

Proposal Name	7281 14 Horticulture and Small Farms Area Advisor Placer Nevada
Project Summary	<p>The Area Horticulture and Small Farms Advisor for Placer/Nevada Counties will focus on the commercial organic and conventional production and marketing of existing and emerging annual crops, orchard crops (including citrus), grapes (wine and table), berries, cut flowers, and other horticultural crops. Specific areas of focus include production practices, irrigation and nutrient management, soil health, integrated pest management, small farm economics and business strategies, and mitigating the impacts of climate change in these production systems.</p> <p>The Horticulture and Small Farms Advisor should have a minimum of a master’s degree in horticultural production, pest management, soil science, agroecology, and/or small farm economics.</p> <p>The Area Advisor will extend research-based knowledge by leveraging experience and knowledge of the network of advisors and specialists working in horticulture and small farms, integrated pest management, irrigation, nutrient management, agroecology, and agricultural economics. However, because of the unique nature of specialty crop production in Placer/Nevada Counties (see below), a locally-focused UCCE Horticulture and Small Farms program is critical to addressing the region-specific needs that cannot be met by advisors from other regions.</p> <p>The Advisor will work with growers, AES and non-AES researchers (including, potentially, Plant Sciences, Plant Pathology, Entomology, Land Air and Water Resources, and Agriculture and Resource Economics) to develop workshops, extension materials, and applied research focused on foothill specialty crop production.</p>

About the Position Proposal Development

What is your title / representation to submit this proposal?	Regional Team Leader
Please indicate the groups that co-developed the proposal. Group type(s): for Advisor proposals - Regional Team number (1-5), REC System, Program Team(s); for Specialist proposals - which Program Team(s) the initial idea came from.	<p>Dan Macon, UCCE County Director, Placer and Nevada Counties, with input from California Communities and Food Systems, Diversified Farming and Food Systems, and Pest Management Program Teams; UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program; UC Organic Agriculture Institute; and Placer/Nevada County growers, county government, and NGOs (including Sierra Harvest, local farm bureaus, and local farmers market organizations).</p> <p>**Important to note this is the number 1 ranked choice by both the Diversified Farming & Food Systems and California Communities & Food Systems program teams**</p>

About the Proposed Position

What is the proposed headquarters? For Advisor proposals, enter UCCE county office. For Specialist proposals, enter campus acronym and name of department or center.	Placer
For Advisor proposals only: Enter the names of the county(ies) that the proposed position covers. For Specialist proposals, enter "Statewide".	Placer, Nevada

Contacts

Name	Position	Affiliation
Daniel Macon	Principal Investigator	Placer-Nevada Counties
JoLynn Miller	Co PI	Central Sierra Cooperative Extension

Area Horticulture and Small Farms Advisor – Placer and Nevada Counties

Developed and proposed by: Dan Macon, UCCE County Director, Placer and Nevada Counties, with input from California Communities and Food Systems, Diversified Farming and Food Systems, and Pest Management Program Teams; UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program; UC Organic Agriculture Institute; and Placer/Nevada County growers, county government, and NGOs (including Sierra Harvest, local farm bureaus, and local farmers market organizations).

Position: The Area Horticulture and Small Farms Advisor for Placer/Nevada Counties will focus on the commercial organic and conventional production and marketing of existing and emerging annual crops, orchard crops (including citrus), grapes (wine and table), berries, cut flowers, and other horticultural crops. Specific areas of focus include production practices, irrigation and nutrient management, soil health, integrated pest management, small farm economics and business strategies, and mitigating the impacts of climate change in these production systems.

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The Advisor will work with growers, AES and non-AES researchers (including, potentially, Plant Sciences, Plant Pathology, Entomology, Land Air and Water Resources, and Agriculture and Resource Economics) to develop workshops, extension materials, and applied research focused on foothill specialty crop production.

Justification: Given the unique nature of specialty crop production in Placer/Nevada County, there is a profound and ongoing need for continued local support from UCCE. The distinctive characteristics of foothill crop production make it vital for an on-the-ground advisor to be embedded within the local agricultural community. A locally-focused UCCE Horticulture and Small Farms program is critical to addressing region-specific needs; these needs cannot be met by advisors from other regions, including adjacent Sacramento Valley counties. Local agricultural clientele and county partners have expressed strong support for this position being refilled as soon as possible.

The Area Advisor will serve approximately 1,000 specialty crop farmers (2017 Census of Agriculture) who operate from the edge of the Sacramento Valley to approximately 3,000 feet above sea level. About 35% of these growers are beginning farmers with less than 10 years of production experience. Crops include citrus, pome fruit, stone fruit, winegrapes, specialty fruit

(e.g., persimmons, pomegranates, kiwis, etc.), cool and warm season vegetables, cut flowers, and ornamentals.

