

REWILDING THE LAND

RESTORATION-EDUCATION-COLLABORATION

Wildlife Conservation Commission Grant Application

Description of Organization

1. Type of organization or business

Public Benefit Corporation

2. Purpose for which the organization was formed

Rewilding the Land (RWL) was formed to restore approximately 96 acres of degraded land in Pope Valley, including impaired ponds, a degraded creek system, and formerly terraced vineyard areas, into a functioning regenerative landscape. The site will integrate watershed restoration, habitat recovery, wildfire resilience, and nature-based education, serving as a living demonstration of climate resilience, biodiverse restoration, and community stewardship.

Through phased restoration and hands-on programming, the land will function as both an ecological asset and a place of learning, supporting long-term environmental health and deepening community connection to nature.

3. Tax-exempt status - Pending

4. Date formed as Non-profit - June 23, 2026

5. Membership: No Restrictions. No Members. No fees.

6. Names of Board of Directors

Briana Clark - Chair
605 Hill Road
Angwin, CA 94508
(707) 738-8224
Briana@rewildingtheland.org

Christine Waskowiak - Vice Chair
2909 Redwood Rd, Napa 94558
(707) 320-3513
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Kristin Belair - Treasure
2962 Sunrise Drive
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Mike Hackett - Member at Large
282 South White Cottage
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Vivian Wehner - Secretary
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Needs Assessment / Problem Statement

1. Clear statement of the problem

California faces increasing climate pressures, including prolonged drought, extreme weather variability, wildfires, and declining biodiversity. There is an urgent need for place-based, scalable models of land restoration and climate action that improve water retention, create wildfire resilience, rebuild habitat, and demonstrate regenerative land stewardship practices. Equally urgent is hands-on environmental education that connects youth to the natural world and builds their understanding of its need for protection.

These projects respond directly to that need by restoring ecological function at the site level, creating a replicable model for similar landscapes across the region, educating youth, and fostering long-term stewardship of wildlands.

2. Specific objective & specific dollar amount requested

Rewilding the Land will address three specific objectives in the hope of being awarded two grants. The objectives are:

1. Rewild a degraded vineyard and its surrounding forest, creek, and ponds to restore the site's natural biodiversity and increase wildfire resilience
2. Create an experiential environmental education and stewardship program for students in grades 3-8

3. Collaborate with the community, local experts, and volunteers to build a replicable model of environmental stewardship and climate resilience, providing ongoing experiences and education for community members

Location: Pope Valley California

Summary - Grant Request One - \$12,300

Execution of Pilot Youth Experiential Environmental Education; Grades 3-5

- Up to 50 students will be served in the initial year
- Partner schools are:
 - Howell Mountain Public School in Angwin - confirmed
 - Foothill Private School in Deer Park - to be confirmed
- The first year of the student program will:
 - begin in October 2026
 - end in June 2027.
- Students will participate two days per month
- Program will be augmented by their school science curriculum
- An additional summer program is to be determined.

Summary - Grant Request Two - \$20,000

Restoration of Prior Vineyard Land, Ponds and Creek

- In Pope Valley, CA - RWL will restore ecological function to a
 - 95-acre site
 - 16 acres of prior vineyard land
 - a creek and three ponds
- Create fire resilience in conjunction with CalFire and Firewise
 - Maintain fireroad access to Angwin
 - Remove downed trees
 - Increase back road awareness and access for firefighters
- Create a replicable model for similar landscapes across the region
- Schedule Ten Community Volunteer Workdays
 - Safety Training provided
 - Limit to ten volunteers per project
 - May execute more than one project at a time
- Foster wildlife:
 - Resilience
 - Biodiversity
 - Habitat restoration and protection
 - Long-term stewardship

Summary - Timeline

May 2026 through September 2026:

- Create Organizational Structure
- Build Base
 - Consult with Knowledgeable Organizations
 - Napa RCD
 - CDFW
 - Water Board
 - Firewise
 - Apply for required permits
 - Planning Commission
 - Water Board
 - Meet with adjacent programs: see, listen, learn, partner
 - Abuelitos - <https://www.abuelitosfoundation.org/todmostero@abuelitosfoundation.org>
 - Occidental Eco Center <https://oaec.org/who-we-are/about-oaec/>
 - Ag Innovations - Genevieve Taylor; genevieve@aginnovations.org
<https://aginnovations.org/about-us/ag-innovations-team/#toggle-id-2> - Upper Putah Creek project
 - Cal Flora - Native Plant Nursery- <https://www.calfloranursery.com/>
 - Develop one year, two year and 3 year plan
 - Meet with Impacted Community
 - School Principals
 - Teachers
 - Parents
 - Qualified Facilitators (volunteers)
 - Launch and Maintain information Campaign
 - Create Social Media Outreach
 - Write Press Releases
 - Sit for interviews by local publication writers
 - Eyes on Napa
 - Napa Valley Features

