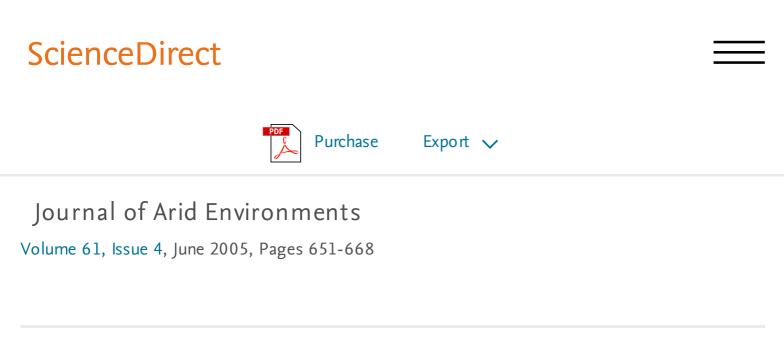
Vegetation changes in the Jornada Basin from 1858 to 1998.

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Vegetation changes in the Jornada Basin from 1858 to 1998

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Abstract

Notes made by land surveyors in 1858 were utilized to estimate cover of grasses and shrubs on the Jornada Experimental Range (JER) and the Chihuahuan Desert Range Research Center (CDRRC) in the northern Chihuahuan Desert in southern New Mexico, USA. Portions of these areas have been previously assessed for historical vegetation dynamics but the entire 84,271Å ha assessed in the 19th century has not been examined in total. In 1858, fair to very good grass cover occurred on 98% and 67% of the JER and CDRRC, respectively. Shrubs were present throughout both properties but 45% of the JER and 18% of the CDRRC were shrub free. Reconnaissance surveys, made to determine carrying capacity for livestock were made in 1915â \in "1916 and 1928â \in "1929 on the JER and in 1938 on the CDRRC, show that shrubs had made large increases in area occupied at the time of the surveys. Vegetation type maps were made of both properties in 1998. Mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*) was the primary dominant on 59% of the JER in 1998 and creosotebush (*Larrea tridentata*) was the primary dominant on

27% of the area. On the CDRRC mesquite and creosotebush were primary dominants on 37% and 46% of the area, respectively. Grass cover has decreased greatly with the increase in shrubs and only shrub control efforts have maintained the once abundant black grama (*Bouteloua eriopoda*) as a primary dominant on 1% or less of the area on both properties.

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