

UC Cooperative Extension Placer and Nevada Counties
2023 Annual Report



University of California
Agriculture and Natural Resources



Cooperative Extension

Cooperative Extension is a nationwide system for non-formal education. Established by Congress in 1914 to improve America's agriculture and strengthen families and communities, Cooperative Extension is a partnership between the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the state land grant universities, and county governments.

The mission of the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) is to serve California through the creation, development, and application of knowledge in agricultural, natural, and human resources. UCCE was established in Placer and Nevada Counties in 1917. We provide university-paid programs and professionals; our county partners provide support staff, office space, and equipment. Today, funding for our research and educational programs comes from county, state, and federal governments, as well as from competitive grants awarded to our county-based advisors.

Also known as the 4-H and Farm Advisor, UCCE Placer-Nevada serves as a local problem-solving center. We work to strengthen and ensure the sustainability of our land, our environment, and our local communities. We are catalysts, collaborators, educators, and researchers, living in the communities we serve.

In Placer and Nevada Counties, we continue to expand our ability to serve the needs of our community by providing unbiased, research-based information and training. New advisors in 4-H Youth Development, Forestry, Local Food Systems, Community Health and Nutrition, and Environmental Horticulture have expanded our ability to meet community needs. Our Livestock and Natural Resources and Horticulture and Small Farms programs continue to address local and regional needs, and collaborations with other UCCE advisors and specialists support rice production, wildfire resiliency, livestock health and welfare, orchard crop production, and weed management. Finally, our 4-H Youth Development and Master Gardener programs are facilitated by hundreds of community volunteers.



From the County Director

With leadership from our locally-based advisors and staff, and tremendous support from hundreds of 4-H and Master Gardener volunteers, UCCE Placer-Nevada continues to expand the virtual education and outreach efforts developed over the last several years. Combined with the hands-on, learn-by-doing model that has been the backbone of our efforts to support and strengthen our communities, we continue to provide locally-focused research, educational programming, and leadership in the following areas:

- Livestock and Natural Resources
- Horticulture and Small Farms
- CalFresh Healthy Living, UCCE
- Forestry
- Environmental Horticulture
- Fire Ecology and Wildfire Preparedness
- Regional Food Systems
- 4-H Youth Development
- Master Gardeners



Our partnerships with county government, community organizations, local farmers and ranchers, and our wonderful 4-H and Master Gardener volunteers make this possible! Thank you!

Dan Macon

County Director, Placer and Nevada Counties.

Connecting Placer and Nevada Counties to the University of California

Our local advisors are recognized as regional, national, and international experts in citrus production, small farm/ranch economics, targeted grazing, forest management, wildfire preparation, livestock-wildlife interactions, and youth development. In addition, UCCE Placer/Nevada connects our communities with the resources and knowledge of the entire University of California system.

Collaborating with county-based colleagues and campus-based specialists, we provide world-class science-based information on a wide range of local topics, including rice production, integrated pest management, orchard crops, irrigation systems, oak woodland management, fire-adapted communities, health and nutrition, youth development, and the California Naturalist and Climate Stewards programs.





Horticulture and Small Farms

Cindy Fake became the Horticulture and Small Farms Advisor for Placer and Nevada Counties in 2001. Over the course of her 22-year career with UCCE, she served approximately 1,000 specialty crop farmers who operate from the Sacramento Valley to the upper foothills (~3,000 feet above sea level), producing citrus, pome and stone fruit, winegrapes, specialty fruit, cool and warm season vegetables, cut flowers, and ornamentals.

As a result of her UCCE programs, many farmers adopted sustainable farming practices. These have improved soil health, increased water use efficiency, and reduced the environmental impacts of pesticide use while improving produce quality and yields and increasing farm profitability. These practices have become standard for many farms. For example:

- Over the last two decades, about 2,400 growers attended on-farm and practical workshops. Peer-to-peer learning in these workshops catalyzed widespread changes in production practices, including soil and nutrient management practices, irrigation monitoring and scheduling, pruning, composting, and mulching.
- Soil management practices have led to healthier, more resilient, and productive soils. Benefits include maintaining vegetative cover in orchards and vineyards to prevent erosion, capture and store rainwater, increase soil organic matter, foster soil microbial populations, and provide habitat for natural enemies.
- Growers are more knowledgeable about irrigation needs in variable weather and monitor soil moisture and crop status more carefully.
- As a result of collaborative research on mulch in multiple orchards, the application of mulch and/or compost in tree and vine rows has been adopted across many perennial crops. Biologically active mulch reduces water and herbicide use; improves soil health and microbial diversity; maintains soil moisture; and mitigates soil and canopy temperature fluctuations. Cindy's research has also shown mulching to be an important tool for reducing tree and vine stress and maintaining yield in our current variable climate.
- UCCE Placer/Nevada Horticulture and Small Farms program trained farmers and coordinated releases of parasitic Aphytis wasps to control California red



