

The Sierra Valley:
Sustaining the Sierra Valley Through Minimal Development &
Alternative Ranching Approaches

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This class project report was created for the undergraduate course *Community and Regional Development 142* lectured by Professor Ryan E. Galt at the University of California Davis during the Winter Quarter of 2009. The student authors were all undergraduate students at the time of researching and writing this report during an approximately eight-week period.

Sustaining The Sierra Valley

The picturesque Sierra Valley is what comes to the mind of many when they imagine how a rural landscape looks. Native grasses cover the rangeland that stretches for miles, with clear skies and breezes unimpacted by urban grit and large populations. The Sierra Valley is near the famed Lake Tahoe and the lesser known city of Truckee. The Sierra Valley contains the towns Loyalton, Sierraville, Calpine, Satley, Graeagle, Blairsdon and Vinton. Most of the land is forested or ranchland, with cattle ranching constituting a large percentage of the region's income. Family ranching has true roots in the Sierra Valley. Multiple ranches have been run by the same family for a century or more. Tourism also contributes to the economy, and lately the Sierra Valley has been sought out as the perfect spot in which to develop further. Developers have their eye on the extensive ranch lands for golf courses and luxury homes, hoping to extend Tahoe's trade into the valley. However, not all residents are as enthused. Sierra Valley locals and their supporters are putting forth an effort to protect the integrity of the land. Questions are being raised about the agricultural, economic and social viability of the valley. By examining the elements that determine the agricultural viability of the valley, we can determine whether a future development plan would benefit Sierra Valley agriculturally, economically and socially. The valley can sustain its agricultural business, but needs to allow some kind of new development to encourage economic growth.

This paper will explore the history of the valley, the influence of developers, the stakeholders input on the importance of preservation, conservation, and viability, as well as possible alternatives to extensive redevelopment.

History of Sierra Valley

History of Agriculture

Settlers first set foot in the Sierra Valley around 1850, during the California gold rush era. As gold rush activity died down, people began to settle in the surrounding area. In the early stages of growth, the ranches provided wheat, dairy and cattle for the town of Truckee and the Sierra and Comstock mines. By the 1880s, the Sierra Valley was one of the most productive agricultural regions in California, devoted mainly to dairy cattle, farming and lumber (SCG, 2008). During this time period, the agriculture of the Sierra Valley was clearly affluent and prosperous, but throughout the years, changes in the surrounding communities have caused some to question the agricultural viability of the valley.

Historic Significance of Agriculture

The Sierra Valley lumber industry supplied timber to the mines, as well as to the Central Pacific Railroad. When the mines closed in the early 1900s, the demand for lumber declined as well; however, the lumber industry still remained important to the economy of the region. Around the same time period, the USDA Forest Service was established by the federal government in order to protect forested lands. Today, the forested area of the valley is controlled by the US Forest Service and is designated as national forest. Although the land is federally owned, Ranchers are permitted to lease large portions of land to graze their cattle (SBC, 2008).

Allotments were issued by the US Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management, allowing ranchers to move a certain number of livestock to a specific area during certain times of the year (SBC, 2008). These allotments allowed ranchers to use the land to help sustain their cattle, which has enabled the family owned cattle ranches to exist today. Cattle ranches have outlasted most of the

other agricultural businesses in the Sierra Valley due to these permits; however other sectors of the cattle ranching economy have suffered from regulations and changes in technology.

In 1940 the USDA began requiring milk to be homogenized or processed within a 48 hour period. The dairy production industry of the Sierra Valley was popular because it required far less land than most other livestock industry. However, many of the small scale dairies went out of business because they were unable to adapt to the regulations strictly set by USDA (SBC, 2008). The meat industry was also impacted by food safety regulations. Consumers formerly were able to purchase meat or dairy directly from the farmers, but USDA regulations changed the relationship between producers and consumers. Small acreage ranches were unable to adapt to the changes of the marketplace and went out of business. As a result, government safety regulations drove out small dairy and meat operations and consolidated others.

