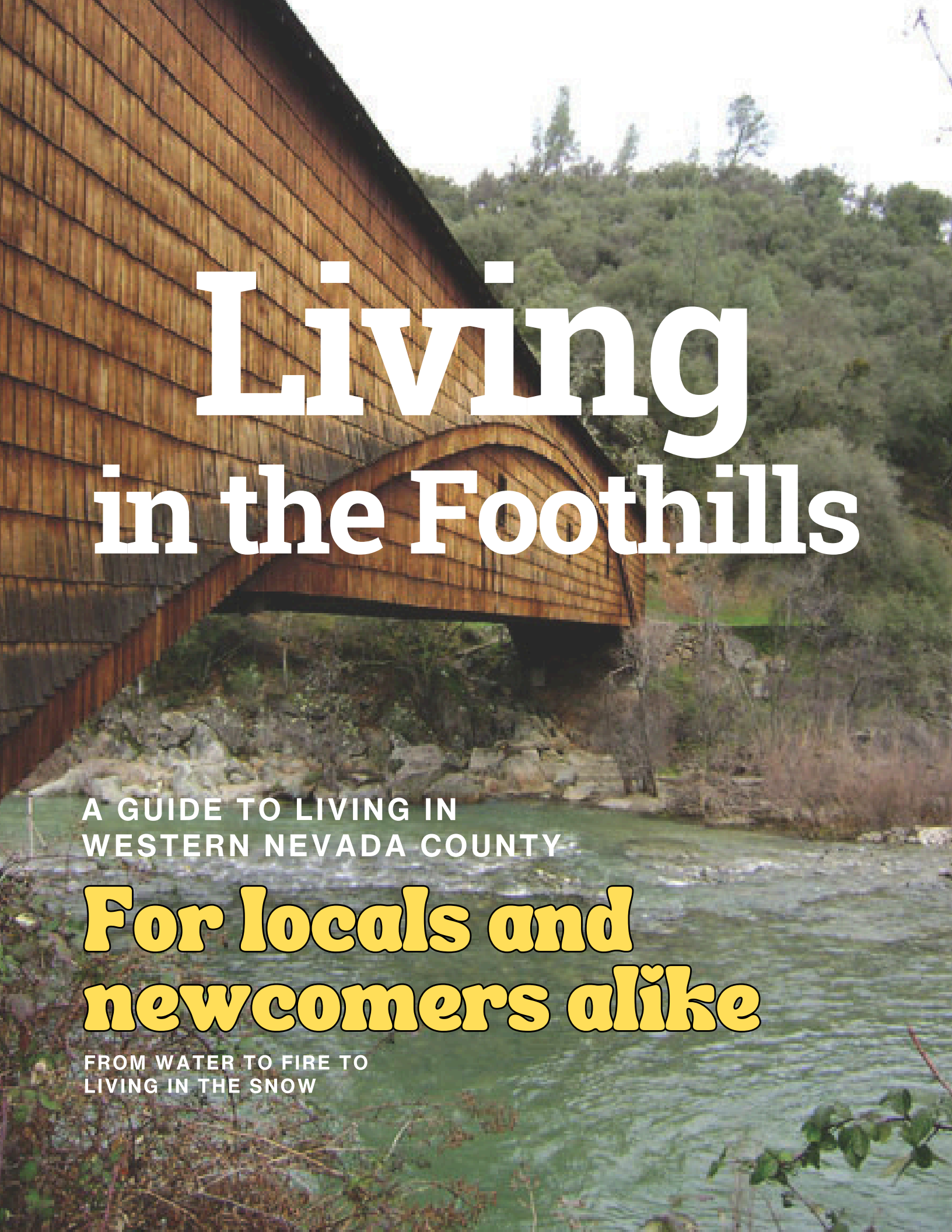


Living in the Foothills

A GUIDE TO LIVING IN WESTERN NEVADA COUNTY

For locals and newcomers alike

FROM WATER TO FIRE TO LIVING IN THE SNOW

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Introduction

Welcome to life in the foothills of Western Nevada County. This booklet offers information on caring for your property and the environment responsibly, and tips to help you safely navigate a landscape that's as beautiful as it is unpredictable.

Country living comes with its own rhythm and challenges. Cell service can be spotty, GPS isn't always reliable, waterways rise and flood roads, narrow single-lane dirt or gravel roads require patience and wildlife or livestock may wander across your path at any time. Take a breath, slow your pace, and embrace a simpler life shaped by nature.

If you're arriving from a more urban environment, you may be discovering the wealth of natural resources right outside your door and the role you play in sustaining them:

- Clean, reliable water
- Wildlife to observe and appreciate
- Healthy ecosystems supported by native plants
- Fresh, breathable air
- Safe farms, public lands, and private property

These resources thrive only with care and proper stewardship. This booklet is designed to help you understand your role and responsibilities as a resident, protect the natural environment around you, and ensure that these lands remain a place of beauty and resilience for generations to come.

The Yuba River Watershed

Western Nevada County is home to the Yuba River Watershed, which begins at 8000' above sea level and follows nearly 100 miles of canyons where it meets the Feather River in the Central Valley. The Yuba River is made up of 3 forks; the North, Middle and South, and because these 3 forks ultimately combine and feed back into the Pacific Ocean, proper stewardship of the watershed is extremely important.

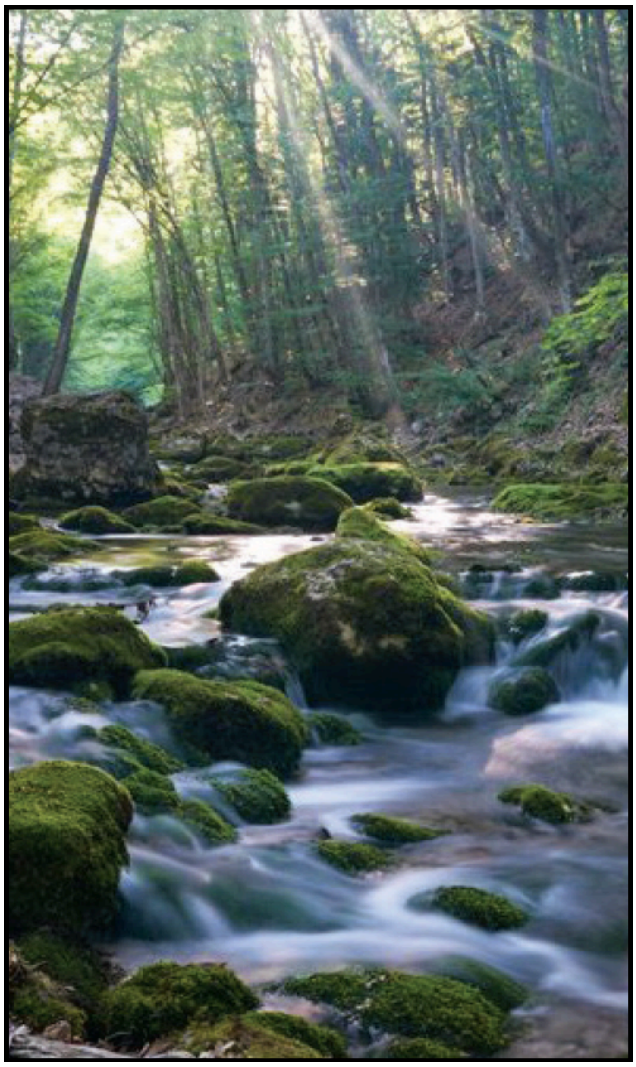
Water is essential to all living things, and although it may seem abundant, 97% of the Earth's water is salt water and unsuitable for drinking or irrigation. Only the remaining 3% is fresh water and nearly two-thirds of that is frozen in ice, leaving only about 1% of all of the water on the planet available for human use.

