

CASE STUDY:

Kelly Mulville, Paicines Ranch & Vineyard

Ranch Overview:

Located an hour south of San Jose, California, Paicines Ranch spans 7,600 acres of rolling hills, vineyards and rangeland that have been continuously operated since 1846. Once part of a Mexican land grant, the ranch narrowly avoided development in the 1990s when its current owners purchased it to preserve the land and pursue a different kind of legacy — one rooted in ecological restoration and regenerative agriculture.

Under the direction of Kelly Mulville, vineyard director, the ranch integrates grazing livestock, vineyards and education in a way that models whole-ranch systems thinking. Its enterprises include a 25-acre vineyard, a 3,000-head sheep flock, cattle, poultry and a nonprofit learning center that offers hands-on training in regenerative agriculture. Paicines Ranch also hosts community events, workshops and weddings, with a full commercial kitchen and lodging to support visitors.

“ **Agriculture has been one of the most destructive forces on the planet. Our goal is to flip that — to make it a force for restoring biodiversity and soil health. When you work with nature instead of against it, the land gives back more than you ever imagined.**” — Kelly Mulville

Regenerative Journey:

When Mulville arrived more than a decade ago, Paicines Ranch was an ambitious blank slate. The owner, Sallie Calhoun, had recently converted the property to certified organic, but sought deeper transformation. A chance meeting at a regenerative agriculture workshop led to a partnership that would redefine what a vineyard could be.

Mulville proposed redesigning the vineyard from the ground up so livestock could graze among vines year-round — eliminating the need for mowing, tilling and many external inputs. Traditional vineyards, Mulville explains, keep trellises low, forcing producers to remove sheep during the growing season to prevent leaf and fruit damage. His innovative system raised the trellis height to allow sheep to graze safely beneath the vines, performing natural pruning, sucker removal and nutrient cycling.

The results have been remarkable. Since planting the vineyard in 2017, plant diversity has grown from 11 species to more than 100, soil organic matter and water-holding capacity have increased, and irrigation use has dropped dramatically. While many California vineyards spray up to 18 times per season, Paicines Ranch averages just four applications a year, all nutrient-based rather than chemical.

Mulville also tracks biodiversity metrics — soil microbes, birds, insects and vegetation — demonstrating how agriculture can become a driver of ecosystem restoration. With over 60 bird species now documented in and around the vineyard and flourishing beneficial insect populations, the vineyard has become a living laboratory for regenerative viticulture.



Stewardship & Ranch Management Philosophy:

- **Work with ecological design:** Build systems from the soil up that integrate crops and animals in mutually beneficial ways.
- **Health before inputs:** Strengthen soil and plant biology to reduce sprays, improve resilience and eliminate dependency on external amendments.
- **Monitor biodiversity:** Track species diversity, soil microbes and wildlife as key performance indicators of ranch health.
- **Design for a changing climate:** Use wide spacing, canopy shade, and permanent cover to reduce heat stress, conserve water and increase yields sustainably.
- **Open-source knowledge:** Share data, methods and outcomes freely to encourage other growers to follow suit.



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Kelly Mulville.