



Statement by

Tracy Schohr, M.S.

Livestock and Natural Resources Advisor

University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR), Cooperative Extension

And partner in Schohr Ranch, a family farm in Gridley, California

At a hearing before the House Committee on Agriculture

Subcommittee on Conservation and Forestry

“Supporting Careers in Conservation: Workforce Training, Education, and Job Opportunities”

May 25, 2022

Good afternoon, Chair Spanberger, Ranking Member LaMalfa and members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for hosting this hearing today recognizing the importance of “Supporting Careers in Conservation.” I am pleased to be here to offer testimony before the Subcommittee.

My name is Tracy Schohr and I am here today in 3 capacities –

I am a University of California Cooperative Extension Livestock and Natural Resources Advisor serving three counties in Northern California – Butte, Plumas, and Sierra, which happens to be within Rep. LaMalfa’s congressional district. My role as a cooperative extension advisor is to conduct research and bring science-based information into the hands of ranchers, land managers, and community members.

Secondly, I am a managing partner of Schohr Ranch, a 5th generation family farm that grows rice, walnuts, and raises cattle.

Lastly, and most importantly, I am a product of career technical education. I grew up as an active member in the West Gridley 4-H Club and Gridley FFA. Mr. Dillabo’s & Mr. Risso’s high school agricultural classes exposed to me livestock grazing management, genetics, agricultural business management, and plant identification - giving me the building blocks necessary for my career.

After attending California State University, Chico, I worked in the policy arena where I had the opportunity to build bridges between the environmental community and ranchers. This inspiring work led me to go back to college to earn a Master’s in Horticulture and Agronomy at University

of California, Davis so that I could become a cooperative extension advisor, also known as an extension agent in other states.

I chose this career path because, farmers and ranchers, along with land management agencies, need a trained workforce that can help them meet contemporary and emerging issues. Climate resiliency, wildfire mitigation, drought, producing a safe, abundant, and affordable food supply, all require a workforce that is highly trained.

Congress needs to support programs that train the next generation for exciting careers in conservation. How can this be accomplished...

1. Make investments where it counts, examples I am passionate about include:

4-H Youth Development that was created by the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 as part of a federal-state-local partnership and the land-grant university system. In California, 4-H Youth Development is in both urban and rural areas – bringing hands-on, experiential learning in areas such as agriculture, STEM, robotics, computer coding, and natural resources management, to name a few. 4-H members build confidence and leadership skills and are exposed to a variety of potential careers.

Another is the National FFA Program federally funded under Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act. FFA programs across the nation are training the future workforce in every spectrum of careers in sustainable agriculture - data science, natural resources conservation and forest health, while building professional development skills such as public speaking, critical thinking, and research.

These two programs expose youth of all backgrounds and ethnicities to the breadth of careers in conservation.

2. Support continued investments in research and extension funding. I am proud to be part of the Land Grant partnership that was developed between states and the federal government with the 1862 Morrill Act, the 1887 Hatch Act and the previously mentioned 1914 Smith-Lever Act.

For over 130 years extension agents have conducted research and outreach important to our local communities at the intersection of long-term agricultural sustainability and public good benefits such as clean water, healthy soils, working rangelands, resilient forests and wildlife conservation.

My colleagues and I work and live in the communities we serve and have formed long-standing and trusted relationships. Cooperative extension is a boundary spanning organization working with diverse stakeholders such as, tribal, environmental, agricultural, and all levels of government.

As an extension advisor, I help ranchers overcome challenges they face on topics such as animal health, irrigated pasture, predators, regulatory compliance, applying for federal farm bill programs and managing landscapes in the aftermath of the 2018

Camp Fire, the 2019 Walker Fire, the 2020 North Complex Fire, and the 2021 Dixie Fire. I personally led research on fire implications including the first study on water quality post Camp Fire that informed downstream ranchers that water flowing through their private landscapes was safe for cattle to drink. Last week I launched a research project, working closely with ranchers and the Plumas National Forest. We are using GPS collars on cows to investigate how catastrophic fires that burn dense forests change landscape vegetation, which impacts livestock grazing. Data collected from the GPS collars will inform future post-fire grazing practices.

When disaster strikes, ranchers and emergency services call on cooperative extension. During the North Complex Fires when the Plumas Sheriff Department and Animal Control needed help evacuating cattle, they knew I had strong relationships in the community and could quickly call on people to bring their personal cattle trailers to help move a large herd out of harm's way. During the Dixie Fire, for weeks, I worked with Incident Command Teams serving as a liaison to ranchers needing to move, care and treat animals behind evacuation lines. I mention this because it is a prime example of how cooperative extension advisors are valued members of the community and that our relationships are grounded in trust. It is what makes us effective in all aspects of our work.

