

## DISCUSSION GUIDES



The discussion guides include script, questions, and resources specific to each *Passion for the Land* story. They are designed to foster dialogue and action using personal stories as a springboard for conversations involving a range of viewpoints.

Is Sustainable Attainable? (p. 1-2)  
Water Worries (p. 3-4)  
Passing It On (p. 5-6)  
Keeping People on the Land (p. 7-10)  
Chasing Water (p. 11-14)  
Future Farmers of America (p. 15-16)  
Just a Farmer (p. 17-18)  
Unforeseen Consequences (p. 19-20)  
Blue Gold (p. 21-22)  
Preserving for the Future (p. 23-24)  
The Next Hundred Years (p. 25-26)  
A View From the Barn (p. 27-30)

### **PASSION FOR THE LAND STORIES**

Running Time (min:sec)

#### **Water**

Water Worries (3:26)  
Chasing Water (4:27)  
Blue Gold (3:39)

#### **Land Use**

Is Sustainable Attainable (4:02)  
Keeping People on The Land (4:30)  
Just A Farmer (3:05)

#### **Education**

Passing it On (3:30)  
Future Farmers of America (3:27)

#### **Stewardship and Heritage**

Unforeseen Consequences (2:45)  
Preserving for the Future (2:52)  
The Next Hundred Years (2:31)  
View From the Barn (4:31)

# Is Sustainable Attainable? by Gary Romano

How a small family farm is diversifying their operation to survive Running time 04:02



Can a small, High Sierra farmer sustain his family farm in this day age? Or is it just Suicide with a Butter Knife!

My grandfather came to Plumas

County in 1907 from Italy with a dream to be a cattle rancher and a farmer. He bought his first 800 acre ranch along the Middle Fork of the Feather River in Beckwourth, California, for \$1 per acre. His family got through the Great Depression, the boys survived WWII, and after it was all said and done he had accumulated over 3500 acres by 1945.

But times were changing. By 1978, industrial farming was taking over, and the family ranches were disappearing in Sierra Valley. In 1989 my uncle called me fully exhausted, "Do you want to buy the last 65 acres of the farm?" I thought about my childhood growing up in a hardworking Italian family, working every day after school and on weekends at my family's flower farm in San Jose, California. My parents would say, "You better get good grades and go to college or else you'll be pulling weeds the rest of your life!"

Did I want to go back to that? I had a successful 17 year career in Parks and Recreation, and did I want to give all that up for an unknown future? To me, it was a no brainer. Sold to Gary Romano; Occupation: Farmer.

The old ways of farming were gone. Sierra Valley has one of the shortest growing seasons in the West. Why it's said by the old-timers, "All we have in Sierra Valley is July and winter." I had to diversify our operation to make a living. Going organic was the niche for us. In addition, my wife Kim and I had to add other farming ventures to sustain the farm: doing farm tours, dinners in the barn, on-farm Farmers Market, and running a native plant nursery. We even went as far as coming up with an organic Bloody Mary Mix. That's what long winters do to a farmer in Sierra Valley.

It's been 20 years, "robbing Peter to pay Paul" and extending ourselves annually. It's a constant challenge for small family farms. Unlike large industrial farms, there are no subsidies for small farmers. How long can I go on like this? Or am I just prolonging the inevitable...selling the family farm? It would be the last crop I'll ever sell!





I bought the farm to carry on my family's farming heritage here in Sierra Valley, realizing that in order to survive as a small farmer I couldn't put all my eggs in one basket. With this in mind, I ask our local politicians and policy makers to remember that asphalt and concrete cannot be used as a cover crop, and that all land left fallow or as open space can always be farmed. And that asphalt and concrete is a one-time crop that can't be reversed.

In the end, sustainability comes from the heart of the farmer. My passion to continue farming comes from within. To THIS farmer, being sustainable is always attainable.

### Resources



Sierra Valley Farms, <http://www.sierravalleyfarms.com/>

California Certified Farmers' Market <http://www.california-grown.com/>

Community Alliance with Family Farmers <http://www.caff.org/>

California Farm Bureau Federation (protecting family farms) <http://www.cfbf.com/familyfarms/>

University of California Small Farm Program <http://sfp.ucdavis.edu/agritourism/>

### Key Message

*Farmers, ranchers and community members need to work together to make agriculture economically, environmentally and socially sustainable.*

### Discussion Questions:

- ? What does sustainability mean to you?
- ? Gary Romano shares some things he's tried to improve his economic sustainability. What other conditions are needed for a sustainable agricultural community?
- ? There is often a tension between farmers and housing developers—why do you think that is? What are some creative ways to preserve farms while allowing new home construction?
- ? What strategies have you seen to help make farming or ranching operations more viable?
- ? What messages would you share with local decision makers about sustaining family farms?



# Water Worries by Cindy Maddalena

*How water regulations impact family farmers and ranchers*

Running time 03:26



Tony had about 20 cows before we got married 33 years ago. Tony's Dad and Mom, Louie and Nadine Maddalena, gave us six pair as a wedding gift. That was our start in the cow business.

Ranching has been a great way for us to make a living and raise our two kids, Sam and Annie. We all worked hard and played hard together. And we always laughed a lot. Our kids helped run the ranch from the time they could ride a horse and do chores. They've graduated college and moved but we call them from time to time to help brand calves and ship cows and they are always there when we need them.

Ranching has many challenges. Sometimes it's the same struggles year after year. Like weather conditions, cattle prices and for us old equipment always breaking down. Some of our new challenges have to do with water. We are always in fear of losing our adjudicated water rights. Also, four years ago the state mandated a water quality monitoring program called the Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program. The state has no money to fund this program so the entire burden of the cost for sampling, analysis, and reporting has all been put on the farmers and ranchers.

Ag community members have spent over \$200,000.00 that could have been better spent in our local economy.

Everyone appreciates the open space and rural lifestyle that ranchers and farmers provide. Without water, agriculture would not be sustainable. Wildlife habitat would be diminished. So much of the recreation we enjoy would be eliminated. Ranchers without water would be forced to sell, and that would result in losing our rural communities.

Sierra Valley is and always has been in agriculture. Our ranching community is united in protecting our business and way of life. With such a small percentage of people in agriculture compared to the large number of people in urban areas, we need to educate policy makers how important our water rights are to our land and business.

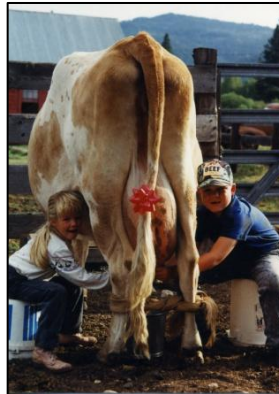
Nobody, absolutely nobody can survive without agriculture and agriculture cannot survive without water.

