
Permanent Photos for Monitoring Trend

Equipment: 3ft x 3ft plot frame (PVC pipe or two carpenter rulers works well), 100ft transect tape, camera (with memory card or film), plot markers or stakes, photo labels, previous years' photos (if any), Study Location sheet, GPS (optional), and compass (optional)

Once a monitoring site has been selected, complete the Study Location sheet to document relevant site information. Stretch out the transect tape and mark one end of the transect with a survey marker or brightly colored stake that will be easy to find in the future. Another survey marker may be placed at the other end of the transect tape, or a compass can be used to record the azimuth of the transect, so only one end of the tape would need to be marked.

If the site is difficult to locate, a witness post may be placed 20 to 50 feet away from the transect (this distance prevents damage to the site from animals rubbing on the post). A GPS may also be used to record the site coordinates to help find the photo point in the future.

Create a photo identification label (colored paper works best, because white is often too reflective). The label should be used in **every** photo, and should include the date, photographer's name, pasture name, and any other relevant information.

Take general view photographs of the landscape from each end of the transect line (facing the tape). If possible, these pictures should include a distinctive landmark to aid in locating the site in future years.

Take photographs of the plot frame on the ground along the transect line. No less than 3, and no more than 5, plot photos should be taken. The photographs should be spread out evenly along the transect tape. For example, if 3 plot photos are taken, the frame should be photographed at the 25', 50', and 75' marks. The frame may be placed on either side of the tape, as long as the technique is consistent. Stand on the north side of the frame to avoid casting a shadow in the picture.

Return each of the following years to retake the pictures. Be consistent in your techniques (i.e., if you take 5 plot photos the first year, take 5 plot photos each of the following years).