



# Merced County Farm News



## MID Merced Irrigation District preparing for dry season with marginal water availability

**By: Merced Irrigation District**

February 16, 2022 -  
If nothing changes from the current weather conditions, Merced Irrigation District’s Class 1 growers may receive slightly more than 1 acre foot of surface water this year.  
Water supply availability for this year was discussed at length during a MID Board of Directors meeting Tuesday. Dozens of growers were in attendance to ask questions and get preliminary information about the

upcoming irrigation season.  
“As of now and unless the weather changes, the Board will have some difficult decisions to make in the coming weeks,” said MID General Manager John Sweigard.  
Determinations about water supply availability from Lake McClure are made each year by the Board of Directors. The allocation is based on a host of factors, including snow levels in the Sierra and the amount of water stored in Lake McClure when the season begins. MID staff summarized and explained that numerous variables could still affect water availability

this year. No decisions were made at Tuesday’s meeting.  
Although not discussed in detail, in past dry years, MID has made supplemental water supplies available through a voluntary-participation supply pool program. As part of its conjunctive management operations, each year more than 120,000 acre feet of Lake McClure water is placed into the local groundwater basin through recharge basins and canals that remain unlined in specific areas. MID typically uses those water resources during dry years.  
Lake McClure is currently

approximately 28 percent full, half of its historic average for this time of year. No storms are predicted for the rest of February and daytime temperatures are expected to remain in the mid-60s to low-70s.  
At its next meeting on March 1, 2022, the MID Board and staff will discuss any new developments. They will also discuss potential benefits and drawbacks of various decisions that could still affect this year’s water supply availability. MID will not begin its irrigation season before March 1, and a precise season start date has not yet been set.

## Merced County Partners with Patriot Rail to Establish New Rail District

**By: Merced County**

February 8, 2022 -  
MERCED—The Merced County Board of Supervisors approved an agreement with Patriot Rail today to establish a rail district at Castle Commerce Center, making the site a focal point for the movement of freight by rail and future economic development.  
The rail district, located near the southeastern corner of Castle, will enhance the ability of agricultural producers, manufacturers and other enterprises from throughout the San Joaquin Valley to ship and receive products via the Burlington-Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) railroad mainline, which runs adjacent to the site. A rail

spur from the BNSF lines currently connects to Castle, and Patriot Rail will soon develop additional infrastructure to facilitate enhanced rail freight service from the location.  
The expansion of rail service in the new district is mutually beneficial for producers, Patriot Rail, and Merced County alike. The new district will allow businesses from Merced County and the surrounding region to further expand their operations by quickly and efficiently receiving and shipping more freight by rail—the most environmentally sensitive and sustainable way to move goods over land.  
As part of the agreement, Patriot Rail will lease approximately 6,500 feet of track and related property.

The lease term is for 20 years, with potential renewals subject to mutual agreement between Merced County and Patriot Rail. Patriot Rail will maintain the track and anticipates making an initial investment of \$1.2 million to increase rail capacity and fluidity of shippers in the Castle rail district.  
“This agreement is the culmination of years of market analysis and strategic planning,” said Chairman Lloyd Pareira of the Merced County Board of Supervisors. “Coupled with the autonomous vehicle testing happening at Castle, this is an exciting time for Merced County. We’re on the

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Address





from the

# President's Corner

Eric Harcksen

Happy February from your Farm Bureau president. Bloom is upon us so please be considerate to our bee friends as they are very important to the production of our crops. If doing any spraying or other field work, please contact your beekeeper or feel free to reach out to someone who can help you figure out the best time to do your work.

The other day I was asked, “Why am I a Farm Bureau member?”, my answer was, “Why are you not a Farm Bureau member?!” Farm Bureau members are offered a wide array of member benefits from discounts,

weather services, labor employers services and a variety of benefits that one would not have if the Farm Bureau had not brought it to their attention. However, one of the main things that the Farm Bureau does is lobby on the behalf of the farmers at the federal, state, and local level. A good majority of bills get shut down behind the scenes by the Farm Bureau before they ever gain traction on the floor. This goes unrecognized for those who work so hard for us to make sure our needs are brought to light. With that being said, the argument can be made that you should support the Farm

Bureau even if you don’t farm. We need to help bring awareness to our county level Farm Bureau to gain more members whether you are a farmer or not. It is important to convince people to become members from all walks of life, because we need to make sure that we protect the food we eat and provide.

The Merced County Farm Bureau Annual Meeting will be held at the Merced Fairgrounds on March 25, 2022, at 5:30pm social and 6:45pm dinner. You can get your tickets at the Farm Bureau office during business hours. Hope to see you there!

Cities and counties have various policy platforms that guide their direction each year. One large and lengthy document is a General Plan. In approximately five-year increments, cities and counties are required to update their plans with a vision for a 20-year span. These documents cover a wide range of topics including the areas of a growth a city would like to develop (residential, health care, commercial for example), measures they must meet such as air quality or environmental, opportunities

the agency would like to explore, etc. The simplest way to explain a General Plan is to view it as a wish list of items.

Be warned– if you’ve never been through this process, it is a lengthy one filled with comment periods, consultant presentations, and at times, stretches of imagination from various governmental entities. In review of past documents, I have found this to be the case as it relates to water availability and accessibility assurances, population numbers and the areas they would like to absorb into

County. They’ve held several community and stakeholder meetings to gather input in what people would like to see for their community. Their timeline for review and thus adoption has been greatly skewed due to the pandemic. I would expect something to be released in greater depth this year. Los Banos is the furthest along and has recently ended public comment for their first step of the notification process.

The Notice of Preparation (NOP) comment period closed this past Wednesday. Los Banos has taken in public comments for some time and an NOP is distributed to the public to request any detailed aspects that an agency should include when reviewing the environmental proceedings. This will include areas of agriculture, air quality, water resources, housing, etc. They have greatly expanded their boundary line, impacting many in the agriculture areas that surround the city. I would encourage members in the area to participate moving forward however you feel comfortable. Additional public hearings and written comment periods will all be available as the process moves forward.

In any General Plan process, there is substantial work to be done following the NOP. This includes the release of the draft General Plan and



from the

# Director's Desk

Breanne Vandenberg

adoption of the final plan. In between this would be multiple presentations, meetings, adjustments to any necessary policies, etc. If you have yet to engage in the above and you live in these areas, I would encourage you to reach out and check in with local officials or our office. If you do not live in these areas, your time will be here quicker than you know it.



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## Merced County Farm Bureau’s Mission Statement

Merced County Farm Bureau is an independent, non-governmental, grassroots organization that advocates for the men and women who provide food, fiber, and nursery products for our community, state, and nation.

