



2025 Work Plan

Veronda-Falletti Ranch

November 4, 2024

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
PHOENIX FARM CONCEPTS	3
THE TEAM	4
WORK PLAN	5
INTERIM SUMMARY	5
RANCH OPERATIONS	6
COMMUNITY OUTREACH	8
FUNDRAISING	9
EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES	10
2025 ACTIVITY SCHEDULE	10
3 YEAR VISION	11

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Veronda-Falletti Ranch was established to provide education and recreation to the local community. Phoenix Farm Concepts proposes to continue realizing that vision in 2025 with free and low-cost community events for all ages, in conjunction with sustainable farm operations. Our events are designed to be interactive, educational and low-impact. No expertise or physical ability is necessary to participate, making the ranch accessible to all.

PHOENIX FARM CONCEPTS

Like the mythological phoenix, my land management company was born from fire. As a long time homesteader, I was just beginning to explore a passion for growing food for other people, when the Glass Fire struck in 2020. After “losing everything” I had a realization: that I hadn’t really lost anything important- my family survived, as well as the *knowledge* I gained in all those years growing food.

I established Fern Homestead in 2021, and immediately enrolled in SRJC’s Sustainable Agriculture program, earning an A.S. in that subject while using the practices I was learning about. In three years, I turned a 4 acre mowed field into a thriving regenerative farm that produces food for 7+ families. We produce vegetables, fruit, honey, meat, milk and eggs, nearly a complete diet for our farm share members.

In addition to growing food sustainably, Fern Homestead is dedicated to community engagement and education. We host volunteer days, tours and workshops, and one annual paid internship for an aspiring farmer. My passion for education goes all the way back to my time at UC Berkeley, where I worked at the Center for Middle Eastern Studies after graduating from that department. I planned and executed educational programming for the community, on sensitive cultural and political topics, and managed a \$1M+ annual budget.

THE TEAM

Phoenix Farm Concepts owner/operator Tomi Laine Henry has a lifetime of experience in education and events and has been growing food for over a decade. She has a B.A. in Middle Eastern Studies and an A.S. in Sustainable Agriculture. She currently manages two small farms, producing food and educational content.

REFERENCES

Emily Gottreich	Adjunct Professor, UC Berkeley	(510) 409-9723
Amy Houseman	Animal and Equine Science Program Coordinator, SRJC	(559) 706-8059
Brooke Pippi	Agricultural Engineer, USDA-NRCS	(707) 796-9040

Project Manager and Garden Coordinator Bryce Nahas has a background in construction management and school garden education. He's passionate about smart environmental solutions and community education. He is currently pursuing a certificate in Sustainable Ag from SRJC.

Callie Warne established social media/marketing company Sonoma Soil after seeing a need for more community engagement with agriculture. She has a bachelor's degree in Applied Business Management and certificates in Marketing and Agribusiness. In addition to managing Sonoma Soil, she is Poultry Manager at Apricot Lane Farms, of The Biggest Little Farm documentary.

Heigi Pillor is Phoenix Farm Concepts' 2024-25 intern. After earning a degree in Enology & Viticulture from UC Davis and becoming a winemaker, Heigi realized she has dreams of owning her own farm. She is learning food production and livestock care in pursuit of that dream.

WORK PLAN

INTERIM SUMMARY

Since taking over management of the Ranch in July, we have pursued our goals of engaging with the community, organizing and beautifying the property, and supporting existing programming in partnership with the City and Sandy Loam.

We have been in contact with members of the Cotati Historical Society, the Rotary Club, Church of the Oaks, walkers on nearby paths, attendees at ranch events, and participants in the free compost program. We're forming an idea of what the community wants, and how it can be achieved within the boundaries of the ecological and financial reality of the property.

We spent dozens of hours removing trash, junk and rubble from all farm areas, as well as trimming perennial bushes and trees for safe clearance between paths, buildings and equipment. Materials deemed suitable for future use were organized behind fencing to prevent animal access. Tools were organized in the barn and tool shed, a lock was added to the tool shed, and all gate codes were updated for security. Broken tools and equipment were either repaired or disposed of. We successfully implemented a livestock weight loss plan for optimum healthy weight, and treated one cow for chronic fly stress.

We provided in-person and logistical support for multiple Sandy Loam and Cotati City events, such as Open Ranch Day and Fall Fest. We facilitated interactions between the public and the Ranch's animals, grew plant starts for a community giveaway, managed activities, recruited volunteers, and solicited funding.