October 2026 to-June 2027

- Launch Student Environmental Program
- Launch Water and Land Restoration
- Launch Firewise and CalFire Plan

Summary - Staff

- Founder
- Board of Directors
- Educators
- Facilitators
- Experts in each phase of the program
 - Advisory Counsel
 - RCD
 - CDFW
 - Firewise
 - Forestry Expert
 - Hydrologist
 - Irrigation Specialist
- Volunteers

Details Grant Request #1: \$12,300.00

Execution of Pilot Youth Experiential Environmental Education; Grades 3-5

First, Important Note:

Developmental Awareness

Children ages 8–10 process complex environmental information differently than older students, which directly shapes how the curriculum is designed:

- **Concrete over abstract:** They understand nature through direct experience — bugs, hikes, parks, weather — rather than abstract ecological concepts like "biodiversity" or "carbon cycles."
- **Oscillation between smallness and agency:** They can feel awed and insignificant next to something vast (the ocean, the sky, dinosaurs) while also feeling proud and capable after a hands-on action like planting a garden or recycling.
- **Not yet systemic:** They can grasp simple chains (bees → flowers → food) but not complex feedback loops or long-term consequences; concepts like climate change are often understood only vaguely, if at all.

Accordingly, the grade 3–5 curriculum is built as a progression of foundational steps that lead into the more advanced grade 5–8 program.

Specific Objectives:

By Year End 3rd - through-5th Grade Students will Exhibit:

Learning Outcomes

- **Self-expressed connection to nature**
 - *Indicator:* Ability to express observations and connection to nature through art, writing, and storytelling; increased awareness and ability to identify wildlife, trees, and plants; reduced initial discomfort when encountering unfamiliar natural settings
 - *Method:* Student artwork, writing samples, and verbal reflections collected at intervals; facilitator observation notes on comfort level in the field
- **Ecosystem understanding**
 - *Indicator:* Understanding of simple local ecosystems, demonstrated through an individual project; ability to explain basic ecological principles in a peer-to-peer activity
 - *Method:* Individual project review and educator evaluation; peer-teaching session observed and scored by facilitators
- **Data collection skills**
 - *Indicator:* Application of sample collection and measurement-taking skills; ability to compare before-and-after mitigation results; increasing ability to draw "if this, then that" conclusions; proficient use of handheld microscope and magnifying glass
 - *Method:* Field journal notes; facilitator checklist tracking skill demonstration across sessions
- **Applied restoration skills**
 - *Indicator:* Participation in age-appropriate restoration activities, including invasive plant removal, native plant and wildlife identification, native seed and slip collection, propagation of native plants, and watershed and pond data collection
 - *Method:* Facilitator sign-off per activity; participation log tracking hands-on tasks completed across the year
- **Ecological literacy**
 - *Indicator:* Ability to recognize a basic healthy versus unhealthy watershed (e.g., identifying murky vs. clear water, describing changes after aeration); ability to recommend simple restorative solutions and explain why restoration matters
 - *Method:* Facilitator-led verbal assessment during field sessions; short written or verbal explanation captured in student journal
- **Leadership and stewardship**
 - *Indicator:* Demonstrated growth in leadership and stewardship behavior over the course of the program
 - *Method:* Before-and-after facilitator and teacher observation notes

Projected First Year Budget for Youth Experiential Environmental Education:

<i>Observation-Collection-Reflection-Expression</i>	# Needed	Price	Total
Art Materials	50	20.00	1000.00
Notebooks	50	10.00	500.00
Pens	50	1.00	50.00
Protective gloves	50	10.00	500.00
Youth Sized Hand Shovel	50	30.00	1500.00
Specimen sample containers	50	10.00	500.00
Small nets	50	6.00	300.00
Magnifying glasses	50	7.00	350.00
Hand-Held Mini Microscopes	50	53.00	2650.00
Single Use Cameras	50	30.00	1500.00
Backpack Tote bags	50	69.00	3450.00
Total Pilot Youth Program Expenses. Dollar Amount Requested.			\$ 12,300.00