Organizations Involved

Sierra Business Council

“Sierra Business Council is a member-based organization of over 700 individuals and businesses that are committed to pioneering innovative solutions in the Sierra Nevada” (SBC, 2008). With a large staff, the group directs efforts to projects that foster community vitality, environmental quality, economic prosperity and social fairness in the valley. The Sierra Business Council focuses on conservation, while seeking to improve the economic stature of the community. Therefore, projects are chosen with a conscious effort to maintain open space and conserve natural habitats. Studies done by the SBC indicate that economics is not the group’s only interest, and that the social factors of different industries (such as ranching) are highly considered by the organization and the community (SBC, 2008). The Sierra Business Council stands to preserve the ranching history of the valley and steer away residential and commercial development that they feel would be detrimental to the valley’s environment and community.

Saving the Sierra

"Saving The Sierra: Voices of Conservation in Action (STS) is an independent regional media project led by co-directors jesikah maria ross and Catherine Stifter. "Through public media and citizen storytelling, the project documents community efforts to conserve the environment, culture, and economy of the Sierra Nevada" (Our Project, 2008). Ranchers, rural youth, native tribes and conservationists are just a few of the voices that can be heard through media projects such as audio documentaries and through multimedia Web content (Our Project, 2008). “Saving The Sierra: Grassroots Solutions for Sustaining Rural Communities”, is an hour documentary special aired on NPR that can be listened to on the Saving the Sierra website. The documentary explores how urban development threatens rural areas across the state and showcases how three different communities are struggling to preserve rural culture from rapid residential growth, sustain local economies as resort developments boom and protect clean water and open space for future generations (ross, 2009) (Radio Stories, 2009).

High Sierra Rural Alliance

True to their name, the High Sierra Rural Alliance is a passionate group committed to preserving the scenic high Sierra. The High Sierra Rural Alliance describes itself as, “a non-profit, grassroots organization committed to the preservation and enhancement of the rural Sierra experience” (HSRA, 2008). The organization was founded in March 2004 when two land planners from the Sierra County Planning Department formulated the group to provide informed representation in land use matters on behalf of the public (HSRA, 2008). The board of directors

sits Brenden McCormack and Judy Lawrence. Also partners with the Sierra Business Council, the mission of HSRA is to promote the protection of the rural environment at the local level by monitoring public hearing notices, examining environmental documents, researching policy and advocating for decisions by providing written comments at public hearings (HSRA, 2008). The goal of the HSRA is to protect the ranches in the Sierra Valley from developers attempting to destroy the breathtaking aesthetics of the valley and the rancher's way of life.

The Influence of Developers

The Sierra Valley is sinking into an economic crisis. Its communities are unable to provide enough revenue to support its financial obligations. There are several development agencies who are supporting development. These agencies have taken a supportive approach, believing themselves to be doing the region and its population a favor by creating developments which would create much needed revenue. Developers have taken advantage of the current economic situation and are using it to urge locations such as Sierra Valley to allow development.

Sierra Valley Development Company LLC. is a development firm, which seeks to boost the revenue of the Sierra Valley by creating business of both profit to them and the Valley. The city of Loyalton is of interest for this firm. According to SVDC (SVDC):

- Sierra County is unable to fund a CAO position, it has no viable plan for enhancing revenues, it has no vision to improve fiscal planning resources and its planning staff is spread very thin requiring an inordinate amount of time to respond to growth potentials and the processing of development projects.
- The City of Loyalton has no present fiscal means of addressing legal compliance for planning issues, for updating its General Plan, for addressing infrastructure upgrades and generally doing City business consistent with requirements of California law.
- Sierra County may eventually go into bankruptcy if it does not start to seriously "farm" its growth potentials to maximize fiscal revenue generation.

