



ANNUAL REPORT 2024

**Placer
Nevada**

**UC
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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
Agriculture and Natural Resources

UC Cooperative Extension

FROM THE AREA DIRECTOR

I would like to introduce myself as the new University of California Cooperative Extension Area Director for Placer, Nevada, Plumas and Sierra counties.

I come to this position with more than 20 years of experience delivering education, managing programs, and fulfilling programmatic and organizational goals for UCCE Placer & Nevada counties.

As a lifelong resident of Placer County, I understand the unique needs and resources of our foothill and mountain communities, and I am deeply committed to the work UCCE delivers.

I look forward to supporting our advisors, educators, staff, and dedicated volunteers as they deliver high-quality research-based educational programming throughout our counties. I look forward to collaborating with local government, community organizations and the public to strengthen our connections and support the needs of our communities.

Thank you!

Michele Fisch

Area Director Placer, Nevada,
Sierra and Plumas Counties



MICHELE FISCH
Area Director
Placer, Nevada, Sierra
and Plumas Counties

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. UCCE Placer Nevada serves as a local problem-solving center, working to strengthen the sustainability of our land, our environment, and our local communities. We are catalysts, collaborators, educators, and researchers, living in the communities we serve. Advisors and educators support programming in the areas of 4-H Youth Development, Local Food Systems, Community Health and Nutrition, Environmental Horticulture, Livestock and Natural Resources, Horticulture and Small Farms, and Forestry.

LIVESTOCK & NATURAL RESOURCES

New Advisor ~ Andrea Warner

Andrea Warner joined UCCE as the Livestock and Natural Resources Advisor for Placer, Nevada, Yuba, and Sutter counties on October 1, 2024.

Although Andrea was recently hired as an advisor, her journey with UC started over nine years ago.

While attending Sierra College, she was employed as a student research associate at the UC Sierra Foothill Research and Extension Center. At the center, Andrea assisted with several beef cattle research projects including field testing of the Foothill Abortion vaccine, feeding of rice straw, mineral supplementation for stocker cattle, and assisted with calving out the UC cow herd. After Sierra College, Andrea attended California State University, Chico to complete her bachelor's degree in animal science. There, she analyzed data for a project that assessed feed efficiency and fertility traits of commercial and Lowline Angus heifers at the Chico State Farm



Following graduation, Andrea moved to Stillwater, Oklahoma to attend Oklahoma State University and earn her master's degree in animal science.

A change of pace from pasture cattle, Andrea spent two years at the Willard Sparks Beef Research Center, studying the effects of feeding cotton byproducts to feedlot steers. Her research aided in developing the Beef Advisory Council within the cotton commodity board, creating connections and partnerships between crop and livestock producers in the southern region of the United States. Following the completion of her M.S in 2020, Andrea accepted a position at Langston University as the Research Farm Manager at the American Institute for Goat Research. At Langston, Andrea managed a large herd of dairy and meat goats, and hair sheep which were used for nutrition, health, and management research at the facility. She was also responsible for the oversight of farm employees and training undergraduate students interested in small ruminant production.

Ready to return to California, Andrea was excited to accept a full-time position at the UC Sierra Foothill Research and Extension Center as the Staff Research Associate in 2023. There, she assisted with research projects related to beef cattle production, natural resources, climate change, and rangeland management. Since starting her journey with UC, becoming a livestock advisor has been Andrea's long term career goal.

A Nevada County native, she is most excited about building relationships with local producers and community members in the industry while continuing to address challenges with a research-based approach in the place she calls home.

ANDREA WARNER
Livestock and Natural
Resources Advisor
530-889-7385

LIVESTOCK & NATURAL RESOURCES

Placer and Nevada County 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 2023-24, 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 using targeted grazing to reduce fuels and manage invasive weeds, reducing conflicts with predators and other wildlife, planning for wildfires and other emergencies, and using prescribed fire to improve rangeland conditions. 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 short- and long-term needs for ranchers and land managers. We are collaborating with a network of advisors and specialists to evaluate new technology for 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 continue to evaluate cattle nutrition management strategies designed to improve efficiency and profitability. Finally, we are helping policy makers translate our research regarding the use of prescribed grazing for reducing California's wildfire fuel loads.