State policy makers need to understand the impact it is putting on our community. We take care of the land and water or it won't take care of us.





From my front porch all I see are lush green pasture land with horses and cattle grazing. Just up from our backyard are meadows that hug the mountain where we've seen deer, bear, and bald eagles. At night, all you hear are the two creeks our house sits between and the crickets. I never take this beauty for the granted and will do my best to pass it on to the next generation.



## Resources



California Farm Bureau Federation (issues & regulations)  
<http://www.cfbf.com/issues/index.cfm>

Upper Feather River Watershed Group [www.ufrwg.org](http://www.ufrwg.org)

Plumas-Sierra UC Cooperative Extension [http://ucce-plumas-sierra.ucdavis.edu/Ag\\_Water\\_Quality](http://ucce-plumas-sierra.ucdavis.edu/Ag_Water_Quality)

Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board  
[www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/)

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation [www.nfwf.org](http://www.nfwf.org)

Sustaining Rural Places Toolkit  
<http://www.sbcouncil.org/Sustaining-Rural-Places-Toolkit>

## Key Message

*Water is crucial to agriculture. Farmers and ranchers are concerned about costly regulations that hamper their ability to produce food, fiber and care for the land.*

## Discussion Questions:

- ? Where does your water come from?
- ? Who plays a role in ensuring that you and your family have clean drinking water?
- ? When farmers and ranchers say their operations provide public benefits what do you think they are referring to? Are these important for your community?
- ? Can you identify the different interests involved in creating and enforcing environmental regulations related to water?
- ? How are current water policies supporting or hindering local agricultural operations?
- ? Who should carry the financial burden of complying with water regulations? How might the burden of regulation and enforcement be shared by both upstream and downstream users?

# Passing It On by Dave Goss

*Helping young people understand where their food comes from*

Running time 03:30



My father, Joe Goss, came to Sierra Valley in 1923 to work as a chore boy on Frank Humphrey's ranch. My family bought into the ranch in 1948, and have worked it ever since.

When our youngest son, Jere, was in kindergarten he invited the class to our

ranch for a field day. At that time we still milked a cow for the house, so I let each child milks a squirt or two. They also got to gather eggs from the chicken coop. It surprised us how many of the children from a rural town didn't know where eggs and milk came from.

My wife Doris then showed them our baby lambs and how she vaccinated them. She also demonstrated how her border collie helped her round up the sheep. After the demonstrations the children sat in the apple orchard and had their sack lunches and sampled fresh cow milk.

That's how Ranch Days got started. For 35 years we've put on this event for the fourth grade class from Portola and the third and fourth grade classes from Loyalton. Every May about one hundred kids from each school spend half a day with us learning about ranch work. And for the past few summers, we've organized a Ranch Day for low-income children from Reno.

Ranch Days has grown over time so now the Plumas Sierra Cattle Woman's Association helps us staff the event. We have five demonstration stations that show children the many different things we do to take care of our animals. They get a chance to experience life on a ranch and learn about the by-products of beef and what they are used for in our lives.

The part children love the best is when I take them for a wagon ride with my team of draft horses. We drive through a group of cattle, and I show them the different breeds we have, the actual brands on the cows, and explain the identification on the ear tags. I tell them about the annual cycle on our ranch: how we feed hay to cattle through the winter, start calving in the spring, irrigate meadows just before summer, and then brand calves and take them to a summer range. I explain how in July we put up hay for the winter and then in October the calves are weaned and sold.

This is my wife and my way to expose youth to ranch life. Most people nowadays are 3-4 generations away from production agriculture. They don't always understand that the meat in Safeway comes from the cows out here. The







more they know about where their food comes from the more informed they will be when they go to the ballot box to vote on policies that affect our way of life. Farmers are the minority now so we have to educate our legislators and the general public so that they understand our operations and our needs.

At my 50th high school reunion, one of my classmates made a point of thanking me for holding Ranch Days. Both his daughters and granddaughters attended and still remember the experience. It's very gratifying to know we're helping to build a solid future for agriculture by bringing youth out to our ranch.

### Resources



California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom  
<http://www.cfaitc.org/>

US Department of Agriculture (educational materials)  
[http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=EDUCATION\\_MTLS&navtype=RT&parentnav=EDUCATION\\_OUTREACH](http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=EDUCATION_MTLS&navtype=RT&parentnav=EDUCATION_OUTREACH)

USDA Farm to School Initiative  
<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/f2s/>

Community Alliance with Family Farmers Farm to School  
<http://caff.org/programs/farm-2-school/>

Food Dollar Series: Better Understanding of Our Food Costs (2011)  
<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Publications/ERR114/ERR114.pdf>

### Key Message

*Farmers and ranchers want young people to understand where their food comes from and the role agriculture plays in our communities.*

### Discussion Questions:

- ? Where does your food come from? What do you know about the farmers, ranchers and workers that produce the food you eat and the conditions under which they work?
- ? How do youth in your community learn where their food comes from? What other opportunities can we create so that our youth have access to agricultural education?
- ? Dave Goss says that most people nowadays don't know that meat in grocery stores comes from cows on a ranch. Do you agree? Do you think this is a problem?
- ? Direct marketing--where farmers sell directly to consumers, rather than going through a middle man-- is often proposed as a way of increasing agricultural economic viability. What might be the advantages and disadvantages of direct marketing for farmers and ranchers?
- ? Dave also says that farmers are a minority population and need to educate policymakers and the public about agricultural issues so they're informed when they vote. What can farmers do to help others learn about agricultural needs, practices, and concerns?

# Keeping People On The Land by Holly George

*Thriving communities are an important part of Ag sustainability*

Running time 04:30



Up in the High Sierra, not far from Reno and Truckee, is a hidden treasure.

As the local Farm Advisor for University of California Cooperative Extension, I've had the honor to interact with the amazing, hardworking and fun-loving people of Sierra Valley for over twenty years. The people in agriculture are the golden threads that hold the fabric of our rural communities together. But we're at risk of losing these gems if we don't stop the piecemeal erosion of our agricultural land base and the continuous whittling of farmers' and ranchers' rights to produce food and fiber, care for the land and make a decent living. We need to consider people as a key component in our economic development and land use planning efforts.