scale instead of applying pesticides. Since 2005, 22.9 million wasps have been released in 64 small-scale foothill citrus orchards, covering a total of 2,677 acres. As a result, approximately 22,808 pounds of carbaryl (carbamate pesticide) and 47,851 gallons of horticultural oil were not applied to these orchards. Growers also saved about 7,361,750 million gallons (22.6 acre-feet) of water as well as reducing labor costs. Over 90% of foothill citrus growers now release Aphytis to control California red scale as standard practice. More than 80% of citrus growers do not use pesticides at all, and those who do, use horticultural oils.

- Over two decades, more than 1,100 growers participated in hands-on pest management workshops, improved their practices, and disseminated these practices throughout foothill agriculture. Department of Pesticide Regulation records from 2001 to 2019 show significant decreases in the use of broad-spectrum pesticides and pesticides of concern for water quality in Placer and Nevada Counties. UCCE programs contributed to reducing organophosphate use: diazinon use declined by 99.8%, phosmet by 99.0%, and chlorpyrifos by 97.2%. Mancozeb, a fungicide which disrupts soil biota, also declined by 98.5% in the same period. Widespread use of mulch in orchards helped reduce glyphosate herbicide use by 69.5%.

With Cindy Fake's retirement in June 2023, UCCE Placer-Nevada is working to ensure that the Horticulture and Small Farms Advisor position remains a high priority for UC ANR funding.

Horticulture and Small Farms



Livestock and Natural Resources



Commercial livestock production and rangeland management in Placer and Nevada Counties go hand-in-hand; most beef cattle, sheep, and goat operations rely on rangelands for a significant portion of the year. In addition to serving commercial ranchers, UCCE provides research-based information to local, state, federal, tribal, and nongovernmental land and resource managers. Our research and extension programs emphasize the ongoing and emerging issues impacting rangelands and the ranchers who rely on them.

In 2022-23, we continued to provide hands-on and virtual training programs for both new and experienced livestock producers. Our workshops and field days provided practical information on managing pasture and rangeland forages, reducing conflicts with predators and other wildlife, planning for wildfires and other emergencies, and using prescribed fire to reduce fuel loads and manage invasive weeds. We also developed resources to help ranchers diversify their income streams and adapt to drought and other climate impacts. We continue to

coordinate the only multi-county livestock disaster pass program in California, which provides training to ranchers to safely care for their livestock during wildfire or other emergency evacuations.

Our locally-focused research addresses the short- and long-term needs for ranchers and land managers. We are collaborating with a network of advisors and specialists to develop new remote sensing technology for measuring forage production and controlling livestock through virtual fencing. We are evaluating new approaches to using livestock to remove fuel loads, reduce the need for herbicides, and improve soil health in forestry and farming systems. We are evaluating cattle nutrition management strategies designed to improve efficiency and profitability. We completed an evaluation of foothill agricultural water use within the Nevada Irrigation District. Finally, we are helping policymakers translate our research into protecting livestock from predators into new policy approaches that recognize ranchers' unique role in addressing livestock-predator coexistence.

Livestock and Natural Resources

Program Highlights 2022-23:

- More than 800 producers and land managers participated in workshops regarding oak woodland restoration, livestock production practices, prescribed fire, and targeted grazing. These workshops were a combination of field days, classroom-based instruction, and webinars.
- UCCE coordinated the Nevada-Placer-Yuba Livestock Disaster Pass and Nevada County Agricultural Disaster Pass programs, providing training to more than 115 local producers in fire behavior, the incident command system, and disaster planning. This program was recognized by the California State Association of Counties as the top Rural Disaster and Emergency Response program in 2022.
- During the 2022 fire season, UCCE and county agriculture departments worked with local law enforcement and CalFire to provide safe access for livestock producers to care for livestock and remove equipment from evacuation zones.
- Our research into nonlethal livestock protection tools and livestock-predator coexistence provided policymakers with science-based information in the creation of predator loss compensation and pay-for-presence programs in the northern Sierra Nevada and Northeastern California.
- Collaborative research regarding targeted grazing is identifying new management systems and expanding opportunities for livestock producers to address weed management and fuel loading issues while improving economic viability.
- Working with landowner partners, local resource conservation districts, and CalFire, we successfully implemented the first range improvement prescribed fire to occur on private land in Nevada County in several decades. This project, which focused on invasive barb goatgrass, will be followed up with additional prescribed burning in the coming years.
- Through our UCCE website (<https://ucanr.edu/sites/Livestock/>), our Ranching in the Sierra Foothills blog (<https://ucanr.edu/blogs/RanchingintheFoothills/index.cfm>), and weekly podcast, we provide timely, science-based information to producers throughout the foothills and beyond.



