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Goats for Good: A Community-Powered Wildfire Prevention Effort at Round Mountain

NEVADA CITY, Calif. — October 2025 — This fall, the Yuba Watershed Institute (YWI) and First Rain Farm & Land Stewardship Services, in collaboration with the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), are launching the first-ever goat grazing project at Round Mountain, just north of Nevada City. The project will use a herd of more than 200 goats and sheep to help reduce hazardous fuels and restore ecological balance in this high-risk area along the South Yuba Canyon.

The goat grazing initiative is part of the Round Mountain Landscape Resilience Project, an ongoing partnership between the Yuba Watershed Institute, BLM, Bear Yuba Land Trust, and local residents. This collaborative effort aims to improve forest health, reduce wildfire risk, and protect both public and private lands in one of the most wildfire-prone parts of Nevada County.

“Our goats thrive on the very vegetation that poses a fire risk, making them the ideal workers for this project,” said Tim Van Wagner of First Rain Farm & Stewardship, who will oversee the herd. “It’s an ecological and cost-effective way to maintain the shaded fuel break that protects the community.”

Unlike mechanical thinning or heavy equipment, targeted grazing provides a low-impact, self-renewing method for managing fuels and maintaining healthy forest structure. The goats will move through 1- to 5-acre paddocks, grazing for several days in each area under careful supervision, before relocating. Over time, this process will reduce flammable vegetation and help to maintain critical evacuation routes.

While the project has broad community and agency support, local funding is essential to bring the goats to Round Mountain and sustain the work over the grazing season. A GoFundMe campaign has been launched to cover the costs of herding, fencing, water transport, and monitoring.

“This is a direct investment in community safety and ecological health,” said Chris Friedel, Executive Director of the Yuba Watershed Institute. “We’ve done the planning and built the partnerships — now we just need the community’s help to make it happen.”

Residents and supporters can contribute at:

✉ gofund.me/fa86bba1e

For more information about the Round Mountain Landscape Resilience Project, visit:
□ yubawatershedinstitute.org/projects/round-mountain/goat-grazing

About the Yuba Watershed Institute

The Yuba Watershed Institute (YWI) is a Nevada County–based nonprofit dedicated to community-based forest and watershed management in the Yuba River region. YWI collaborates with public agencies, land trusts, and local residents to build ecological resilience, reduce wildfire risk, and promote science-based stewardship of the Sierra Nevada foothills.

About First Rain Land Stewardship Services

Based in Nevada City, First Rain Land Stewardship Services uses land-management methods rooted in the natural elements of fire, water and livestock. Their team works to “heal and re-balance the land” through targeted grazing, prescribed fire, mechanical thinning and watershed restoration. By combining ecological insight with on-the-ground action, First Rain helps create fire-resilient forest landscapes and stronger communities in the Sierra Nevada foothills.