

SIERRA-WIDE SOLUTIONS: WORKING MEADOWS ON PRIVATE LANDS IN THE SIERRA

A National Fish & Wildlife Foundation Funded Partnership
American Rivers – Cosumnes, American Bear Yuba Integrated Regional Water Management Group - Environmental Defense Fund – Tuolumne County Resource Conservation District

The Sierra Nevada snowpack is California’s largest surface “reservoir” providing over half of California’s freshwater supply. Mountain meadows throughout the range are a key feature of this water storage capacity that ensures fresh water year-round for California’s residents and agricultural industry. Meadows are also an important source of forage for the state’s livestock industry and provide rich habitat for fish and wildlife.



For those meadows that are degraded—enhancement efforts are aimed at improving how mountain meadows can provide these important services both now and into the future.

PROJECT SUMMARY

A group of environmental and conservation organizations have come together through this unique NFWF funded partnership to improve private meadows Sierra-wide. The project has two main objectives

1. Compile scientific and economic data to more accurately quantify the costs and benefits of meadow enhancement;
2. Explore opportunities to build a Sierra-wide community in support of meadow enhancement—through educational materials, field trips, and outreach events.

The project will explore a range of questions, including:

- What challenges do ranchers who depend upon Sierra meadows face?
- What options are available for improving meadow conditions?
- What are the costs and benefits of meadow restoration to meadow landowners?
- What are the best management practices for landowners to optimize forage production and environmental benefits on Sierra meadows?
- What funding resources are available to implement meadow restoration activities?

Several different activities under this partnership aim to answer these questions:

1. Downstream user impacts: quantify and articulate costs and benefits of meadow enhancements as they relate to grazing and downstream water users;
2. Grazing Benefits from Meadow Restoration: examine changes to forage production and meadow conditions by evaluating landowner experiences of meadow enhancement and management;
3. Opinion Research: learn what Sierra community members think of meadow restoration through survey and focus groups;
4. Education and Outreach: create materials on meadow restoration, such as a DVD, conduct community briefings, and lead field trips to meadow restoration sites;
5. A Conservation Roadmap for Sierra Meadows: develop a roadmap to help interested landowners implement enhancements and best management practices on private meadows across the Sierra.
6. Identify Potential Funding Sources: both state and federal funding may be available to implement meadow enhancement; in addition, we will examine the potential to develop ecosystem markets for these enhancements.

We welcome your questions and comments. The success of the project depends on expertise far beyond our partnership.

Sherri Brennan
Tuolumne County Resource
Conservation District
Sherri@tcrd.org

Belinda Morris
Environmental Defense Fund
bmorris@edf.org

Katie Burdick
CABY
katie@cabyregion.org

Lesah Osterholm
Conservation & Agricultural Consultant
lesahorses@gmail.com

Luke Hunt
American Rivers
lhunt@americanrivers.org

Ashley Rood
Environmental Defense Fund
arood@edf.org