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Forestry and Natural Resources



Forests and woodlands encompass over 65% of Placer County and 85% of Nevada County. To ensure the persistence of our ecosystems and their residents, UCCE works with private forest landowners, professional forest practitioners, local agencies, and rural householders to tackle major issues of concern.

In 2022-23, our extension activities focused on targeted forest stewardship, pile burning and GIS trainings for landowners and resource professionals. We also continued to expand our career mentorship program, bringing collegiate forestry students and local professionals together. Working collaboratively with CalFire, USFS, and American Forests, we also developed and piloted a new cone survey tool to help locate cone masting activity and replenish our depleted seed banks. Finally, we expanded

the Forestry Institute for Teachers program with new staffing and a new FIT -Focus session, delivering three-day intensive trainings to teachers on specific forestry topics.

To support changing markets and a growing demand for small diameter fuels reduction, we have collaborated with local fire-safe councils and colleagues to research the potential for grazing in forested environments. This multi-year study successfully completed the first of two treatments this year and will improve understanding of costs and benefits associated with grazing in wildland-urban interface environments. We are also part of a statewide network of advisors and specialists evaluating new silvicultural approaches to ensure the continued survival of our forests and the services they provide.

Forestry and Natural Resources

Program Highlights 2022-23:

- Forest GIS Training on ArcGIS Pro with Sierra College.
- Pile Burning Trainings with Local Fire Safe Councils.
- Development of Statewide Cone Survey Tool <https://arcg.is/1jPuT80>.
- Introducing new Forestry Institute for Teachers session in El Dorado County, and piloting New FIT-Focus session on forest disturbances (forestryinstitute.org).
- Continued delivery of Project Learning Tree (<http://ucanr.edu/plt>).



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Nevada and Placer Counties 4-H Youth Development



The University of California 4-H Youth Development Program provides a variety of experiential learning opportunities that support the promotion of healthy youth and their communities. The 4-H program offers many opportunities, such as summer camps, clubs, after-school or in-school programs, and other county and state leadership opportunities.

The 4-H program is guided by positive youth development theory, which emphasizes the importance of healthy developmental contexts, such as a youth's sense of belonging, feeling safe, and having a spark or passion in life. The 4-H program believes that when a young person has a healthy developmental context, they will begin to achieve positive outcomes, such as having a growth mindset, setting and managing goals, and having a sense of hope and purpose in life.

4-H programs are inclusive to all youth (ages 5-18) from a variety of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.

Nevada County

- 10 Clubs
- 389 youth members
- 109 adult volunteers

Placer County

- 11 Clubs
- 684 youth members
- 106 adult volunteers

Nevada and Placer Counties 4-H Youth Development

Program Highlights 2022-23:

- Our 4-H Embryology Expanded Learning Program was offered to youth across 20 schools in Placer County and 2 schools in Nevada County.
- A bi-county 4-H summer camp was offered this year at Donner Mine Camp with 15 youth attending from Placer County and 22 youth attending from Nevada County.
- To increase exposure of the 4-H program in the community, 4-H has initiated a marketing campaign that includes booths at local fairs and community events, county-wide announcements, promotional materials given to school districts, and a Constant Contact email marketing platform.
- A new 4-H Foresthill club was added in Placer County. The Green Acres 4-H Club and the Countywide Shooting Sports Club were added in Nevada County.
- The Placer County 4-H programs offered more than \$9,000 in scholarships to graduating seniors. These funds come from the Neil and Laura D. Hulbert estate, and the Placer County 4-H scholarships award.
- The Hulbert estate is awarding five awards annually (\$2,500) to both outstanding 4-H male and female, between the ages of 14-18.
- The Placer County 4-H scholarships come from 4-Hers who raise a market animal or pen to be auctioned off at either the Placer County Fair or Gold Country Fair Junior Livestock Auction with the proceeds used to fund the 4-H scholarship awards.
- UCANR programs are open to all participants, regardless of their ability to pay. For youth facing economic disadvantage, the 4-H program provides enrollment fee waivers so that all youth can participate.