Most of us don't think about our connection to Ag and all the things the land and the people who work it provide. The food you eat and the clothes you pull out of your closet come from agriculture. They supply things that most of us take for granted--like amazing habitat for wildlife, tons of recreational opportunities, a place for rivers to spread out and reduce flooding, plus breathtaking views that are enjoyed by locals and visitors. The public pays little for these amenities and in most cases doesn't know that private landowners are responsible for them, stewarding them at their own expense.



But people in Ag face increasing costly regulations, narrow profit margins and the impacts of unpredictable weather. We have no control over the weather; but if we truly value the rural character of our counties then we need to figure ways to make it economically viable for these people to stay on the land. Otherwise, they leave and what do we get?





Ranchettes with absentee gentleman ranchers, resort developments populated part time, and more golf courses. Pasture lands aren't placeholders for development. Absentee landowners can add to our communities; but rarely are they the foundation and they don't usually coach soccer, organize school functions or serve on the volunteer fire department. Too often, ranchettes become weedettes.



We continue to enact cumbersome legislation and pile on expensive one-size fits all regulations, often in the

name of sustainability or protecting the environment, with little or no regard for the people. People are key to Ag sustainability and keeping them on the land is as important as saving plants and animals or fighting invasive species.

I think agriculture sustainability is a shared responsibility. Farmers and ranchers must practice good stewardship. People who vote and donate money need to become better educated about the impacts their decisions have on the people as well as our resources. Policy makers must value the part

people play in our communities and then work towards creating 'win-win' solutions to ensure they and the lands they watch over will be here for all of us to enjoy for years to come. The people in agriculture, the lands they work and our livelihoods are undeniably linked.

I think our greatest responsibility is to be good ancestors. We need realistic policies that acknowledge the contributions the people in Ag make on the land and in our neighborhoods verses creating more restrictive regulations forcing them from the land and destroying the rural quality of our counties. Get to know these people, invest your money in conservation easements of working lands and cast your votes to support viable local ag production and processing practices.

In the big picture, we, landowners, policy makers and voters are temporary caretakers of the land. As you think about your legacy, remember people are part of the sustainability equation.



# Keeping People On The Land --- Continued



## Resources



California Rangeland Conservation Coalition  
<http://www.carangeland.org/>

California Working Landscapes  
([http://nature.berkeley.edu/huntsingerlab/Rangeland\\_Landowners\\_files/huntsinger%20china%20pastoralism.pdf](http://nature.berkeley.edu/huntsingerlab/Rangeland_Landowners_files/huntsinger%20china%20pastoralism.pdf))

Sierra Business Council, Working Landscapes Initiative  
<http://www.sbcouncil.org/Projects/Working-Landscapes>

Sustainable Rangelands: Ecosystem Goods and Services  
[http://sustainable.rangelands.org/pdf/Ecosystem\\_Goods\\_Services.pdf](http://sustainable.rangelands.org/pdf/Ecosystem_Goods_Services.pdf)

Cost of Community Services Studies (cost and fiscal contributions of certain land uses)  
[http://www.farmlandinfo.org/documents/27757/FS\\_COCS\\_11-02.pdf](http://www.farmlandinfo.org/documents/27757/FS_COCS_11-02.pdf)



## Key Message

*If we want our rural communities to survive and thrive the people living on and caring for our working landscapes must be taken into consideration as we conduct business as well as when we develop economic and environmental policies.*

## Discussion Questions:

- ? Holly George states that “people are key to Ag sustainability and keeping them on the land is as important as saving plants and animals or fighting invasive species.” Do you agree?
- ? What makes it hard for farmers and ranchers in your area to “produce food and fiber, care for the land, and make a decent living”?
- ? If farmers and ranchers are providing benefits to society (often called ecosystem services or public goods) such as water filtration and maintaining biodiversity on their land, how might they be compensated for providing these benefits?
- ? There is a lot of talk these days about saving ‘special places’ like agricultural open space. What are we doing to help the people who work on and care for these ‘special places’?
- ? How can farmers and ranchers better communicate the important role they play in the lives of people inside and outside of their communities?







# Chasing Water by Carol Dobbas

Ranchers and scientists come together to deal with water quality regulations

Running Time 04:27



I moved to Sierra Valley in 1977 after graduating from the University of Idaho. My first impression of this beautiful alpine valley surrounded by forest lands and fed by mountain creeks was: *This is God's Country.*

Sierra Valley hasn't changed much since those first years, thanks to the commitment of local ranch families and town residents. So in 2004, when talk about an agricultural water regulatory program started, it was hard to believe we really needed such a thing. Here we are as close to the source of pristine water as anyone in the state.

Statewide, Regional Water Boards began to require all irrigated Ag producers, like my husband and I, to comply with and pay for a regulatory program. Our region, the Central Valley Region, is the largest. It stretches from Modoc County on the Oregon border down to Kern County at the southern end. However, most of the focus is on Central Valley Ag production issues, and the regulatory program tends to be developed around those concerns, and then enforced across the entire region in areas that don't necessarily have the same problems.

Most of us here in Sierra Valley were convinced that with some initial monitoring we could show that water here is clean. And that cattle grazing and hay production in these mountain watersheds has little to no impact on state waters, making strong regulatory intervention not really necessary. So we formed the Upper Feather River Watershed Group and I stepped up to serve as the Executive Director. Our goal is to provide a peer group to help share knowledge and involve as many local ranchers in this "water quality thing". So now I am involved at several levels: as a lifetime cattle rancher who relies on water for grass and hay production, as part of the water monitoring team, and as a representative for the group at the greater coalition regional meetings.

Working with the ranchers to collect samples from the creeks that supply our surface irrigation water has given me a chance to visit with more of my neighbors. And I am encouraged by their own desires to take care of this resource.





I remember one cold blustery spring day we met up with a rancher to locate some sampling sites on his place. Driving along on our ATVs, this rancher, with his

two dogs clinging to the back basket was obviously more accustomed to high speed maneuvers across boggy fields and very questionable ditch crossings than our monitoring team. He led us to find three ideal sampling sites on his 10,000 acre ranch.

You have to give these guys credit, for stepping up to the plate and giving the monitoring team and university folks access to



their private property. Each one has seemed genuinely interested in cooperating as we study how water quality might be affected by grazing lands here in Sierra Valley.

I have learned a lot by attending the many, many meetings and workshops and also from working with the dedicated university people who have come to our area to help conduct the research we need to support our efforts.

I would like to think they might have learned something from my rancher perspective as well. In fact, we rely on this shared exchange and research to provide data that will demonstrate that grazing management practices and water quality efforts are compatible.