DAN MACON
Livestock and Natural
Resources Advisor

LIVESTOCK & NATURAL RESOURCES

Program Highlights - 2023-24

- Following our targeted grazing field day at the UC Blodgett Experimental Forest in July 2024, 100% (n=37) of the participants reported they had a greater understanding of how to use targeted grazing to reduce fuel loads in forested environments, and over half reported they would implement targeted grazing on lands that they managed. As part of this particular project, we are developing and testing new methodology for objectively measuring brush removal in targeted grazing projects (a methodology that does not currently exist), which will improve our ability to evaluate grazing effectiveness.
- Our livestock-predator work is largely an investment in long-term impacts; success will ultimately be measured by a reduction in both predator losses and lethal control of predators. In the short term, our work on predator loss compensation contributed to the success of the initial wolf compensation pilot program (\$3 million in compensation paid to ranchers) and to additional funding to renew the program in 2024.
- Our hands-on workshops improved animal husbandry and grazing management skills (as measured by post-workshop evaluations and increased labor efficiency).
- The targeted grazing businesses that we worked with over the last two years report they have grazed more than 11,000 acres in 2024 (an increase of nearly 60% over 2022). Longer term, state recognition of the importance of prescribed grazing in fuel load management will lead to greater funding and more acres treated. Adoption of new technology will improve labor efficiency and reduce input costs.
- UCCE coordinated the Nevada-Placer-Yuba Livestock Disaster Pass and Nevada County Agricultural Disaster Pass programs, providing training to more than 120 local producers in fire behavior, the incident command system, and disaster planning.
- Working with landowner partners, local resource conservation districts, and CalFire, we the first Rancher's Fire Academy, designed to provide ranchers and land managers with hand-on training in prescribed fire and wildfire preparation. More than 60 people participated our spring workshops series.
- Through our UCCE website (<https://ucanr.edu/site/central-sierra-livestock-natural-resources>), our Ranching in the Sierra Foothills blog (<https://ucanr.edu/blog/ranching-sierra-foothills>), and biweekly podcast, we provide timely, science-based information to producers throughout the foothills and beyond.



ENVIRONMENTAL HORTICULTURE

Environmental Horticulture is a new program for UCCE Placer and Nevada in 2023-24. Environmental horticulture is the production, maintenance, and care of our landscape plants and includes commercial plant producers and landscape professionals, commonly referred to as the “Green Industry”. Dr. Bruno J.L. Pitton joined UCCE Placer and Nevada in November 2023 and has been conducting a needs assessment of the Green Industry in Placer and Nevada counties. Dr. Pitton has been actively engaging with landscape professionals, many of which have no internet presence and the only way to contact them is through word-of-mouth or by direct interaction. Dr. Pitton is working with UCCE colleagues to distribute a formal survey for landscape professionals within Placer and Nevada counties and throughout the state.

From one-on-one interactions with landscape professionals, Dr. Pitton has identified the need for providing pesticide applicator information and training because a large proportion of landscape professionals polled do not have a pesticide applicator license and many have asked for information on how to acquire one. Dr. Pitton has developed a guide to direct landscapers how to acquire their pesticide applicator license (QAC-Q) and distributed these guides and free study materials to landscape professionals.

Wildfire is an ever-present risk in our communities in Placer and Nevada counties and Dr. Pitton is pursuing research to improve the fire resiliency of our residential landscapes. Dr. Pitton plans to conduct research related to reducing plant ignitability and flammability of ornamental plants to improve the defensible space of our communities.