For three generations – my grandfather, dad, and brother - have called on our local extension agents on issues such as rice disease, water management, and invasive weeds. Our family has immense trust with UC's Cooperative Extension services, which provides critical advice that helps us improve our multi-generational family farm. Our family farm also lends our fields to UC for research trials, where the results help our entire industry, the environment, and, in the case of our rice crops, improves the sushi rice you eat!

- 3. We must train and educate a workforce that is adapting to our changing environment** – weeds, pests, drought, and the aftermath from catastrophic fires. We must train on the evolution of land management, including the need to actively manage our forests, recognize that grazing can be a sustainable land management tool, and look at agriculture as a solution - not the problem. Lastly, we must train a workforce skilled in emerging technology that can assist with conservation and farming needs. For example, there is exciting work being done to consider ways to put artificial intelligence tools to work on the farm reducing pesticide use and to help decipher copious amounts of data to minimize nitrogen applications, improving agricultural sustainability while maintaining productivity.

Conclusion

In closing, the demand and future job opportunities are endless...

Reflecting back to the family farm, we are working with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) staff with conservation careers to implement Farm Bill programs for irrigation efficiency, soil health, pollinators, air quality and wildlife habitat.

There is a need for a skilled workforce to put money on the ground managing our forests to create more fire resilient landscapes. UC Cooperative Extension is actively working to build and train this workforce, but there is a strong need to make sure that USDA programs continue to be funded. This will ensure that there will be resources to train the next generation of conservation professionals who can assist farmers to stay at the cutting edge of research and farm practices.

The federal investment into the Smith-Lever Act, for example, is one way the federal government through the USDA provides critical “people power” and research talent to enable states to connect local issues with the power of university research. This federal investment in cooperative extension is heavily leveraged by state, county, and local support – a high return on the federal government’s investment.

There is a strong need for additional funding to be provided to ensure that our nation will have a conservation workforce that can serve agricultural needs into the future. For example, there is a need to hire more researchers like myself, who work hand-in-hand with farmers, ranchers, and natural resource managers, who benefit from cooperative extension - to make conservation happen, while supporting healthy landscapes, protecting watersheds, and enhancing profitable agricultural businesses.

As the Committee writes that next Farm Bill, I encourage Congress to continue to invest in the programs that support the creation of a strong conservation workforce. Doing so will help to ensure farmers and ranchers and the agriculture sector can continue to thrive and provide food for our nation using sustainable management practices. Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before the Subcommittee. I am happy to answer any questions.

Tracy K. Schohr

(916) 716-2643 • tkschohr@ucanr.edu

EDUCATION

M.S. Horticulture and Agronomy, University of California Davis, 2014

B.S. Agriculture Business, Cum Laude, California State University, Chico, 2004

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

University of California ~ Livestock and Natural Resource Advisor ~ 10/17 – current

- Serve as a technical advisor to livestock producers, public land management agencies and natural resource regulatory entities.
- Craft effective solutions to issues relating to commercial livestock production systems and natural resource issues such as water quality, rangeland health, livestock grazing distribution, wildlife habitat, predators and public lands management. Serve as a liaison between regulating government entities and farmers and ranchers.
- Conduct research on a variety of topics including animal health, water quality, post fire grazing, predators and invasive species. Develop investigative studies, identify funding, collect data, interpret results, publish findings and present information to interested stakeholders.
- Disseminate science-based information to inform clientele, using a variety of extension methods, including social media, newsletters, seminars, community meetings, and webinars trainings.
- Emergency Management and Coordination. Developed model Butte County Ag Pass Program, participated in Dixie Fire Incident Command, shelter lead for evacuated livestock, coordinator for youth volunteers, manage livestock donations and planning for disaster preparedness for livestock owners.
- Support training and education of youth and young professionals interested in livestock, ecosystem services and rangeland management. Provide extension and outreach to 4-H and FFA members, along with engaging with students at community colleges and universities.
- Successfully apply for grants to support extension and research activities. Develop grants, oversee budget, complete reporting requirements and successfully implement deliverables.

Schohr Ranch, Gridley, California ~ Partner ~ 01/2002- current

- Serve as human resources manager, providing employee training, and coordination of hiring procedures.
- Oversee grant programs application and administration, with Natural Resources Conservation Service (Environmental Quality Incentives Program and Conservation Innovation Grant)
- Responsible for ensuring legal reporting compliance, meeting minutes and all official correspondence.
- Personally responsible for financial management over multiple partnerships and corporations utilizing QuickBooks software. Provide company budgets, perspectives and work with CPA to prepare taxes. Provide support for employee payroll.
- Manage the cattle grazing to meet multiple management goals on private and public lands, along with conducting cattle herd health and record management.

