Russell L. Rustici Endowed Specialist in Cooperative Extension in Rangeland Watershed Science

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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
I am using funds to 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 this link: http://bit.ly/1RZPOsG
TEACHING
I was on sabbatical leave and did not teach courses this year. I will teach Principles of Rangeland Management this coming year.

STUDENTS
This fund has supported research and outreach activities conducted by Dr. Leslie Roche. Leslie is currently combining biophysical and social approaches to conduct stakeholder participatory research to integrate management, research, and policy to identify economically, socially, and ecologically sustainable range livestock production strategies. Among many other projects, Leslie is the leading scientist on our Stakeholder Prescribed Adaptive Grazing Project.

OUTREACH
The Rustici Endowed Specialist funding has allowed me to establish the Rustici Rangeland Science Symposium. The first, second, and third symposiums were held 2012, 2013, and 2015 on the Davis campus. The 2-day events feature innovative partnerships among researchers, ranchers and rangeland managers, agencies and conservation organizations. In total, we have had over 1,000 attendees. At this year’s symposium, we focused on two interconnected and extremely contentious topics - rangeland water quality and defining sustainable public lands grazing. The sustainability of livestock grazing on private and public rangelands 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 benefits that rangelands support. As in earlier symposiums, leaders with practical experience in setting policy, management decision-making and implementation, and research introduced the key aspects of water quality and 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 rangelands. Please read more about the symposium at this link: http://bit.ly/1DbOlDe

THANKS
I remain 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 remain really excited about where we are headed with range science in CA, and it is in large part due to Russ's investment.