BRUNO PITTON, PhD
Environmental Horticulture
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ENVIRONMENTAL HORTICULTURE

Program Highlights - 2023-24

- Engaged 162 different landscape maintenance companies to communicate the Cooperative Extension mission, exchange contact information, and describe how UCCE Placer and Nevada can help them.
- Although, ninety-percent of landscape maintenance companies who apply herbicides do not have a pesticide applicator license, many are interested in acquiring a Maintenance Gardener Pest Control Certification (QAC-Q). Distributed a guide to direct individuals how to acquire their QAC-Q to 67 landscape maintenance professionals. Working with Placer County Agricultural Commissioner's office and California Department of Pesticide Regulation to organize a QAC-Q training for landscape maintenance professionals.
- Educated local nursery producers about best management practices for container-plant nursery production systems.
- Engaged with CAL FIRE defensible space inspection staff to understand state responsibility of wildfire preparedness and inspection check list. Developing research to address fire resiliency of home landscapes while maintaining ecosystem benefits of those landscapes.



HOME LANDSCAPE DEFENSIBLE SPACE

The insurance industry and state regulators will continue to compel property owners in Placer and Nevada counties to maintain defensible space to increase homeowner resiliency to fire. Fortunately, UCCE Placer-Nevada has filled the demand for free, non-punitive defensible space and home hardening outreach and education. The focus of the program is on Home Landscape Defensible Space: how to organize and maintain an aesthetically pleasing landscape of shrubs and trees that meet California's defensible space requirements which provides safe evacuation routes and space for firefighters to defend homes during a fire.

By having UCCE experts give homeowners specific advice about their landscapes and the reasoning behind the recommendations, our program creates an environment of trust and teamwork with the local community. Furthermore, ecological diversity and unique neighborhood and property arrangement necessitates a "hyper-local" perspective that is more effective than the "general guidance" that can be viewed online. The Home Landscape Defensible Space Program has been welcomed with gratitude and appreciation by our local community.



KEVIN MARINI
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HOME LANDSCAPE DEFENSIBLE SPACE

Program Highlights - 2023-24

Education and outreach on landscape defensible space was delivered to residents through monthly newsletter articles, in-person “Firescaping” presentations, and on-site private property consultations.

- 16 Firewise communities directly received education and outreach on landscape defensible space, impacting approximately 250 properties in the areas of Colfax, Meadow Vista, Christian Valley, Auburn, Newcastle and Loomis.
- 66 private property owners received direct education on fire prevention strategies and landscape defensible space zones.
- Over 550 residents attended “Firescaping” presentations through local garden clubs, real estate offices, non-profit organizations, and other groups.
- Multiple podcasts on “Firescaping” were produced to provide landscape defensible space information to a wider audience



FIRE ECOLOGY & WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS



Communities and ecosystems in Placer and Nevada Counties remain vulnerable to the impacts from high intensity wildfires. To address California's growing wildfire-related challenges, 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 to work toward fire resilience across the state. 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. This year, we expanded our reach by hiring a Staff Research Associate to help develop and deliver fire-related programming in both counties. Joaquin Pastrana is a skilled prescribed fire practitioner and will be based out of UCCE's Nevada County office.

Our research efforts aim to inform the strategic implementation and maintenance of fuel reduction treatments across the Sierra Nevada. We are collaborating with regional forestry and livestock advisors on an applied research projects assessing the efficacy and commercial viability of targeted grazing for fuel reduction in wildland-urban interface communities. This year, we completed a multi-year study at Blodgett Forest Research Station (BFRS) looking at grazing impacts in young conifer plantations. We were also awarded a \$75,000 grant to start a new multi-year study at BFRS looking at applicability of grazing as a post-fire reforestation site preparation tool in the 2022 Mosquito Fire footprint. In 2024, our research team shared project outcomes and methods to 221 people through various field tours, conference presentations, and professional meetings.

Our fire program has a strong emphasis on collaborating with other regional UCCE Advisors and local programs and organizations. This year, we collaborated with Placer County OES and Fire Safe Councils to administer the Placer County Firewise Community Volunteer Hour Reporting Tool to help local Firewise communities report their volunteer hours and activities. We envision using this tool to assist communities by sending summarized reports of hours and activities to Firewise Leaders when reporting is due. The tool also gives communities the ability to track changes in volunteer investments and activities over time and use these metrics in grant applications and reports. We continue to provide strategic advice on the Advisory Committee of the Placer Prescribed Burn Association (PBA). 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 will continue to leverage the diverse expertise of Network members and programs developed to accelerate the delivery of fire-related programs in Nevada and Placer Counties.