As Ag producers, we realize that water issues have become one of the most important challenges facing agriculture today, especially here in highly populated California.



Our task is to convince decision makers and the general public as well that water used in Ag Production is as important as water for residential and recreational uses. Agriculture needs water and people need agriculture. I am hopeful that we can modify the current regulatory program so that dollars that now leave our community can stay here for local water quality projects. Then we will be on the right track.

# Chasing Water --- Continued



## Resources



Upper Feather River Watershed Group [www.ufrwg.org](http://www.ufrwg.org)

Plumas-Sierra UC Cooperative Extension  
[http://ucce-plumas-sierra.ucdavis.edu/Ag\\_Water\\_Quality](http://ucce-plumas-sierra.ucdavis.edu/Ag_Water_Quality)

California Rangeland Watershed Laboratory – UC Davis  
<http://rangelandwatersheds.ucdavis.edu>

Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board  
[www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/](http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/)

Association of California Water Agencies [www.acwa.org](http://www.acwa.org)



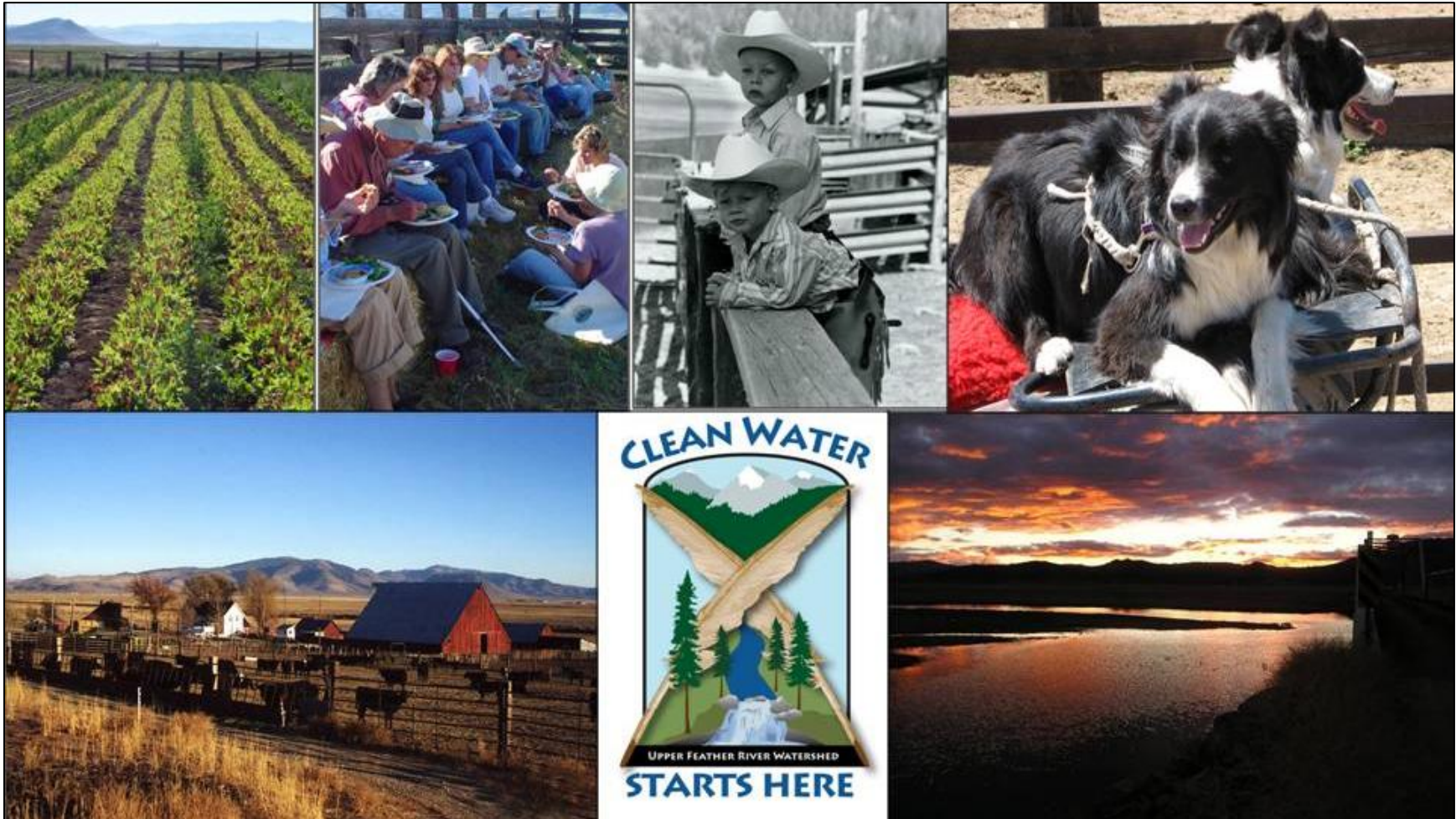
## Key Message

*Agriculture water policy needs to rely on shared exchanges of scientific research with ground-level experiences and knowledge.*

## Discussion Questions:

- ? Governance is a concept used in the social sciences to refer to the blurring of responsibility between the state, businesses, and society. How does this story relate to this concept?
- ? What does water quality mean to you? Who is responsible for ensuring water quality? What steps could you take to contribute to better water quality?
- ? Do current environmental regulations pose challenges to agricultural viability in your area? What would you change and how would you go about it?
- ? Carol Dobbas believes that grazing management practices and water quality efforts can be compatible. Do you agree? What can we do to demonstrate such compatibility?
- ? The Upper Feather River Watershed Group provides a network to help share knowledge and get farmers and ranchers involved in water quality monitoring and education. How might people in your area form a similar organization?





# Future Farmers of America by Bill Loveridge

A teacher's view on the importance of agricultural education

Running Time 3:27



As a high school teacher for more than 30 years, I have taught the Future Farmers of America creed to countless numbers of students.

The creed begins, *"I believe in the future of agriculture with a faith born not of words, but of deeds...."*

Our valley has a long tradition of agricultural youth involvement. They exhibit livestock, grow gardens, work on farms and ranches and do greenhouse work. Whether we're talking about a young man who grew up on a ranch and is the fourth or fifth generation on that ranch, or the young lady from Sierra Brooks who took that first lamb to the fair in high school – these are the folks who are gaining an understanding of agriculture and will carry on the best traditions of our national life.

I have been blessed to have the opportunity to see "the light go on" with kids. When they see a lamb being born or that seed that they planted breaks through the potting soils as it germinates and they say, "Wow, this is cool!" That appreciation will carry agriculture forward. Even if that young man or woman doesn't go into the field of agriculture as a career, they still will be spokesmen in the community for our industry.