According to this firm, the Sierra Valley will soon be absorbed by another county if it does not take advantage of its open space value. The value has nearly 95% open space, 76% of it federal lands and untouchable and 8% private (SVDC). However the remaining land is open and is what makes this valley attractive to 'baby boomers' looking to build their dream house.

Other projects have been created, such as the Thran project, which proposes a subdivision of 250 acres into three 80 acre parcels. However, the community views this project as 'detrimental' to the overall integrity of the valley, which is largely reliant upon agriculture (HSRA). The residential parcels many locals believe will be turned into larger residential developments. This project is just one of a few which centers around the debate between local ranchers and land developers. As noted above, developers believe the development possibilities are endless, and will provide much needed revenue through a variety of ways including: Property taxes, the purchase of needed goods and services from the local businesses, registration of cars within the local cities, the use and payment of sanitation services, water services, solid waste services, road maintenance, and snow removal (SVDC).

Analyzing the debates between ranchers and developers is complex, considering both sides have unique and acceptable arguments. Local farmers believe that the proposed commercial development is much too small and should be more similar to the Plumas county development which was sold around 640 acre parcels. Plumas County has had a 17.6% growth rate by residents in the past year. Considering the real estate market, this is quite a strong showing. Ranchers believe that officials are moving much too quickly, almost a fire sale of sorts to try and fix the fiscal crisis the county faces. In the long run, they believe the sale of parcels at such a small acre size will only hurt the community because development projects will be small and expensive and may not help the town recover as fast or as well as proposed by the developers.

There are several developers who argue with this point. Along with SVDC there is the Sierra Pacific Industries, Van Horn Properties, Dotta Properties, and Goicoechea Properties. All these groups own parcels of land of 160 acres or more and are waiting for the zoning to go through so they can begin the development process, although SVDC is the only group presently permitted for any level of development. According to these firms and groups the county is on the brink of bankruptcy and immediate action by the county must be taken. These developers propose that they will benefit the local populous in a variety of ways, both financial and convenience. An issue arises however being that the county is composed of several cities, some which may need development more than others, thus some are more likely to benefit while others such as previous residential development, will suffer.

Regardless of the debate, what is inarguable is our nation's current economic crisis. Considering the proposed development is residential homes that are for either retirement or tourist purposes, the cities and county are facing a severe problem. They are facing pressures from local ranchers as well as developers, both with separate agendas. In the long road commercial and residential development is necessary for the recovery of the county and its cities. Analyzing both sides, the county officials must work with city councilmen of the cities, if they have them, to create an adequate and fair zoning of the current open space.

Rancher's Perspectives about the Sierra Valley

Perhaps the most informed opinion of all is that of the ranchers living in the valley themselves. They are few and far between, with the little town of Loyaltown having only 794 citizens and the even smaller Vinton housing 387 (Census). In accordance with the rest of California's rangelands, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the residents to hold the valley together as temptation to sell increases. Liffmann (2000: 363) has reported that "Estate taxes, conflicts between multiple heirs, and lucrative purchase offer encourage ranchers to sell land to developers, and much land is being purchased and held for development by corporate and individual speculators". Like any population, there are some disagreements as to what the best tactic for the valley as well as them personally will be. However, the locals do agree on one thing; change needs to happen in the Sierra Valley in order for the ranching towns to survive at all in an increasingly globalized world.

The most pressing problem ranchers are facing is a financial one. Earning enough to keep the land and get a livable profit off of it is becoming increasingly difficult as industry leaves, the towns are victim to increased financial strain. Many ranches in the valley are aided by the Williamson Act, where "...participant landowners... enroll in a 10-year rolling land conservation contract with their county in exchange for tax relief" (Liffman 2000:363). The money saved in taxes can make the difference between keeping their family's heritage ranch and being forced to sell. A new option is conservation easements, also known as land or government easements or land trusts (CRD 142