Because polluted water both transports and leaves behind contaminates as it flows through the watershed, it is critical to consider what we introduce into our waterways.

Where does your water come from?

In Nevada County, your water may come from a private well or from the Nevada Irrigation District (NID).

If you rely on a private well, remember that unlike public water systems there are no experts routinely monitoring your water source or its quality. As the well owner, you are responsible for ensuring your drinking water is safe. Regular testing is essential.



If you receive water from NID, you're part of a system that provides treated drinking water and irrigation water to nearly 25,000 homes, farms, and businesses across Nevada and Placer counties.

NID collects water from Sierra Nevada snowpack and stores it in a network of 10 reservoirs. As the water moves downhill to customers, it also generates clean hydroelectric power and supports public recreation. NID operates as an independent California special district governed by an elected board.



Water Quality

Clean water is essential to life, and as a property owner, you play a direct role in protecting it, for yourself, and for everyone who shares your watershed. Proper septic system maintenance, erosion control, and fire-hazard reduction all have significant impacts on water quality.

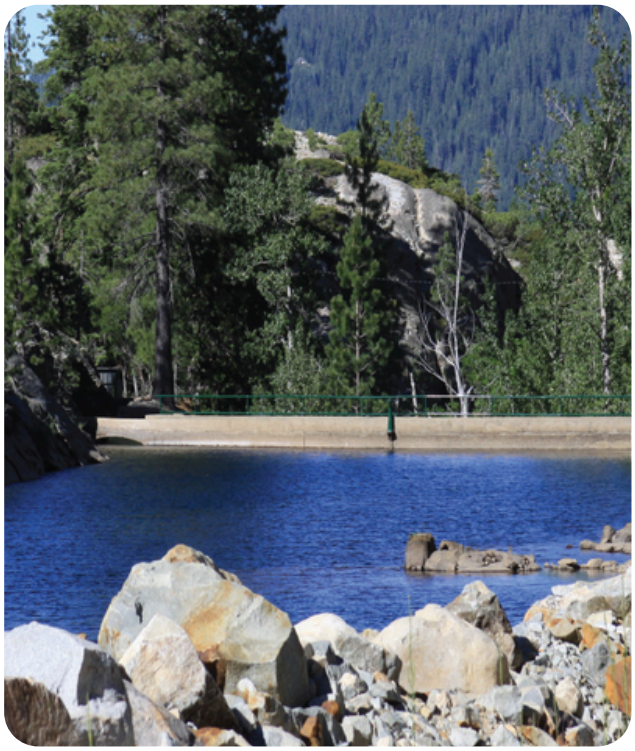
Safe disposal of hazardous materials and household waste is equally important. Whether your water comes from a private well or a community system, everything that happens on your land influences the larger environment.

How does pollution travel from your backyard to a reservoir, aquifer, or river? When rain or snow falls, it either soaks into the soil or runs downhill, carrying with it traces of whatever has been applied to your landscape—pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, and more.

At least half of U.S. households use pesticides or fertilizers in their yards. Pollution carried by stormwater runoff from places like backyards, parks, fields, parking lots, and streets is known as “non-point source pollution” and is one of the leading causes of water-quality decline affecting drinking water, recreation, fisheries, and wildlife habitat.

Fortunately, there are many alternatives to chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Simple homemade options like vinegar or pepper sprays can be effective, and natural fertilizers such as compost and manure are among the best available. Your local nursery or an organic gardening guide can help you explore safer, sustainable choices.

Water Conservation



Nevada County relies on rain and snow, most of which falls between late October and March, to supply drinking water year-round. Historically, precipitation patterns and water-use records helped predict future water availability. However, recent changes in snowpack, rainfall, and temperature show that these patterns are no longer reliable.

More precipitation is now falling as rain instead of snow, and warmer temperatures cause the remaining snow to melt earlier and faster. As a result, our water supply is becoming less predictable. Droughts are expected to occur more frequently, reducing long-term water availability and creating new challenges for water supply reliability, especially during extended dry periods.

One of the most effective ways to support our watershed's health is simple: use less water. Small daily changes add up.

Water-Saving Tips

Inside the Home

- **Fix leaking pipes** and faucets. A single drip per second wastes 2,700 gallons per year.
- **Test toilets** for leaks by adding food coloring to the tank. If color appears in the bowl within 30 minutes, the toilet is leaking—potentially wasting 200 gallons a day.
- **Turn off the tap** while brushing teeth or shaving, or install a flip on/off aerator.
- **Install low-flow showerheads** to save up to 40 gallons per shower.
- **Run dishwashers and washing machines** only when full.
- **Choose short showers** over baths. Baths use 30–50 gallons; showers use about 5 gallons per minute, less with a flow restrictor.
- **Fill the second sink basin** for rinsing instead of letting water run when washing dishes by hand.
- **Collect warm-up water** from sinks or showers in a bucket to use for plants or pets.
- **Consider installing a hot-water recirculation system,** which can save up to 15,000 gallons annually.

Outside the Home

- **Water lawns and gardens** during the coolest part of the day.
- **Use drip irrigation** to deliver water slowly and directly to plant roots.
- **Collect rainwater** from gutters in barrels for landscape use.
- **Wash cars with a bucket and hose nozzle**. A running hose can waste over 100 gallons during a single wash.
- **Choose native or drought-tolerant plants** for landscaping.
- **Reduce chemical fertilizers and pesticides** that can leach into groundwater.