RANCH OPERATIONS

Phoenix Farm Concepts currently manages three distinct use areas on Ranch property, in addition to providing advice and support in areas managed by Sandy Loam. Areas

under our purview are the livestock pasture and paddocks; the food forest (including the large greenhouse); and the pumpkin patch. By agreement with Sandy Loam, we manage the chicken coop and the small greenhouse.

Our livestock management includes long term planning for animal and ecological health, arrangement of all necessary tasks and procedures (such as shearing, hoof trimming, and vaccines), and daily monitoring of animal quality of life.

We strive to be in compliance with all shared agreements with the City of Cotati, the Cotati Historical Society, and Open Space District while also providing ecological farm management within the mission of the City Council and the bounds of available funding.

In the coming year, we have been charged with converting the pumpkin patch to a food garden. We plan to achieve this by testing the soil, adding appropriate amendments, extending the planting rows, and reducing the width of the rows while increasing the number of rows. We'll use compost, mulch and cover cropping to cultivate new soil appropriate to growing vegetables.

In early 2025, we'll begin rotational grazing of the pasture at the ranch, with a goal of increasing soil and vegetation quality, and animal health. We'll use electric net fencing to move the animals around the pasture to achieve an appropriate level of impact. A public-facing mobile hay feeder and info station will rotate with the animals, along the fence line. The mobile feeder is designed to facilitate through-the-fence interactions between the public and the livestock, by giving people a chance to feed hay and learn about rotational grazing.

For several reasons, we recommend rehoming the ranch's two cows, Nani & Nellie. The size and quality of the pasture is not suited to the keeping of cows. By removing the pressure applied by the cows, we can begin rehabilitating the soil and vegetation quality

on the property. Additionally, cows and goats/sheep need different types of electric fencing and pasture shelters. Involving both types of animals in a rotational grazing plan at Veronda-Falletti could double the costs of that program.

We have identified a sanctuary near Ashland, Oregon that is home to a single and lonely mini cow. Tikkun Olam Farm Sanctuary provides 10 acres of irrigated pasture to its animals, and owner/operator Hadassah Dejack is prepared to personally deliver Nani & Nellie to their new home there. We think this would be the best outcome for everyone.

In the auxiliary paddocks, we have begun conducting cover crop experiments designed to break up compacted soils in those areas, and make them more pleasant and useful to both livestock and humans. In November 2024, we added mobile shelters to the auxiliary paddock on West Sierra so the livestock can spend time in that area and be visible to the public during the winter.

We plan to fill empty spaces in the food forest with similar species, and the plants' nutrient, water, and trimming/mulching needs will be closely monitored by Garden Coordinator Bryce Nahas. Bryce will bring our irrigation equipment up to code by installing additional valves and replacing garden hoses with high quality distribution and drip irrigation lines. The new system will be below ground to remove trip hazards and help the equipment last longer.

We'll provide 12-month crop plans for use in both greenhouses and the food garden. By agreement with Sandy Loam, and as part of our mission to support educational programming with our co-licensee, we'll grow plant starts in the SL greenhouse primarily to support SL programming or to give away or sell at other Ranch events. Plants grown in the large greenhouse will primarily be for transplanting in the garden or food forest. We plan to use this space for educational and fundraising events as well, leaving the central area open for this purpose.

We will continue to manage the chicken coop environment and we have started exploring options for providing the chickens with free range opportunities in the Sandy Loam garden.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

As part of our mission of community engagement, we welcome visitors to the ranch and seek the opinions of interested community members. We are collecting contact information for people who show an interest in receiving updates, volunteering at the Ranch, or donating to support ranch operations. One of our main 2025 goals is establishing a robust cadre of trusted volunteers who participate regularly in farm events; we have several volunteer days planned, focusing on seasonal garden activities on the ranch. We look forward to helping provide people with the satisfaction of seeing their efforts produce food.

Next year we'll institute two new recurring events: Farmer Picnics and Food Forest Fridays. On the first Saturday of every month (weather permitting), Farmer Tomi will have lunch at the picnic tables (BYO), and be available to answer questions or hear concerns from community members. On Fridays from 11:30-1:30 Bryce will open the food forest and garden to visitors and host a supervised u-pick; for a set entrance fee, each family can fill a container provided by us. Food not picked on Fridays or at relevant events will be harvested and made available to City employees for suggested donation.

