

## History and Background

### University of California Natural Reserve System (UC NRS)

In 1965, the UC Board of Regents established the UC NRS to provide protected environments representing California's natural habitats for research, education and public service. Since its formation, the UC NRS has grown from seven to 39 Reserves that encompass over 750,000 acres and serve as a gateway to more than a million acres of public lands. The NRS protects California's natural heritage for the public trust and provides protected natural areas for research and teaching to contribute to the understanding and wise management of the Earth and its natural systems. The ecosystems and facilities offered by the 39 Reserves are available to scientists, educators, students, and the public from throughout the world.



### UCSB Natural Reserves and VESR

UC Santa Barbara manages seven of the 39 UC NRS Reserves, and the Valentine Eastern Sierra Reserves comprise two of these reserves managed through UCSB. These reserves provide a base for research and teaching operations throughout the Eastern Sierra (see Appendix 3 for more details on reserve use at VESR). On March 17, 1972, the Regents of the University of California authorized the acceptance of Valentine Camp for inclusion in the Natural Land and Water Reserves System, making it the 16<sup>th</sup> reserve to join the NRS. SNARL became a reserve, co-managed in the region, just one year later in 1973.



Reserve Use

Research

Due to the unique location of the reserves and the rich array of natural resources and facilities, SNARL has attracted researchers from all over the world. Despite a highly seasonal climate that reduces use during winter months, recent use of VESR has averaged more than 8,100 person-user days per year. Housing and laboratory space are nearly fully occupied from approximately April to October of each year. Research accounts for 42% of VESR use, with teaching and public service accounting for the remaining use. Of the UCSB NRS sites, and also compared to the entirety of the UC NRS system, VESR has the greatest use, and specifically, the greatest **research** use relative to other NRS sites. The table below shows annual user days at each site.

Site	Total	Research	University Classes	Public Service
SNARL	8103	3295	2576	2232
Valentine Camp	2830	781	105	1944

The majority of research use of VESR is by biologists, although use by researchers from other disciplines, including geology and hydrology, is also significant. Over the last five years there have been an average of 40 extramurally supported research projects per year and this use has been approximately evenly distributed across faculty, research scientists, and graduate students. Since 1973, projects conducted either completely or in part at SNARL have produced at least 800 peer reviewed publications, including at least 163 during the last 5-year period.

Teaching and Public Service

By utilizing the resources at both SNARL and Valentine Camp, VESR provides active outreach programs for the region. The Spring Seminar Series at SNARL hosts visiting scientists who give presentations on scientific topics of interest to local and regional public audiences of approximately 75-100 people per week. The Outdoor Science Education program (OSEP) which operates both at Valentine Camp and SNARL, provides hands-on science lessons for approximately 2000 K-12 students per year from Inyo and Mono counties as well as remote locations of western Nevada. This program is supported by a large group of volunteers in addition to paid education staff. The VESR K-12 programs hosts all K-5 graders in the region at Valentine Camp in Fall, and SNARL in Spring. VESR’s summer OSEP program provides weeklong science camps for (~200) students K-8 grade. Additionally, VESR reaches approximately 200 adult visitors with the walking ecology tours at Valentine Camp. VESR has two employed education staff and supplements the other components of the program via stipends for local teachers who also help lead the coursework.