Water Regulations

Nevada County's emergency drought declaration and the Nevada Irrigation District's Rules and Regulations are intended to prevent water waste. Examples of year-round water-use restrictions include:

- No outdoor watering between 10:00 AM and 6:00 PM.
- No outdoor watering during rain or within 48 hours afterward.
- Washing driveways and sidewalks is prohibited unless needed for health or safety.
- Vehicles may only be washed with a hose fitted with a shutoff nozzle.
- Potable water may not be used in decorative fountains unless the water is recirculated.
- Hotels and motels must offer guests the option to decline daily towel and linen laundering.
- No irrigation with potable water on ornamental turf in public street medians.
- Irrigation of landscapes around newly constructed buildings must comply with California Building Standards Commission and Department of Housing and Community Development requirements.

Septic Care

A failing septic system can release raw sewage into the environment, contaminating nearby streams, ponds, and drinking-water wells. Poor maintenance often leads to costly repairs, and surfacing sewage can expose your family and pets to harmful bacteria and viruses.

Septic System Guidelines

- Never pour paints, varnishes, thinners, pesticides, or other hazardous chemicals into your septic system. These materials move through the soil and into the watershed.
- Do not flush coffee grounds, diapers, kitty litter, sanitary products, grease, paper towels, or other items that can clog the system.
- Fix leaking faucets and running toilets, and run dishwashers and washing machines only when full. This prevents oversaturating the drain field and helps the soil filter pollutants effectively.
- Inspect your septic system annually to ensure it's functioning properly and to determine when pumping is needed.
- Pump your tank every 3 to 5 years, depending on tank size and household use.
- Repair or service your system promptly if it is leaking, malfunctioning, or showing signs of failure.



Native Plants

Recommended	
Western Redbud	Cercis Occidentalis
Interior Live Oak	Quercus agrifolia
Mountain Mahogany	Cercocarpus betuloides

Shrubs	
Evergreen Currant	Ribes viburnifolium
Golden Currant	Ribes aureum
Fuchsia-flowering Gooseberry	Ribes speciosum
Holly-Leaf Cherry	Prunus ilicifornica
Wild Lilac	Ceanothus
Coffeeberry	Rhamnus californica
Silk Tassel	Garrya elliptica & fremontii
Coyote Brush (well maintained)	Baccharis pilularis
California Wild Rose	Rosa Californica
Yucca	Yucca whipplei

Perennials	
Yarrow	Acheillea millefolium
Coral Bells	Heuchera micrantha
Monkey Flower	Mimulus
Beard Tongue	Penstemon heterophyllus
Royal Beard Tongue	Penstemon spectabilis
California White and Blue Sage	Salvia leucophylla & mellifera
Purple and Black Sage	Salvia leucophylla & mellifera
Hummingbird Sage	Salvia sathacea
California Fuchsia	Zauschenira californica
Blue & Yellow-Eyed Grasses	Sisyrinchium bellum & californica
California Poppy	Eschscholzia californica
Matilija Poppy	Romneya coulteri
Western Columbine	Aquilegia formosa

Ground Covers	
Creeping Oregon Grape	Mahonia repens
Prostrate Wild Lilac	Ceanothus griseus horizontails
Stonecrop	Sedum spathufolium
Sonoma Sage	Salvia sonomensis

Native & Drought Tolerant Plants



Droughts are a fact of life in California. Here in Nevada County, most of us rely on our snowpack to meet our daily water needs. The snowpack acts as a natural reservoir to hold winter precipitation until it later runs off as stream flow into our reservoirs.

Native & Drought-Tolerant Plants

Planting low-maintenance native or drought-tolerant trees, shrubs, and perennials reduces water use, lowers fire risk, and minimizes the need for pesticides and fertilizers. Native plants are naturally adapted to local soils and climate, making them more resilient and more resistant to pests.

Noxious weeds and Landscaping

Noxious weeds are non-native plants that spread aggressively and become serious pests. An example of one of the most problematic weeds in Western Nevada County is Yellow Star Thistle, a spiny plant that is poisonous to horses. Its deep, thirsty roots outcompete native plants for water, and its enormous seed production allows it to spread rapidly.

When weeds like Yellow Star Thistle take over, they displace desirable vegetation, degrade ecosystems, and reduce wildlife habitat, livestock forage, and native wildflower displays. They thrive in disturbed areas such as roadsides, overgrazed pastures, and construction sites, and can spread through vehicles, equipment, contaminated hay or straw, and even soil moved from one place to another. Some invasive plants are still sold as ornamentals, making awareness even more important. Preventing weed spread is far easier and less costly than controlling established infestations. Early detection and removal help protect the landscape and reduce the need for herbicides.

What You Can Do

- Plant only non-invasive species. The California Native Plant Society (www.cnps.org) provides lists of safe options.
- Remove weed seeds from clothing, gear, and pets after visiting infested areas. Store seeds in a paper bag until they can be safely burned.
- Drive only on established roads and trails. Clean soil and plant material from tires before leaving an infested area.
- Ask suppliers for certified weed-free hay and straw.
- Practice good land management as healthy native vegetation helps resist weed invasion.
- Pull weeds manually as soon as they appear.
- Report infestations to landowners or land-management agencies.
- Join local volunteer eradication efforts through your Resource Conservation District or Noxious Weed Alliance (www.cdfa.ca.gov).

Many other noxious weeds occur in our area, including Spotted Knapweed, Bull Thistle, Italian Thistle, St. Johnswort, Scotch Broom, and Spanish Broom. For more information and a digital copy of our invasive weed booklet, visit:

- www.ncrcd.org/index.php/resources-and-links/weeds/
- https://www.ncrcd.org/invasive-species
- www.cdfa.ca.gov/wma



Soil Care & Conservation



Healthy soil is essential for a healthy environment. Poor soil quality contributes to the spread of non-native weeds, increased erosion, sediment in streams and lakes, reduced land productivity, and a weakened water cycle, which can lead to lower spring and well levels. Rising weed infestations, erosion, and declining groundwater are all signs of declining soil health.

Good soil care includes avoiding compaction and excessive tilling, protecting topsoil from erosion, and increasing organic matter through compost, cover crops, and mulching. Ensure plants have adequate water, nutrients, and air so they can grow strong and support a resilient landscape.

Guidelines

- Protect cut-and-fill slopes with stabilizing materials such as vegetation, fiber cloth, straw, riprap, gabions, or retaining walls.
- Install culverts in accordance with local, regional, and California State Code standards.
- Maintain healthy vegetative ground cover in riparian areas.
- Divert water away from driveways and pathways to prevent gully erosion; water bars can be used where appropriate.
- Minimize soil disturbance and preserve existing vegetative cover.
- Avoid removing naturally fallen pine needles whenever possible.
- Clean or remove unwanted debris, especially human-caused debris, from riparian areas.