3. Anticipated results, with timeline:

Upon completion of Unit I, October 2026 through December 2026, students will have developed:

Upon completion of Unit I, students will have developed:

- **Nature observation skills**, using their senses to engage directly with the environment
- **Data collection knowledge**, including use of a staff gauge to measure water depth, hand-held nets and water sample collection bottles, leaf collection, and photo/camera documentation
- **A concrete sense of place in nature**, expressed through direct experience rather than abstract explanation
- **Journaling skills**, used to record observations in the field
- **A basic understanding of habitat, biodiversity, and ecosystem**, and the distinctions between them, introduced through visual diagrams

4. Detailed descriptions of methods designed to achieve objectives:

Unit I: Meet Your Place

Theme: "Where am I?"

Activities

- Sit-spot observation practice
- Get your hands wet. Learn watershed basics
- Ready for a hike. Identify native plants, animals, scat, and footprints
- Collect samples of non-native and native plants
- Photo journaling
- Create a nature journal

Experiential Projects: Students will:

- Experience biodiversity with all of their senses
 - Close your eyes, what do you hear?
 - What do you smell?
 - Open your eyes. What do you see?
 - Touch what's around you and feel the earth's textures
- Begin nature collection during hikes
- Collect initial creek and pond measurements and forest data
- Create map of the site showing:
 - Creek
 - Pond
 - Forest
 - Wildlife corridors
 - Restoration areas

Art Connection

- Leaf prints
- Nature Collage
- Mapping
- Landscape sketches

Upon completion of Unit II, January 2027 through June 2027

students will have developed:

- A basic understanding of watersheds, water cycles, and aquatic ecosystems, and why each matters to overall environmental health
- The skills to begin more complex restoration of aquatic and watershed ecosystems

Unit II: Water is Life

Theme: "Follow the Water"

Activities

- Water quality testing
 - Ponds
 - creek
- Macroinvertebrate exploration
- Watershed model demonstrations
- Measure creek depth and flow
- Initial identification of non-native plants in watershed
- Initial restoration of watershed

Experiential Project

- Students become creek and pond scientists
- Students learn how to collect data using:
 - staff gage
 - water flow monitor
 - self collected water samples
- Students compare findings
 - microscopic look at water samples
 - collected data from 3 different places in creek and 3 ponds
 - compare data with prior season
 - document your findings
- Students learn ways to mitigate unhealthy ponds and creeks
 - initiate restoration of creek and ponds based on collected data
 - initiate restoration of watershed based on data

Art & Storytelling

- Watercolor paintings
- Write a story from the perspective of a fish, frog, or pollinator
- Game, "What am I?"

5. Fish & Wildlife Code; 13103/Chapter 2 a:

Nature Study, Wildlife Conservation, and Educational Aids.

"(a) Public education relating to the scientific principles of fish and wildlife conservation..."

6. How will we determine success after year one of the youth program?

- **Student engagement**
 - *Indicator:* Consistent willingness to participate in activities; positive interaction with peers and facilitators; active verbal and physical involvement in sessions
 - *Method:* Daily facilitator debriefs; session-by-session observation logs using a standardized engagement rubric (e.g., 1–5 scale across participation, cooperation, and initiative)
- **Knowledge gained**
 - *Indicator:* Measurable increase in ecological and conservation knowledge from start to end of program
 - *Method:* Pre- and post-program survey (10–15 questions covering core concepts taught during the year); scored and compared for percentage improvement per student
- **Project completion**
 - *Indicator:* Successful completion of individual restoration or research projects by year's end
 - *Method:* Educator sign-off checklist; brief student presentation or written project summary; completion rate tracked as a percentage of enrolled students
- **Connection to nature**
 - *Indicator:* Increased self-reported comfort and confidence in natural settings
 - *Method:* Simple 1–5 self-assessment survey administered at program start and end; compared for average score increase
- **Stewardship mindset**
 - *Indicator:* Demonstrated enthusiasm for nature paired with a stated desire to protect it
 - *Method:* Short student reflection collected three times during the year (fall, winter, spring); qualitative coding for stewardship-oriented language, tracked over time

Details Grant Request # 2 - \$20,000

1. Clear Statement of the Problem as stated on page 2

California faces increasing climate pressures, including prolonged drought, extreme weather variability, wildfires, and declining biodiversity. There is an urgent need for place-based, scalable models of land restoration and climate action that improve water retention, create wildfire resilience, rebuild habitat, and teach regenerative land stewardship practices to both adults and youth.