Merced County Farm Bureau exists for the purpose of improving the ability of individuals engaged in production agriculture to utilize

California resources to produce food and fiber in the most profitable, efficient and responsible manner possible, guaranteeing our nation a domestic food supply.

Merced County Farm Bureau supports policies and legislation that promote and protect our Country’s number one industry - agriculture for future generations and the security of our nation.



# Rail District

continued from page 1

front-end of additional job creation and economic development.”

“Castle Commerce Center has enormous potential and is quickly becoming a site of regional, national and international significance,” said District 3 Supervisor Daron McDaniel, whose district includes Castle. “Patriot is a major part of our vision for Castle, and we’re looking forward to working with the partners they bring to help expand this growth and spur future job creation.”

“Patriot Rail is pleased to advance and help drive Merced County’s vision of economic growth,” said John E. Fenton, Patriot Rail CEO. “We are committed to providing service and safety excellence as a premier rail solutions provider, and to partnering with Merced County customers to ensure exciting new competitive options for shipment by rail to build business and grow jobs.”

“We have partnered with Merced County since 2017 to increase investment and trade development in Central California, and this public-private rail partnership is a major step forward,” said Gene Seroka, Executive Director, Port of Los Angeles, the nation’s busiest container port. “This agreement will help make Central California a focal point to accelerate goods movement across our state and nation.”

“This unique partnership reflects the growing global demand for the agricultural products grown right here in the Valley,” said Assemblyman Adam Gray (D-Merced). “Together, Merced County and Patriot Rail are working to reduce supply chain

shortages while proving Castle’s potential as an engine for economic productivity. It’s projects like these that will reduce inflation, create more jobs, and strengthen our regional economy.”

The agreement with Patriot Rail, a recognized leader in rail, rail services and safety, was executed through Patriot Rail subsidiary Foster Townsend Rail Logistics, LLC.

## About Merced County

Merced County is located in the heart of California’s Central Valley, the agricultural hub of the state. The County’s abundant flat land and nearby sources of water support the local agricultural economy. The County geography spans from the coastal ranges to the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, and occupies approximately 1,935 square miles. Merced County has a culturally diverse population and is home to the University of California, Merced (UC). The UC’s 10th campus was opened in the fall of 2005 and incorporates state-of-the-art technologies and vast potential for scientific, environmental, and medical advancements. For more information about Merced County, please visit [www.countyofmerced.com](http://www.countyofmerced.com)

## About Patriot Rail

Patriot Rail operates 13 regional and freight short line railroads, a scenic rail excursion train, and rail-related services companies with operations in over 15 states. Service capabilities include railcar storage, railcar repair and maintenance, railway clean-up and transfer, tank car cleaning and environmental services, contract switching, transloading, engineering services, excursion railroads, real estate, and track access. For more information about Patriot Rail, please visit [www.patriotrail.com](http://www.patriotrail.com)

# Merced County Farm News

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# Calendar of Events

**Febraury 22**  
**Merced County YF&R meeting (pg. 16)**

**March 1**  
**Deadline to submit ESJ INMP Reports (pg. 7)**

**March 7**  
**Heat Illness Training (pg. 13)**

**March 25**  
**MCFB Annual Meeting (pg. 24)**

**April 23**  
**FARM2U Day (pg. 12)**

**May 6**  
**Deadline to apply for Rooted in Ag Program (pg. 19)**



# A candidate to improve the California GOP image?

**By: Dan Walters, CalMatters**

February 14, 2022 -

At one level, it makes absolutely no sense for state Sen. Brian Dahle or any other Republican to run for governor of California.

The state's sharp political shift from a purple state where the GOP could often win to one of the nation's bluest bastions, which began a quarter-century ago, dooms any Republican candidate for any statewide office.

Running against an incumbent Democratic governor with fairly high approval ratings and who has twice garnered nearly two-thirds of the votes, as Dahle declared he wants to do, is a political kamikaze mission.

Nevertheless, Dahle, who represents a sprawling senate district in the state's northeastern corner, will give it a try, hoping against hope that public unhappiness about Gov. Gavin Newsom's one-man management of the COVID-19 pandemic will give him an opening.

"I love California, this amazing, beautiful state that used to be the land of opportunity," Dahle said as he declared his candidacy in Redding. "But its leadership is so poor that people are running for the state line ... trust me, if you get four more years of this dictator, it will cost you a lot more."

"I am not some smooth-talking wine salesman from San Francisco," he added. "I'm a farmer from Bieber. You might say I'm the underdog."

He certainly is. It would take some sort of cataclysmic collapse by Newsom — some act of omission or commission that turned millions of Californians against him — to give Dahle or any other Republican even a slight chance of prevailing.

Newsom does have a tendency to fall on his face, as shown by his infamous attendance at a lobbyist's birthday party without mask while exhorting Californians to mask-up. But it would take a much larger screwup to turn the tide this year.

All of that notwithstanding, by running for governor this year, Dahle could do something to help the California GOP, which now claims

fewer than a quarter of the state's registered voters — make it more respectable.

Although the GOP's decline began in the 1990s for a variety of political, economic and demographic reasons, the advent of Donald Trump as the party's commanding figure accelerated its descent into irrelevance. In 2018, mid-way through Trump's presidency, Republicans lost half of their California congressional seats, and while the party rebounded a bit in 2020, Democrats continue to play the Trump card.

Newsom's campaign spokesman, Nathan Glick, dismissed Dahle's candidacy as showing a "sad state of affairs for the California Republican Party."

"They are trying to pass off the same milque-Trump-toast that Californians soundly rejected last year," Glick said in a statement.

Dahle has the reputation of being a mainstream conservative and a serious lawmaker, more Reaganite than Trumpie, and would perform a valuable service for his party and the state by separating himself from Trump and his acolytes.

