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CONTACT

Stephanie Moreno, Executive Director

gcrcd@gcrcd.org

831-235-1799

Over 2,000 Square Miles of Historically Roamed Habitat in the San Francisco and Monterey Bay Regions Still Suitable For Tule Elk

San Jose, Calif. – The North Santa Clara Resource Conservation District (NSCRCD) has announced the publication of a collaborative research project that found over 2,000 square miles of suitable habitat for tule elk in the San Francisco and Monterey Bay Regions study area, where large elk herds roamed historically. The study was led by Dr. Thomas Connor of UC Berkeley, with Dr. Rick Lanman of the Institute for Historical Ecology as senior author. Scientists from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife collaborated in the research, with the analysis supported by a research grant from NSCRCD.

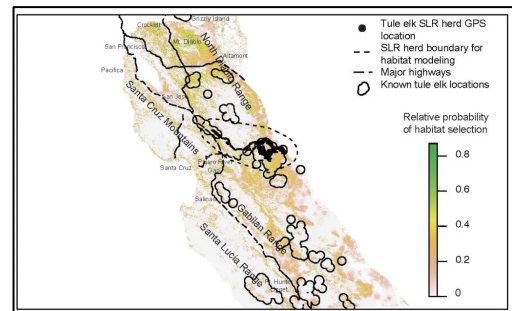


Figure 4. Predicted habitat (mean relative probability of selection across summer and winter seasons) for tule elk across central coastal California.

Tule elk have important ecological value for California as they are one of two native species that help mitigate wildfires – beaver being the other – and are a food source for many animals, including mountain lions (pumas) and California condors. They also can contribute economic value to the regions they populate through revenues generated by wildlife viewing, tourism and hunting. Elk populations have grown very slowly in the Diablo Range in particular, likely due to its hot and arid climate, so helping these herds expand their range to the cooler and wetter lands near the coast may help them thrive as California’s climate continues warming. However, the elk herds in eastern Santa Clara County have been unable to expand their range westward or northward to cooler climates because of Highway 101 and Interstates 680 & 580. This research will help public agencies and nonprofit wildlife groups identify potential locations for wildlife overcrossings, fencing/barrier removal, and targeted translocations, which in turn would afford local elk populations improved opportunities to remain healthy and viable in our changing environment.

About the Publication

[Habitat suitability assessment for tule elk in the San Francisco Bay and Monterey Bay areas](https://doi.org/10.51492/cfwj.109.19)

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About NSCRCD

NSCRCD is an independent special district of the state of California dedicated to the conservation of natural resources in Santa Clara County. Working on soil, water and wildlife conservation issues since the 1940’s, California’s resource conservation districts are leaders in locally-led conservation work throughout the State.

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