

# Upper Feather River Integrated Regional Water Management Plan Proposition 50 Grant Agreement No. 4600007650

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## Project Performance & Monitoring Report

**Project No./Name:** Sierra Valley IRWM Project

**Project Proponent:** Feather River Land Trust, County of Plumas

**Progress Report No.:** 3

**Reporting Period:** 2020

**Date of Post-Performance Report:** 5/7/2021

Project Specific Output Signatures			
	Yes	No	Comments
Was a stream restoration plan implemented for the project area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Was a grazing plan implemented?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Was the native plant restoration plan implemented?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Were off-stream water sources for cattle developed and maintained?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Project Specific Outcome Indicators			
	Yes	No	Comments
How many acres of wetlands were enhanced and managed?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	500+ acres have been protected since post project completion. Key partnerships with Point Blue, Audubon, Ducks Unlimited and NRCS have enabled FRLT to protect and enhance wetlands.
How many acres of non-native plants were eradicated and native plants restored?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	100+ acres have been improved.
Were stream and grazing conditions improved as a result of the project?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	FRLT along with its close partnership have continued to restrict and adjust the duration for when livestock are present on the property. See narrative for detail.
How many feet/miles of wildlife friendly fencing was installed/repared along riparian areas?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Over 18,000 feet of post project fencing has been replaced and improved. FRLT has moved to smooth wire fencing whenever possible on the Sierra Valley Preserve.
Did you meet the goal of your project? If yes, please provide a brief description stating how you achieved this goal. If no, please comment as to why the goal was not achieved.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	We continue to leverage additional resources through our partnership with NRCs, Point Blue, and Norther Sierra Partnership. Millions of dollars have been raised and more currently being secure to ensure the long-term management and protection of the Sierra Valley Preserve.

	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
<b>Other Standard Reporting Requirements: Please indicate other monitoring/reporting requirements you may already be required to do independent from DWR contractual obligations. For example: CDPH Title 22 Ch. 15 "Domestic Water Quality AND Monitoring Regulations," NPDES, GAMA, CASGEM, or other internal reporting requirements that may yield valuable data.</b>			
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
<b>What Upper Feather River IRWM Plan Objectives did your project address to support implementation of the Plan?</b>			
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Restore natural hydrologic functions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See narrative for detail.
Reduce potential for catastrophic wildland fires in the Region	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Balance the needs of forest health, habitat preservation, fuels reduction, forest fire prevention, and economic activity in the Upper Feather River Region	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	FRLT has prioritized habitat protection on the Sierra Valley Preserve and continue to work with NRCS for securing Wetland Reserve Easements on the property.
Build communications and collaboration among water resources stakeholders in the Region	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See narrative for detail.
Work with Department of Water Resources to develop strategies and actions for the management, operation, and control of the State Water Project facilities in the Upper Feather River Watershed in order to increase water supply, recreational and environmental benefits to the Region	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Encourage municipal service providers to participate in regional water management actions that improve water supply and water quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Continue to actively engage in FERC relicensing of hydroelectric facilities in the Region	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Address economic challenges of municipal service providers to serve customers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Protect, restore, and enhance the quality of surface and groundwater resources for all beneficial uses, consistent with the Central Valley Regional Water Control Board Basin Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See narrative for detail.
Address water resources and wastewater needs of Disadvantaged Communities (DACs) and Native Americans	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

Coordinate management of recharge areas and protect groundwater resources	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See narrative below.
Improve coordination of land use and water resources planning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See narrative below.
Maximize agricultural, environmental and municipal water use efficiency	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Effectively address climate change adaptation and/or mitigation in water resource management	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See narrative below.
Improve efficiency and reliability of water supply and other water-related infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Enhance public awareness and understanding of water management issues and needs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See narrative below.
Address economic challenges of agricultural producers	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	See narrative below.
Work with counties, communities, and groups to make sure staff capacity exists for actual administration and implementation of grant funding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

**1. Summary of the operations of the project.**

In 2015, the Sierra Valley Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) Project (Project) implemented several aspects of the Natural Resources Conservation Society (NRCS) Ranch Management Plan on the 575-acre Maddalena Ranch property, located along the Middle Fork of the Feather River (MFFR): improving wet meadow/irrigated pasture management to enhance existing wetlands and waterfowl habitat, to increase groundwater infiltration, and to eliminate surface irrigation water discharge into the MFFR. Specifically, the Project installed approximately 8,500 feet of permanent riparian fencing around a 60-acre wetland to exclude the area from cattle grazing and to provide a riparian buffer strip between irrigated pasture and the MFFR; installed approximately 6,000 feet of cross-fencing; replaced three weir/water control structures to control erosion and improve irrigation efficiency; and installed a well, water storage tank, two solar-powered pumps, and associated plumbing and troughs to provide off-river water for cattle. Goat grazing was also utilized to remove nonnative plant species. Additionally, 50 acres of meadow/wetlands were reseeded with native grasses in areas protected by cattle exclusion fencing.