Our kids are workers and businessmen. They can figure budgets and keep other financial records as they develop their projects. They can market the "product of their toil".

And they help others. I am always amazed at the caring attitude of our kids, given everything we read in the media especially. Kids really do care. Our youth are involved in food drives for the Sierra Valley Food Bank, coat drives for the needy and seed drives for the Philippines. They help with roadside cleanup, are involved in community work days and assist a host of other agencies and organizations accomplish their goals. Good citizenry is being developed with agrarian roots.

Our agriculture youth are learners, workers, and good citizens already. It gives one hope for the republic as we watch these young leaders develop.

They will, if allowed, carry agriculture, our valley and our nation forward.







The “if allowed” part is a concern. Programs in agricultural education for youth, whether in the public schools with FFA as a vital component or via UC Extension and 4-H, are critical for this country to maintain a food supply. With shifts in population to more urban areas, we are getting further and further away from the land. These programs need to be maintained everywhere in rural America – even more especially in the Sierra Valley.



## Resources



California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom  
<http://www.cfaitc.org/>

National Future Farmers of America, [www.ffa.org](http://www.ffa.org)

California Department of Education, Agriculture Education,  
[www.calaged.org](http://www.calaged.org)

California State University Agricultural Research Institute,  
<http://ari.calstate.edu/>

University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources,  
<http://ucanr.org/>

## Key Message

*Agricultural education programs are vital components of rural communities and our future food supply.*

## Discussion Questions:

- ? Bill Loveridge states that agricultural education programs carry on the best traditions of our national life. What do you think he means?
- ? In your experience, who speaks for agriculture? Whose voices are typically missing or not heard as loudly? Why do you think that is?
- ? Why is education about agriculture and food important? What happens if society generally does not know about these topics?
- ? How do youth in your community get a hands-on experience with agriculture? What other agricultural education programs would you like to make available in your area?
- ? Bill feels that agricultural education programs like 4-H and the Future Farmers of America are critical to maintaining our future food supply yet they are at risk of being discontinued. Do these programs exist in your community? If not, how might you help get them started? If so, what could you do to strengthen them?



# Just a Farmer by Dave Goicoechea

*A farmer takes on speculators and changing land use regulations*

Running time 03:05



*I am just a farmer* was my mantra.

One day, while watching TV, a bunch of guys just like me recited the poem, *I Am Just a Farmer, Pure and Simple*, and I thought how truly the words described who I was and what I always wanted to be.

Then along came a lawyer who asked me “You can’t really make a living off that place, can you?” “I try,” I said. Soon after, I learned my family farm was the focus of our General Plan process. Lawyers and elected officials using the terms like Sphere of Influence, Annexation, Eminent Domain, Municipal Services, and LAFCO were going to determine if we would be able to continue farming our land.

My family purchased our farm in 1990 and we’ve persistently worked the land, even though fires, floods, droughts, unfavorable market conditions and noxious weeds have sometimes impeded our progress. Land speculators looking to strike gold by getting farmers to cash out their land for subdivisions, politicians wanting a higher tax base, and uniformed citizens were about to take away the lifestyle we have chosen.

In preparing our defense we found that in 1998 the California legislature enacted the Farmland Security Zone Act which contracts with farmers and landowners to keep their property in agricultural production for at least 20 years. This legislation prohibits annexation without the landowner’s permission. This law, the California Farm Bureau, and many supporters throughout our County joined in protecting our farm through the legal onslaught that followed. After 14 months and a series of court appearances, we won the right to keep our land in agricultural production. Now I am more than *just a farmer*.

After this experience, I was elected to the Sierra County Board of Supervisors.

I’m working to preserve the custom and culture of a successful 150 year agricultural economy in Sierra Valley. I believe government policies and actions are necessary to respect not only the rights of individuals wishing to farm their land, but also the rights of individuals who





treasure open space and rural country living. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, developers, land use planners, ranchers, and government officials need to learn from past mistakes, work collectively to pursue common sense legislation and protect the ever dwindling agricultural lands for future generations.

## Resources



California Land Use Planning Information Network (LUPIN)  
<http://ceres.ca.gov/planning/>

Land Use Fact Sheets [http://ucce-plumas-sierra.ucdavis.edu/Land\\_Use/](http://ucce-plumas-sierra.ucdavis.edu/Land_Use/) 18 Different Fact Sheets

California Department of Conservation (Farmland Security)  
<http://www.conservation.ca.gov/index/Pages/Index.aspx>

California Farm Bureau Federation [www.cfbf.com](http://www.cfbf.com)

Sustaining Rural Places Toolkit  
<http://www.sbcouncil.org/Sustaining-Rural-Places-Toolkit>

Regional Council of Rural Counties [www.rcrcnet.org/rcrc](http://www.rcrcnet.org/rcrc)

## Key Message

*Land use regulations are important tools to protect the land and rights of individuals.*

## Discussion Questions:

- ? Why do we need to protect agricultural lands and open space? What are the various uses and benefits of these lands and why are they often threatened?
- ? What is a county general plan? How can local residents share their views and concerns in the general planning process? Why is it important to participate in the planning process?
- ? Dave Goicoechea refers to “land speculators looking to strike gold by getting farmers to cash out their lands for subdivisions” and “politicians wanting a higher tax base” as two of the economic pressures that result in loss of agricultural land. What are the economic pressures in your area that threaten agricultural land and open space?
- ? How do communities choose between long-term interests and short-term interests? Which of these typically win in the U.S. today and why?
- ? How do policies like the Farmland Security Zone Act and the Williamson Act help preserve agricultural lands? How can diverse stakeholders protect agricultural land and open space for future generations?

# Unforeseen Consequences by Cindy Noble

*What happens when a family doesn't have a succession plan*

Running time 03:05



My family like most other ranching families was picture perfect. Things changed, years rolled by, and finally both my parents passed away.

My brothers and I ended up with different views on how to manage the family business.

Honestly I can't imagine that the current situation was a part of my father's plan. Maybe the problem was he never had a plan to begin with. He might have been hoping for the best and just wishing we would all just get along. As it turns out, my brothers thought they could do a better job without me. And because of how my father's estate was drawn up and passed down, they were well within the law when they forced me out of the family partnership.

Reality is, owning a ranch is hard work. Maybe more work than they bargained for. Horses and cattle, fences and gates, and the issues of agriculture need constant attention.