Our social media accounts (@verondafallettiranch on both instagram and facebook) are thriving, with a growing engagement and almost daily posts. Our videos are up close and personal with the plants and animals on the Ranch, to allow followers to experience farm life virtually and encourage them to participate in person. Next year we'll explore options for email marketing and a regular newsletter to share updates. We will continue to oversee the distribution of free compost to the community, and we hope to begin offering free mulch in 2025 as well.

FUNDRAISING

We propose to create simple and voluntary donation opportunities, such as posting a QR code at the mobile feeder. This method of crowdsourcing funds provides users a streamlined process for easily donating small sums of money, which can add up. Making connections with community members creates emotional “buy-in” and allows us to build toward events with more substantial fundraising opportunities, such as an on-site farm to table dinner.

Food produced on the Ranch has not typically been available for purchase, but by diversifying our production and engaging in creative marketing practices, we can make food available to the community while also defraying operational costs.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Next year we’ll provide a regular, low-cost composting class, taught by Garden Coordinator Bryce Nahas. In Spring, we’ll host a sheep shearing demonstration at the Ranch.

In partnership with Sarah Keiser of Wild Oat Hollow, we’ll hold a “grazing school” designed for teens and adults to learn how to manage vegetation on a small acreage with sheep and goats. Technical instruction in livestock care and operation of electric fencing will be conducted at the Ranch.

Farm Club, planned in cooperation with Sandy Loam, is designed for kids ages 8-12 to learn animal husbandry skills. We’ll discover how animal products are created and how that can be done sustainably and humanely. This program will run for 4 weeks in Spring.

In addition to Farm Club, we’ll be supporting Sandy Loam with in-person and logistical assistance. We plan to present weekly lessons as part of the Early Release Enrichment Program, sparking kids’ imaginations with hands-on livestock activities. Each summer camp session in 2025 will begin with a tour from Farmer Tomi and the presentation of a

“Farm Chore Chart” which the kids will be responsible for checking off (with adult supervision).

2025 ACTIVITY SCHEDULE

January	Rotational grazing, crop planning, terminate cover crop and sheet mulch garden, graze cover crop in aux. paddock
February	Rotational grazing, pick up bare root fruit trees and pot up
March	Rotational grazing, terminate cover crop in aux. paddock, starting plants for Sandy Loam, Grazing School, Compost Workshop, Volunteer Day: perennial planting and seed sowing, sow carrots in pumpkin patch
April	Rotational grazing, weeding in garden/food forest, sow summer cover crop in aux. paddock, direct seeding veggies, Farm Club weeks 1-2, sheep shearing demonstration
May	Rotational grazing, Farm Club weeks 2-4, Compost Workshop, Volunteer Day: veggie transplanting, first u-pick
June	Rotational grazing, maintaining food forest/garden, weekly u-pick
July	Rotational grazing, Volunteer Day: harvest/weeding in food forest and garden, sowing fall veggies, weekly u-pick
August	Compost Workshop, Volunteer Day: transplanting fall veggies, weekly u-pick
September	Harvest Dinner
October	Fall Fest
November	Volunteer Day: putting the garden to bed
December	Rotational grazing, cover cropping

3 YEAR VISION

Our ecological priority is improving soil and vegetation quality at the Ranch, so that it can support more, and healthier, animals, plants and people. Our community priority is encouraging participation in ranch activities. With more participation, we can do more: grow more food, make the ranch more beautiful, and give away more compost, plants and knowledge.

To achieve this, we'll grow our base of volunteers, donors, and event attendees. We'll listen to the community and hear what people want to see. The possibilities are endless: beekeeping, wool working, goat milking, growing food, canning & preserving, trialing additional cultivars or species, all in an effort to both satisfy and pique the community's curiosity. In addition to plant and food giveaways, we'll begin selling our food products via a farm stand and/or a CSA program to help support ranch operations.

In the coming years, I expect to watch Veronda-Falletti Ranch grow into a thriving community hub of food and knowledge. We'll increase production efficiency in every area, utilize spaces that haven't been useful in the past, and produce healthy food products from healthy soil. We will actively fundraise, for all ranch operations, but particularly for the new barns.

We look forward to working with the City of Cotati and our other Ranch partners to fulfill this dream, and we encourage City Hall employees and City Council members to visit Fern Homestead, to see what three years of our management services can do.