Re-vegetate any bare or disturbed soil with grass seed, native plants, and mulch. The best time to do this is between October 15 and November 15.

For more information on building healthy soil and understanding soil ecology, visit:

- Soil Biology Primer: an overview of ecological processes in soil: www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/site/soils/home/

- Managing Wholes: information on “brittle” vs. “non-brittle” environments and land management for ecological, social, and financial benefit: www.managingwholes.com

Common Nevada County Conifers

Beech Family	Birch Family	Buckthorn Family	Citrus Family
Tan Oak, Scrub Oak, Blue Oak,Oregon Oak, California Oak, Interior Live Oak	Grey Alder, White Alder	Tobacco brush, Whithorn hybrid, Cascara	Western hoptree
Cypress Family	**Dogwood Family**	**Heath Family**	**Laurel Family**
Incense Cedar, McNab Cypress, Western Juniper	Brown Dogwood, Miners Dogwood	Pacific Madrone, Sticky Whiteleaf, Manzanita	Califonria Bay Laurel
Olive Family	**Pea Family**	**Pine Family**	**Rose Family**
California Foot Ash, Oregon Ash	Western Redbud	White Fir, Red Fir, Whitebark Pine, KnobCone Pine, Jeffrey Pine, Sugar, Pine, Western White Pine, Western Yellow Pine, California Foothill Pine,	Birchleaf Mountain, Mahogany, Desert Mountain Mahogany, Desert Peach, Bitter Cherry, Kalamath Plum, Chokecherry
Soapberry	**Walnut Family**	**Willow Family**	**Yew Family**
Rocky Mountain Maple, Bigleaf Maple, California Buckeye	Southern California, Black Walnut, Northern California Black Walnut	Fremont's Cottonwood, Quaking Aspen, Black Cottonwood, Red Willow, Pacific Willow, Arroyo Willow, Sandbar Willow, Goddings Black Willow, Shining Willow, Dusky Willow, Coulter's Willow	Pacific Yew, Californnia Nutmeg





Forest Land Management

Land Ownership Responsibilities

Nevada County offers many beautiful properties, and if you move onto one it's important to remember that you're not only a landowner, you're also a steward of the land, and that comes with important responsibilities. Property owners are required to follow local forest land management best-practices and fire-resilience regulations, which means that proper maintenance your land is essential.



Forest Land Management

Nevada County is home to more than 65 native tree species. If your property includes forested areas, it's important to understand how water, disease, thinning, and fire risk affect woodland health.

A good starting point is to contact the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) or hire a private forester. CAL FIRE works to sustain California's natural resources by:

- Administering state and federal forestry assistance programs
- Demonstrating sound management practices on state forests
- Enforcing the California Forest Practice Act on non-federal timberlands
- Providing research and public education on forest pests such as Sudden Oak Death and bark beetles
- Coordinating fire-hazard-reduction efforts to lower wildfire risk and improve ecosystem health

Removing most conifers requires a state-issued permit, prepared by a Registered Professional Forester (RPF).

Care of California's Native Oaks



Common diseases in irrigated settings include crown rot and oak root fungus, which cause reduced vigor, twig die-back, yellowing leaves, and bark lesions with dark oozing. Treatment includes removing irrigated plants from the RPZ, improving drainage, and avoiding summer watering.

Mistletoe, a parasitic plant, can weaken branches and increase breakage risk. Small infestations can be pruned out; larger ones require an arborist.

Because oak woodlands often overlap with rangeland, landowners may also need guidance from a Certified Range Manager or RPF, depending on the project.

Young native oaks are hardy and adaptable, but mature oaks are sensitive to changes in their environment. They evolved in cool, wet winters and hot, dry summers, so homeowners should strive to maintain conditions similar to their natural habitat.

A key rule is to protect the root protection zone (RPZ), an area extending from the trunk to 1.5 times the drip line. Disturbing this zone can weaken or kill a mature oak.

To protect your oaks:

- Maintain natural drainage and avoid filling, trenching, or paving within the RPZ.
- Avoid summer irrigation in the root zone; excess moisture can smother roots and promote fungal diseases.
- If an oak appears stressed, consult a certified arborist. Excessive pruning can harm or kill the tree.
- For management involving more than a few trees, consult a Registered Professional Forester or certified arborist, as required by California law.



Fire Hazzard Reduction



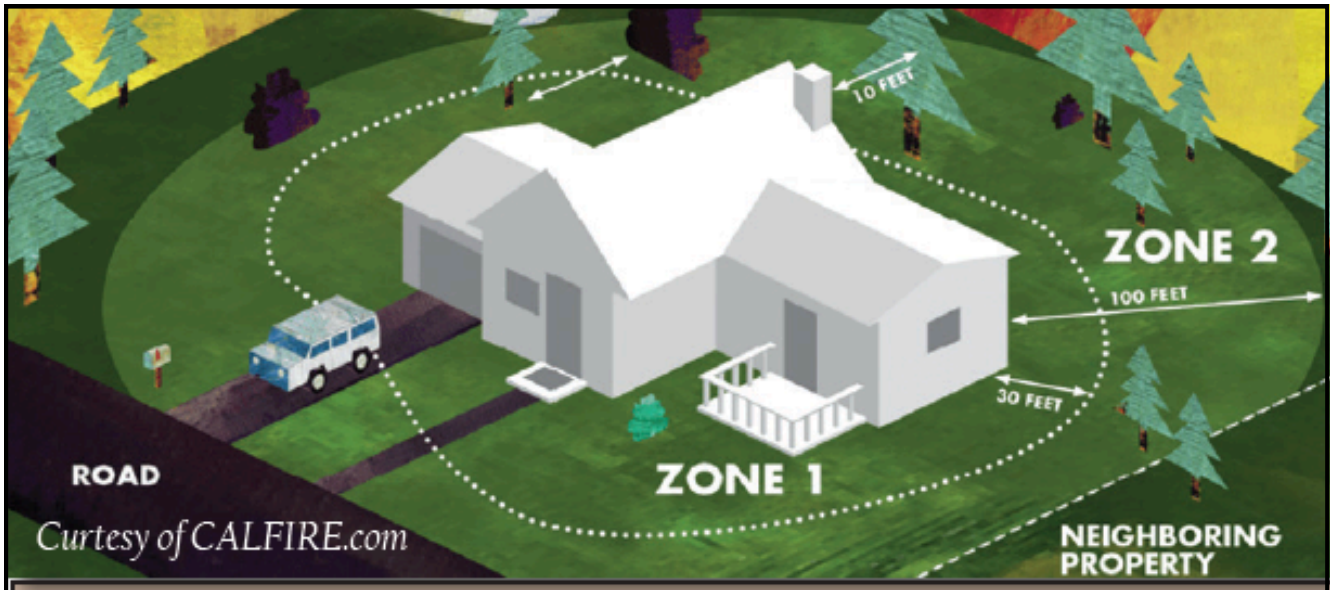
Nevada County lies within a Mediterranean climate, marked by hot, dry summers and cold, wet winters. Neither season creates conditions favorable for the rapid fungal decay of dead forest material. As a result, fallen branches, needles, and other debris steadily accumulate on the forest floor. Historically, natural events such as lightning-caused fires and volcanic activity periodically reduced this buildup.

