My name is AnnMarie Lewer and I am the Executive Director of the Benmore Valley Project 501(c)(3). I currently live at the Benmore Valley Ranch where the project is based. Benmore Valley Project (BVP) is a growing nonprofit organization in Lake and Mendocino Counties. Our mission is to facilitate projects that promote ecological stewardship within our community. The current scope of the organization is wide: fire ecology, and supporting youth, seniors, and native communities. My recent work has focused on food production and distribution. Starting January 2025 I will be devoting ½ time exclusively to BVP and transitioning to a full-time position as funding allows.

The following are projects the organization will be working on this year in Lake County:

- Organic food production for donation
    - Last year was the 2nd year of our community garden and resulted in over 600 lbs of produce donated between Mendocino and Lake Counties to various community centers and Indigenous Organizations. We plan to increase acreage and yields this year and produce more utilizing regenerative farming techniques.
    - We have an active grant application for up to $5000 from the FruitGuys Community Fund Grant that was submitted in January.
- Seed library
    - Partner with Lake County Library to provide locally adapted seeds, organize workshops to improve community engagement, and work with local senior centers to bring service to their organizations.
    - In the past we've made monetary and food donations to Lucerne Senior Center and worked actively with Jim Steele's Lake County Silver Foundation.
- Farm to School
    - If available this fiscal year, we plan to continue to pursue Farm to School grants to be able to provide fresh, organic produce to Lake County schools. We submitted a strong proposal in 2024 and narrowly missed being awarded the grant.
- North Coast Emergency Food System Partnership
    - We plan to continue engagement with this organization to help strengthen local food supply in times of an emergency. We've taken part in the in-person workshops at the University of California Hopland Research and Extension Center (HREC) and have worked with John Bailey, the manager of HREC on

various initiatives, including exploring a public/private grant program between BVP and HREC.

- Fire Ecology
    - We have over $200,000 in active grants with Calfire (through CLERC) and NRCS for fuel reduction and community scale firebreaks to help protect Lakeport from the next fire. Jared Henricks has been leading that effort. More info here: https://www.benmorevalleyranch.com/benmore-valley-project
    - BVP has made a $10,000 donation to the Lakeport Fire Department.

In addition to my role at Benmore Valley Project, I also sit on the Board of Directors of Kelseyville Senior Center. As you may be aware, the center was recently purchased by the county and a remodel of the building is currently in the developmental phase. It has been a valuable learning experience to be a part of the decision-making process for a civic building. I am looking forward to furthering the discussion of what the Benmore Valley Project can do to ensure a future in Lake County that understands the importance of ecological stewardship.

Best Regards,

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