University of California, Davis ~ Graduate Student Researcher/Junior Specialist ~ 09/12 – 10/17

- Author and data analyst on research paper covering a survey of California ranchers to better understand demographics, grazing practices, conservation goals and management obstacles. Also, participated in a research project to evaluate impacts of drought on California livestock producers.
- Manage meetings and events with rangeland stakeholders, conservation organizations, regulatory officials and cooperative extension advisors on a breadth of topics centered on working rangelands.

Specifically, coordinated all facets of multiple Rustici Rangeland Science Symposiums that have drawn hundreds of guests. Responsible for event fiscal oversight, trades show recruitment, agenda development, outreach, speakers, poster session, media coverage, and contract negotiation.

California Rangeland Conservation Coalition ~ Director of Rangeland Conservation

11/06 – 06/12

- Served as coordinator for all facets of partnership of ranchers, conservation organizations, researchers and local, state and federal government agencies, including education, training and outreach.
- Guided the diverse partnership in developing strategic goals and priorities. Supervised and supported partners in the achievement of goals and special projects.
- Identified and acquired grant funding for positions and projects.
- Analyzed regulatory and legislative policies, facilitated consensus among divergent partner groups, and pursued cooperative initiatives.

California Cattlemen's Association ~ Director of Industry Affairs ~ 3/05 – 10/06

- Facilitated cooperative conservation partnerships, specifically moderated the creation of the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition.
- Acted as specialist in natural resources issues, regulations, and litigation; wrote and submitted comments on regulatory packages, analyzed federal legislation, provided research assistance to legal counsel, and assisted lobbyist on state legislation.
- Administrator for California Public Lands Council. Oversaw membership communication, retention, and recruitment.
- Editor of weekly CCA Legislative Bulletin. Web site designer, manager, and contributor.

HONORS

- Profiles in Leadership Award, California Agricultural Leadership Foundation, 2021
- Butte County Cattlemen Top Hand Award, 2019
- Butte County Farm Bureau Member of the Year, 2018
- Western Innovator: Capital Press Newspaper, 2017
- Butte County Rice Growers Association Leadership Program, 2015
- UC Davis - Milton D. and Mary M. Miller Plant Science Award, 2012 and 2013
- California Agricultural Leadership Program, Class 39, 2008-2010
- Water Education Foundation, William R. Gianelli Water Leaders Class, 2007
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Certificate of Achievement as a Great Communicator, 2008

PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS (RECENT SELECTION)

- Schohr, T. 2021 Invasive Weed Management Post-Wildfire: Closer Look at Camp Fire Invasive Weeds in Right-of-Ways. California Dept of Fish and Wildlife Wildlands IPM Seminar
- Schohr, T. 2020. Evolution of Conservation Easements in Sierra Valley. California Association of Resource Conservation Districts Annual Conference.
- Schohr, T. and B. Karle. 2019. Livestock Water and Forage Quality Post Fire. Camp Fire Water Resources Monitoring and Research Symposium.
- Schohr, T. 2019. Grazing distribution and management in Northern California. Chico State Bridging Genetics and Rangeland Management Symposium.
- Schohr, T. 2018. Completing the knowledge cycle: Deriving IPM knowledge directly from practitioners on working landscapes. Society for Range Management International Conference.

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

- Woodmansee G., D. Macon, T. Schohr, and L.M. Roche. 2021. On-ranch adaptation to California's historic 2012-2016 drought. *Rangelands* 43:6. 222-230.
- Banwarth, M, C. Stevenson, C. Field, J. Dubowsky; K. DeAtley, T. Schohr; Z. McFarlane. 2021. Survey of beef bull selection and management Practice of California Producers. *Translational Animal Science*. *Accepted for publication*
- Schohr T., E. Gornish, G. Woodmansee, J. Shaw, K. Tate, L. Roche. 2020. Practitioner Insights into Weed Management on California's Rangelands and Natural Areas. *Environmental Management*. 65. 1-8. 10.1007/s00267-019-01238-8.
- Macon D, T. Schohr, M. Garbelotto. 2020. Recent blue oak mortality on Sierra Nevada foothill rangelands may be linked to drought, climate change. *California Agriculture* 74(2):71-72.
- Schohr T., R. Tompkins, T. Getts, K. Wilkin, and J. Wiley. 2019. Invasive Weed Management Post-Wildfire: Closer Look at Camp Fire Invasive Weeds in Right-of-ways. *Grasslands* 29(3):10-14.
- Macon, D.K, R.A. Baldwin, D.F. Lile, J. Stackhouse, C.K. Rivers, T. Saitone, T.K. Schohr, L.K. Snell, J. Harper, R. Ingram, K. Rodrigues, L. Macaulay, and L.M. Roche. 2018 January. Livestock protection tools for California ranchers. Oakland: University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources Publication 8598.
- Roche, L.M., T. Schohr, J. D. Derner, M. N. Lubell, B. B. Cutts, E. Kachergis, V. T. Eviner, K. W. Tate. *August 2015, ISSN 1550-742*. Sustaining multifunctional working rangelands: social and ecological insights from rancher decision-making. *Rangeland Ecology and Management*.
- Schohr. Vernal Pool Manuscript/2010 Vernal Pool Conference Proceedings.
- Barry, S., T. Schohr, K. Sweet June. The California Rangeland Conservation Coalition. *Rangelands* 29(3), 31-34.

