

Carbon Farming on the Chamberlin Ranch, report by Penny Knowles

On May 31, 2018 Russell Chamberlin invited us out to the family ranch to learn firsthand what carbon farming is all about. I have to say that there was not a lot to see, probably because the scarce rainfall this year has not allowed the composting to truly take effect.

It was a perfect morning, sunny but not yet hot. We assembled in a field adjacent to USCB's test plots. WE Watch members were joined by a throng of other interested folks, including followers of Gerri French, a nutritionist and teacher through SBCC Continuing Education, and members of the Community Environmental Council in SB, one of the sponsors and promoters of this effort.



Russell spoke about some of the components of his carbon farming plan, supported by a grant from the State of California Healthy Soils Initiative. Two elements that are most important are rotating the cattle so they only eat about a third of the grass and trample down the rest, creating a nice mulch. The other is spreading $\frac{1}{4}$ inch compost over the grass in a onetime application that will last 30 or so years. Combined, these two procedures enhance the quality of the soil and its water and carbon retaining ability.

Sigrid Wright, the Executive Director of the Community Environmental Council (CEC) and Allegra Roth, Food and Climate Control Associate for the CEC, also spoke to us about their ambitious plans to extend this carbon farming protocol to 15% of the suitable grassland in our County or 42,000 acres. This would offset the carbon emissions from the county's entire agricultural sector. The amount of carbon stored in the soil as a result would be like taking 11,350 cars off the road every year for two decades. Best of all, it will preserve our rangeland for future generations.

If you are interested in following this topic, please let us know, and stay connected to our website: www.we-watch.org.

<https://www.grass-fed-solutions.com/carbon.html>

<https://grist.org/article/california-is-turning-farms-into-carbon-sucking-factories/>

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