For roughly 12,000 years, Native American communities used intentional burning to complement nature's cleansing processes. From the foothills up to about 5,000 feet in elevation, each acre typically burned every seven to fifteen years. These frequent, low-intensity fires prevented dense thickets of young trees and brush from forming and maintained separation between ground fuels and tree canopies. As a result, historic forests generally consisted of widely spaced stands of about 60 to 90 trees per acre—four to five times less dense than many forests today.

As Euro-American settlement expanded westward, accidental fires became more common. The establishment of the U.S. Forest Service in 1906, followed by the adoption of strict wildfire suppression policies, aimed to protect lives and property. However, these well-intentioned policies unintentionally allowed forest fuels to accumulate dramatically and forest densities to increase. Since the onset of fire suppression, much of the Sierra Nevada has missed five to ten natural fuel-reducing fire cycles.

Nevada County's past also includes cattle ranchers and sheep herders who drove their livestock into the high Sierra for summer grazing. In the fall, as they moved their herds downslope, they often ignited fires behind them. These periodic burns maintained grasses and forbs in upland meadows, prevented lodgepole pine and other species from encroaching, and rejuvenated brushlands. Fire consumed older, unproductive vegetation and replaced it with fresh, nutritious growth from sprouts and newly germinated seeds.

Defensible Space



DEFENSIBLE SPACE *Recommended spacing of trees and bushes based on steepness of slope*			
SLOPE	0-20%	20-40%	+40%
Shrubs*	2x	4x	12x
Trees	10′	20′	40′

Remember: Clearing need not be bare mineral soil for entire 100 feet. To learn how to properly create defensible space: www.fire.ca.gov/dspace

Key Resources

Know your Evacuation Zone
www.nevadacountyca.gov/3223/Evacuation-Zones
In the event of a wildfire or an emergency situation, law enforcement and fire agencies issue evacuation warnings or evacuation orders for impacted areas. These notices are issued for a Zone with an evacuation Status.

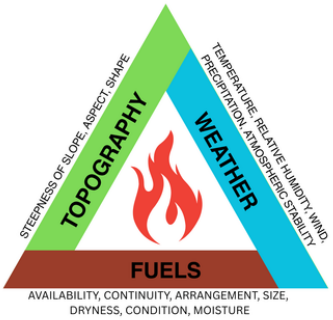
Sign Up for Nevada County Alerts
www.nevadacountyca.gov/4140/Ready-Nevada-County
Nevada County Alerts is an opt-in notification system used by the County of Nevada to notify residents in an emergency. These alerts may be received as text, email, landline, cell phone, and TTY. Message and data rates may apply to sent and/or received texts.

Ready Set Go
www.nevadacountyca.gov/2777/Ready
This on-line resource will be your guide to being prepared and ready for wildfire. READY: is your home ready? SET: are your friends, family, and neighbors set and prepared? GO: do you know where to go? Get familiar with the Fire Safe Council of Nevada County: www.areyoufiresafe.com/

Additional Preparation for Fire Season

The Sierra Nevada's Mediterranean climate, hot, dry summers followed by cold, wet winters, creates conditions where fire is a natural and inevitable force. With a constant potential for ignition and fuels that reach extreme dryness by late summer, the region becomes a fire-adapted ecosystem. When high-wind events occur during these dry periods, the system behaves like a fire-adapted landscape intensified many times over.

Fire depends on the three elements of the Fire Triangle: heat, oxygen, and fuel. Remove any one of these components and the fire goes out. Heat initiates combustion, oxygen sustains it, and fuel—when dry enough—allows it to continue burning.



Personal Preparedness

- Prepare a Grab & Go bag for every family member and pet.
- Plan your evacuation route in advance and ensure everyone knows it.
- Make sure your address is clearly visible from the road in all weather conditions.
- Keep a two-week supply of water, candles, non-perishable food, and essential medications.
- Store cash, along with your bank and insurance information, in an easily accessible place and/or digitally.

FIRE Then vs. FIRE Now

Historically, forest fires in the Sierra were typically low-intensity. They often burned large areas, but flames stayed close to the ground and temperatures remained moderate. Wildlife could usually escape, and the fires helped maintain healthy forest structure.

Modern wildfires, however, can reach extreme intensities. Flames may tower high above the forest floor, and temperatures can soar to 3,000°F—hot enough to melt metal. These fires can travel 20 miles in a single day and are capable of sterilizing soils, leaving behind landscapes that struggle to recover.

Ground Fires

Ground fires burn slowly beneath the forest floor, smoldering through roots, duff, and buried organic material. While they can flare up into surface fires under the right conditions, they more commonly follow fast-moving fires, consuming what remains below. Ground fires are generally easier to control than large surface or crown fires, but they can persist for long periods and reignite surface fuels.

Crown Fires

Crown fires leap from treetop to treetop, with flames reaching anywhere from five to over 200 feet high. They are the most dramatic and deadly type of wildfire. Driven primarily by wind, crown fires are extremely difficult to control and pose the greatest threat to life, property, and forest ecosystems.

Ignition Sources (Heat)
Accidental ignitions and arson can be reduced but never fully eliminated. Because of this, the “heat” side of the fire triangle will always remain present. Prevention efforts can lower the number of ignitions, but they cannot remove the risk entirely.

Oxygen
Water and fire retardant temporarily coat fuels, reducing heat and limiting oxygen access. However, large fires can consume so much oxygen that they generate powerful inflow winds—essentially creating their own weather. In major wind-driven fires, attempts to remove the oxygen component of the fire triangle have only limited effectiveness.

Fuel
Continuous, unbroken fuels on the forest floor allow wildfires to spread rapidly. Reducing available fuel is one of the most effective ways to decrease fire severity and improve firefighting success. Every landowner can influence this leg of the fire triangle by reducing accumulated vegetation and maintaining ongoing fuel-management programs.

Fire Weather
Local and regional storm winds typically arrive from the south to southwest. Understanding the orientation of south/southwest and east/northeast bearings helps landowners anticipate the direction of high-wind events that can rapidly intensify wildfire behavior.