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The vision of CalFresh Healthy Living, UCCE Placer and Nevada Counties is to teach CalFresh eligible children and adults about good nutrition, how to stretch their food dollars, and how to be physically active at any age. Effective, evidence-based nutrition education, garden education, and physical activity classes are aligned with policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change strategies to create long-lasting community change.

Students and teachers in qualifying schools receive direct education on nutrition, physical activity, and garden topics with USDA-approved nutrition curricula, resources, and training. CalFresh eligible adults receive direct education through classes and training. Indirect education is also

provided through newsletters, educational literature, and online resources.

In 2022-2023 the CalFresh Healthy Living, UCCE program delivered nutrition lessons to over 4,200 CalFresh eligible youth and adults throughout Placer and Nevada Counties. Youth lessons were delivered in person at 24 elementary and preschool sites. Adult classes were delivered remotely and in-person at 12 sites. CalFresh Healthy Living, UCCE had an estimated reach of over 40,000 people through the delivery of indirect education. Indirect education was disseminated through newsletters, Facebook posts, and other virtual materials.

CalFresh Healthy Living UC

Program Highlights 2022-23:

- Delivered direct education to 8 elementary schools and 16 preschools in Placer/Nevada Counties.
- Over 4,200 students received direct nutrition education.
- Delivered CATCH physical activity program to 3 after-school sites.
- Partnered with Placer County Office of Education, Early Childhood Education to install school gardens at 10 State Preschool sites.
- Managed 3 elementary school garden sites.
- Delivered adult education in-person and virtually to 12 sites.



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Master Gardeners of Nevada and Placer Counties



The UCCE Placer and Nevada Master Gardener Programs provide volunteer training in horticultural knowledge to enhance home landscaping and garden experiences while striving to improve community health and preserve the quality and resources of our natural environment. Through the encouragement of growing food at home and practicing sustainable garden practices, the programs reflect a benefit to the broader community in the prevention of endemic and invasive pests and diseases, maintenance of healthy communities, creation of sustainable food systems, and preservation of natural resources.

UC Master Gardener volunteers aid in identifying specific issues and gardening needs of Placer and Nevada County residents. They actively develop and promote educational activities to help address specific concerns of home gardeners and composters, which continues to grow in popularity as a family and community activity.

In 2023, both programs celebrated 40 years of community education and engagement, highlighting the upward growth of each county's program from their original establishment in 1983. From conception to the present time, the presence of the Master Gardeners continues to be a community resource for the at-home and community members.

Master Gardeners of Nevada and Placer Counties

Program Highlights 2022-23:

- Celebrated 40 Years of established program activity.
- 255 certified Master Gardener volunteers provided 25,600 hours of service.
- Master Gardener outreach and education reached over 15,000 people, providing research-based gardening and composting information.
- Volunteers delivered 50 workshops and presentations spanning various topics, including Perennials and Flowering Shrubs, Vegetable Gardening, School and Community Gardens, Integrated Pest Management, Pest Prevention and Diagnosis, Recycling Garden Waste, Soil and Irrigation, waterwise Wise Gardening, and Firesafe Landscaping.
- 235 community members expressed interest in joining the Master Gardener programs as volunteers for 2024.



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Fire Ecology and Wildfire Preparedness



Historically, the ecosystems in Nevada and Placer Counties experienced frequent low-to-moderate intensity fires, which resulted in fire-resilient ecosystems. Now, past management practices and an increase in climate change impacts have made human communities and ecosystems more vulnerable to high-intensity wildfires. To address California's growing wildfire-related challenges and build fire resilience across the state, the University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR) created the Fire Network to build capacity among UC ANR scientists, practitioners, agencies, policymakers, and communities. In Nevada and Placer Counties, we are able to allocate statewide Fire Network resources to develop and deliver regionally-specific fire-related research and extension programs to meet the concerns of local residents and resource professionals.

Our local research efforts aim to inform the strategic implementation and maintenance of various fuel reduction treatments across the Sierra Nevada. This year, we completed a multi-year study quantifying the long-term impacts of wildfire on shaded fuel break longevity. Through collaborations with University of California researchers and advisors and the US Forest Service, we provided fire and forest managers with important

information on treatment efficacy and how it connects to forest persistence through multiple wildfires. We are collaborating with the forestry and livestock programs on a project assessing the efficacy and commercial viability of targeted grazing for fuel reduction in wildland-urban interface communities. We are also researching how to create equitable fire and forestry career pathways for justice-impacted communities to help address statewide natural resource workforce development issues.

