

Tulare County Office of Education

Jim Vidak, County Superintendent of Schools

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For Immediate Release

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Tulare County Office of Education Announces: Third Annual Field Science Weekend Planned for Circle J-Norris Ranch in Springville

January 26 & 27, 2008 from 8:30 a.m. Saturday to 4:00 p.m. Sunday

The Circle J-Norris Ranch and SCICON will host a Field Science Weekend for over 80 area high school students who have identified an interest in field science and conservation careers.

Students, teachers and scientists will collaborate to complete a detailed study of pond ecology and range management. Sophomore, junior and senior students and their science teachers will roll up their sleeves to perform a variety of studies during this two-day event. Schools involved include: Tulare Union High School, Tulare Western High School, Granite Hills High School (Porterville), Monache High School (Porterville), Strathmore High School, Orosi High School and Redwood High School (Visalia).

This year, students will work Saturday morning and afternoon with their study group on a specific aspect of the ranch, performing investigations and keeping data. Seven different study groups include topics on Fish Biology, Water Quality Monitoring, Wildlife Surveying, Grazing and Forage Assessment, Vegetation Studies, and Photography and Video Documenting. For

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example, the Fish Biology group will use a block seine net to capture a portion of the fish in the pond. Students then identify the species and measure and weigh each fish caught before releasing them back into the pond. The results help to identify fish population trends.

Sunday morning the students will be involved in ecological service projects such as: restoring riparian vegetation, designing and building a floating island (for water purification and duck nesting), and building duck boxes. Sunday afternoon, students will make presentations to the group and prioritize future restoration projects. Concerning the event, Circle J-Norris Ranch lead teacher, Nancy Bruce, says: “What is notable is that we seek to create an environment that balances the needs of the cattle operation with the needs of wildlife. Our restoration projects aim to create healthy, vigorous habitat for wildlife.”

Students will be fed and housed at SCICON (the Clemmie Gill School for Science and Conservation), which is operated by Tulare County Office of Education. Evening activities include team building exercises and an astronomy program. “We appreciate all of the scientists and teachers who have come together to make the Field Science Weekend possible,” says Tulare County Superintendent of Schools Jim Vidak. “Their efforts will help students see the many career opportunities that existing in field sciences and conservation.”

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

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