KATIE LOW
Statewide Coordinator
UC ANR Fire Network
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JOAQUIN PASTRANA
UC ANR Fire Network
Staff Research Associate
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FIRE ECOLOGY & WILDFIRE PREPAREDNESS

Program Highlights - 2023-24

- Over 140 residents participated in UCCE-led trainings on home and ranch hardening and defensible space in Placer and Nevada Counties.
- Led immersive fire-focused tour for 30 legislative staffers at the UC ANR Fire Network Legislative Field Tour at Blodgett Forest Research Station.
- Hosted two statewide wildfire preparedness webinars for the ranching community, reaching a combined 191 people nationwide. Webinars focused on ranch hardening strategies for agricultural structures and managing livestock health during wildfire.
- Organized four fire science webinars designed to bring the latest research in fuels management, plant flammability, community wildfire planning, and more to California's communities. We reached 343 people nationwide.



FORESTRY & NATURAL RESOURCES

Forests and woodland encompass over 65% of acreage in Placer County and 85% in Nevada County. To ensure the continued health of our forest ecosystems and their residents, UCCE works with private forest residents, professional forest practitioners, and local agencies to tackle major issues of concern.

In 2023-24, our extension activities focused on forest stewardship training for local landowners and GIS trainings for resource professionals. We also continued to host fuels management and home hardening workshops for local residents in collaboration with local Master Gardeners and Fire Safe Councils. Our workshops and field days provide practical science-based skills training to improve the pace and scale of management in the region.

To support changing markets and a growing demand for small diameter fuels reduction, we are continuing to research the feasibility of grazing in forested environments. This multi-year study will improve understanding of costs and operational constraints associated with grazing in the wildland urban interface.

We continue to deliver forestry education training to educators through the Forestry Institute for Teachers, a week-long and three-day intensive field workshop program. We also maintain support for the Forestry Mentorship Program, bringing collegiate forestry students and local professionals together to better prepare for future careers in forestry. Finally, we collaborated with CAL FIRE, and local Resource Conservation Districts to provide reforestation training for land managers working to reforest lands impacted by fire and other disturbances.



RICKY SATOMI
Forestry and Natural
Resources Advisor
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FORESTRY & NATURAL RESOURCES

Program Highlights - 2023-24

- Fuel Management and Home Hardening Training (3) – Trained local Master Gardeners on forestry and fuels management to promote fire-resilient forests and communities.
- Forest Stewardship Tree School (3) – Trained forest landowners on GIS, compass and map reading, forest ecology, and silviculture at Stewardship Tree School and forest stewardship field days.
- Post-fire Stewardship Workshop – Trained forest landowners on vegetation management and reforestation for post-wildfire reestablishment.
- Forest GIS Training on ArcGIS Pro (3) – Trained foresters and natural resource professionals in intermediate level GIS with California Association of Resource Conservation Districts and Sierra College collaborators.
- Forestry Institute for Teachers (6) – Trained educators on forest science and environmental education pedagogy at in-woods field camps
- Grazing Research Education and training (4) – Hosted local workshops and presentations to land managers, grazers, students, researchers, and agency representatives on grazing efficacy and methods in forest establishment.
- Publication of Fire-Smart Landscaping Guide for the Foothills and Forestry Field Foundations K-12 Education Curriculum



NEVADA & 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, community clubs, after-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. The result of these efforts is 4-H youth who are beyond ready for their next college or career decision. 4-H programs are inclusive to all youth (ages 5-19) from a variety of socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds.



