



Restoring Watersheds for Wildlife and Human Communities

Drought is expected to worsen in the West over the next two decades, with likely severe ecological and economic impacts. PRBO and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) are working with ranchers and farmers to “rewater” Central Valley watersheds by expanding eco-friendly cattle grazing and other beneficial practices that enhance soils, recharge ground water, sequester carbon, and increase bird and other wildlife habitat.

Next Steps: Secure matching funds and hire five new “partner” biologists targeting 50,000 acres of Central Valley foothill rangelands and streams.

Ranching for Watersheds, Carbon and Wildlife Program Summary

Recent efforts have demonstrated that a prescribed set of ranching practices can significantly enhance the water storage, carbon sequestration and wildlife values of rangeland soils in California, with economic benefits as well. Researchers at University of California-Berkeley estimate that applying such practices on all of California’s rangelands could sequester the total carbon emissions of the entire state. While implementing such practices on every acre of rangeland may be infeasible, PRBO has begun a program to expand the use of these practices on grazed grasslands in the foothills of the Central Valley. PRBO is collaborating with the Natural Resources Conservation Service and numerous partners to expand these practices among ranchers through Farm Bill incentive programs.

We are focusing our efforts on important watersheds where enhanced water retention in the soils will improve ground water recharge and contribute to overall water availability as well as to carbon sequestration. PRBO will utilize standardized NRCS practices for enhancing watershed habitats on 50,000 acres on 30 properties in five focal watersheds of the Central Valley. PRBO will deploy five wildlife habitat biologists in NRCS field offices to work with ranchers in applying practices that increase perennial grass cover and improve riparian habitats and wetlands. This effort will result in significantly enhanced habitat for birds and other wildlife as we face expected increases in drought and temperature extremes in the years ahead.

Total Project Budget:	\$450,000
Remaining Funding Need:	\$150,000