

Rangeland Benefits to Society – September theme for the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralist (IYRP)

Theresa Becchetti, Livestock and Natural Resource Advisor, Stanislaus and San Joaquin Counties.

September's theme for IYRP is "Rangeland Benefits to Society". I thought I would summarize benefits that are traditionally attributed to rangelands, and propose a few more for you to think about, and more importantly, to share with people who do not live and work on rangelands. One of the benefits of IYRP is having a global spotlight on rangelands. We need to take advantage of this opportunity to share information with others, and September's theme is a perfect way to do that.

Benefits from rangelands can also be called ecosystem services which will have categories of provisioning, regulating, cultural and supporting. Using those terms, food and fiber are the obvious first two which are considered provisioning services. Rangelands also provide clean water, which we see in our area with reservoirs that provide drinking water for local and Bay Area municipalities. Those are probably the easiest ecosystem services to think of, what rangelands directly provide. The regulating category is a little different. Regulating services are the things rangelands help control such as infiltration of stormwater to recharge groundwater aquifers; flood mitigation; filtering sediment and other pollutants potentially in the water; prevent erosion from wind and flooding, and carbon sequestration. In recent years there has been discussion about how much rangelands play a role in carbon sequestration. Worldwide, undisturbed grasslands can be a stable source for a significant amount of carbon. Since the roots are storing carbon underground, it is believed to be more stable than forests, where the carbon is stored in the tree as well as underground. With our recent wildfire history globally, there is less carbon lost from grassland compared to wooded landscape.

The supporting benefits are especially significant for California rangelands- supporting the biodiversity we have in the state, with over 182 Federally threatened plants and 100 animals, 51% of which are found on grazing lands (Barry and Huntsinger, 2021). Locally rangelands support vernal pool species, burrowing owls, provide habitat for kit fox and many other species.

Cultural and social benefits range from supporting rural economies from the feedstore, hardware store and grocery store in areas where the land is normally not suitable for other uses.

Recreation and tourism not only support rural economies, but also provide beautiful landscapes

for hikes, wildlife viewing, seasonal wildflowers (those super blooms people flock to for social media worthy pictures – those are on grazed rangelands), and even hunting. There is a value of simply having beautiful open spaces, the “viewshed”.

But beyond the traditional ecosystem services rangelands are known to provide, IYRP adds in the pastoralist (or rancher as they are known in the US). There is a value to the people who steward the lands, many for generations. Who knows every inch of their property, who knows how wildfire moves through the landscape from experience. Who knows where to find livestock at different times of the year because they know how the livestock prefers different vegetation growing at different times of the year. Who knows how to move livestock to protect the land and wildlife. IYRP wants it known that rangelands are not simply “marginalized lands”, but together with the people who steward them are alive and vibrant with life and provide society many benefits often taken for granted. The steward needs to be recognized and valued as well.

Paper referenced: Barry, S.J and L. Huntsinger. 2021. Rangeland Land-Sharing, Livestock Grazing’s Role in the Conservation of Imperiled Species. Sustainability 13:4466.



Elk in the Tracy, CA hills

International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists Actives Locally

As part of a research project with other western states, I have an art exhibit focused on rangelands. Our goal is to see how we can use art to inform the public about rangelands. For those who might have walked through the Farm Bureau Building at the Stanislaus County Fair, you probably saw the exhibit. It was up throughout the fair, and I held a few different activities to engage people in art. There are more activities being planned for the fall, as well as our local San Joaquin-Stanislaus Cattlemen are working on proclamations from both counties about the value of our rangelands. On November 5, 2026, we will have a viewing of “You Just Can’t See Them from the Road”, California Rangeland Trust’s latest film about the pastoralist who is shepherding the rangelands. The art exhibit will also be set up in the lobby as people come in for the film. As information is confirmed for the event, it will be shared broadly in local newspapers as well as social media, newsletter, etc. I would challenge you to share the film information with people you know. A quick poll I did, I had non-ag people in my life that said they would attend since they knew I was involved. We all have people like that in our lives who will attend because we are involved. When you see the information about the film, reach out to and invite them to join you. The film is a beautiful way to highlight California rangelands and really drives home the point that the people who have lived and worked on them for generations are who we have to thank for the many benefits we all enjoy.



Rangeland art exhibit at the Stanislaus County Fair

LOCKEFORD PMC
21001 N. ELLIOTT RD,
LOCKEFORD, CA

JOIN US
SEPTEMBER 15
2026
9:30-12:00

FALL FIELD DAY

LOCKEFORD PLANT MATERIAL CENTER

Summer Forage and Cover Crops

- ✓ Nitrogen Production from Cover Crops
- ✓ Great Valley Gumweed for pollinator habitat.
- ✓ Warm Season Annual and Perennial Grasses for grazing
- ✓ 5-year study on cover crops in orchards and vineyards



Natural Resources Conservation Service



Western
Sustainable Agriculture
Research and Education



University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR) is an equal opportunity provider.



Register:

<https://link.ucanr.edu/forage2026>

209-525-6800

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender

Seeking Farmers and Agricultural Leaders for a Biosecurity Outreach Project on Diversified Small-Scale Farms in California

Project Background

Diversified small-scale farms often raise multiple livestock species and/or crops within the same operation. This project (2026–2027) aims to support these farmers and agricultural educators with biosecurity training, practical planning resources, and tools to improve preparedness for disease outbreak and disaster responses.

Our Team

This project is led by researchers from UC Davis Weill School of Veterinary Medicine (Drs. Alda Pires, Rosie Busch, and Lais Costa) and six UC Cooperative Extension Farm Advisors.

Who Are We Looking For?

- **Small-scale farmers raising multiple livestock species (small ruminants, swine, and poultry)**
- **FFA and 4-H leaders, educators, and staff members**
- **Crop-livestock integrated farmers**

**Interested in Participating?
Contact Us or Scan this QR code!**

Dr. Alda Pires (UC Davis)
apires@ucdavis.edu
Dr. Sejin Cheong (UC Davis)
sjcheong@ucdavis.edu



Benefits – Why Participate?

1) Learn Practical Biosecurity Skills

Access webinars, workshops, on-farm demonstrations, educational factsheets and tools to strengthen daily biosecurity practices.

(Project website: <https://farmppe.netlify.app/>)



2) Share Challenges and Expand Your Network

Participate in surveys and discussions to help us identify barriers by diversified small-scale operations. Share your experiences and connect with other agricultural professionals.



3) Receive a customized farm biosecurity Plan

Receive a confidential, customized biosecurity plan developed through on-farm assessment.



**Project activities will take place from
late 2026 through 2027!**