Lecture, 3/12/09). In short, land trusts are a contract between the land owner and the government that gives the rancher tax breaks and other incentives in order not to sell their land to developers, making it possible for some to keep their land as agricultural land when otherwise they could not. Vinton resident and owner of the Pitchfork Cattle Company Dave (see Image 2) Goss estimates around a half dozen or more ranchers are currently tied up in easements, to their detriment in his eyes (Goss). Goss explains his dislike of easements in that “They’re a one-time fix, and keep the ranch tied up in perpetuity for three or four generations. Down the road if you can’t make a living you can’t sell it” (Goss). Concern about binding children and grandchildren to a failing industry is a common concern among valley ranchers. Rick Roberti of Roberti Farms expressed similar fear, stating that in terms of easements he is “Cautiously optimistic. They’re certainly better than housing developments. I’m in favor, though I was originally hesitant”. He instead suggests shortening the terms of easements to make them less binding for future generations (Roberti). While they work for some, many are hesitant about the current easements. Yet profit must come from somewhere, and with no easement to relieve some financial pressure ranchers are forced to find a supplemental form of income.

The most common farmed products from the Sierra Valley are beef cattle, hay, and grain (Roberti). Though family farms have operated on a small scale of production, grain producers are able to remain competitive because slower-growing mountain hay has higher protein content and is worth more (see Image 4) (Roberti). Despite this, making a profit is still difficult and many ranchers have turned to alternate methods in order to supplement their income. These range from “jackrabbit hunts” of thirty years ago (where locals rounded up the jackrabbits destroying their crops and sold them to San Francisco restaurants as specialty “mountain hare”) to timber sales (also no longer possible) to selling the parts of the land (Goss). Dave Goss has slowly been selling pieces of the huge granite rocks dotting his hills as landscape rock, and knows his neighbor to be selling natural gravel. “Boy, it definitely helps”, Goss explains. Individually, ranchers are coming up with creative solutions to stay afloat. Yet the question remains, what can be done on a larger level to boost the valley’s economy?

The Sierra Valley ranchers feel trapped in a paradox of development and preservation; they are desperately trying to keep their lands agricultural and not allow them to become golf courses, resorts, and luxury housing. A recent study in Mountain Research and Development explains that it is not only the loss of the land, but the change in society as well, saying that “Planning problems that tend to come with settlement expansion in high mountain regions represent a certain potential for conflict between people who have been living here for a long period...and recent, affluent amenity migrants” (Loffler 2006:64). At the same time, the environmental concerns of some prevent them from implementing a solution that could preserve the land for agriculture. Like most rural space, the valley is a complex quilt of privately owned land and government land leased to ranchers by the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. Angus and alfalfa rancher Rick Roberti jokes that the “The forest service is inundated with more lawyers than we have cows. They run in when they don’t have to”. Like all good jokes, Roberti’s comment is funny because it strikes true. As evidence, he cites the time that the construction of a “...gold cyanide mine was vetoed, but they’re pretty clean and all over the place...People want to have their cake and eat it too” (Roberti).

The truth those who don’t want any change refuse to accept is that without the introduction of some form of industry, the quality of life in the town will continue to deteriorate until the resident choose to move or are forced to economically. The land would then be sold to the highest bidder; property developers. In the views of local ranchers, the towns must be expanded slightly to avoid expanding exponentially. When asked about a solution to the valley’s predicament, Roberti

worriedly explained that “I wish there was a real solution. Industry, I think we need industry on the side of the valley so that it brings income in without affecting the ranch land...Some want no growth, but those who don’t haven’t seen our schools since the loss of timber receipts. There’s still a lot of good people willing to pick up the slack, but unless something changes these little towns will be gone”.

The loss of towns in the Sierra Valley would be a significant loss indeed. A warm and friendly community of families, living a lifestyle few have witnessed in place like most have ever seen, the valley’s tiny towns are loved by its residents. As a productive community the valley deserves to be protected and nourished. This can be accomplished by introducing industry that will not tax the valley’s resources but instead introduce opportunities to better the local institutions, as well as the creation of contracts which may help a family keep their farm without binding them to a failing enterprise. Without these changes, locals who know the valley’s history, are a part of its history, will be forced to sell and make way for tourism.