Then entered a notorious local realtor who promised them big money for portions of this 5000 acre ranch we inherited. Try as they may to sell 200 acres here and another 100 acres there, this economy has provided no buyers.

Passing land to family members is a tricky process. The land that was passed to my brothers and I free and clear, is now looking a little run down. I can think of many instances where a plan might have helped my brothers and me. But instead we did not have the skills to develop goals without allowing our personal issues to get in the way. So now the places we shared, the land I know is now the subject of conversations by people outside my family who plan to acquire, develop, and possibly destroy my family's heritage.

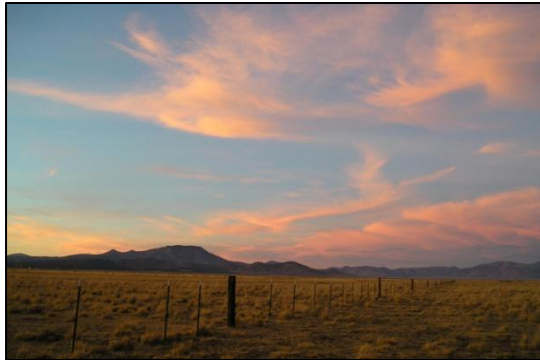
I wish things were different because they are definitely not better. This situation calls for serious thought about how families take estate planning in consideration. We should be telling our stories; we should be asking good questions and voicing our opinions before things get messy.







I believe it is important to keep talking about how land can be passed to people who want it, want that kind of work, and know how hard it can be. Turns out, this is not my story alone and in order to keep large tracks of agricultural land viable, we must keep ranching families talking about the best way to hand down what is often their most valuable asset...the land itself.



### Resources



California Rangeland Trust, <http://www.rangelandtrust.org/>

California Farm Bureau Federation, estate and succession planning, they're different, <http://www.cfbf.com/agalert/sidebar/handingdown002.cfm>

California Farm Link, builds family farming by linking aspiring and retiring farmers, <http://www.californiafarmlink.org/joomla/index.php>

Quivira Coalition, <http://www.quiviracoalition.org/>

Family Communication, <http://ag.udel.edu/extension/fam/FM/issue/famcomm.htm>

### Key Message

*Communication and succession planning are essential to sustainability of agriculture and rural communities*

### Discussion Questions:

- ? Cindy Noble notes that: "passing land to family members is a tricky process." What makes estate and land succession planning so difficult among farm and ranch families?
- ? How is ranching viewed by the part of society that does not participate in it? How is farming and ranching valued in relation to other kinds of work?
- ? What are the challenges that farmers and ranchers face in trying to get future generations of the family involved in the management of these agricultural lands?
- ? Cindy also states "In order to keep large tracts of land viable we must keep ranching families talking about the best way to hand down what is often their most valuable asset: the land itself." What strategies or resources do you recommend to generate these kinds of conversations?
- ? Do you have an estate planning success story you can you share that resulted in keeping family farms and ranches viable?

# Blue Gold by Gia Martynn

*Water is the thread that binds our livelihoods*

Running time 03:39



Growing up in the Central Valley of California, I took for granted the water that kept my playground green, grew my food, or quenched my thirst. As a child I recall stories of how the valley once was. A giant wetland, covered by hundreds of miles of marshes and lakes filled with waterfowl and herds of

Tule elk. The water that once covered this great valley hundreds of years ago comes primarily from the Sierra Nevada mountain range.

As a young adult, I began my natural resources career in the southern Sierras. Memories pull me back standing atop a mountain peak overlooking the valley below. I close my eyes and imagine that massive



wetland amongst the fields of cotton, alfalfa, corn, orange groves, dairies, and relic oaks that currently cover the valley floor. Open fields and suburbs are now bound and woven together by canals and irrigation ditches. The water that once fed the giant wetland, now feeds a tapestry of agricultural, industrial, and municipal developments.

Family ties and career moves pulled me north into the Sacramento Valley at the northern end of the great Central Valley, where I followed the California aqueduct to its source in the northern Sierras. Now as the Watershed Coordinator for the Feather River Coordinated Resource Management group I have come to fully understand and appreciate the value of water. Following the Feather River down the canyon to the valley with my child's sixth grade class, I watch the students fill their thirsty minds with watershed facts and refresh their bodies with the clean water from the watershed they call their backyard. It never ceases to amaze me how few Californians know where their water comes from.



Other parents on the watershed field trip comment on how they never gave a second thought about where their water came from. Afterwards I hear them boast about living in the Feather River watershed, the headwaters of the State Water Project that delivers water to over 23 million Californians.

But as I watch the water turn the hydroelectric turbines in the canyon, the kayakers race the rapids, the fisherman reel in his catch, and the boaters skimming across Lake Oroville Reservoir, I remind them that this water is essential to all living



things. It is the *blue gold* of the Sierras and as residents of this watershed we should act as stewards of this precious treasure. Not just those living in the lifeblood watersheds of the state, but all California residents should know and acknowledge the true value of their water. Let's not squander this vital resource, but help protect, restore, and conserve the water of California because, water is the thread that binds our livelihoods.



## Resources



Feather River Coordinated Resource Management  
[www.feather-river-crm.org](http://www.feather-river-crm.org)

California Dept of Conservation's California Watershed Portal  
<http://www.conservation.ca.gov/dlrp/watershedportal/Pages/Index.aspx>

Watershed Education Links  
<http://www.stjoeriver.net/wmp/edulinks.htm>

Sustaining Rural Places Toolkit  
<http://www.sbcouncil.org/Sustaining-Rural-Places-Toolkit>

California Department of Water Resources,  
<http://www.water.ca.gov/>

## Key Message

*Water is essential to our livelihoods and we all have a responsibility to help protect, restore and conserve it.*

## Discussion Questions:

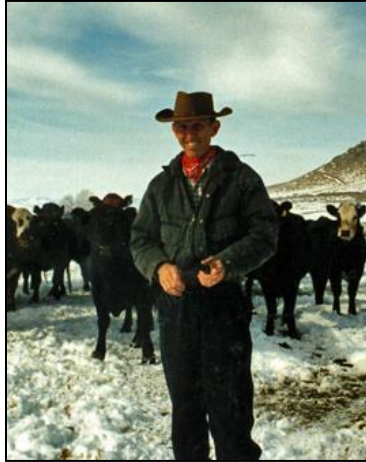
- ? What have you used water for today? Brainstorm a list! Do you ever take it for granted?
- ? Where does your water come from? What are the boundaries of your watershed? Does your watershed have a name?
- ? Where does California get its water? How does California's precipitation (timing and amount of rainfall/ snow) compare to the rest of the U. S.? Has it changed over time?
- ? Identify the various segments of society that depend upon water. How might the interests of these different groups be compatible and how might they conflict? What suggestions do you have to deal with and/or reduce these conflicts?
- ? According to Gia Martynn, "Water is the thread that binds our livelihoods." What are you doing currently to protect, restore, or conserve water where you live?