The Changed Sierra Landscape
Nearly every forested acre in the Sierra Nevada looks dramatically different from its historical condition. Once dominated by older, widely spaced conifers with open understories, today’s forests are filled with smaller, densely packed trees and thick layers of brush. This shift has increased fire risk and reduced forest resilience.

Crown Fires (Reiterated)
Modern crown fires remain the most spectacular and lethal of all wildfire types. Their wind-driven nature and towering flames make them exceptionally challenging to fight and devastating to forests and communities.

Beetle Invasions
Bark beetles have flourished in today’s unnaturally dense forests. In some areas of the Tahoe Basin, beetles have killed up to 33 percent of trees, and in the San Bernardino and San Jacinto Mountains, nearly half of all pines are dead. Overcrowded forests leave trees stressed and unable to produce enough sap to defend against beetle attacks—even in wet years. During drought, their vulnerability increases dramatically.

Introduced Plant Species
California is home to roughly 6,600 native plant species, but humans have introduced about 1,400 non-native species. Today, non-native grasses dominate many meadows and grasslands. Yellow Star Thistle blankets foothill landscapes, Himalayan Blackberry chokes riparian corridors, and Scotch Broom spreads aggressively throughout foothill and Sierra environments.

Over the past 50 years, rapid development has transformed rangeland and timberland into subdivisions. Tens of thousands of homes now occupy foothill and forested areas, fragmenting habitat for native wildlife. Increased roads, fences, and infrastructure further degrade ecosystems. Domestic dogs and cats (well-fed, efficient predators) have added pressure on native species such as ground-nesting birds, rabbits, voles, lizards, and other small animals at the base of the food chain.

The Wildland–Urban Interface
Living among dense forests without proper thinning and maintenance has proven deadly. More than 8 million people now reside in the wildland-urban interface, facing significant wildfire risk. With California expected to add another 6 million residents in the next 15 years, the danger will continue to grow.

Long-Term Forest Resilience
It took decades for headwater forests to reach their current degraded state, and restoring resilience will also require many years. Yet short-term priorities, such as fire suppression or managing for threatened and endangered species, often dominate decision-making. Few regulations require planning for long-term forest health. Additionally, public concerns about air and water quality, wildlife habitat, scenic values, and recreation can limit landowners' ability to implement management actions that would yield long-term benefits.

Top Cause of Wildfire in the Foothills

Human Activity

Human activity is responsible for the majority of wildfires, causing approximately 85% of all wildfire ignitions. Common human-related causes include:

- Unattended campfires: Campfires that are not fully extinguished can quickly ignite nearby vegetation.
- Burn Piles: Burning leaves, branches, or other debris, especially during windy weather, can spread beyond control.
- Improperly discarded cigarettes: Cigarette butts tossed into dry grass or brush can start fires.
- Agricultural or construction equipment: Loose chains or metal parts dragging on roadways can create sparks that ignite dry vegetation.
- Mowing and weed-eating: Using lawn equipment at the wrong time of day or during hot, dry, or windy conditions can increase wildfire risk.

CAL FIRE Recommended Mowing Safety Guidelines

- Mow before 10 a.m. when temperatures are cooler and humidity is typically higher.
- Avoid mowing during windy, hot, or extremely dry conditions. Sparks or heated equipment can easily ignite dry vegetation.
- Never mow dead or dry vegetation. Lawn mowers are intended for green lawns only.

Fuel and Equipment Safety

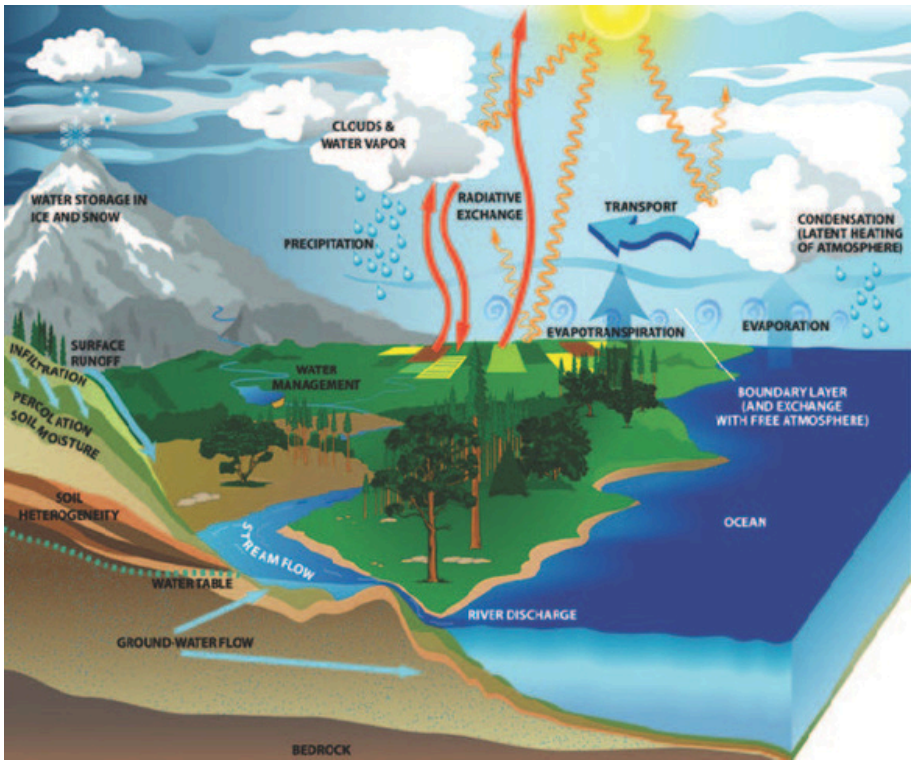
- Use spark arresters on gasoline-powered equipment such as mowers, weed-eaters, tractors, and similar tools in wildland areas.
- Keep equipment in good working condition, remove carbon buildup, and use the correct fuel grade.
- Watch for rocks, metal, and other hard objects. Metal blades striking rocks can create sparks.
- Avoid mowing, disking, or weed-eating in dry grass, weeds, or brush.
- Keep a water source nearby so you can quickly extinguish sparks or small ignitions.

Air Quality

Air Quality in the Western Sierra Foothills

Although we live in a region that appears relatively pristine, air quality has become an increasingly important concern in the Western Sierra foothills. As pollution levels worsen in the Bay Area and the Sacramento Valley, the foothills often experience the downwind effects. Poor air quality not only threatens human health but can also harm local ecosystems.

