

PREVIEW: San Juan Mountain Watch Field Guide

Paying attention to nature and how it is doing in and around local gardens, farms, and ranches in the Greater San Juan Mountain Ecosystem—a guide to observing, monitoring, and citizen science



**HEALTHY COMMUNITY
FOOD SYSTEMS**



*Healthy Land, Healthy Food,
Healthy People*



Jim Dyer, Healthy Community Food Systems, Updated April 2024

See www.HCFS.org under the “Healthy Foodsheds” link for this Field Guide, updates and online resources, and our [Exploring Foodshed Health Field Guide](#) for a slightly different version suited to any region of the country.

Connecting Food Systems and Ecosystems

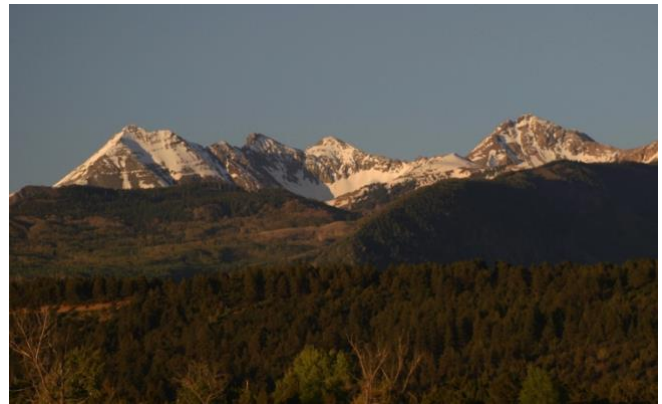
1. How can our local food be healthy and abundant if not grown on healthy soils, with healthy water, and in healthy farm, garden, and ranch ecosystems?



Healthy Food

2. How can the soils, water, and ecosystems where this food is grown be healthy if the surrounding lands are not healthy—in other words, without a healthy local foodshed?

(and vice versa!)



Healthy Foodsheds

3. How can we expect local growers to keep producing this healthy local food now and into the future without healthy local foodsheds with rich biodiversity and a reasonable climate?



Healthy Growers, Eaters, & Future

Healthy Foodsheds → Healthy Food → Healthy People → Healthy Future

Why this Field Guide?

The ecological health of our local garden, farm, and ranch ecosystems and their surroundings is critical to our ability to produce healthy local food now and into the future. Ultimately, that health is critical to the overall well-being of our local area, our region, and our planet. To protect, restore, and strengthen these food-producing lands and the surrounding more wild ecosystems, we must be more aware of the health of our local foodsheds and how that health is changing over time.



Observing and monitoring indicators of foodshed health—such as pollinators, birds, earthworms, monarchs, pikas, seasons, and weather—can be a great learning experience, provide enjoyable and therapeutic time outdoors in natural settings, and if shared with scientists through citizen science activities, can contribute directly to a brighter future.

Challenges that farmers and ranchers face in producing the local foods we want call for our support of these growers at the market and in policies. Natural resource depletion, pollinator and biodiversity losses, extreme weather, and a changing climate are critical. We want more local food, and for it to be available into the future, so greater public awareness of these challenges through observation and monitoring can lead to greater local support for these producers and the foodshed health they depend upon.



The purpose of this guide is to encourage and support the exploration, by people of all ages, of local foodsheds in order to become more aware of how and why to protect, restore, and strengthen the health of these foodsheds, to connect more with nature, and to support our local producers as they deal with a changing world. Focused on our greater San Juan Mountain region, it can help guide similar efforts in any region where people care about their local food and foodsheds.



How to Use this Field Guide

Part 1: Understanding the Basics of Observing Foodshed Health—what a foodshed is, why its ecological health is important, and what types of observing and monitoring activities can help you explore your local foodshed. (Page 4)

Part 2: Getting Started—defining your local foodshed, learning what indicators you can pick from to observe and monitor foodshed health on your own or with people throughout your community, and making it fun and educational at the same time. (Page 10)

Part 3: Learning About Suggested Indicators—17 suggested indicators or topics you can choose from, and for each indicator critical issues related to food, how to observe, where to learn more, and citizen science programs ready to use. (Page 19)

Part 4: Making it Local—connecting with fellow observers and finding local partners, growers, local resource experts, best observing sites, and issues of most concern in your local foodshed. (Page 41)

Part 5: Developing Local and Regional Projects—project idea examples to help you decide how to connect and collaborate with others in foodshed monitoring and citizen science targeted to issues of local and regional concern. (Page 47)

Part 6: Going Beyond Monitoring—use what you are learning to help you engage in protecting, restoring, and strengthening your foodshed, make wise food choices, and support local food and those who grow it. (Page 52)

NOTE: Not living in Southwest Colorado? This guide is designed specifically for the greater San Juan Mountain region of Southwest Colorado, but we hope it will serve as a model that can be adapted to wherever you live, grow, and eat. Several sections, especially 1, 2, 3, and 6 are very easily adaptable to other regions, and while sections 4 and 5 include local examples, these sections should help guide the pursuit of local and regional collaborations wherever you may live. See our [Exploring Foodshed Health Field Guide](#) for a slightly different version of this guide suited to any region of the country.

**Field Guide and more resources online: [San Juan Mountain Watch](#)
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