

Environmental Justice: Context-Sensitive Planning Grants

Making Safe & Healthy Community Connections in Round Valley

- **Grant Amount:** \$92,873
- **Grant Recipient:** Round Valley Indian Tribes
- **County:** Mendocino

Project Area – The unincorporated town of Covelo and the surrounding community located in northern Mendocino County, in an isolated valley 28 miles east of Highway 101, along Highway 162.

Project Focus – Mortality rates in Round Valley are unusually high. While the average life expectancy for women in the U.S is 79.9 years, the average age of death for Round Valley native women is 68 years. For men the national average is 74.5 years, compared to 57 years for native men. Health problems among local residents have included diabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, and heart disease. Many of these health conditions can be prevented or treated with an increase in physical activity and access to healthy foods. A walking/bicycling pathway in Round Valley will provide the atmosphere and physical space needed to implement comprehensive prevention and outreach activities aimed at addressing these specific health conditions.

Project Goals – The proposed Round Valley Community Planning project will organize a broad spectrum of stakeholders in the community to come together and participate in a facilitated charrette event in order to: 1) Develop a plan to provide a safe walking/bicycling pathway that will permit safe movement within Round Valley and 2) Collect ideas to generate a plan for a town center and location for a new library.

Community Outreach – A public design charrette process was organized to produce conceptual plans for the community. The process included a multi-day series of meetings, presentations, and workshops that engaged key stakeholders including residents, property owners, and community organizations.

Environmental Justice Community Involvement – The formal charrette process began with an opening event in which 150 community members attended. A cultural celebration with healthy food and tribal dance and music were featured. This event served as an orientation to the charrette process and participants were asked to share, discuss and vote on key values and community priorities. Focus group meetings were held during the first two days involving health and emergency service providers. A Saturday workshop was held with 40 participants that featured a “walk audit” of the community, training on trail and community design, and provided participants with an opportunity to put their vision on maps during interactive design table discussions.

Project Outcome – The project strives to engage and bring together the Indian and non-Indian stakeholders of Round Valley in a visioning process that highlights community voices around safe and healthy transportation and land-use.



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Challenges

- A majority of the pedestrians consist of young people. Children walking to school, young mothers with babies, teens in transit, as well as people carrying groceries from town, and occasionally people in wheelchairs. There is no public transit available.

Successes

- A recent Safe Routes to School grant for the surrounding area around Round Valley High and Elementary School has made it possible to implement improvements for pedestrians traveling to and from school.
- Trails allow people of all ages to incorporate exercise into their daily routines by connecting them with places they need and want to go.