

# SIERRA COUNTY



## COUNTY INFORMATION

**Size:** 962 sq. miles (2,492 sq. kilometers)  
**Population:** 3,555 (as of 2000 US Census)  
**Location:** North-Eastern Sierra  
**Official Website:** [www.sierracounty.ws](http://www.sierracounty.ws)

## CONSERVATION STORY

### **The Feather River Land Trust Holds Sierra Valley Habitat Together**

The Sierra Valley is the largest alpine meadow in California. The meadow spans both Plumas and Sierra counties - over a whopping 210,000 acres. Un-fragmented open areas such as the Sierra Valley are vital to the protection of wildlife, as habitat destruction is currently the number one cause of species extinction world-wide. The Feather River Land Trust (FRLT) realized this, and in 2007, the FRLT purchased conservation easements in the Sierra Valley from Fred and Dan Balderston – two generations of a ranching family.

In January of 2007 with the help of the Sierra Business Council and the Nature Conservancy, the FRLT purchased a 1,360 acre conservation easement on the Fred Balderston Ranch in the valley. In September of that same year, the FRLT completed a 160 acre conservation easement with landowner Dan Balderston, son of Fred Balderston.

The easements on both ranches help maintain the properties as working cattle ranches, while conserving outstanding wildlife habitat, scenic vistas, and the water quality of the Middle Fork of the Feather River. Because the easements are “in perpetuity,” the land is protected from development even if the ranchers decide to give up working the land.

“Sierra Valley is a very special place,” said Fred Balderston. “The ranch is like an old friend to me and protecting its land, wildlife, and scenery, while ensuring that the property remains a working ranch, is a legacy my family is very proud to pass on.”

The conservation easements in the Sierra Valley protect both the wildlife and ecological integrity of the region. They provide key migratory and wintering habitat for the Loyalton-Truckee deer herd, as well as house over 130 bird species. Some of the endangered and threatened species found on the ranches are the Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Red-tailed Hawk, Red-breasted Sapsucker, Wolverine, and the Sierra Nevada Red Fox.

Ecologically, the properties support a diversity of habitat, including grassland, sagebrush, and bitterbrush ecosystems. The Sierra Valley is the site of extensive freshwater marshes filled with cattails, bulrushes and alkaline flats that drain into the middle fork of the Feather River.

While the FRLT has succeeded in creating safe havens for these species and ecosystems in the Balderston ranch conservation easements, the FRLT is also working to protect larger portions of the valley. In order to prevent “fragmentation,” which means that the habitat for a species is protected only in small pieces interspersed with development areas, the FRLT hopes to secure larger areas of land in the Sierra Valley as conservation easements.

“The nearby cities of Reno and Truckee continue to expand around the Sierra Valley,” said FRLT Executive Director Paul Hardy. As urban populations continue to grow in the Sierra in unsustainable ways, they fragment crucial habitat. Not only is wildlife affected, but eventually so are natural resources people need.

Hardy summed up the relationship between the rancher and encroaching developers: “When ranchers and private organizations can work together to protect agricultural land, wildlife habitat, and other important natural resources while helping to maintain ranching as an integral part of the Sierra Valley, everybody wins.”

The Feather River Land Trust was formed in 2001 and since then has protected over 27,000 acres in the Feather River region. As a 501(c)3 it has done it all through the

support of volunteers, donations, and its community. For more information on the Feather River Land Trust visit [www.frlt.org](http://www.frlt.org).

## **ORGANIZATIONS**

### **High Sierra Permaculture Insitute**

**Contact Name:** Beenie

**Address:** POB 251 Sierraville CA 96126

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**Website:** [www.highsierrapermaculture.org](http://www.highsierrapermaculture.org)

**County of Activity:** Sierra Nevada regions

**Issue Focus:** Sustainable agriculture, working landscapes, air quality, forestry, land use, transportation, water supply, watershed quality, wildlife and habitat, soil ecology, wilderness programs, renewable fuel, renewable energy, localization, art and culture, green and natural building/construction and planning.

**Group Type:**

**Volunteer Opportunities:** Yes

**Accept donations?** Yes

**Public Events:** High Sierra Permaculture (HSP) will be publishing information for upcoming events for 2008, 2009 and 2010 on our web site [www.highsierrapermaculture.org](http://www.highsierrapermaculture.org).

**Description:** High Sierra Permaculture (HSP) weaves indigenous wisdom and permaculture principles into experiential learning opportunities. HSP uses a range of hands-on, earth-centered programs to empower participants to create and maintain economically, ecologically, and culturally sustainable systems. HSP is creating an educational hub and that will use sustainable principles and practices of permaculture with the collaboration of ranchers, indigenous tribes, and cottage industries to develop collaborative, community-based strategies for effective kinship with the land and economical benefits to communities.

### **High Sierra Rural Alliance**

**Contact Name:** Stevee Duber

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**Email:** [stevee@highsierrarural.org](mailto:stevee@highsierrarural.org)

**Website URL:** [www.highsierrarural.org](http://www.highsierrarural.org)

**County/Countries:** Plumas, Sierra

**Issue Focus:** botanical, land use, transportation, water supply, watershed quality, wildlife and habitat

**Public Events:** public informational meetings

**Volunteer Opportunities:** internships, event planning, local agency meeting attendance

**Accepts Donations:** Yes

**Description:** The High Sierra Rural Alliance advocates preservation and enhancement of rural Sierra Nevada in Plumas and Sierra Counties. Formerly the Environmental Defense Project of Sierra County, the High Sierra Rural Alliance (HSRA) has been in existence since 2004. Our organization utilizes land use and planning expertise to provide local agency oversight and public input opportunities. We advocate for the public's right to participation and healthy sustainable communities. Our focus is on the preservation of agriculture in Sierra Valley and conservation of the immeasurable natural resources found in the region. Please visit our website, [www.highsierrarural.org](http://www.highsierrarural.org) for project information and our successes.

## **PUBLIC OFFICIALS AND AGENCIES**

### **Sierra County Board of Supervisors**

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100 Courthouse Square, Suite 11  
Downieville, CA 95936

**Office Phone:** (530) 289-3295

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### **Senate Representative – 1<sup>st</sup> District:**

**Counties Represented:** Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Lassen, Modoc, Mono, Plumas and Sierra, as well as portions of Nevada, Placer and Sacramento Counties.

**Website:** <http://republican.sen.ca.gov/web/1/>

### **Assembly Representative – 3<sup>rd</sup> District**

**Counties Represented:** Lassen, Plumas, Butte, Sierra Yuba, Nevada, Placer

**Website:** <http://republican.assembly.ca.gov/members/a3/index.aspx>