Rewilding the Land responds directly to these needs by restoring ecological function at the site level, creating a replicable model for similar landscapes across the region, educating youth, and fostering long-term stewardship of wildlands.

2. Specific Objectives -

- Replace vineyard with its original native Oak trees
- Rewild 96-acres of land, 2 ponds and a creek
 - Remove fencing that impairs wildlife movement
 - Regenerate Biodiversity
 - Restoring ecological function
 - Replace non-native with native plants & trees

Description of Methods:

Creek/Pond/Land Restoration:

Year One Phase I: October 2026 through January 2027

- Schedule four volunteer workdays
- Limit initial volunteer participation to ten per project, plus staff
- Include at least one subject-matter expert to inform each planned activity
- Include a project manager to help organize and implement the plan
- Confirm acquisition of all needed supplies
- Develop a volunteer outreach plan
- Build a 16 ft x 12 ft shade house for propagating native plants from on-site seeds and plant slips
- Remove five identified dead trees (experienced adults only)
- Remove one mile of old barbed-wire cattle fencing
- Flag native plant species on-site
- Flag invasive, non-native plants along 200 feet of watershed
- Fuel reduction of brush
- Apply gully stuffing techniques in two selected sections of the creek – a process-based method using natural materials to reduce erosion and support water infiltration (OAEC,

"Gully Stuffing") — to slow water flow, reduce bank loss, and raise and expand water levels while improving absorption, thereby reducing water loss and improving habitat quality

- Burn vine piles through Firewise/CalFire

Year One Phase II: February 2027 through June 2027

- Schedule six volunteer workdays
- Staff and advisors will assess the watershed for damage following winter weather
- Staff and advisors will determine the next invasive plant removal section along the creek
- Volunteers will prepare the shade house for propagation of native seeds and plant slips collected on-site
- Remove invasive, non-native plants from 200 feet of creek watershed
- Begin restoring cleared sections with native plants
- Retrofit irrigation system, supervised by an RWL volunteer team member
- Plant 250 native oak trees
- Install an aerator in Pond One (to be named by students)
- Staff and a hydrologist will collect data on the creek and three ponds in preparation for Year Two mitigation

Supplies forCreek - Land Restoration Activities			
Assess-Reflect-Learn-Plan-Act	# Needed	Price	Total
Staff Gage	4	80.00	320.00
Lopper Shears	10	28.00	280.00
Machete	10	30.00	300.00
Shovels	10	28.00	280.00
Leaf Rakes	5	25.00	125.00
Bow Rakes	5	32.00	160.00
Pruning Shears	15	29.00	435.00
Battery Chainsaw - Large Size	3	500.00	1,500.00
Battery Chainsaw - Small Size	3	300.00	900.00
Chain Saw Bar Oil	12	10.00	120.00
Gloves	48	25.00	1,200.00
Safety Glasses	50	8.00	400.00
Storage Bins	8	30	240.00
Storage Shelves	2	370.00	740.00
Mixed Oak Trees	500	16.00	8,000.00
Native Plants	500	10.00	5,000.00
Wheel Barrows	2	130	260
Shade House Materials: Metal Frame & Shade Cloth	1	1480	1480
Total Restoration Expenses			
Specific Dollar Amount Requested.			\$21,740

3. Anticipated Results and Timeline

- Weather and CalFire scheduling permitting, vine piles and non-native grasses will be removed through a planned controlled burn training session in fall 2026
- One mile of cattle fencing will be removed by hand during the second workday, fall 2026, with metal recycled afterward
- Game cameras will be installed in fall 2026 to assess the impact of fence removal on wildlife movement
- The shade house will be completed
- An irrigation design engineer will complete a revised irrigation design by late winter 2027
- The revised irrigation system will be installed by spring 2027
- 250 mixed oak trees will be planted by early summer 2027, marking the beginning of restoration on the former working land
- Wildfire risk will be reduced on the former vineyard land

4. Detailed Description of Methods

Remove one mile of barbed-wire cattle fencing

Remove grape vine piles and non-native grasses from the former vineyard

- Conducted via controlled burn
- Completed through Firewise/CalFire training

Redesign the existing irrigation system to support native oak planting

- Create an engineered design
- Purchase needed supplies

Install the retrofitted irrigation system, supervised by an expert/team member

- Provide supplies
- Provide directions
- Oversee installation

Source native oak species (plants, trees, and acorns)

