ENDOWMENT PURPOSE
The Rustici Endowed Specialist in Cooperative Extension in Rangeland Watershed Sciences was established in 2008 by the late Russell L. Rustici to give special recognition to the holder and provide financial support for his or her teaching, research and outreach efforts. Mr. Rustici was particularly concerned with research that investigates the connections between range management, water quality, hydrology and related ecosystem processes towards the protection and enhancement of California’s Central Valley rangeland landscape. The Specialist in Cooperative Extension is one of two endowed positions created through Mr. Rustici’s giving.

RESEARCH
Endowment funds support our Stakeholder Prescribed Adaptive Grazing Project. This is a 10-year grazing research project at the UC Sierra Foothill Research and Extension Center which involves 1200 acres of rangeland and over 430 cattle. The scale and scope of this project is similar to that of the median cattle ranch in California, making findings directly applicable to ranchers. The project goals and grazing treatments were developed in direct collaboration with ranchers, range managers, and conservation professionals. This is a novel participatory research approach designed to fully integrate management and science to address management challenges important to stakeholders. We are now completing our second year of this project. During these first two project years, we have experienced some of the driest growing seasons on record. The availability of endowment funds is essential to allow us to continue this project through normal and above average rainfall and forage years. Please read more about this important project using the link below (1).

(1) http://rangelandwatersheds.ucdavis.edu/main/grazing_management_ecosystem_services.html

TEACHING
My teaching focuses on the intersection of agriculture and the environment. In both graduate and undergraduate courses, I try to bring my on-the-ground experiences as a Cooperative Extension specialist to the classroom. I encourage students to take a problem-solving approach to find a sustainable balance between agricultural and environmental goals. I am currently developing a course for
undergraduates and graduates on the Management of Grazed Ecosystems. I support graduate students who are interested in making a difference in research and education on the sustainable management of California's rangelands and dependent ranching enterprises. I currently have students examining the goals, management strategies, and perceptions of ranchers on sustainable ranch management (see link 2 below); as well as the tradeoffs and synergies of agricultural goods and ecological services on oak hardwood rangelands (see link 3 below).

(2) http://rangelandwatersheds.ucdavis.edu/main/projects/ranchersurvey.html
(3) http://rangelandwatersheds.ucdavis.edu/main/projects/transition_models.htm

Using endowment funds, we will subsidize student registration and poster session at the upcoming 2015 Rangeland Research Symposium.

OUTREACH

The endowment has allowed me to establish the Rangeland Science Symposium. The first and second symposiums were held January 2012 and 2013 on the Davis campus, in conjunction the CA Rangeland Conservation Coalition Summit. The 2-day events featured innovative partnerships among researchers, ranchers and rangeland managers, agencies and conservation organizations. We had over 400 attendees both years. We are currently planning the third symposium, which will focus on Sustainable Public Lands Grazing - Policy, Management, and Science. The sustainability of livestock grazing on local, state, and federal public lands is an essential issue facing policy makers, ranchers, conservationists, and the scientific community. Public grazing lands are critical for the economic integrity of ranching enterprises and rural communities. Grazing is a cost-effective weed control, fuel reduction, and climate change adaptation tool. However, grazing must be prescribed to conserve the unique habitat and species public lands support. This symposium will bring stakeholders together for a novel conversation about the environmental, economic, and cultural sustainability of public lands grazing. Leaders with practical experience in setting policy, management decision-making and implementation, and research will introduce the key aspects of sustainability in public lands grazing, stimulating conversations with and among participants. Such conversations are the first step towards a positive, shared vision for environmental and socio-economic sustainability for our public rangelands. The third symposium will be held February 2015 in conjunction with the annual convention of the Society for Range Management in Sacramento.

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

I plan to focus the funding this year on continuing to support the Rangeland Research Symposium as well as the Stakeholder Prescribed Adaptive Grazing Project described above.

THANKS

I am deeply indebted to Russ for his commitment to range management and science, and his mentoring early in my career. I am focusing our efforts and the use of these funds on projects and activities which I think Russ would have valued and approved. Every project has direct involvement and input from California's ranching community. I am leveraging other funds and support almost dollar for dollar in the process, which I know Russ would have liked. I remain really excited about where we are headed with range science in CA, and it is in large part due to Russ's investment.