# Preserving for the Future by George Goodwin

*Saving precious open space for the next generation*

Running time 02:52



You know you're in a special place when you can sit on your back porch looking across the beautiful valley of acres and acres of farm land, see cattle grazing, the hills you hunted in, and the streams you fished in as a boy. Now 80 years later I am blessed to see my children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren enjoy the things that have meant so much in my life.

My grandparents came from Switzerland back in the 1800's and settled here in the Sierra Valley. They originally operated a dairy and grew hay for their animals. I was raised in Southern California but I spent as much time as possible with my grandparents and other relatives in the Sierra Valley. What a joy as a child, raised in the city to participate in ranch life; milking cows, riding horses, hunting, fishing, even drinking fresh cold water from a spring. It was a wonderful experience. I want all of our family and friends to be able to enjoy these things they do not have in the city.



After my marriage and having six children, we were blessed 22 years ago to purchase property originally owned by some of our relatives. Our 7,000 acre cattle ranch is a family owned operation, managed by my daughter, son in law, and their family. All six of our families love being in this valley. Enjoying the sight of deer and bear, all kinds of duck and geese, and many other beautiful creatures that are part of the wildlife here. Even the smell of sage brush and pine trees has its own unique aroma.

We are thankful that the majority of the local population appreciates this area enough to protect it from residential development and sprawl. We know for all of this to be protected government officials need to put in place land use policies that enforce strong restrictions, prohibiting zone changes that allow agriculture to be changed to residential.

Once this land is changed this unique beauty and way of life can never again be enjoyed or put back to its original use. It would be an awful loss to all of us. This rare beautiful country should be saved for future generations to appreciate and enjoy as much as we do today.



## Resources



California Land Use Planning Information Network (LUPIN) <http://ceres.ca.gov/planning/>

Land Use Fact Sheets [http://ucce-plumas-sierra.ucdavis.edu/Land\\_Use/](http://ucce-plumas-sierra.ucdavis.edu/Land_Use/) 18 Different Fact Sheets

California Department of Conservation <http://www.conservation.ca.gov/index/Pages/Index.aspx>

Sierra Business Council, [www.sbcouncil.org](http://www.sbcouncil.org)

Northern Sierra Partnership, <http://www.northernsierrapartnership.org/> conserving lands and waters of the northern Sierra Nevada; enhancing its communities and local economies.



## Key Message

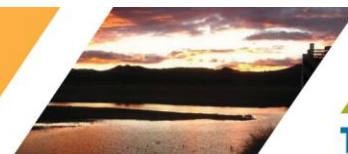
*We have a responsibility to future generations to care for the land via stewardship and sensible land use policies.*

## Discussion Questions:

- ? George Goodwin talks about protecting agricultural land and open space from residential development and sprawl. How does residential development threaten agriculture? Are there ways to make development and agriculture more compatible?
- ? What kinds of land use policies and zoning support farms and ranches? What kinds of policies and zoning undermine the viability of farms and ranches?
- ? At what scale of government does zoning occur in California? What are the conditions facing this level of government and how do decision-makers at this level usually respond?
- ? What might land use planning at a different level of government look like? Who else might be involved and how would that change things?
- ? What steps can residents in your area take to shape land use policies to preserve agricultural land and open space for future generations?

# The Next Hundred Years by Lacey Maddalena

*A young woman overcomes adversity to continue the family ranch* Running time 2:31



I always knew that I wanted to have a job in agriculture. I didn't know that I would be thrown into the position as a single, twenty-four year old girl, but I am very thankful for what my dad left to me after his unexpected passing.

My dad was the most important person in my life. He was my hero and the one person who influenced me into believing that agriculture is a way of life. It's not just what you do, but who you are. It defines you as a person.

When I hear of people saying that agriculture isn't viable in Sierra Valley, I can't help but be disappointed. If agriculture isn't viable in Sierra Valley, then what is?

When you drive up to the Vista Point on Highway 49 and look out over the valley, all you see is ranch land. My family has been ranching in this valley for one hundred years, and I fully intend on being the next generation to come in and ranch it for another hundred years.

Ranching is hard work. People ask "why do you work so hard for something that is so up and down? Sometimes you make money, sometimes you don't." Well, it's not about the money; it's about the love for the land.

It's about looking out seeing your progress every day, seeing the calves get big, watching the grass grow tall, knowing those calluses on your hands are the product of hard work and determination. It's about knowing that someday future generations like myself will be able to have something beautiful of their own. Something sustainable and absolutely viable. As long as you have a piece of land you can be entirely self sufficient, and in these hard times that is truly a beautiful thing.

Sometimes I sit up on the hill on our ranch where we spread my Dads ashes and I cry and ask the Lord why he put such an enormous responsibility upon my shoulders.

As I wipe my tears and look up I can see the entire valley through the setting of the sun. It is then that I realize that this is my life.







I am the future of agriculture and it is my responsibility to make sure that people understand that agriculture is, and always will be, viable in Sierra Valley.

## Resources



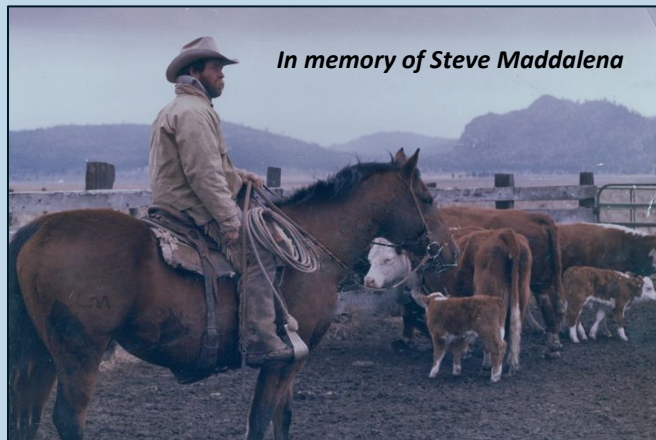
Young Farmers and Ranchers, <http://www.cfbf.com/yfr/>

Sierra Nevada Conservancy  
<http://www.sierranevada.ca.gov/>

California Farm Link, builds family farming by linking aspiring and retiring farmers,  
<http://www.californiafarmlink.org/joomla/index.php>

