **Decide where you would like to monitor** - Maybe you've made some positive management changes in your early pastures, and would like to see if your efforts are paying off ...Inversely, maybe you've been forced to make management changes that could potentially degrade certain fields, and want to know the extent.
- **Look down at the ground/ across the landscape** – It will amaze you how many different factors you might observe by changing your visual perspective...even if you don't see major changes in species right away, you might be surprised what you see from year to year (i.e. seasonal production differences, weed cycles, grass hoppers, different grazing levels). Even though CSP only requires 1 photo, you will learn more with more pictures.



John Doe Ranch (8/06/2010) Wagon Pasture (Field 6) Looking West.

(In this case, I ran a tape between 2 known stakes marked them with GPS) Tip: pick a known point on the horizon to line up with and orient yourself to, but keep the sky at the top of the frame.



John Doe Ranch (8/06/10) Wagon Pasture (Field 6) 90'-93' on the tape. Walking East to West standing on North side of tape.

Note: take careful notes to remember exactly how you are oriented and consider your shadow in the picture.

- **Be consistent with timing and location of pictures** – It is a good idea to have a permanent stake where you can return to re-create the same conditions of last year's photos, and try to hold your camera at the same distance from the ground as well. In this area, July-Oct seems to be the most beneficial, as seasonal production is captured and forage isn't crispy, snowed over, and hard to identify.
- **Set up a binder or computer records where you can put the different years' pictures side by side.** Make educated guesses of why you are seeing changes (drought, grazing pressure, timing, etc...).
- **Use your feedback (and records) to make management decisions-** This may include:
 - ✓ *Improved rotation strategies for pastures*
 - ✓ *Increased use of stubble height and grass stage of maturity to dictate moves*
 - ✓ *Using supplement placement to control livestock distribution*
 - ✓ *Improved decision making on the need for and placement of water and fence development*
 - ✓ *Increased growing season rest for pastures*

- ✓ *Awareness of grazing utilization patterns and utilization in key areas*
- ✓ *Increased awareness and improved noxious weed control*

- **Don't be discouraged if you don't see results right away** – Think of it like a family photo. We might not look much different a year from now, but in 10 years we might not even recognize ourselves... Photo monitoring will capture many SHORT TERM factors (seasonal production, moisture conditions, utilization levels, and season of use), and give LONG TERM feedback (% bare ground, species composition, and production changes based on plant vigor and health).
- **Think beyond CSP requirements...** This is an investment in your operation, and (just like the family photos) they'll be more valuable to you as time goes on. Digital photos are easy and once you're set up, the time investment is minimal!
- **If you need assistance or have any questions, contact Jim Olson at the Choteau NRCS Field Office at (406) 466 5877 Ext 117.**