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Nevada County 4-H
Community Education
Specialist
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Advisor
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JONATHAN STEFANI
Placer County 4-H
Community Education
Specialist
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NEVADA & PLACER COUNTIES 4-H YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Program Highlights - 2023-24

NEVADA COUNTY

10 CLUBS

407 YOUTH MEMBERS

109 ADULT VOLUNTEERS

PLACER COUNTY

10 CLUBS

492 YOUTH MEMBERS

116 ADULT VOLUNTEERS

- Our 4-H Embryology Expanded Learning Program was offered to 298 youth across 8 schools in Placer County
- A bi-county 4-H summer camp was offered this year at Donner Mine Camp with 38 youth attending from Placer County and 23 youth attending from Nevada County
- 4-H added a new part-time Community Education Specialist to support after-school program coordination in Nevada County
- UC ANR programs are open to all participants, regardless of their ability to pay. 4-H enrollment fee support was provided to all youth with economic need.



- The Placer County 4-H program offered more than \$ 7,500 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 three awards annually (\$2,500) to outstanding 4-H youth between the ages of 14-18.
 - The Placer County 4-H scholarships come from 4-H'ers 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
- The Nevada County 4-H Leaders Council awarded \$6,250 in Senior Scholarships

MASTER GARDENERS OF NEVADA & PLACER COUNTIES



The UCCE Placer and Nevada Master Gardener Programs provide research-based horticulture information to enhance residents' knowledge of home landscaping and gardening while improving community health and the quality of our natural environment. Through the communication of sustainable horticulture, gardening, and pest management practices, the UC Master Gardener programs provide benefit to the broader community by preventing endemic and invasive pests and diseases, maintaining healthy communities, creating sustainable food systems, and preserving natural resources.

The UC Master Gardener volunteers aid in identifying specific issues and the gardening needs of Placer and Nevada counties' residents. They actively develop and promote educational activities to help address specific concerns of home gardeners and composters through presentations, workshops, and demonstration garden events.

In 2024, both programs celebrated 41 years of community education and engagement since their original establishment in 1983. From conception to the present time, the Master Gardener programs continue to be a community resource for the residents of Placer and Nevada counties



**Placer County MG
Help Desk
530-889-7388**

**CASSIE BURZINSKI
Master Gardener
Community Education
Specialist
530-889-7385**

**Nevada County MG
Help Desk
530-273-0919**

MASTER GARDENERS OF NEVADA & PLACER COUNTIES

Program Highlights - 2023-24

- The UC Master Gardeners of Nevada County celebrated their 41st year by opening their demonstration garden to the public! This event brought over 600 visitors. Including the Grass Valley Chamber of Commerce, the Grass Valley Mayor- Jan Arbuckle, as well as GV City Councilman- Bob Branstrom (who, coincidentally was a Master Gardener). It also included a local Farm Advisor and very first Program Coordinators for this counties program, Garth Veerkamp.
- The UC Master Gardeners of Placer County opened a Demonstration Garden at the Loomis Library in March 2024. The Mayor of the Town of Loomis that year, Stephanie Youngblood, attended the ribbon cutting ceremony. The Placer County Water Agency (PCWA) graciously donated \$17,000 to the UC Master Gardeners of Placer County.
- The UC Master Gardeners of Placer and Nevada counties accepted 49 community members into the program this year who will undergo training and become UC-certified Master Gardeners.
- 283 certified Master Gardener volunteers provided 25,041 hours of service. Which is equal to \$934,530 in donated volunteer time!
- Among the 283 Master Gardener volunteers, 62 reached over 1,000 lifetime volunteer hours, 21 reached over 2,500 lifetime volunteer hours, and 3 reached over 5,000 lifetime volunteer hours.
- Master Gardener outreach and education reached over 15,000 people, providing research-based gardening and composting information.
- Volunteers delivered 45 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.



CALFRESH HEALTHY LIVING UCCE



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The vision of CalFresh Healthy Living, UCCE Placer and Nevada Counties is to educate CalFresh eligible families about the importance of 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 2023-2024 the CalFresh Healthy Living, UCCE program delivered nutrition lessons to over 4,500 CalFresh eligible youth and adults throughout Placer and Nevada Counties. Youth lessons were delivered in person at 25 elementary and preschool sites. Adult classes were delivered remotely and in-person at 8 sites. UCCE had an estimated reach of over 55,000 people through the delivery of indirect education. Indirect education was disseminated through newsletters, Facebook posts, and other virtual materials

Students at First Street Elementary School are learning to care for young fruit trees in the new school orchard.