Cultivating Success, curricula for new farmers and ranchers, <http://www.cultivatingsuccess.org/courses.htm>

History of Sierra Valley,  
<http://www.eastsierravalleychamber.com/history.html>  
<http://www.sierracountygold.com/History/index.html>



## Key Message

*Young people care about the future of agriculture and are committed to making it viable.*

## Discussion Questions:

- ? Consider the root words in agriculture. What are the cultural dimensions of agriculture?
- ? Lacey Maddalena believes that agriculture is a way of life; *"It's not just what you do but who you are. It defines you as a person."* Why do you think she makes this claim? Do you agree?
- ? Who has influenced you most when it comes to understanding agriculture? How did other groups or individuals help form your current attitude about agriculture?
- ? Lacey says *"I am the future of agriculture and it is my responsibility to make sure that people understand that agriculture is, and always will be, viable in Sierra Valley."* How can young people become more involved in the field of agriculture and how can adults support them?
- ? For many generations farm life has not been strongly valued by youth in farming areas and some families have even discouraged their children from going into agriculture. How does that compare with societal trends that we see today? Why are so many young adults interested in farming now? Is this a fad, or do you think it is a permanent change?

# A View From the Barn by Rick Roberti

*Ranchers manage land for livestock & wildlife*

Running time 4:31



thing they looked at was the barn. For farmers like my grandparents, a good barn was even more important than a nice house.

This is the Wheritty barn, and it has been

an important part of Sierra Valley for well over 100 years. The barn is named after the Wheritty family, who owned the land before Alfred and Josephine Roberti purchased it in 1924. My name is Rick Roberti, and I am their grandson. Along with my parents, brothers and our families, we are privileged to ranch on the land that surrounds the Wheritty barn.

I often think if this old barn could talk, what stories it could tell of the people from at least six generations who have come and gone. From dairy cows to beef cows, from pitchforks and wagons to trucks and hay squeezes, from bib overall to shorts, this old barn has seen it all.

This grand old barn has been home to birds, rabbits, horses, skunks, cats, and lots of cow and calves. Though

the outside walls show their age and a tin roof has replaced the old shingles, the barn's views haven't changed a whole lot over time. Looking west, it has a clear view of Beckwith Peak and the Sierra Nevada Mountains.

The north end of the barn stares at a huge pile of old baling wire. It's a reminder of past hay seasons and hundreds of hot summer days. To the east, you see the meadows that have produced the hay and forage for livestock long before the barn was built. Irrigating, haying, grazing, and wintertime feeding ...as the barn remembers, that has pretty much been the routine for years.

And due south of the barn there are fields that are still native pastures. Other fields are being farmed, and there are also fields that were once plowed that have returned to their original state.



The hard working people who settled this valley are gone now, replaced by more good people taking care of the land.



All in all, Sierra Valley hasn't changed that much over time and though we complain about the cold east wind, the lack of moisture, or that hard frost in June or July, we know we've been truly blessed to live in this unique place. It's my desire, along with many other landowners, farmers, and ranchers to leave this land in good shape for generations to come.



One thing we can do on our ranch is to improve and preserve the wetlands and riparian areas we have, and to try and establish new ones. With

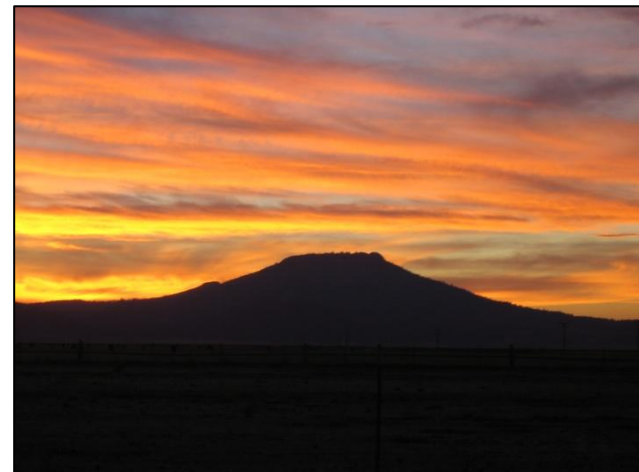
help from our County Extension Service and the NRCS, we have been able to improve our streams, enhance existing ponds, and create new wetlands.

Close to twenty years ago we fenced off an irrigation pond, and we planted several trees and shrubs. We also brought in a dump-truck load of tules, and then time and nature did the rest. This is what it looks like today.

This past summer we fenced off another larger pond and wetland area. It will be exciting to see what time and a little work can do to make this wetland area even better.

Another project under construction is a seventeen-acre wildlife preserve. When completed it should be roughly ten acres of open water with several nesting islands and coves. One of the goals of this project is to create an area that will give ducks a place to raise their hatch in a safe environment all summer long.

The Roberti family is dedicated to Sierra Valley and to taking care of the land. The Wheritty barn stands as a reminder of six generations who have made a living off this land, and Lord willing, the barn will witness many more years of good stewardship in this beautiful high desert valley of California.





# A View From the Barn --- Continued



## Resources



California Cattlemen's Association,  
<http://www.calcattlemen.org/>

Natural Resource Conservation Service,  
<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/home>

University of California Cooperative Extension, <http://ucce-plumas-sierra.ucdavis.edu/>

Sierra Valley Audubon, map of Sierra Valley with birding guide  
<http://www.nevadaudubon.org/birdingguide/birdingareas/sierravalley.html>

California Farm Bureau Federation, <http://www.cfbf.com/>

Caron Valley Eagles and Agriculture  
<http://www.visitcarsonvalley.org/eagles-and-agriculture.html>



## Key Message

*Generations of ranchers live on the land, make it their homes, produce food and fiber plus genuinely care for it.*

## Discussion Questions:

- ? When you think of a “rancher” what images come to mind? What are the sources of those images? How does this story confirm or contradict the images you have of a rancher?
- ? Many ranchers see themselves as stewards of the land—protecting wildlife habitat and managing natural resources while running their business. How does Rick Roberti exemplify ranchers as land stewards? Do you think most ranchers practice this level of stewardship?
- ? If farmers tend to have a strong conservation ethic, why is it that processes like soil erosion continue? More generally, why are people not always able to live according to their values? Consider the role of resource constraints or limitations.
- ? What examples can you share where farmers or ranchers are engaging in innovative land stewardship practices on their farms and ranches?
- ? How can we encourage ag producers to adopt stewardship practices that support wildlife habitat and improve natural resources while still making a living raising food and fiber?