

NOTE FROM AUTHORS



A big thank you to the Plumas and Sierra county residents who participated, as storytellers, in the *Passion for the Land* (PFL) project and generously volunteered their time, shared their hopes and concerns, trusted us to lead this new and somewhat unusual outreach effort, and remained committed to the process. As a result, together we created an awesome collection of personal digital stories about agricultural viability, resource stewardship, and sustaining rural communities that have been shared with people across the nation.

We wish to thank Marion Parsons and Cheree Childers for their patience and skill in working with the Project Team to create the PFL digital stories. We are especially grateful to Cheree Childers for her dedicated help in compiling and designing this Toolkit and to Amy Rasband for getting the *Toolkit for Change* website up and operational.

We'd also like to recognize the [Center for Digital Storytelling](#) for their pioneering work in launching the international digital storytelling movement. We appreciate their continued efforts to provide tools and training so that more communities can get involved in sharing their stories.

Finally, we thank the UC Davis Humanities Institute and the Center for Regional Change for their generous support of the PFL project. We're also grateful to the Renewable Resources Extension Act for providing funding to help offset the cost of creating this Toolkit and to the UC Davis Art of Regional Change and University of California Cooperative Extension for supporting us to develop it.

Enjoy creating, sharing and discussing your own stories!

Holly George, UC Cooperative Extension, Plumas-Sierra Counties
jesikah maria ross, UC Davis Art of Regional Change
Co-directors, Passion for the Land Project





Acknowledgements

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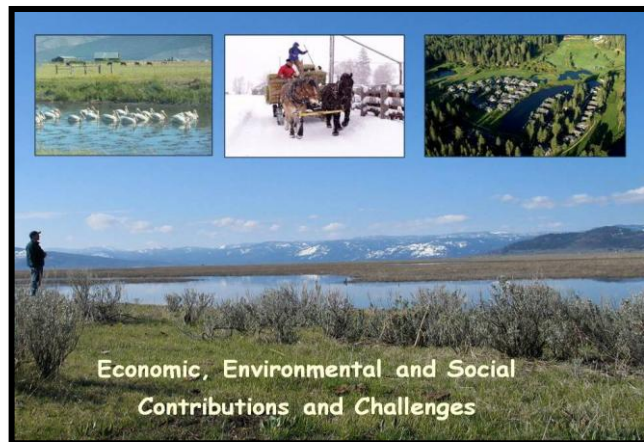
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While this project was very much a team effort, co-director jesikah maria ross provided a great deal of the foundational material and led much of the writing and editing effort for this Toolkit. Her experience and expertise working with groups and creating digital stories with community members was invaluable to this project.

Toolkit for Change Goals:

- Build the capacity of educators and resource professionals to use personal digital stories in their community outreach efforts.
- Demonstrate how personal stories can spark important conversations that otherwise might not take place.
- Promote digital storytelling as an innovative tool for improving communication and understanding of issues.
- Build bridges among different audiences about renewable resources, people, and community development.

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Preface

Our understanding of people and issues expands when we listen to personal stories about places they care about. I had the great fortune to attend a film screening and discussion of *Passion for the Land - Personal Stories from the Sierra Valley* in Quincy, CA one evening in May 2010. The stories touched everyone in the audience, regardless of walk of life, including myself.

Conflict over agricultural land uses and natural resources protection, changing demographics in rural communities, and competition for fewer resources make it easy for us to focus on our differences. Polarized camps are often the product.

Although diverse land use opinions resided in the audience, the stories told that evening were so obviously genuine that all in attendance responded very positively. The digital storytelling and subsequent discussion provided a forum for the community to recall how similar our fundamental human concerns really are, regardless of our opinions about land use.

That evening, *Passion for the Land - Personal Stories from the Sierra Valley* redirected our focus back to our common values for our families, our communities, and thus the land which sustains us all. It is from this common base, rather than from divided camps, that we are going to one day achieve sustainable agriculture, natural resources, and rural communities.

We scientists working on land use issues, and the uncomfortable topic of change, are commonly seeking opportunities to address relevant questions with the best available science. Forums such as *Passion for the Land* are critical to creating these opportunities, as well as reminding scientists to keep the human dimension of land use research embedded in our studies. Digital stories are a tool we can use to reach diverse audiences and spark conversations about these important issues.

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Personal Stories are Powerful

People protect the places they care about. And they care about places when they recognize how they benefit from the social, economic, and environmental resources these places provide.

Personal stories build these kinds of connections. Through authentic, heartfelt voices of the people who live and work the land, personal narratives take listeners/viewers to places they might otherwise not go, help them relate to the natural resource issues at stake, and motivate them to take action.

In this way, personal stories are a useful tool for reaching out to the wider public about ways to understand different stewardship practices, sustain California's resources, and address the challenges and opportunities facing our diverse communities. When these stories are easy to access and share, as digital stories are, the tool becomes even more effective.