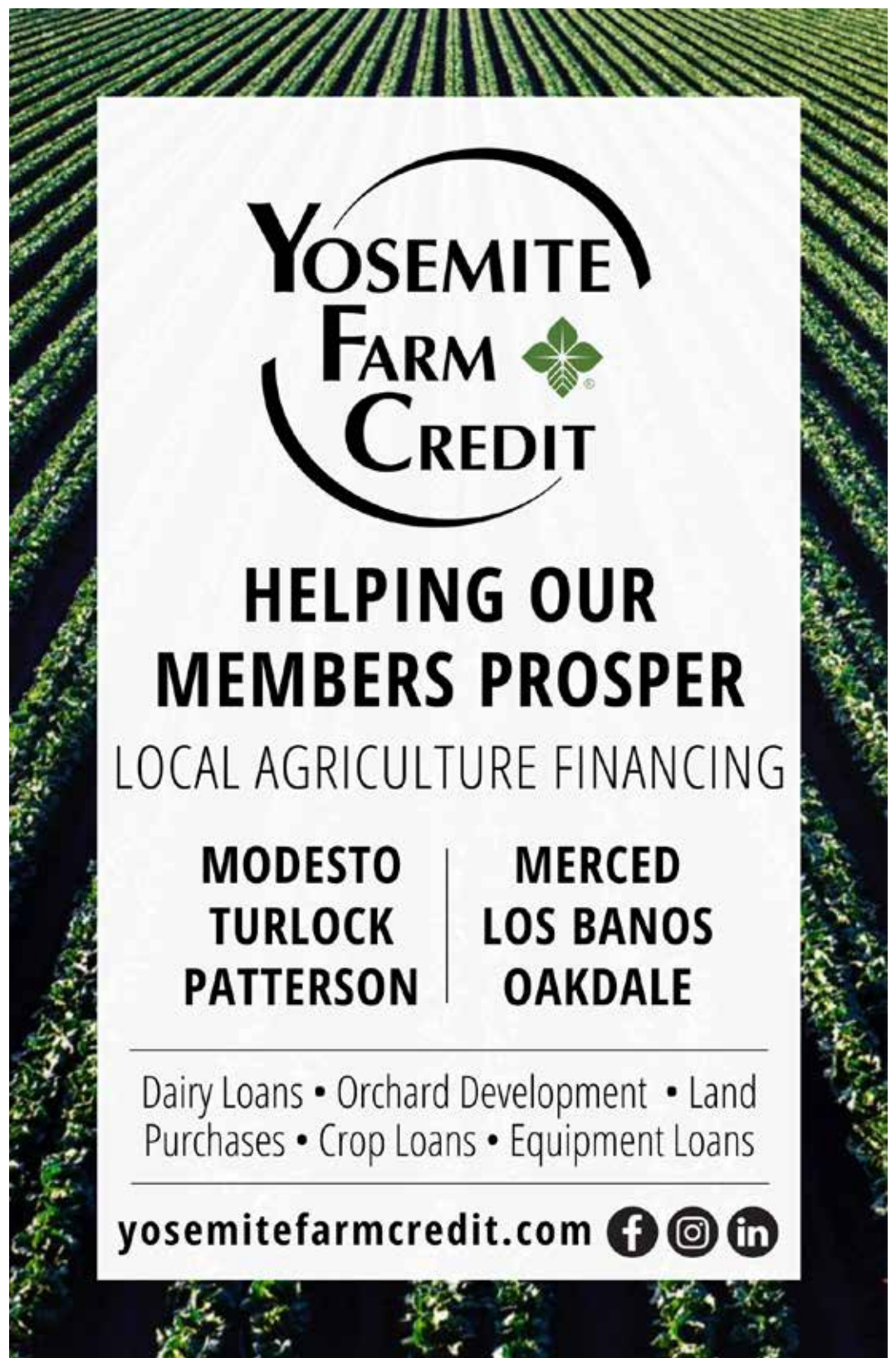
It would be difficult, especially since Dahle's rural district is a hotbed of Trump cultists, as witnessed by the recent recall of a Republican Shasta County supervisor accused of not being militant enough.

The image of Republicans today not only hurts the party in a state like California, but hurts California because it needs a healthy two-party political system to curb the Democrats' loonier element. The state works best when politics are playing out in the

moderate middle, where consensus and compromise prevail.

A dignified, issue-oriented Republican challenge to Newsom, either by Dahle or another candidate, could begin to polish the party's

tarnished brand and help it regain credibility among no-party-preference moderates. They are as numerous as GOP voters and some are unhappy with the Democrats' left turn and Newsom's somewhat erratic ways.



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# California bill would require COVID-19 vaccines for all employees

By: Don Thompson, Assocaited Press

February 11, 2022 - SACRAMENTO, Calif. -- California would mandate that all businesses require their employees and independent contractors to receive the COVID-19 vaccine under legislation announced Friday by Democratic state lawmakers that was immediately criticized by Republicans as government overreach.

Employees or contractors who qualify for medical or religious exemptions would have to be regularly tested under a planned amendment to the bill. New employees would have to get at least one dose by the time they start work and the second dose within 45 days of being on the job.

Assemblywoman Buffy Wicks introduced her bill months after delaying an original proposal last fall. The previous version would have allowed workers to submit to weekly testing as an alternative to getting vaccinated, but that is not an option in her new proposal.

Vaccines mandates are highly controversial and there have been many rallies at the state Capitol in Sacramento opposing such requirements.

Wicks and other supporters said the mandate is needed even as California moves to ease other requirements and anticipates moving into a new "endemic" phase that accepts the coronavirus is here to stay but is manageable as immunity builds.

"That's fundamentally what this bill is about," she said. "Getting back to some sense of normalcy so we can go on with our lives, and we don't have these constant interruptions and outbreaks and all these things that we've been experiencing for so long."

The mandate would stay in place unless the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention decides that COVID-19 vaccinations are no longer needed.

The bill would require state health and occupational safety officials to advise employers on what qualifies as a medical condition, disability, religious belief and valid vaccination status. Businesses that didn't comply

would face penalties that have yet to be determined.

Assembly Republican Leader James Gallagher said he is vaccinated and urges others to also get their shots.

"But telling people they can't feed their family unless they get the vaccine is just wrong," Gallagher said. "I trust Californians enough to treat them like adults who can make their own health care decisions. It's unfortunate that a few Democrats in the Legislature don't."

The proposal drew similar concerns from Jonathan Keller, president of the conservative California Family Council advocacy group, who said that "Government should not force employers to fire people over personal medical decisions."

Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom last year ordered all of the state's roughly 2.2 million health care workers to to be vaccinated or lose their jobs.

He also required state workers and teachers to either get vaccinated or submit to weekly testing. And California's school children by summer must be vaccinated to attend in-person classes.

Wicks' proposal is just the latest of several far-reaching measures introduced by Democratic state lawmakers this year.

Among others, Sen. Scott Wiener would allow children 12 and up to be vaccinated without their parents' consent, while Sen. Richard Pan would eliminate a personal belief exemption in school-based COVID-19 vaccination requirements.

Pan argued in support of Wicks' bill that "having a safe workplace is essential to ... keeping our economy going."

People can't be scared of getting infected when they go to work or while patronizing businesses, and businesses cannot endure frequent outbreaks that sideline their employees, he said.

More than 2,000 of the 30,000 San Francisco Bay Area members of the United Food

and Commercial Workers Local 5 have been sickened and some have died from the coronavirus, said Jim Araby, the union's director of strategic campaigns.

"Just like we would never ask a construction worker to go to a construction site without a hardhat, we shouldn't ask our members and workers who work in these essential industries to go in without the protection of a vaccine," he said in backing Wicks' bill.