Our growing regional fire program will continue to have a strong emphasis on collaboration with other regional UCCE Advisors and other local programs and organizations. We continue to provide strategic advice on the Advisory Committee of the Placer Prescribed Burn Association (PBA) and frequently collaborate with Placer PBA and Yuba Bear Burn Cooperative on prescribed fire workshops and outreach events. We have also partnered with Fire Safe Councils and Firewise Communities in Nevada and Placer Counties to host events centered on wildfire preparedness. Moving forward, we aim to leverage the diverse expertise of Network members and programs developed to accelerate the delivery of fire-related programs in Nevada and Placer Counties.

Fire Ecology and Wildfire Preparedness

Program Highlights 2022-23:

- More than 65 people participated in four Pile Burn Workshops in Nevada, Placer, and Yuba Counties. The workshops were jointly hosted with Forestry Advisor Ricky Satomi and in partnership with CalFire, local fire departments, regional Air Quality Management Districts, local Resource Conservation Districts (RCDs), and local Fire Safe Councils.
- Over 150 people attended four Wildfire Preparedness Workshops in Nevada and Placer Counties. Events focused on educating residents about defensible space and structure hardening and were in partnership with local Fire Safe Councils, CalFire and City of Auburn Fire, and other regional organizations.
- More than 40 people gained hands-on skills in preparing their lands for and using prescribed fire at a workshop jointly hosted with Livestock and Natural Resources Advisor Dan Macon and in partnership with the Placer RCD.
- A total of 181 residents and forestry and natural resource professionals in Nevada and Placer Counties completed our Wildfire Preparedness and Impacts Survey.



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UC ANR Fire Network

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Regional Food Systems



The regional food systems program aims to serve Placer and Nevada Counties in three ways: increasing the availability and use of healthy, local food – especially by low-income people; strengthening connections between small- and mid-scale farmers and appropriate markets; and enhancing local food economies and the livelihoods of food system workers. These goals are based on the findings of a comprehensive needs assessment of program clientele that included interviews, participant observation, and surveys.

The program contributes to these aims through research, market connections, and publications. To expand access to fresh and local food for low-income consumers, we are preparing research on the availability of CalFresh and other nutrition assistance programs at certified farmers' markets across the Sacramento region. This study will

help UC Cooperative Extension and community partners better tailor technical assistance to markets in the future.

To build business connections for small- and medium-sized growers, we held a large grower-buyer event in March 2023 that connected farmers, food hubs, food banks, schools, and technical assistance providers. We have also referred individual clients to potential growers, buyers, or processors upon request.

To enhance local food economies in foothill communities, we are working with the Nevada County Food Policy Council to expand values-based purchasing by institutions within the county. Working with the council, we publish news articles in local media outlets to educate the public about food system challenges and solutions.



Regional Food Systems

Program Highlights 2022-23:

- Hosted a meeting of 71 growers, buyers, and food hubs to build new connections.
- Completed a needs assessment, and interviewed dozens of food aggregators, distributors, food banks, food pantries, growers, institutional purchasers, and agency representatives.
- Assisted clientele including emergency food providers and producers with research requests.
- Published research-based articles in local news outlets on meat processing and procurement.
- Served on the Nevada County Food Policy Council steering committee.



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Environmental Horticulture



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Bruno Pitton recently joined UCCE as the Environmental Horticulture Advisor for Placer and Nevada Counties.

Previously, he worked in the Department of Plant Sciences at the University of California in Davis, administering a grant-funded research and extension program for California's nursery and greenhouse industry.

Bruno has over twenty years of experience in Environmental Horticulture, beginning with his undergraduate education at UC Davis. While an undergraduate student, he worked at the UC Davis Student Farm, an organic production and research farm, and the Arboretum Nursery producing California native and Mediterranean-adapted plants.

After graduation, he was employed in operations at the UC Davis College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences' research greenhouses and teaching gardens. In the greenhouses, he oversaw integrated pest management, irrigation, and fertilizer programs for plant science research. The teaching gardens were used to educate students about landscape plants and he gained valuable practical experience managing all aspects of landscape maintenance from urban forestry to perennial propagation and planting.

While working in the CA&ES greenhouses and teaching gardens, he conducted research on residential irrigation runoff with UCCE Environmental Horticulture Specialist Dr. Loren Oki and received an MS in Horticulture and Agronomy. In 2015, he began working full-time with Dr.