DEBORAH WEEKS
Program Supervisor
530-889-7385

CALFRESH HEALTHY LIVING UCCE

Program Highlights - 2023-24

- Delivered direct education to 9 elementary schools and 16 preschools in Placer/Nevada Counties.
- Over 4,500 students received direct nutrition education.
- Delivered CATCH physical activity program to 3 after-school sites.
- Supported school gardens in 8 elementary schools and 10 preschools.
- Delivered adult education in-person and virtually to 8 sites.



COMMUNITY NUTRITION & HEALTH

New Advisor ~ Kitty Oppliger

Kitty Oppliger joined UCCE as the new Community Nutrition and Health Advisor and began working in 6 counties including Placer and Nevada Counties. Kitty completed an initial Needs Assessment for the region using community led research approaches and mixed-methods analyses.

In September, Kitty was awarded USDA NIFA funding for a project titled “Culturally Competent Curricula for Diverse Food Systems” as a part of the Women and Minorities in STEM program. This project is in collaboration with Matt Rodriguez, 4-H Advisor and will develop food system education for Native American students.

Kitty has made new connections and built upon established partnerships with a variety of community stakeholders working to address food insecurity, mental health concerns, and health disparities. 2024 laid the groundwork for exciting initiatives as Kitty continues to work with community members in Placer and Nevada Counties to ensure health and wellbeing for all our residents



KITTY OPPLIGER
 Community Nutrition
 and Health Advisor
 209-256-9486

REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEMS

UCCE Regional Food Systems Advisor Olivia Henry contributed to market development for local farmers by organizing a workshop in partnership with Sierra Harvest titled, “Evaluating Farm-to-School Funding Opportunities.” The goal was to support Placer and Nevada County farmers interested in participating in the state’s farm-to-school grantmaking program. Nineteen farmers attended the workshop and reported that new knowledge and skills were gained around this funding opportunity and grant-writing in general.



To enhance local food systems economies, the Food Systems Program hosted another workshop with Sierra Harvest titled “Creating Value-Added Products on Small Farms.” The workshop reviewed regulatory pathways to create value-added food products and brought together a panel of farmers and co-packers to discuss creating products for local markets.

The “Sacramento Region Farmers’ Market Access Project” has contributed to the increased availability of locally grown food, especially for people experiencing food insecurity. The project is a research effort to support farmers’ markets – including those in Placer and Nevada Counties – interested in accepting food assistance benefits such as CalFresh. Henry surveyed and interviewed market managers of roughly 70 markets in and around Sacramento to ask about their acceptance or non-acceptance of these benefits. This research sets the stage for future publications and a robust extension program addressing the CalFresh authorization process and how it shapes markets’ acceptance of benefits.

Program Highlights - 2023-24

- Carried out research effort around farmers’ markets and nutrition benefit
- Hosted a grant workshop for farmers interested in applying for farm-to-school funding.
- Hosted an educational workshop on value-added food production for beginning farmers
- Served on the Nevada County Food Policy Council steering committee

Program Summary

The Food Systems Program aims to safeguard abundant and healthy food for all Californians through three areas of focus:

- Strengthening the connections between small, mid-scale farmers and appropriate markets
- Enhancing local food economies and the livelihoods of food system workers
- Increasing the availability and use of regionally grown food, especially among people experiencing food insecurity



OLIVIA HENRY
Regional Food
Systems Area Advisor
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CONNECTING PLACER & 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-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 and climate Stewards programs.

Images from American River Conservancy's November 2-8, 2024 RCF-GJC California Naturalist course with CCC Placer Center Corpsmembers:



UCCE PROGRAMS & STAFF

- **4-H Youth & Development - Placer-Nevada**

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- **UCCE County Collaborators**

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