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PREFACE

The development and completion of this *Guide* is an excellent example of a long-term, multi-agency cooperative project. Nearly every state and federal agency with jurisdiction over resource management in California has either contributed written material or financial support. Valuable assistance was also provided by private utility companies responsible for managing resources throughout the state. The broad-based support for the *Guide* is a testimony to the mutual realization that today's resource management problems can only be addressed effectively through uniform approaches—standardized resource data that can be shared among resource professionals.

The habitat classification and *Guide* is an invitation to resource managers and scientists to base (at some level) habitat classifications on a standardized system. We recognize that resource interest and management objectives are as diverse as nature itself. Therefore, we have attempted to accommodate this diversity by providing an association level classification framework that can be used by an array of resource management interests, thus facilitating the exchange of resource inventory data.

The *Guide* is organized in a user-friendly format. The Introduction and Scope address the goals and objectives of the habitat classification system. Moreover, we provide an approach for placing vegetation assemblages into appropriate habitats. These rules and field techniques should help provide clarity to the classification process.

Next, de Becker and Sweet present a comprehensive Classification Crosswalk, where habitats contained within this *Guide* can be cross-referenced to other commonly-used vegetation classification systems. To our knowledge, this is the first of its kind for California, and should stimulate others to develop similar tools.

The remainder of the *Guide* provides technical information about each habitat in the classification system. These habitats have been grouped according to the dominant vegetation (e.g., tree dominated, shrub dominated, herbaceous dominated, etc.). The purpose of these descriptions is to describe dominant vegetation, vegetative diversity, and the physiographic character of the habitat.

The final part of the *Guide* provides an extensive list of plant and wildlife species contained within each of the habitats described. Besides being a compilation of common and scientific names of species mentioned in the habitat description, the list can be used as an abridged species checklist for species common to California's wildlife habitats. Finally, the *Literature Cited* section offers nearly 500 references that deal specifically with either California vegetation or classification theory and process. This list of pertinent literature on California vegetation should be useful to anyone interested in vegetation classification and management.

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