Agricultural Viability and Sustainability

Agriculture is business. The viability of a business depends on whether or not revenue can cover the cost of the expenses of doing business. Ranching is not exempt from this concept. The family farms in the Sierra Valley must be able to provide for living expenses and cover the cost of doing business. This is a good definition of what viability concerns and how sustainability can occur. For the ranching businesses to continue, it may be best to focus on agricultural sustainability. Beyond the ranches, the Sierra Valley must be economically viable as well.

Because the Sierra Valley includes both Plumas County and Sierra County, farming demographics from both counties need to be analyzed. The following table shows important changes in the Sierra Valley’s number of farms and the size of acres harvested:

Table 1. Change in Number of Farms and Acres Harvested from 2002 to 2006

	Plumas County		Sierra County	
Year	Number of Farms	Acres Harvested	Number of Farms	Acres Harvested
2002	54	9,255	21	2,910
2007	33	7,692	21	2,412

Source: 2007 CENSUS OF AGRICULTURE - COUNTY DATA

From the graph it can be calculated that in 2002, 171.38 acres per farm were harvested in Plumas. In 2007, there was 233.09 acres per farm harvested in Plumas. Therefore, there was an increase in the number of acres harvested per farm from 171.38 acres to 233.09 acres harvested per farm in 2007. The acres harvested became more concentrated in 2007 to fewer farms, just thirty-three farms, harvesting more acres in Plumas County in 2007 than in 2002. Sierra county farming is more stable with fewer farms compared to Plumas. However, acres per farm fell from 138.57 acres to 114.85 acres per the number of farms.

The Sierra Valley has to at least embrace minimal development to encourage economic growth and sustain the agriculture business. In this case, minimal development can be determined by

what the farmers and other community members want to preserve, and what is necessary for economic growth. What is the balancing point between developing new economic sectors in the valley and sustaining agriculture? The question is difficult to answer.

The economic growth of the Sierra Valley matters. Growth matters to the youth. The schools are suffering due to the loss of revenue from lumber (Roberti). Growth matters to farm revenue. New methods, new processes & new products are necessary to sustain business. Growth matters to individuals. Farmers want to pass along their land to the younger generation. Growth means some kind of increase in goods and services being produced in the valley. Without more revenue coming in than money and resources going out, the valley will not be able to sustain the agricultural business.

Allowing some residential and business development can bring much needed revenue to support the school system. The encroaching private development brings with it many ideas that can result in economic growth in the valley. Paving over farmland and grazing land will be one consequence of development. This may affect the cattle business in Sierra Development because of the loss of grazing land (Smethurst). Effective planning is important to create development which has a minimal effect on the current cattle business. One of the most important factors is for both counties to have experienced planners involved. This may be the best economical option to prevent the county from going bankrupt.

There can be a guideline to answering the question of what is the balancing point to allow some kind of development encourage economic growth while sustaining agriculture. The problem in answering this question is that sustainability is relative. It's relative to one's own concepts and ideas (Collados). This is where Saving The Sierra is doing invaluable work. The voices of the ranchers and community members is crucial to finding the balance and understanding what can be done.

The ranchers and farmers we interviewed shared the desire to have economic growth with minimal impact on their way of life and on their perception of the Sierra Valley. The ranchers we spoke to said they farm mainly hay and cattle. Their hay is higher quality than many others and is competitive in the market. Their cattle is angus beef (see Image 6). Angus beef is a well marketed and prized product amongst consumers of beef. Ranchers Dave Goss and Rick Roberti also sell granite and sand respectively. Roberti is able to sell sand from his property while he is building a lake. Goss sells granite to landscapers to supplement his income. These are some of the alternatives to hay and cattle the ranchers are engaged in. Both these farmers are using their current means to developed new business opportunities on their land. This kind of entrepreneurship is what will help the Sierra Valley be agriculturally sustainable.