## **2. Discuss project benefits to water quality, water supply, and the environment.**

The Feather River Land Trust (FRLT) was able to achieve the following results:

- Installation of over 18,000 ft. (and counting) of wildlife friendly fencing (mainly two strand electric fencing) that protected riparian habitat. This prevented cattle from entering water ways and thereby protecting nesting bird habitat, native plants, streambanks, water quality, ground water recharge and sediment erosion.
- Installation of three (and more to be installed) shallow livestock wells- kept cattle out of streams and surface water flowing downstream without the risk of sediment or other potential impacts that come with cattle entering the stream channel.
- Leveraging additional support from Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) that assisted with augmenting Proposition 50 funded revegetation efforts and that funded the installation of three water control structures that allowed FRLT to slow surface flows and re-water the wet meadow habitat and thereby improving ground water recharge, meadow grasses recovery, and habitat for nesting birds. For 2019-2020 NRCS has been in the planning phases to repair a diversion structure that will greatly improve wetland habitat. The planned repairs are scheduled for fall of 2021.
- FRLT continues with its ongoing Invasive weed control to stop the expansion of tall whitetop, Canada thistle, bull thistle and medusa head into the wet meadow and wetland habitat. It is well documented that invasive weeds effect the shallow ground water table due to their deep tap roots. FRLT has used a diverse approach with the use of targeted grazing (goats, cattle), mowing, flooding (using newly installed water control structures) and herbicide treatment.
- The increase of native vegetation in the wetland channel has substantially improved and our recent wildlife monitoring efforts with Plumas Audubon and Point Blue who have documented improved nesting habitat for birds.
- Improved wildlife habitat, native plant recovery, and improved groundwater recharge described above has been fully integrated with sustainable cattle grazing on the FRLT property through improved rotational grazing opportunities that were enabled by Proposition funding for additional fencing, off stream water development, and invasive species removal.

## **3. Comparison and explanation of any differences between expected versus actual project success in meeting IRWM priorities as stated in the original IRWM Implementation Grant application.**

The Project goals were originally focused on 575 acres and now are building from IRMP priorities, Proposition 50 and NRCS funded successes to the now 2,500-acre Sierra Valley Preserve. FRLT continues to work with the Sierra Valley Ground Water Management District (SVGMD), the Department of Water Resources (DWR) Water Master, and nonprofits and public agencies in the watershed to build a shared vision for sustainable land and water management in the Sierra Valley.

## **4. Summary of any additional costs and/or benefits deriving from the project.**

The FRLT was able to continue work with NRCS and has been able to expand upon the work originally started with this project. This has allowed FRLT to bring in Point Blue, Plumas Audubon and other consultants to assist with improving restoration and management goals on the property.

Some of our recent accomplishments include:

- Purchase of three adjacent parcels to the Maddalena property, expanding the total ownership to 2,500 acres, now named Sierra Valley Preserve.
- FRLT acquired the Decker Dam. This dam has allowed FRLT to improve more than 200 acres of wetland habitat for nesting birds, by creating and extending the duration of wet meadow habitat through the summer. The dam is scheduled for improvements with recently secured NRCS funds for 2021.
- An additional 10,000 feet of new wildlife friendly riparian fences installed.
- New solar livestock wells have been installed. An additional off-site well is planned 2022.
- Planning for a third phase of revegetation along the wetland area with NRCs for 2022
- Begun soil, vegetation and bird studies on the 2,500-acre Preserve.
- Expanded recreational opportunities to local schools and visitors with improved trails, seating areas, signage, guided outings, and visitor facilities. Through the Northern Sierra Partnership, FRLT has been able to raise more than \$6 million dollars to build visitor facilities and improve access to the preserve. In 2021, FRLT will begin building a new visitor center, trails, and enhance wildlife viewing for future generations.

#### **5. Additional information relevant to or generated by the continued operation of the project.**

The project allowed FRLT the ability to leverage additional support that continues today. All the existing project work is currently operating, and our Proposition 50 funded project successes have been expanded through subsequent funding to the larger Sierra Valley Preserve. The FRLT is scheduled to build a visitor center, trails, and other facilities in 2021-2022 that will allow the community and visitors to explore and learn about the importance of wetland habitat in the Upper Feather River Watershed. The FRLT continues to be an active partner in the development of a Groundwater Sustainability Planning (GSP) grant for the Sierra Valley including procuring seed funds to help the Sierra Valley Groundwater Management District develop the GSP grant application.

“Prop 50 gave us a solid footing and now we can fly!”

You can discover more about the Sierra Valley Preserve by visiting:

<https://www.frlt.org/blog/sierra-valley-preserve-conservation-story/>