The California Chamber of Commerce, California Restaurant Association, California Retailers Association and California chapter of

the National Federation of Independent Businesses did not immediately comment on the bill.

But the bill has support from the Small Business Majority advocacy group that has 85,000 members nationwide, including nearly 20,000 in California.

"Small businesses don't want to be traffic cops in debates about public safety," said John Arensmeyer, the group's chief executive. "They're looking for a common statewide standard that disentangles them from politics and enables them to operate their businesses safely and predictably."



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# California Farm Bureau Legislative Update

By: **CAFB**

February 11, 2022  
**Air Quality**

The California Air Resources Board is hosting a public workshop on Tuesday February 15th to discuss public health proposals and impacts for the update of the 2022 Scoping Plan. Farm Bureau staff will be listening to this workshops and comment, if needed.

## **Agricultural Employment**

Legislature Passes, Newsom signs COVID-19 Paid Sick Leave Bill: Governor Newsom signed SB 114 (Committee on the Budget and Fiscal Review) on February 9, mandating a COVID-19 paid sick leave requirement effective on February 19 through September 30, 2022, with the leave entitlement retroactive to January 1, 2022 and be in effect until September 30, 2022. It requires employers of 26 or more to provide employees up one week (40 hours) of paid sick leave for their own COVID-related illnesses, a second week (an additional 40 hours, for a total of 80 hours) if the employee or family member tests positive, with a limitation of 24 total hours for receiving a COVID vaccination, illness resulting from vaccination, or other purposes. Part-time employees would receive leave on the basis of the number of hours typically worked in a workweek. Employers would be required to provide testing and pay for it if it is not otherwise paid for, though this is already imposed by the Cal/ OSHA COVID-19 ETS. Employees who refuse testing or refuse to share test results with their employers would be ineligible for the second week of leave.

Indoor Mask Mandate To Expire: Governor Newsom and the head of the California Department of Public Health, Dr. Tomas Aragon, announced on February 7 that the current state-wide indoor mask mandate will not be fully renewed when it expires on February 15. The mandate will remain in place for those who are not vaccinated, on public transportation, in homeless shelters and medical facilities (including long term care facilities). County health departments may elect to impose more stringent masking requirements, and ag employers are urged to check with their local agencies to verify local requirements. As of February 16, masking requirements will revert

to the existing requirements of the January 2022 version of the Cal/ OSHA Emergency Temporary Standards (ETS), which requires employers generally to require non-vaccinated employees to mask indoors; Frequently-Asked Questions (FAQ) (see "Vaccines, #6) issued by Cal/OSHA allows employers to allow employees self-attest to their vaccination status.

## **Budget**

The Senate and Assembly Budget Subcommittees that manage agricultural and natural resources issues met this week to discuss various items in the Governor's Proposed Budget. Senators were heard noting the importance and success of programs to reduce methane emission from dairy and livestock operations. They also questioned an additional investment proposed in the Office of Farm to Fork within the newly established Farm to School Program. All items of note were held open and will be discussed in future hearings.

## **Cannabis**

AB 1725 (Smith) increases criminal penalties for illicit cannabis cultivation. This bill would amend the Adult Use Marijuana Act to make it a felony, punishable by 16 months or 2 or 3 years in county jail, for a person over 18 years of age to plant, cultivate, harvest, dry, or process more than 6 living cannabis plants. The bill has been double referred to Assembly Public Safety and Assembly Business and Professions. Currently, these are misdemeanor offenses, unless there are other existing circumstances such as prior violent felony convictions. The bill has not been set for hearing.

## **Commodities**

Senator John Laird (D-Santa Cruz) has introduced SB 982. This bill would authorize the California Apple Commission to appoint any person to the Commission to serve as ex officio non-voting member. The bill would also require the Secretary of the Department of Food and Agriculture to respond to the Committee in writing within 30 days in response to a Committee recommendation.

AB 1825 (Assembly Agriculture Committee) has been introduced. This bill would expand the existing exemption from the fruit, nut and vegetable standard for melons and vegetables shipped in field bins or bulk out of state and into an adjoining state from 25 miles beyond the border to

any adjoining state.

Assemblymember Mark Stone (D-Santa Cruz) has introduced a bill, AB 1870, to require the Department of Public Health to, among other things, develop a single application and an online registration portal for processors of organic food products. This bill will likely be referred to several policy committees in the following weeks.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture's (CDFA) Pest Exclusion Branch is announcing three midterm vacancies on the Nursery Advisory Board. The Board is composed of twelve voting members, each representing an establishment with a valid California License to Sell Nursery Stock. Members will represent a wide spectrum of the nursery industry, be geographically representative of the nursery industry and hold a valid California License to Sell Nursery Stock. The term of office for Board Members is four years. One candidate will be appointed to serve to January 31, 2023, whereas two successful candidates will be appointed to serve until January 31, 2025. Individuals interested in being considered should send a letter of interest and a resumé to Kristina Weber by March 21, 2022, by email to [nurseryservices@cdfa.ca.gov](mailto:nurseryservices@cdfa.ca.gov) or by mail to: California Department of Food and Agriculture Pest Exclusion Branch; 1220 N Street, Room 221; Sacramento, CA 95814.

## **Forestry and Wildfire**

Two Senate bills were introduced this week to address wildfire and forestry issues.

SB 926 aims to increase the use of prescribed fire and cultural burns by expediting the creation of a pool of funds from the state budget that provides claims coverage related to such forestry and wildfire prevention activity. Senate Bill 926 directs \$20 million from the 2021 state budget to be deposited into the Prescribed Fire Claims Fund and requires the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection to establish the Prescribed Fire Liability Pilot Program to support coverage for losses from permitted prescribed fires by nonpublic entities, private land owners and other non-governmental organizations. The bill task the Department of General Services (DGS) to administer the claims to assist in increasing the pace and scale of prescribed fire or cultural burn projects. DGS will coordinate

with the Insurance Commissioner and Director of Forestry and Fire Protection to create the claims fund policies.

SB 936 seeks to establish a forestry training center in northern California with a goal to increase hand crews, particularly from formerly incarcerated individuals. Before December 31, 2024, Senate Bill 936 would create a partnership with the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection and the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to establish a forestry training center in northern California to provide enhanced training, education, work experience, and job readiness for entry-level forestry and vegetation management jobs. The bill would require the training center to include counseling, mentorship, supportive housing, health care, and educational services and authorize the training center to provide training modules on specified activities. The bill would require enrollment opportunities at the training center for formerly incarcerated individuals and to prioritize enrollment for those formerly incarcerated individuals who have either successfully served on a California Conservation Camp program crew and were recommended by the Director of Forestry and Fire Protection and the Secretary of the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, or successfully served on a hand crew at the county level and were recommended for participation by county probation and county fire departments.

