



United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

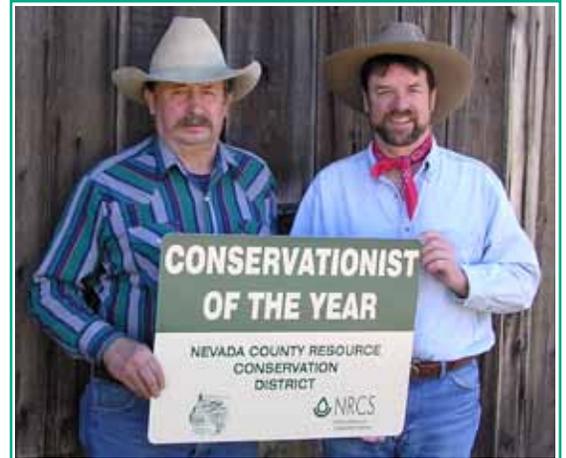
helping people help the land Reader Ranch

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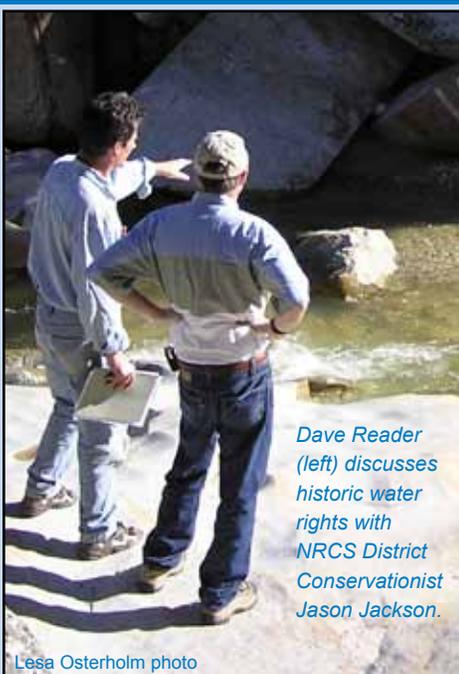
— **Lesla Osterholm,**
Nevada County Resource
Conservation District Manager

In 1854, the great-grandfather of **John Reader** and **Fred Langdon** settled some land above the south fork of the Yuba River, and five generations later, they are proud to still work the property.

The brothers manage Reader Ranch, a 1,000 acre cattle operation near Nevada City, Calif. They run cattle there in the fall and spring. The family continues an old tradition of rounding up cows from winter and spring pasture in the Central Valley and then transport them to summer range in the mountains. Every September, they gather their cattle and spend three days on an old-fashioned cattle drive taking them home to the ranch. Some of Langdon’s and Reader’s other traditional practices, and a few technological innovations, have earned them Conservationist of the Year honors from the Nevada County Resource Conservation District (RCD).



Fred Langdon, left, and John Reader earned conservationist honors for their stewardship of natural resources. Lesla Osterholm Photo

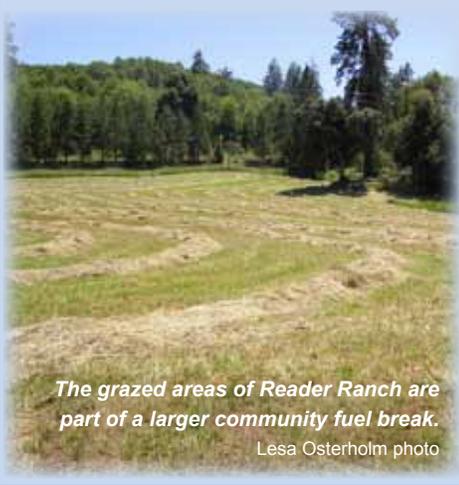


Dave Reader (left) discusses historic water rights with NRCS District Conservationist Jason Jackson.

Lesla Osterholm photo

Some of the Reader family’s range management practices, such as prescribed burning, were discontinued in the early years of the environmental movement, Reader said. “Now the thinking is starting to go the other way. People see that we have created a fire buffer for most of Nevada County.”

The grazed areas of the ranch are part of a larger community fuel break and several catastrophic wildfires were stopped on this ranch due to regular livestock grazing. “They learned a long time ago to adjust their management strategies annually depending on grass growth and water availability,” said **Lesla Osterholm**, manager for the Nevada County RCD.



The grazed areas of Reader Ranch are part of a larger community fuel break.

Lesla Osterholm photo

The brothers follow burning with heavy seeding to improve the pastureland and reduce invasive non-native plants such as star-thistle, medusahead and Scotch broom.



Langdon and Reader observe one of their livestock watering facilities that protect water quality.

The Union/John Hart photo

With financing through the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service Environmental Quality Incentives Program, they have developed springs on the property, diverting water into a tank at each location and laying pipes to different parts of the ranch to get water to the cattle. The cows do not trample the springs, filling them with sediment, and the cattlemen can move the animals around with plentiful water sources, getting more efficient use of the rangeland.