Sustaining the ranchers' current farming practices is the best plan at this moment. In the *Economics* report from the 2007 agricultural census it is reported that cattle accounts for 21% of the three hundred billion dollars in agricultural products being sold in the United States (USDA). Cattle is an important aspect of agricultural business in the Sierra Valley. Therefore, it may be best for them to focus on using cattle.

Agricultural Sustainability: Local Meat Processing Facility

Sierra Valley's agricultural viability is in question. Whether or not the valley can succeed without change is uncertain but currently there are some economic issues affecting the towns and

counties located in the valley according to the proposal made by the SVDC, Sierra Valley Development Company. “Sierra County may eventually go into bankruptcy if it does not start to seriously "farm" its growth potentials to maximize fiscal revenue generation” (SVDC pg.1). Although this statement is somewhat of an exaggeration and only takes into account one side of the story there some economic issues affecting the local towns.

The lack of fiscal revenue as pointed out in the proposal by the SVDC and other economic issues involve the success of the local ranchers. The SVDC’s answer to the economic problems of the region is housing development, they believe that construction of new homes could potentially bring in enough revenue to fund the county’s local government and help the local businesses (SVDC, pg.1).

The SVDC’s proposal is not the only solution to stimulating economic growth in the region, and it’s highly apposed by the local ranchers that don’t want to see the identity of the place they call home be changed into a cookie cutter housing development. One alternative is for the ranchers to invest in the construction of a meat processing facility in the valley. This is an important component of the local agribusiness that is currently missing. According to one of the ranchers in the valley there are up to forty to fifty thousand cattle in the valley when all are present, yet there is no meat processing facility in the area, ranchers must transport there cattle out of the valley for processing even out of state in some cases. Thus there is a huge amount of potential for a processing facility in the valley in order to help the local economy. The presence of such a facility would also help the valley become a sustainable community food system, a “self reliant, locally or regionally based food systems comprised of diversified farms using sustainable practices to supply fresher, more nutritious foodstuffs to small-scale producers and consumer to whom producers are linked by the bonds of community as well as economy” (Goreham, pg. 30). If the processing facility would be locally owned it could allow the valley to function in a local sustainable agribusiness, where all facets of the food system would be present in the valley. This includes the farming operations, production, transportation, marketing of outputs (Galt, CRD 142 lecture 2/1/09).

The proposal of a new meat processing facility located in Sierra Valley would have some advantages and some disadvantages. To start with the benefits, the construction of a new processing facility or of several would stimulate the local economy in several different ways. According to research done of meat packing facilities in Midwestern United States by Georgeanne M. Artza and other of Iowa State University, the addition of such facilities to rural communities has been proven to have some positive effects on local economies (Artz, Orazem, and Otto, pg. 3). In such cases the growth in industry leads to growth in employment and payroll of the direct jobs related to the processing facility and indirectly to local retail and services (Artz, Orazem, and Otto, pg. 3). The same research suggests that the addition of such local facilities actually increases the demand for livestock and feed further stimulating the local economy. If the facility is locally owned there is even more benefits to the local economy since the revenue created from such a business is kept and circulated in the community, also the growth in business would mean more revenues coming into the local government and help with funding deficiencies. The economic growth created by this strategy would eventually lead to the valley becoming agriculturally sustainable and agriculturally viable.

This proposal does however have some potential negative consequences. First of all, such facilities have been known to cause bad odors in the surrounding area because of the nature of the operation. This can lead to property values decreasing which is a bad thing unless the ranchers would see it as a way to discourage development (Galt, CRD 142 lecture 2/9/09). About the economic growth the same previous study on the Midwestern states stated that although jobs are

created and payroll is increased the average wage/income of workers in such facilities does not see growth since these are typically low wage jobs. In this case the local ranchers would not be working in the facilities; their role would be to supply the facilities with the livestock thus it would only affect those working in the facility. The study also confirms of the possibility of social problems such as crime and stress on local health and public services increasing due to increased migration to the area. Although it can be argued that the increased revenues could increase the functioning and capacity of local services. The last issue mentioned by the study is the possibility for environmental problems such as water contamination. This is especially important to the area since the local watershed of the Sierra Valley provides a significant amount of the state of California's water, but can be dealt with through proper mitigation strategies and planning.