## **Insurance**

Assemblymember and Insurance Commissioner candidate Marc Levine introduced AB 1755. Current law prohibits an insurer, for one year after the declaration of a state of emergency, from canceling or refusing to renew a residential property insurance policy solely because the property is in an area in which a wildfire occurred. AB 1755 requires an insurer to issue a policy to a homeowner who has hardened their home against fire, regardless of the home's location, on and after January 1, 2025, and would require an insurer to make conforming changes to its internet website and print materials on or before July 1, 2025. The bill has not been referred to a committee yet.

## **Pest Management**



## Legislative Update

continued from page 6

AB 1959 (Assembly Agriculture Committee) has been introduced in the Assembly which would expand the allowance to use carbon monoxide for controlling for burrowing rodent pests. Existing law would have repealed this allowance by January 1, 2023. This bill would extend the allowance to January 1, 2026. Farm Bureau will likely support this bill.

### Taxation

AB 1249 (Gallagher), which creates an income tax exclusion related to wildfire settlements, passed from the Assembly Floor with a vote of 74-0. AB 1249 creates a personal state income tax exclusion from gross income for settlement funds received by real property owners that suffered losses in the 2015 Butte Fire, 2017 North Bay Fires, and 2018 Camp Fire. The bill contains an urgency clause so that it will take effect immediately upon the Governor's signature instead of waiting until the end of 2021 to be chaptered.

### Water

On February 15th a Joint Hearing of the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee, and the Assembly Local Government Committee will hold an informational hearing, and update on the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) implementation entitled, "What's up down below?" Farm Bureau will monitor and comment if necessary. The Senate Budget and fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 2 on Resources, Environmental Protection and Energy will meet February 16th. Farm Bureau will monitor and testify if necessary.

A measure that would exempt water system and domestic wells designated as high or medium risk from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) was recently introduced. AB 1642 (Rudy Salas, D-Bakersfield) will be heard in the Assembly Natural Resources Committee, but has not yet been scheduled. Farm Bureau is in communication with the author and has not taken a position on the measure in these early stages of the legislative process.

A measure that would require the Judicial Council to adopt rules to expedite approvals of water conveyance or storage projects if the lead agency's Environmental Impact Report (EIR) declares there is little to no impact on the environment. AB 1774 (Kelly Seyarto, R- Murrieta)

was recently introduced to streamline the CEQA process for these projects. A similar measure recently passed out of the Senate 37-0 and will next be heard in the Assembly. SB 230 (Anthony Portantino, D-Glendale) has not yet been assigned to a policy committee for hearing. Farm Bureau is in communication with the authors and has yet to position on the measure in these early stages of the legislative process.

As previously reported, a measure that would authorize a landowner or water right holder to modify, or repair, the water conveyance system on or beneath the land of another landowner and is not under the control or management of any public authority is moving through the Assembly. SB 463 (Dahle, R-Redding) has not yet been scheduled to be heard, but will next be heard in the Assembly Water, Parks and Wildlife Committee. Farm Bureau is working with the author on several issues, including whether mutual water companies and mutual ditch companies should be treated in the same manner as a public agency in the measure. Farm Bureau is in communication with the author and others, and has not positioned on the measure.

SB 880 (John Laird, D-Santa Cruz) will next be heard in the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee, but has not yet been scheduled. As previously reported, SB 880 would extend the law's existing sunset of January 1, 2023 indefinitely. In 2017 AB 589 (Frank Bigelow, R-O'Neals) was signed into law, authorizing those who divert 10 acre feet of water or more per year to self certify their water measuring devices are installed and operating properly if they take a course taught by the University of California Cooperative Extension. Farm Bureau supports.

A measure was recently introduced that would establish the Water Storage and Conveyance Fund in the State Treasury for conveyance subsidence repairs and new reservoir storage. SB 890 (Nielsen, R-Redding) would require the Department of Water Resources to expend money from the fund, upon appropriation by the Legislature, to complete funding for the construction of the Sites Reservoir, and to restore the capacity of the Friant -Kern Canal, the San Luis and Delta- Mendota Canal and other conveyance systems suffering from subsidence. The measure will next be heard in the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee, but has not yet been scheduled. Farm Bureau is

working with the author and potential co-authors on both sides of the isle on

the measure, but has not yet positioned on SB 890.



### Reminder!

Your 2021 INMP reports are due by March 1, 2022. If you need assistance completing your 2021 INMP reports, please contact the MCFB office at (209) 723-3001 to schedule an appointment.

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# From the Archives: 4-H Youth Development

By: Emily Lin, UC Merced Library

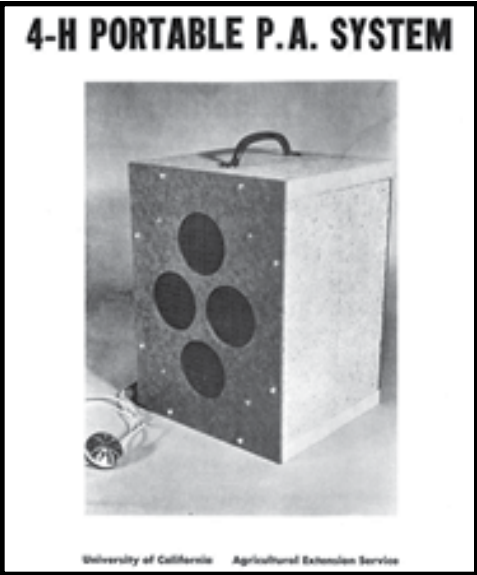
As farm advisors fanned out across California in the 1910s and 1920s and developed programs of work with local farm bureaus, one of their key endeavors was enrolling boys and girls in local agricultural clubs. Early agricultural clubs, including calf, pig, poultry, vegetable growing, and home economics clubs, were formed to provide youth with hands-on learning experiences and demonstrate better agricultural and home practices. Merced County agent J.F. Grass attested in his 1920 report that these clubs successfully “aroused the interest of parents” and “stimulated farm bureau work in those communities.” Competitions were established to increase attention to purebred stock, better feed, and other farm improvement objectives.

Participating in demonstrations, competitions, and judging allowed members to polish what are called “soft skills” today: skills such as communication, teamwork, project management, and leadership. Growth in membership led to the recruitment of adult volunteers who served as project leaders, and clubs adopted formalized procedures and organizational structures under the national 4-H system. The breadth of publications and other 4-H materials from California archived in the California Agricultural Resources Archive ([cara.ucmerced.edu](http://cara.ucmerced.edu)) shows how projects expanded beyond agriculture and home economics. We’ve picked a few highlights found in the recently published Madera County UC Cooperative Extensions records.