Oki on a nationwide research project to develop online decision support tools for helping nursery and greenhouse growers reuse their irrigation runoff water, affectionately known as "CleanWaterR3: Reduce, Remediate, Recycle." They collaborated with two California nurseries to understand irrigation application and runoff patterns and with academics to develop clean-water3.org. He secured over \$600,000 in funding for his Ph.D. research on nitrogen management in nursery production to help growers meet state regulations, increase nitrogen use efficiency, and reduce the environmental impact of nitrogen loss.

After completion of his Ph.D., he conducted research to optimize nutrient application rates in the vegetable transplant industry and developed irrigation best management practice training for California's underserved greenhouse and nursery staff to improve water-use efficiency and plant health.

Bruno is excited to be the UCCE Environmental Horticulture Advisor for Placer and Nevada Counties and wants to help improve the sustainability of the landscape and nursery industry while providing home gardeners with science-based solutions.

UC Cooperative Extension Staff

County Director

Dan Macon

Livestock & Natural Resources

Dan Macon— *Advisor*

Sequoia Williams— *Intern*

Environmental Horticulture

Bruno Pitton— *Advisor*

Fire Ecology and Wildfire Preparedness

Katie Low— *Fire Academic Coordinator*

4-H Youth & Development

Matthew Rodriguez— *Advisor*

Vera Bullard— *Regional Program Supervisor*

Jill Simmons— *Community Education Specialist II*

Jonathan Stefani— *Community Education Specialist II*

Food Systems

Olivia Henry— *Advisor*

Forestry & Natural Resources

Rick Satomi— *Advisor*

Ag Program Research

Robert Bonk

CalFresh Healthy Living

Michele Fisch— *Program Supervisor*

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Deborah Weeks— *Community Education Specialist II*

Henna Shaikh— *Community Education Specialist II*

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Master Gardener/Composter

Kathy Gee— *Program Coordinator*

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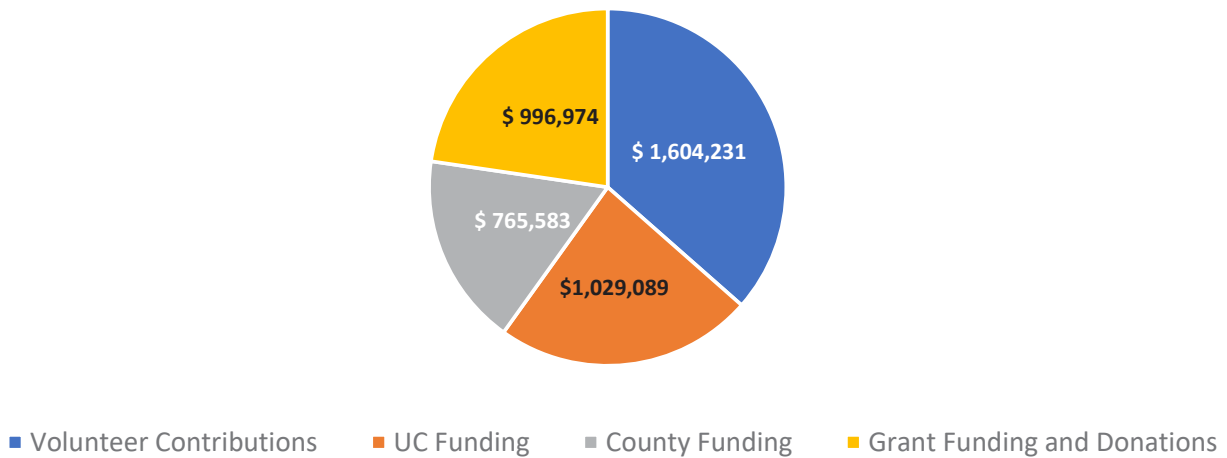
Tammy Lindstrom



Local, State & Federal Funding

	Placer	Nevada	Total
Volunteer Contributions	\$ 778,632	\$ 825,599	\$ 1,604,231
UC Funding	\$ 605,293	\$ 423,796	\$ 1,029,089
County Funding	\$ 646,287	\$ 119,296	\$ 765,583
Grant Funding and Donations	\$ 804,765	\$ 192,209	\$ 996,974
Total	\$ 2,834,977	\$ 1,560,900	\$ 4,395,877

UCCE Placer-Nevada Funding Sources
2022-2023



Programs



Livestock & Natural Resources Dan Macon

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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA Agriculture and Natural Resources

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Master Gardeners of Nevada and Placer Counties

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