This is just one of the many alternatives to the proposed housing development to deal with the economic issues of the valley. The addition of a meat processing facility could lead to many economic opportunities such as the proposed local sustainable agribusiness. It seems like a more practical solution to the problem, since it benefits the farmers economically and it would allow for the valley to maintain its current aesthetics.

Alternative Crop Development

The ranchers say Sierra Valley is the largest valley at the highest elevation in the United States and possibly in North American. With UC Davis only three hours away and with the university already involved with the Sierra Valley, perhaps there can be an effort into finding out what kinds of alternative crops can grow in the valley. For example, can quinoa grow in the valley? Can potatoes acclimated to higher altitudes grow in this valley? If there are unique crops that can be viable in the valley that may grow elsewhere in the world, the ranchers maybe able to create a local industry around providing some of these crops to California's vast organic and farmer's markets.

A Land & Agricultural Use Project Team

The ranchers expressed an interest in having more college students coming into the Sierra Valley and learning about the area. There is a concern about the county, and the valley not having a plan for sustaining their agricultural lifestyle. Much of this problem of a lack of planning is because of the county's lack of funds to hire the individuals necessary to do the jobs. Students, along with professional guidance from professors can provide adequate planning to the Sierra Valley. UC Davis is the leading agricultural school. The university has landscape, environmental and economics programs. Students can positively impact the Sierra Valley. If anything the students will learn valuable real world experience that may help future communities facing the same problems Sierra Valley is.

Conclusion

The real problem with the Sierra Valley is its location and beauty. People want to live there, and developers can easily market the location to potential new residents and other developers. This desirable location is facing a period of economic difficulty. People lost their jobs due to the lumber mill closing. Urban development is encroaching upon the valley. Recreational use of land is very prevalent in the region. Many areas in and around the ski resorts have become highly desired residential locations. The Sierra Valley provides the desired space for this growth. The land of the Sierra Valley is flat and surrounded by snow peaked mountains (see Image 3).

There is potential for the ranchers and residents of the Sierra Valley to create some kind of industry that will prevent over development of the area. Innovative crop development, expanding their cattle business, or developing a student lead research team through the university are all ideas to help protect the valley. But without the necessary political infrastructure to help combat unwanted development, there may be no way to stop the kind of development the ranchers do not want. Easements can help save the ranches but may prevent future generations from developing the land they inherited if agriculture becomes non-viable.

From the rancher's perspective the questions is raised: What kind of development can be done and ranchers still have their business and land? What kind of development is the best development for the Sierra Valley? Certainly the Saving the Sierra project and their partners are doing a good job at getting the word out. More work needs to be done and more people need to be involved. The ranchers don't have the money the developers do, but with the right planning they can get the people they need to enact the type of change they want for their valley.

Photograph Appendix



Image 1: Hereford cattle at the Pitchfork Cattle Company, Vinton, Ca. 2/28/09/. Picture by Anne Jensen.



Image 2: Entry sign to the Pitchfork Cattle Co., Vinton, Ca. 2/28/09. Photo by Anne Jensen.



Image 3: View of the surrounding mountains from Roberti Farms. Loyalton, Ca. 2/28/09. Photo by Anne Jensen.



Image 4: Barn on Roberti Farms. Loyalton, Ca. 2/28/09. Photo by Anne Jensen.



Image 5: Loyalton, Ca. 2/28/09. Photo by Anne Jensen.



Image 6: Angus cattle on Roberti Farms. Loyalton, Ca. 2/28/09. Photo by Anne Jensen.

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