Illustrations of California Trees (1930) prepared for California 4-H leaders is a guide to identifying native conifers that indicates their distribution across the state:



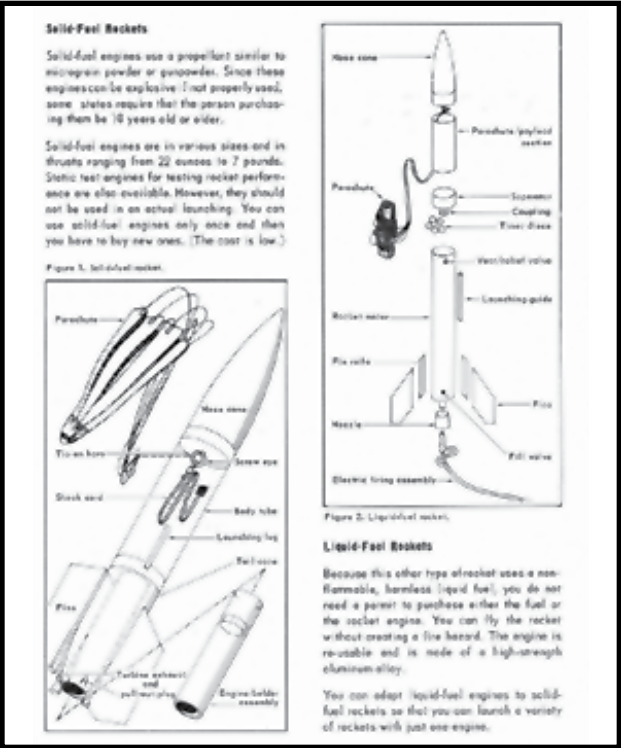
Following these 1966 instructions, a 4-H club could construct a Portable P.A. System for \$18-20 dollars and “amplify a speaker’s voice with clarity



and enough volume to cover audiences of 200 or more.”

Humboldt County 4-H All-Star Mark Bent compiled this 1973 project manual, Rocket into the Future:

In 1959, the University of California produced a 28-minute motion picture film, The 4-H Trail, as an introduction to the 4-H Club program in California. The film features lively footage of club activities and events from around the state and singing by 4-H chorus members. The CARA project has digitized this film for preservation and access. It can now be viewed in full online in Calisphere.



View The 4-H Trail in Calisphere using the QR code.



Dos Palos Calf Club Members, 1920, Merced County





# Merced County Farm Bureau Heritage Members

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# A Busy Month For the Gustine FFA

**By: Garret Gomes, Gustine FFA Reporter**

**Gustine FFA January Meeting**  
Gustine FFA has been quite busy this month. Students had the opportunity to participate in multiple events this month, ranging from our monthly meeting to participating in the Sectional Super Saturday public speaking event.

On January 11th, Gustine FFA hosted its monthly meeting. Students also received the opportunity to compete in the “Ag Olympics” as the activity after the meeting. The Gustine FFA Officer Team announced upcoming events and recapped a variety of FFA events our members participated in last month.

Monthly awards and FFA jackets



**Gustine FFA members that took part in the sectional super saturday event. From Left to Right Christina Moitozo, Crystal Sanchez, Mikayla Silveria, Savanna Barcellos, and Tyler Borba.**

were also given out at the FFA meeting. The members of the month were Michael Salsa (Freshman Member), Phillip Saaranzin (Sophomore Member), Ashlyn Alamo (Junior Member), and Alondra Ortiz (Senior Member).

Gustine FFA Members also received their FFA Jackets funded by the Gustine Ag Boosters. Members who received their jacket included Raul Nunes, Shandel Aguliera, Katelyn Cremeen, Sadey Pedranti, Antonio Hermosillo, Layla Gallegos, and Evelin Lemus, Reese Carlucci, Malissa Nunes, Andera Contreras, Cheyenne Vermissio.

Students then participated in the FFA meeting’s activity which was an Ag Olympic Relay. Students had to flip the hay bale, dress in welding gear, chug a glass of milk, and compete in a wheelbarrow race. The participant with the fastest times took home the gold, silver, and bronze medals. The winners of the relay were first place Rui Cardozo, Second place Jake Campbell, and Cameron Ivey.

Thank you to all FFA members who took part in the monthly meeting activities.

## **Sectional Super Saturday Competition**

On Saturday, January 22nd five Gustine FFA members competed at

the Merced Mariposa Sectional Super Saturday Competition. Super Saturday is where students receive the chance to compete in one of the FFA’s speaking competitions. This year Gustine FFA had 3 Job Interview participants, 1 Creed speaker, and 1 Impromptu member compete in the contest.

Members who competed in the Job Interview competition submitted a resume and cover letter, applying for an agricultural job chosen from a list from California FFA. They then had to fill out an application and take part in a mock interview where they are asked a variety of questions. Christina Moitozo, Tyler Borba, and Savanna Barcellos participated in Job Interview, and Savanna moved on to the final round finishing in 7th place overall.

One Gustine FFA Member took part in the FFA Creed competition. This year, Crystal Sanchez participated in the competition. Crystal had to recite the Creed, written by E. M. Tiffany, to a panel of judges and answer agriculture based questions. Crystal moved on to the final round and placed 11th overall.

Mikayla Silveira Competed in the Impromptu competition where she had to pick 3 random cards with 3 random quotes, or terms. Mikayla must then pick 2 cards and prepare a 2 minute speech on the 2 cards of her choice. Mikayla moved on to the final

round and earned 1st place, which allowed her to move on to the regional competition in February.

Gustine FFA had another successful year at the Super Saturday event! Congratulations to all who competed this year. You all continue to make the Gustine FFA Chapter proud!

## **Gustine AG Boosters Dinner Dance**

On Saturday, January 22nd the Gustine FFA Ag Boosters held their annual FFA Dinner Dance. Students had the opportunity to help decorate and serve at the dinner dance.

The Gustine FFA Dinner Dance is the largest Ag Boosters fundraiser of the year. All proceeds go directly to students and our chapter. Ag Boosters funds multiple trips for the FFA including National Convention, State Convention, MFE/ALA etc. It also helps fund jackets, lunches, and scholarships for our FFA members.

Students helped decorate the Al Gomen Center in Gustine on Friday, January 21 and helped welcome and serve at the event on January 22nd.

The Gustine FFA Chapter would like to thank the community for all the continued support and the Ag Boosters for all they do for us!

Wow.. what an amazing month! Congratulations to all FFA Members for all the achievements over the past month! We look forward to all of the upcoming events.