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- Society for Range Management
- American Society of Animal Science
- California Native Grasslands Association

BOARDS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

- County Emergency Committee – Farm Service Agency – Plumas and Sierra County – 2017-current
- Sierra Valley Groundwater Management District – Groundwater Sustainability Plan Technical Advisory Committee – 2020- current
- Sierra Valley Resource Conservation District, Technical Advisor, 2018-curent
- Camp Fire Water Quality Technical Team, 2018-2019

Truth in Testimony Disclosure Form

In accordance with Rule XI, clause 2(g)(5)* of the *Rules of the House of Representatives*, witnesses are asked to disclose the following information. Please complete this form electronically by filling in the provided blanks.

Committee: Agriculture

Subcommittee: Conservation and Forestry

Hearing Date: 05/25/2022

Hearing Title :

“Supporting Careers in Conservation: Workforce Training, Education, and Job Opportunities”

Witness Name: Tracy Schohr

Position/Title: UC Cooperative Extension - Livestock & Nat. Resources Advisor & Schohr Ranch - Partner

Witness Type: Governmental Non-governmental

Are you representing yourself or an organization? Self Organization

If you are representing an organization, please list what entity or entities you are representing:

University of California Cooperative Extension
Livestock and Natural Resources Advisor

Schohr Ranch, Gridley, California
Partner

FOR WITNESSES APPEARING IN A NON-GOVERNMENTAL CAPACITY

Please complete the following fields. If necessary, attach additional sheet(s) to provide more information.

Are you a fiduciary—including, but not limited to, a director, officer, advisor, or resident agent—of any organization or entity that has an interest in the subject matter of the hearing? If so, please list the name of the organization(s) or entities.

None

Please list any federal grants or contracts (including subgrants or subcontracts) related to the hearing's subject matter that you, the organization(s) you represent, or entities for which you serve as a fiduciary have received in the past thirty-six months from the date of the hearing. Include the source and amount of each grant or contract.

Sustainable Agricultural Research and Education (SARE) - Western Professional Development Program \$79,037

Forward Family Farming (partner)

NRCS - Conservation Innovation Grant \$123,000

NRCS - Environmental Quality Incentives Program \$23,939

Please list any contracts, grants, or payments originating with a foreign government and related to the hearing's subject that you, the organization(s) you represent, or entities for which you serve as a fiduciary have received in the past thirty-six months from the date of the hearing. Include the amount and country of origin of each contract or payment.

None

Please complete the following fields. If necessary, attach additional sheet(s) to provide more information.

I have attached a written statement of proposed testimony.

I have attached my curriculum vitae or biography.

* Rule XI, clause 2(g)(5), of the U.S. House of Representatives provides:

(5)(A) Each committee shall, to the greatest extent practicable, require witnesses who appear before it to submit in advance written statements of proposed testimony and to limit their initial presentations to the committee to brief summaries thereof.

(B) In the case of a witness appearing in a non-governmental capacity, a written statement of proposed testimony shall include— (i) a curriculum vitae; (ii) a disclosure of any Federal grants or contracts, or contracts, grants, or payments originating with a foreign government, received during the past 36 months by the witness or by an entity represented by the witness and related to the subject matter of the hearing; and (iii) a disclosure of whether the witness is a fiduciary (including, but not limited to, a director, officer, advisor, or resident agent) of any organization or entity that has an interest in the subject matter of the hearing.

(C) The disclosure referred to in subdivision (B)(iii) shall include— (i) the amount and source of each Federal grant (or subgrant thereof) or contract (or subcontract thereof) related to the subject matter of the hearing; and (ii) the amount and country of origin of any payment or contract related to the subject matter of the hearing originating with a foreign government.

(D) Such statements, with appropriate redactions to protect the privacy or security of the witness, shall be made publicly available in electronic form 24 hours before the witness appears to the extent practicable, but not later than one day after the witness appears.