“Community building efforts use story to remember the past, understand the present and to imagine the future.”

Personal stories woven into digital stories can inform audiences on a wide-array of topics and engage a range of audiences in conversations they usually don't have. They can spark public dialogue, promote civic participation, or motivate people to take action. The format of digital stories makes them great communication tools because they can be easily and inexpensively distributed via websites, email, social networks, and DVDs.

This Toolkit, part facilitation guide and part training guide, highlights the multi-media digital storytelling process focused on using personal stories to sustain working landscapes, natural resources, and rural communities.

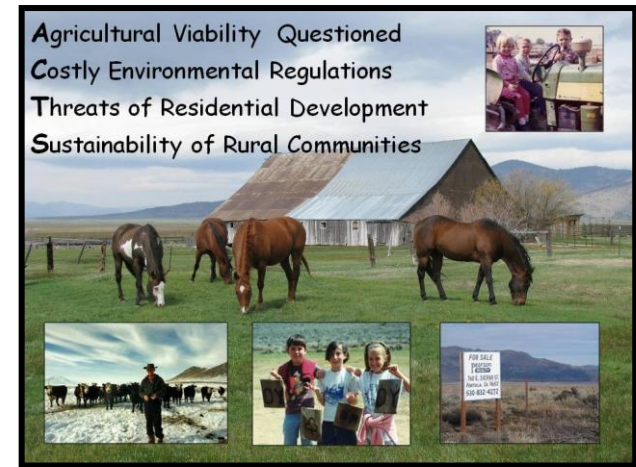


A Little Background

In 2008 [University of California Cooperative Extension \(UCCE\) in Plumas Sierra Counties](#) teamed up with [UC Davis Art of Regional Change \(ARC\)](#) and brought a group of rural residents together to discuss the challenges, and contributions of agriculture viability.

The group identified the issues they wanted others to understand about the interconnections between our environment, agriculture, and local communities.

Over the next year they worked with artists and scholars to create [Passion for the Land \(PFL\)](#). This [collection of 12 personal stories](#) (each 2-4 minutes long) amplifies rural voices on issues facing agricultural communities across the nation. The process helped local residents engage with policymakers, educators, local leaders, and the public about preserving community heritage while protecting agricultural lands and natural resources for future generations.



Project participants, ranging in age from 26-84, chose their topics, wrote and recorded their scripts, and scanned family photos to help tell their stories. Local musicians provided music for the soundtracks. UC Davis media artist jesikah maria ross helped Cooperative Extension staff learn to record and edit digital media and together they produced the twelve stories.

“This type of storytelling brings real people into the issues, far more than just a written media can provide. It creates new friendships and partners among storytellers and the many audiences who hear them. It solidifies the bonds within the ranch community as well”

Carol Dobbas, Chasing Water, PFL



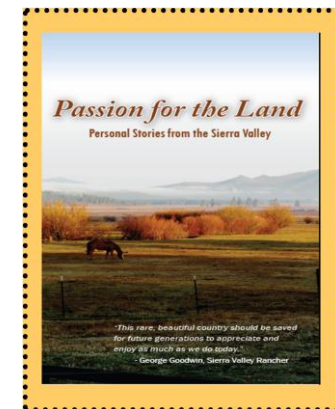
After the stories were completed, the project co-directors—in consultation with project participants—initiated a community outreach effort to share and discuss the stories. During this second year of the project, the stories reached over 5,000 viewers through social media outlets, an estimated 60,000 viewers via community television and roughly 1,200 people at 35 public presentations. Educators, state agencies, business organizations, and non-governmental organization (NGOs) distributed 700+ DVDs to targeted groups across the country. In 2010, PFL received the Gold Award for Mixed Media from the [Association of Natural Resource Extension Professionals](#).



Our Process to Amplify Rural Voices

Talk, Share, Write Scripts, Gather Images & Music, Learn New Technology, Celebrate & Reach Out to Others

The tremendous success of the project led to numerous queries from Cooperative Extension colleagues and resource professionals on how to create digital stories for a variety of educational and outreach purposes. Our experience collaborating with storytellers, project staff, and other stakeholders who presented the PFL stories at diverse venues pointed out the need for some guidance on how to facilitate story screenings and dialogue sessions. This toolkit is designed to provide these resources.











How to Use This Toolkit

The **Facilitator's Guide** encourages educators, resource professionals, and community organizations to use the *Passion for the Land* digital stories in their education and outreach efforts to spark discussions about agricultural viability, resource stewardship, and sustaining rural communities.

The **Training Guide** includes key steps and resources for how to create your own digital stories for a variety of educational and outreach purposes.



KEY to Icons

-  Indicates a "technical" how-to process
-  Indicates a "people" activity process
-  **HANDOUTS:** Ready to copy and share
-  **TIPS** and lessons learned
-  **RESOURCES:** websites, videos, etc.
-  Direct link to *Passion for the Land* DVD cover page so you can access stories

