

THOMAS D. SISK
Biographical Sketch

Tom Sisk is an ecologist with the Center for Sustainable Environments (CSE) at Northern Arizona University, where his work focuses on three interrelated goals: improving our understanding of ongoing environmental change; engaging others in the challenges, societal relevance, and rewards of conservation; and helping to provide solutions to emerging problems facing policy makers and land managers. His NAU laboratory group researches a broad range of topics related to the restoration and conservation of biodiversity and sensitive habitats, combining field study, geographic analysis, and spatial modeling. The group also studies deliberative methods for engaging people in science-based environmental policy and planning. This work, supported by federal, state, and tribal agencies, private foundations, and nongovernmental organizations, focuses primarily on the ecosystems of arid North America.

Working with students, colleagues, and partners across the West, Tom applies research to challenges in conservation and environmental management. Current projects include: 1)the support of forest assessment and planning across the Southwest, through the work of the Forest Ecosystem Restoration Analysis (ForestERA) Project that he founded with colleagues in 2000; 2)work with ranchers, conservation organizations, and land managers to quantify impacts of livestock grazing and climate change, and related efforts to identify sustainable approaches to food production on arid lands; 3)partnering with the Grand Canyon Trust to bring a new science capacity to large landscape conservation efforts across a million acres of public land in the Grand Canyon region.

Tom has been teaching the science of ecology and its application for over 12 years. He has developed courses in conservation biology, landscape ecology, environmental policy and leadership. As Director of Graduate Programs for CSE, Tom oversees interdisciplinary programs that are preparing students for creative roles in environmental problem-solving by linking environmental quality, public policy, and human wellbeing through scientifically rigorous approaches. His approach emphasizes theory and conceptual depth, grounding student experience in field study and applications. By emphasizing NAU's location amid extensive public lands, and its status as the top research institution on the Colorado Plateau, Tom works with students and colleagues to create unusual learning opportunities that have attracted international attention and funding.

A native of New Mexico, Tom has worked around the world, developing a broad perspective on science, government, and the environment. From 1992-94 he directed an international program in tropical conservation for the Center for Conservation Biology at Stanford University, where he earned his Ph.D. in 1992. He was a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Georgia in 1994, and served as a Special Assistant to the Director of the National Biological Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, from 1994-1996. These experiences provided insight into the relationship between science and management, as well as the challenges associated with translating sound science and progressive policy into on-the-ground action. Tom serves on numerous advisory and editorial boards. He is a certified Senior Ecologist of the Ecological Society of America, and an Aldo Leopold Leadership Fellow. He has two daughters and a partner who love horses and the outdoors, and he finds time to pursue life-long fascinations with bikes, trout fishing, and old-time banjo. Whenever possible (but not nearly often enough) he disappears with family and friends, hiking, biking, and floating through the wild places of the Colorado Plateau.