Nearly 60 percent of the air pollution in our region comes from cars and trucks. Additional contributors include off-road vehicles, watercraft, lawn and garden equipment, wood stoves and fireplaces, outdoor burning, fossil-fuel-based power generation, industrial emissions, consumer products, and wildfires.
Indoor air quality also plays a major role in overall health. Smoking, certain cleaning products, mold, and the off-gassing of paint, furniture, and carpeting all contribute to reduced indoor air quality.



What You Can Do

Avoid using wood stoves, pellet stoves, or fireplaces on days when air quality is poor.
If you do use a wood stove, pellet stove, or fireplace insert, ensure it is EPA-approved and that the catalytic converter is functioning properly.

Choose low-VOC or no-VOC (Volatile Organic Compounds) products whenever possible.
Use a brush instead of a sprayer when painting to reduce airborne particulates.
Drive slowly on unpaved roads to minimize dust pollution.

Energy Conservation

Choosing Green Energy

Choosing green energy is one of the most effective ways to protect your health while reducing your contribution to global warming. Green energy comes from renewable sources—sun, wind, water, biomass, and geothermal. These sources produce very little pollution and, unlike nuclear power, leave no radioactive waste.

Steps You Can Take

Improve Home Efficiency

- Consider scheduling a comprehensive home energy audit.
- Check insulation in the attic, basement, and walls. Note the age and condition of heating and cooling systems, appliances, windows, and water heaters.
- Wrap your water heater with an insulating jacket.
- Set your water heater thermostat to 120°F.
- Turn off lights when leaving a room.
- Set thermostats to 68°F in winter when home, and 55°F when sleeping or away.
- Use energy-saving settings on washing machines, dryers, dishwashers, and refrigerators.
- Avoid wasting water—hot or cold—indoors and outdoors.
- Clean refrigerator condenser coils once a year.
- Air-dry clothes when possible.
- Close heating vents in unused rooms.
- Repair leaky faucets and toilets (about 5% of household water use is leakage).
- Close drapes and windows during hot summer days, and after sunset in winter.
- Install 2.5-gallon-per-minute water-saving showerheads.
- Install water-efficient faucet heads in kitchens and bathrooms.
- Install programmable thermostats.
- Seal and Insulate
- In attics and basements, plug air leaks and replace or re-putty broken window panes.
- Clean or replace air filters on heating systems in winter and on air conditioners in summer.
- Insulate the first three feet of hot and cold water pipes.
- Seal and insulate warm-air heating or cooling ducts.
- Add insulating window shades or install storm windows. In hot climates, shade sunny windows or apply solar-control films.
- Insulate hot-water pipes in unheated basements or crawl spaces.
- Choose energy efficient products

Improve Home Efficiency

- Buy energy-efficient appliances. ENERGY STAR products automatically power down when not in use.
- Use energy-efficient lighting, such as indoor compact fluorescents, and install motion sensors or solar lights outdoors.
- Recycle and choose recycled products whenever possible.
- Explore Renewable Options
- Consider installing solar panels, wind systems, or micro-hydro power if feasible for your property.
- Reduce Transportation Emissions
- Carpool or use public transportation whenever possible.
- When purchasing a new vehicle, consider hybrid, electric, or alternative-fuel options.
- Get Support

Contact your State Energy Office or local utility companies for information on rebates, incentives, and energy-saving programs.

Recycling

Become a Practicing Conservationist

The United States is often described as one of the most wasteful nations on Earth. Whether or not that reputation is fully deserved, conserving resources and reusing materials whenever possible is a practice that pays real dividends. Thoughtful conservation reduces environmental impact, saves money, and helps preserve natural resources for future generations. It's an effort well worth making.

County Public Works & Planning

For details of recyclables, hazardous materials:
https://nevadacountyca.gov/4079/Household-Hazardous-Waste

Nevada County Recycling Services

https://nevadacountyca.gov/4267/What-Goes-Where

Nevada County Green Waste

https://nevadacountyca.gov/4267/What-Goes-Where



Living with Wildlife

Coexisting With Wildlife

As the world becomes increasingly urbanized, wildlife habitat continues to shrink. Here in Nevada County, living alongside wildlife requires understanding animal behavior, reducing conflicts, and creating an environment that supports healthy coexistence.

The future of many wildlife populations may depend on our willingness to adapt. Peaceful coexistence is possible, and often simple. For example, instead of using illegal traps or firearms that could kill a mother bear and leave cubs orphaned, inexpensive motion-detector alarms or spray deterrents can effectively discourage hungry bears. Secure garbage in barns or storage sheds; even simple closures like carabiners can prevent a bear from getting inside.

The same principle applies to livestock. Protect animals by securing them in sturdy, covered shelters at night. To deter skunks or other burrowing animals from settling under your home, place mothballs in potential bedding areas. Keep your property and vehicles clean, and remove anything that could serve as a food source.

Encourage natural pest control by installing owl or bird houses to attract species that help manage rodent populations. Teach your family how to avoid mountain lions—most encounters occur at dawn or dusk. When hiking, make noise as you walk and carry bear spray, which is also effective against mountain lions. Never approach or feed wild animals, and keep a close eye on small children. Living in a rural area means wildlife is always nearby, but with thoughtful actions, peaceful coexistence is both achievable and worthwhile.

California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW)

The mission of the California Department of Fish and Wildlife is to manage the state's diverse fish, wildlife, and plant resources—and the habitats they depend on—for their ecological value and for public enjoyment. More information: www.wildlife.ca.gov

Animal Ownership

Thinking About Adding Animals to Your Land?

Before taking that step, take time to consider the ongoing responsibilities: monthly expenses, feed, bedding, pasture seeding, veterinary care, proper housing, and the daily time commitment. In many cases, the rewards outweigh the costs. Farm animals can help control pests naturally, enrich soil through composting, and even provide surprisingly enjoyable companionship.

Before bringing animals home, review local regulations. Check your area's County Ordinances and explore the My Neighborhood Map to understand what is allowed where you live: www.mynevadacounty.com/580/My-Neighborhood-Map

	*ZONE: AG, AE, FR, REC, IDR, PD, TPZ, P&OS	RA	R1, R2, R3	COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL DISTRICTS
LARGE ANIMALS	NO LIMIT		NOT ALLOWED	
SMALL ANIMALS	NO LIMIT			
DOGS/CATS	NO LIMIT		NOT MORE THAN 3	
GAME FOWL, POULTRY & RABBITS	NO LIMIT		NOT ALLOWED	
BACKYARD CHICKENS	NO LIMIT*		NOT ALLOWED ON R1 & R3	
	OK ON 1/2 ACRE*		NOT ALLOWED ON R2 & R3	
CHICKENS R1 & RA	6,000 SQ. FT - 4 CHICKENS* 10,000 SQ. FT - 6 CHICKENS* 20,000 SQ. FT - 12 CHICKENS*			
AVIARIES	NO LIMIT			
APIARIES *COMMERCIAL: CALL COUNTY AG DEPT. FOR MORE INFO: 530-470-2690*	NO LIMIT	NOT MORE THAN 20 COLONIES PER ACRE		NOT ALLOWED
CHINCHILLAS MINKS & SIMILAR SIZE	NO LIMIT		NOT ALLOWED	
WILD, EXOTIC, OR NON-DOMESTIC	USE PERMIT		NOT ALLOWED	
WILDLIFE REHAB FACILITIES	ADMINISTRATIVE PERMIT		NOT ALLOWED	