# Loteria Meeting

**By: Neveya Villa, Livingston FFA**

The city of Livingston, CA is home to an extremely diverse community where we all share and celebrate our separate cultures and beliefs. The Livingston FFA Chapter is no exception to this and to foster an environment of inclusivity and understanding is our reigning goal. On January 25th, 2022, we had our first meeting of the new year. To start the new year off, we decided to shake up our activity for this month by hosting a Loteria meeting. Loteria is a traditional game of chance that is similar to Bingo. It included cards like La Sirena (the mermaid), El Melon (the melon), El Gallo (the rooster), and El Sol (the sun). The game originated from Mexico and can be found in most

households in our community.

As the last of our members came filing into the meeting room, the officers commenced with the Opening and Closing Ceremonies. Afterwards, we proceeded with the Old Business which included our Sectional Super Saturday, Toiletry Drive, and our annual Panda Express Fundraiser. For the Super Saturday report, we recognized all those who participated and gave special recognition to those moving on to Regionals. These included our very own chapter officers Reena Grewal, Gabriela Torres, Jenna Bates, and Allison Franzese. It is customary in our chapter to select a few outstanding members to talk about each event occurring in our chapter. The Old Business was followed by the New Business. This included our Tri-

Tip Dinner Fundraiser, a Washington Leadership Conference informational meeting, and the upcoming CDE Field Days.

We also recognized our January Member of the Month and Aggie on the Rise. This month Fatima Davalos was chosen as our Aggie on the Rise and Fred Velasquez was chosen as Member of the Month. Both of these members have shown exemplary involvement in our chapter and have truly shone above the rest. Once we had gone over all the information necessary, members were dismissed from their tables and were able to enjoy delicious, authentic tacos made by Mrs. Larson and Mr. Perez. The cafeteria was warm and friendly as members enjoyed the company of their peers. This swiftly turned to friendly

competition though as

the Loteria cards were spread amongst the tables. In total, four intense rounds of Loteria were played. Members laughed as they screamed, “LOTERIA” across the cafeteria. A couple of our very own chapter officers even sat at tables and played the game with our members. Our winners included Cain Ambriz and Noemi Perez. After the fourth round was complete, our members were dismissed. This marked the ending of our January 2022 meeting. To close off the meeting, the officers performed the closing ceremonies and thanked everyone for attending. Members appreciated something that was unique to them being showcased in our chapter and we are excited that so many people enjoyed the meeting.



# New Year Full of New Opportunities

**By: Gabriella Buttici, Merced FFA Chapter Reporter**

**H**appy New Year on behalf of Merced FFA! Our chapter is so excited to come back and announce our eventful month of January and our strong start to 2022. On January 22nd, 2022, our agriculture teachers took fourteen amazing students to compete in the Merced-Mariposa Sectional Super



**Students who competed in the Merced Mariposa Sectional Speaking Contest pose for a picture while waiting to be dismissed to their contest locations.**

Saturday event that took place at Merced College. Our students competed in many categories including extemporaneous, prepared public speaking, job interview, creed speaking and impromptu. They all had an amazing Saturday together and our chapters would like to send a big thank you to Merced College Agriculture Department for hosting the contest and we would also like to thank our sectional officers for putting on such a great event. Congratulations to the following individuals for stepping up and participating in the event: Forrest Johnson for competing in extemporaneous public speaking; Esteban Castenada, Fayth Bautista, and Joshus Ortega for competing in Prepared Public Speaking; Preslee Hunter and Christian SantaMaria for competing in Creed; Natalia Robinson, Taylor Melgosa, Melany Garcia, and Gabriella Buttici for participating in Job Interview; and last but not least Warren Parker, Jonathan Clingham, Charli Auldrige, and Liliana Lopez for participating in impromptu public speaking.

Following our Super Saturday event, twelve of our students traveled with two of our agriculture teachers; Mrs. Harvey and Mr. Mua, up to Monterey on January 23rd, 2022, and January 24th, 2022 to attend the Made For Excellence (M.F.E.) Conference hosted by California FFA. One attendee, Charli Auldrige, says “M.F.E. was a great opportunity to make friends from all around California. I learned a lot about leadership and I am even more excited for the upcoming California FFA State Conference in March!” Another member Trinity Diaz shared “M.F.E. was an amazing experience and I’m glad I got to experience that with my chapter. I feel fortunate to have been invited to attend this by my agriculture teachers.”

On January 25th, 2022, Greenhand President Preslee Hunter and Chapter Vice President Natalia Robinson attended the Merced Sunrise Rotary Speech Contest held at Paul's Place. Both ladies had to prepare a speech on “serving others, changing lives.” They then recited their speeches to an in-person and virtual audience! A huge congratulations to both ladies for

placing in the top two, Preslee taking first place followed by Natalia. Good luck to Preslee as she continues to the area contest in February!!

Additionally, on Saturday February 5th, 2022, three Merced FFA students were announced to have won a proficiency award in their particular project area for the Merced-Mariposa Section. Sydney Stone with Small Animal Production, Julia Walker with Specialty Animal Production and Michael Sanchez with Agriculture Education. Sydnee is the rabbit manager of the Merced FFA rabbitry. The Merced FFA rabbitry has a variety of breeds including California's, Mini Rex, Himalayas, and more. Julia currently raises ball python snakes and other reptiles which makes her project unique. Michael has an agriculture education project, with his “Be the Future” podcast. Episodes have included State, Regional, and Sectional FFA Officers as well as members from the agriculture community. Our chapter is sending a big congratulations to all three individuals for how much hard work they put into their project. We can't wait to see what next month holds for our chapter!

## Solar-paneled canals getting a test run in San Joaquin Valley

**By: Lorena Anderson and Julie Hendricks, UC Merced and Citizen Group**

**T**he project is based on research commissioned by a company called Solar AquaGrid through the Sierra Nevada Research Institute and UC Water. Environmental engineering graduate alumna Brandi McQuin was one of the researchers who showed that covering the 4,000 miles of California's water canals could reduce evaporation by as much as 82%, saving about 63 billion gallons of water a year. That's comparable to the same amount needed to irrigate 50,000 acres of farmland or meet the residential water needs of more than 2 million people.

Covering all state water canals with solar installations would also

generate 13 gigawatts of renewable power, equaling roughly 1/6th of the state's current installed capacity — about half the projected new capacity needed by 2030 to meet the state's decarbonization goals.

“Solar canals are an example of an energy-water nexus that offer multiple sustainability benefits. Using water canals for solar infrastructure conserves water while producing renewable electricity and avoids converting large tracts of land to solar development,” McQuin said. “The cooler microclimate next to the canal mitigates panel heating, which enhances PV efficiency, and shade from the panels mitigates aquatic weed growth which is a major maintenance issue.”

At its Feb. 8 board meeting, TID officially approved Project Nexus.

