

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

**January 23, 24 & 25, 2009 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 23-25, 2009, 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. 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: Tulare Union High School, Tulare Western High School, Granite Hills High School, Monache High School, Strathmore High School, Orosi High School and Eleanor Roosevelt Community Learning Center.

This year, students will meet at SCICON on Friday evening for an introduction to the event and participate in teambuilding exercises. Saturday morning and afternoon study groups will work on a specific aspect of the ranch, performing investigations and gathering data. Seven different study groups include topics on Fish Biology, Silviculture, Water Quality Monitoring, Wildlife Surveying, Grazing and Forage Assessment, Vegetation Studies, and Hydrology. For 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

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species and measure and weigh each fish caught before releasing them back into the pond. The results help to identify fish population trends. The student groups will make presentations about their findings and the entire group will create and compose a vision for the ranch management which will guide future restoration projects.

Sunday morning, the students will be involved in ecological service projects such as: restoring riparian vegetation, designing and building floating islands (for water purification and duck nesting), and creating fish habitat using Christmas trees. 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, a night hike and an astronomy program. “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 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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