

Passion for the Land



A Collaborative Project to help rural residents share stories about preserving community heritage while protecting agricultural lands & natural resources for future generations

Water Worries by Cindy Maddalena



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 Land 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 life style that ranchers and farmers provide. Without water agriculture would not be sustainable. Wild life 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 had 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 can not 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 back yard 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 sets 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.



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Project
Co-Directors



Holly George, 530/283-6270, hageorge@ucdavis.edu
UC Cooperative Extension, Plumas-Sierra Counties, 208 Fairgrounds Road, Quincy, CA 95971

jesikah maria ross, 530/320-1819, jmross@ucdavis.edu
UC Davis Art of Regional Change, Davis Humanities Institute, One Shield Ave, Davis, CA 95616

artofregionalchange.ucdavis.edu

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