The region is characterized by an increasingly variable growing environment, with cold winters; hot, dry summers; extreme wind and rainfall events; and frequent drought. Foothill soils are limited in depth, nutrients, and water-holding capacity. The region's fragile ecology and relative isolation from other agricultural regions require distinctly different farming, conservation, and pest management practices than the rest of California. In addition, the region's diverse natural flora and fauna limit pests common to other regions and production systems.

The agricultural infrastructure and community characteristics are equally unique compared to other parts of California. The limited number of certified crop advisors (CCAs) and pest control advisors (PCAs) serving these counties typically do not support small-scale specialty crop farmers, and there are very few agricultural input suppliers. With the prevalence of beginning farmers, there continues to be a strong need for business training and marketing programs as well as extension and research programming in the areas of healthy soils, integrated pest management, whole systems management, and climate adaptation and resilience.

Finally, citrus production is especially critical in the Placer County foothills. Given the ecology, as well as the operational scale characteristic of this region, the citrus production and pest management practices used in the Sacramento and San Joaquin Valleys are not appropriate to northern foothill citrus production. Previous experience indicates that the advice provided by advisors in other citrus-growing regions is entirely inappropriate for Placer County foothill production; therefore, local research is needed to address the specific needs of growers in the area.

A survey of Placer/Nevada County producers (n=64) conducted in November 2023 supports the assertion that production systems are diverse and small scale (nearly 70% operate on 10 acres or less). Many small farms are operated on a part-time basis with an emphasis on direct-to-consumer and direct-to-retail marketing. Grower priorities include pest and weed management, economics and marketing, irrigation management, nutrient management, and mitigating the impacts of climate change. Growers indicate that UCCE is the most trusted source of locally relevant information in both counties.

This position will support the following UC ANR Public Values:

- Promoting economic prosperity through improved small farm profitability.
- Safeguarding abundant and healthy food for all Californians through improved security and improved food safety.
- Protecting California's natural resources through improved management and use of land, protection and conservation of soil quality, and increased ecological sustainability, focused on the specific nature of foothill agriculture.
- Building climate-resilient communities and ecosystems through increased preparedness and resilience to extreme weather and climate change.

Extension: The Area Advisor will extend knowledge created through their own research and experience, as well as co-created with local producers, other advisors, specialists, and AES and non-AES researchers through workshops, field days, publications, and web-based resources.

Research: The Area Advisor will conduct research on foothill-focused horticultural production practices, small farm economics and marketing systems, water and nutrient management systems, integrated pest and weed management, and climate resiliency. Due to the nature of foothill horticultural production and the region's isolation from other production areas, much of this research will be conducted on farms in collaboration with Placer/Nevada County growers.

UC ANR Network: With respect to agricultural sustainability in the northern foothill region, the Horticulture and Small Farms program is a critical pillar that also includes the Placer-Nevada-Sutter-Yuba Livestock and Natural Resources and the Capital Corridor-Placer-Nevada Local Food Systems programs.

Within the UC ANR network, this advisor would contribute to a number of program teams and work groups, including the California Communities and Food Systems, Diversified Farming and Food Systems, and Pest Management Program Teams. The position would also be supported by the Organic Agriculture Institute and the UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program.

Network External to UC ANR: Placer and Nevada Counties have a vibrant network of nongovernmental organizations and local agencies that support local agriculture and food systems. This external network includes formal and informal producer organizations (including county farm bureaus, farmers market organizations, Sierra Harvest, Community Alliance with Family Farmers, Sierra Wine and Grape Growers, and others), local agricultural departments, resource conservation districts, irrigation districts, and county boards of supervisors. This advisor would collaborate with these organizations by creating and providing locally-relevant research-based information. Furthermore, ANR programs in the two counties have a long and successful track record of collaborating with local producers to conduct locally-focused, on-farm research. This advisor and clientele could also participate in the California Farm Demonstration Network.

Support: Placer and Nevada Counties have long supported the existing Horticulture and Small Farms program and have expressed deep commitment to continuing this support. Specific support includes office space, supplies and materials, administrative support, and local travel support (all of which are already included in the Placer-Nevada local budget). Local travel support is provided through county pool vehicles and/or mileage reimbursement.

Other support: Potential funding sources for research and extension activities include California Department of Food and Agriculture grants, Western Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education grants, Extension Risk Management Education grants, Risk Management Agency grants, U.S. Department of Agriculture funding, and California Department of Pesticide Regulation funding.

Headquarters and Coverage Area: The Area Advisor will be based in the Placer County UCCE office located in Auburn, California. Satellite office space is available in the Nevada County UCCE office in Grass Valley. Coverage area includes Placer/Nevada Counties.