

***Centaurea solstitialis* and the Water Balance Research**

John Gerlach
Dept Agronomy and Range Science
UC Davis, Davis, CA 95616

Centaurea solstitialis is altering the water balance of California's ecosystems. Soil samples were obtained under invaded grassland, pristine grassland, native summer-persistent annuals, and a common garden of native perennial grasses. Soil moisture was analyzed using then-nocouple psychrometers and on a volumetric basis. *Centaurea* dried both shallow and deep soils to approximately the same extent as the native species. In contrast, early-season annuals generally do not extract soil moisture below 75 cm. The difference in residual soil moisture availability between stands of *Centaurea* and stands of the early-season annuals has important ecosystem consequences.