For more detailed and specific information, visit www.nevadacountyca.gov/580/My-Neighborhood-Map. Nevada County uses several zoning designations, each defining how land may be used. Common codes include **AG** for General Agriculture, **AE** for Agriculture Exclusive, **FR** for Forestry Resource, **REC** for Recreation, **IDR** for Interim Development Reserve, and **PD** for Planned Development Base District. Additional designations include **TPZ** for Timberland Production Zone and **P&OS** for Public and Open Space District. Understanding these codes will help you determine what activities, structures, and land uses are permitted on your property.

Community Information

Find information about the many departments and services offered by Nevada County—including permitting, animal control, property zoning, taxes, maps, and opportunities to get more involved in your community—by visiting the county's online resources.

Nevada County Website
www.mynevadacounty.com

Nevada County Ag Commissioner
Wildlife concerns and information, weights and measures, consumer protection, agriculture advisory commission, farmer resources, environmental protection, crop reports, pesticide use and safety.
www.nevadacountyca.gov/982/Agricultural-Commissioner

My Neighborhood Interactive Map
With the My Neighborhood map application, you can select individual parcels and obtain parcel-based data such as addresses, assessor's parcel map districting, representatives, valuation, and zoning.
www.maps.nevadacountyca.gov/myneighborhood/

Local Emergency Services
The Office of Emergency Services (OES) is responsible for coordinating with County departments, local cities, and special districts to prevent, protect, mitigate, respond to, and recover from disasters.
www.nevadacountyca.gov/3453/Ready-Nevada-County

Nevada County Farm Advisor
The Farm Advisor Division provides information and training to local residents in the areas of agriculture, nutrition, youth and community development.
www.nevadacountyca.gov/1660/Farm-Advisor-Division

Bear Yuba Land Trust
Protecting scenic open space and working lands forever.
www.bylt.org

Master Gardeners
Master Gardeners provide home gardeners in Nevada County with science-based gardening practices and education.
www.cmg.ucanr.edu/index.cfm

Community Information

Nevada Irrigation District
The District will provide a dependable, high-quality water supply for the communities we serve.
www.nidwater.com

Nevada County Resource Conservation District
Our mission is to promote responsible resource management within our jurisdiction through education leadership, technical and financial assistance, and project facilitation.
www.ncrcd.org

Nevada County Farm Bureau
Nevada County Farm Bureau is a membership organization where all county residents interested in ranching, farming and agriculture have the opportunity to join together, stay informed and have a voice managing our agricultural resources. Farm Bureau is dedicated to improving the economic well-being of its members and the lives of rural residents.
www.nevadacountyfarmbureau.com

Nevada County Resource Conservation Service (USDA)
USDA Grants and Technical Assistance Funding for Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production
www.nrcs.usda.gov

Sierra Harvest
Sierra Harvest's mission is transforming lives and strengthening community through fresh, local, seasonal food.
www.sierraharvest.org

4H
4-H helps young people to reach their full potential as competent, confident, leaders of character who contribute and are connected to their communities..
www.ucanr.edu/sites/nevadacounty4h/

UC Cooperative Extension Placer / Nevada
Cooperative Extension was established in Placer and Nevada Counties in 1917
www.ucanr.edu/sites/nevadacounty/

Living in Snow Country

Winter in Nevada County always brings the possibility of snow, with elevations ranging from about 1,000 feet to more than 7,000 feet near the Summit and Sierra Crest. During snowfall, the Roads Department prioritizes plowing on county-maintained roads, aiming to keep them passable and as free of snow and ice as possible. Most routes are plowed at least once every 12 hours, and during major storms the department often operates around the clock, seven days a week, continuing through the cleanup phase.



For those living on private roads, it's important to arrange snowplow services in advance to ensure driveways and access routes remain open. In cases of significant storm damage, neighbors may find it helpful to coordinate tree and debris removal efforts, as private road maintenance is the responsibility of the property owners who use them. It's also wise to keep essential vendor contacts on hand—such as propane service, emergency tree service, snowplow operators, telecommunications providers, firewood suppliers, and insurance agents.

Drive carefully in winter conditions and **report hazards on county-maintained roads by emailing public.works@nevadacountyca.gov or calling (530) 265-1411**; crews are on call after hours for urgent issues. **Nevada County Sanitation District** customers can report **emergencies 24/7 at (530) 265-1555**. **Downed power** lines should be reported immediately by **calling 9-1-1, as well as PG&E at 1-800-743-5000** or the **Truckee Public Utility District at (530) 587-3896.** Never approach or touch a downed line—always assume it is energized and extremely dangerous.

For additional winter safety information and preparedness tips, visit https://www.readynevadacounty.org/2649/Living-in-Snow-Country

The Nevada County Resource Conservation District (NCRCD) is part of California's network of Resource Conservation Districts, which are authorized under Division 9 of the Public Resources Code. RCDs are special districts of the state, established to operate as locally governed agencies with independently appointed or elected boards of directors. Across California, RCDs work on both public and private lands to implement conservation projects and to educate landowners and the broader community about natural resource stewardship.

Nevada County Resource Conservation District (NCRCD)
113 Presley Way, Suite 1, Grass Valley, CA 95945
www.ncrcd.org
(530) 798-5529



Nevada County AG Commissioner
950 Maidu Ave, Nevada City, CA 95959
www.nevadacountyca.gov
(530) 470-2690

The Nevada County Agricultural Commissioner's Office is committed to supporting a healthy and thriving agricultural industry while safeguarding the environment, the agricultural workforce, and the broader community. In addition, the Department of Weights & Measures works to ensure fairness and equity in the marketplace by protecting both buyers and sellers through education, inspection, and enforcement. Together, these departments help maintain the integrity, safety, and sustainability of Nevada County's agricultural and commercial systems.California's network of Resource Conservation Districts, which are authorized under Division 9 of the Public Resources Code. RCDs are special districts of the state, established to operate as locally governed agencies with independently appointed or elected boards of directors. Across California, RCDs work on both public and private lands to implement conservation projects and to educate landowners and the broader community about natural resource stewardship.