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Hand in Hand with Enviros and Ranchers

Food Chain Radio Show #802 • December 22, 2012
Michael Olson hosts Sierra Foothills Conservancy
&
Sierra Lands Beef
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Can environmentalists and ranchers work together to make money and preserve the land?
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As the Hatfields and McCoys of the American West, environmentalists and ranchers are seldom seen walking the same side of the street.
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In fact, environmentalists and ranchers are traditional enemies because each side champions a different use for the land. Environmentalists want to preserve the land in its natural state; ranchers want to use the land to earn a living. There has not been much room in the middle for "just getting along," and so the two communities have not been just getting along.
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Since the environmental community is backed by the city, with all its votes and dollars, it has been able to purchase large parcels of ranchlands throughout the West and set them aside as conservancies. But a funny thing happened on the way to preserving all that land: invasive species of plants moved in and took over the landscape.
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As the environmental community pondered what to do with all the weeds it was now conserving, someone put forth the idea of bringing back the ranchers and their animals to graze away the weeds. This suggestion leads us to ask…
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Can environmentalists and ranchers work together to make money and preserve the environment?