- Cal Flora Nursery will supply stock (calfloranursery.com)
- Students will collect acorns on-site
- Students will propagate seedlings

Hand-plant 250 of the total 500 native oak trees in the former vineyard area

- Include families, children, and students in planting
- Create a map so "Tree Stewards" can name and track their trees

Remove five dead pine trees, led by an experienced forester

- Chainsaws will be used
- Some trees will remain on-site as "nursery trees" for insects and amphibians
- Remaining trees will be removed to reduce fire risk

Thin fuel load on one acre of forest, led by Firewise or workday volunteers

- Completed using hand tools
- Resulting natural materials will be used for gully stuffing

5. Clear Statement of benefit relative to the goals of the Commission

Improving of Habitat; Land - Fish & Wildlife Code; 13103/Chapter 2 e:

6. Our success will be determined by:

Completion of Phase I - II Restored Creek and Land Habitat

- **Creek corridor and terrace restoration**
 - *Indicator:* Three acres of creek corridor and terraces restored to native vegetation cover
 - *Method:* GPS-mapped restoration boundaries; annual drone survey comparison
- **Non-native plant removal**
 - *Indicator:* 90% removal of target invasive species (e.g., yellow star-thistle, blackberry, vinca) in monitored plots
 - *Method:* Fixed quadrat surveys pre/post treatment; photo-point monitoring
- **Gully stuffer installation**
 - *Indicator:* Two gully stuffers installed and functioning
 - *Method:* Before-and-after photos; visual assessment; before-and-after streamflow measurements
- **On-site native plant propagation**
 - *Indicator:* Completion of shade house for plant propagation; number of native plants propagated on-site and planted per year
 - *Method:* Shade house nursery construction; planting boxes; propagation logs; planting records

- **Wildlife connectivity**
 - *Indicator:* Linear feet of fencing removed; number of new wildlife corridors/crossings established
 - *Method:* Site survey; camera trap movement data across connectivity points
- **Vineyard-to-oak-woodland conversion**
 - *Indicator:* Half of former vineyard land rewilded with native oaks
 - *Method:* Number of oak saplings planted; GPS-mapped planting zones; annual survival rate assessment
- **Community interest and participation**
 - *Indicator:* Number of volunteers, volunteer hours, and workshop/event attendees; newsletter/social media followers
 - *Method:* Sign-in sheets; event registration; engagement analytics
- **Wildlife abundance**
 - *Indicator:* Species richness and abundance detected on-site
 - *Method:* Camera trap surveys; eBird/iNaturalist community science data; seasonal wildlife counts

Expenditure Details

1. Expenditure details are provided within the application.
2. There are currently no other funding sources.
3. Rewilding the Land is a newly formed organization.
4. A letter of recommendation from a school board member is attached.

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to offer my support for Rewilding the Land and its efforts to secure funding for its youth experiential environmental education program.

As a longtime member of the Howell Mountain Elementary School Board, I believe strongly in providing students with meaningful, hands-on learning opportunities that complement the education they receive in the classroom. Rewilding the Land's proposed program presents an exciting opportunity for students in our community to experience science firsthand by exploring local ecosystems, learning about watersheds and native habitats, collecting and analyzing environmental data, and gaining a greater understanding of the natural environment that surrounds them.

Our community is uniquely positioned to benefit from this type of program. Students would have the opportunity not only to learn about environmental science but to observe and participate in real world conservation and restoration efforts. Experiences such as water quality testing, studying creek and pond ecosystems, identifying native plants and wildlife, and tracking environmental changes over time can help bring science to life in a way that is difficult to replicate within the walls of a classroom.

I am particularly encouraged by the potential for students to return to the same environment over time, collect data, observe seasonal changes, and see the impact of restoration efforts firsthand. This type of ongoing, project-based learning can strengthen students' understanding of science while also encouraging curiosity, critical thinking, responsibility, and stewardship of their local community.

The Rewilding the Land's vision has the potential to provide a valuable educational resource for students in Howell Mountain and the surrounding community. I support their efforts to obtain grant funding to develop this program and look forward to exploring opportunities for our students to participate in these hands-on educational experiences.

Sincerely,

Ryan Hackett

Board Member
Howell Mountain Elementary School District