California wants 50% of its electricity to come from renewable sources by 2030 and allocated \$20 million for Project Nexus.

The project is a public-private-academic partnership among TID, the Department of Water Resources (DWR), Solar AquaGrid and UC Merced. McQuin, who studies the economic and environmental sustainability dimensions of the food-water-energy nexus and the integration of science in decision making to improve sustainable development outcomes, is now a postdoctoral researcher at UC Santa Cruz. She will return to UC Merced in April as a project scientist working with engineering Professor Sarah Kurtz, the principal investigator, to conduct several studies related to Project Nexus.

A paper McQuin and others from UC Merced wrote appeared in the journal *Nature*, demonstrating the advantages of solar canals, including:

- Dual use of land
- Reduced plant growth in canals
- Reduced evaporation of water

But there are challenges, Kurtz said, including a higher cost of associated structures relative to output; the need for access to the canals for maintenance, which makes it difficult to deploy the modules in the most cost-effective way; and handling delivery of the electricity to a useful load.

“Let's call each of these factors, and others, ‘key performance indicators’ or KPIs,” Kurtz said. “Working with our partners on the large demonstration projects at TID, we will quantify the

*See 'Solar' Page 12*



# SAVE THE DATE



## April 23, 2022

### Kids Discovery Center in Merced

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## Solar

continued from page 11

KPIs.

“When you look at the cost of implementing the solar canals, the amount of electricity generated, the net change in maintenance costs, etc., what would it take for the project to be viewed as attractive enough that a canal owner would be interested in such a project?”

As they evaluate each KPI, Kurtz, McKuIn and other researchers, including graduate students and a postdoctoral researcher, will also look for opportunities to innovate to improve the bottom line, including a small number of simple engineering designs that could improve access and other details. They will also map the state's canals to identify which design is most beneficial for each segment and see if there are segments that would not be good candidates for adding solar panels. In addition, engineering Professor Marie-Odile Fortier and one of her students will conduct a life-cycle assessment of the system. Engineering Professor Roger Bales, who has been coordinating the project since the research began in 2015, will also contribute to the scaling analysis, prototype analysis and communications.

A companion project on the UC Merced campus will allow researchers to make closer observations, potentially providing a way to include the Merced Irrigation District.

Groundbreaking on Project Nexus is scheduled for this fall, with completion expected in 2024 at multiple locations throughout the TID service territory in the Central Valley. The project will use existing TID infrastructure on already-disturbed land to keep costs low and efficiency high while supporting the region’s sustainable farming tradition. Additionally, energy storage will be installed to study how storage facilities can support the local electric grid when solar generation is suboptimal due to cloud cover.

“By conserving land and water while providing clean electricity with solar canals, Project Nexus has the potential to ease some of the most pressing challenges that face the Central Valley,” McKuIn said. “As a Central Valley native and resident, I’m really excited to be involved in a project that is relevant to my own community.”

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# What Employers Need to Know about California's 2022 COVID-19 Supplemental Paid Sick Leave Law (US)

**By: Cristen R. Hintze & Karen E. Wentzel, The National Law Review**

On February 19, 2022, California employers with more than 25 employees must begin complying with California's latest paid sick leave legislation (Senate Bill 114 to be codified as Cal. Labor Code § 248.6) and provide supplemental paid sick leave to covered employees who are unable to work or telework due to COVID-19 related reasons. While similar to California's 2021 COVID-19 Supplemental Paid Sick Leave law, there are some distinct differences about which employers should take note:

## 1. SB 114 Covers Employees and Their Family Members

The 2022 law has been expanded to allow employees to use supplemental paid sick leave to care for family members impacted by COVID-19. "Family members" include children, parents, spouses, registered domestic partners, grandparents, grandchildren, and siblings.

## 2. SB 114 Establishes Two 40-Hour Supplemental Paid Sick Leave "Banks"

Like its 2021 counterpart, the 2022 law provides up to 80 hours of supplemental paid sick leave for employees. However, the new law differs in the way it allocates those hours. It establishes two separate 40-hour "banks" of leave allotment, each with different requirements and to be used for different purposes:

### Bank #1 – Up to 40 hours for COVID-Related Reasons

Under SB 114, an employee can use up to 40 hours of supplemental paid sick leave if they are unable to work or telework for the following reasons:

- They are subject to a quarantine or isolation period due to COVID-19, as defined by federal, state, or local orders or guidance.
- They have been advised by a health care provider to isolate or self-quarantine due to COVID-19 concerns.

- They are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and seeking a medical diagnosis.
- They are caring for a family member who is subject to a quarantine or isolation order, or who has been advised to isolate or self-quarantine by a health care provider, due to COVID-19 concerns.
- They are caring for a child whose school or place of care is closed or otherwise unavailable for reasons related to COVID-19.

Employees may also use these hours:

- To attend an appointment for themselves or a family member to receive a COVID-19 vaccine or vaccine booster.
- If they are experiencing symptoms or caring for a family member experiencing symptoms related to a COVID-19 vaccine or vaccine booster that prevents the employee from working or teleworking.

With respect to leave provided for symptoms associated with vaccines or boosters, employers may limit the total supplemental paid sick leave to 3 days or 24 hours. If more leave is requested, an employer may require the employee to provide verification from a health care provider that the employee or family member is experiencing continuing symptoms related to a vaccine or vaccine booster; this limitation applies to each vaccine/booster and includes the time used to obtain the vaccine/booster.

### Bank #2 – Up to an Additional 40 Hours for Positive COVID-19 Tests

Under SB 114, an employee may qualify for up to an additional 40 hours of leave if they test positive or are caring for a family member who tested positive for COVID-19. Employees do not need to exhaust all supplemental paid sick leave from Bank 1 before using leave from Bank 2. Significantly, in these cases, SB 114 authorizes an employer to require proof of a positive test result—including proof of an affected family member. SB 114 specifically provides that an "employer has no obligation to provide additional COVID-19 supplemental paid sick

leave...for an employee who refuses to provide documentation of the results of the test...upon the request of the employer."

If the employee is using this bank for their own positive test, an employer may also require testing on day five after the initial positive test.

## 3. SB 114 Provides Credit to Employers Who Already Provided Supplemental Paid Leave

Employers who have already provided supplemental paid leave (beyond regular paid sick leave, vacation time, etc.) for time off taken on or after January 1, 2022, may count those hours towards an employee's SB 114 supplemental paid leave allotment, if the leave was used and paid for reasons provided under SB 114; and the compensation for those hours was equal to or greater than the compensation the employee would have received under SB 114.

## 4. SB 114 Prohibits Employers from Requiring Employees Exhaust Other Benefits Before Using SPSL

Under SB 114, an employer may not require employees to use any other paid or unpaid leave, time off, or vacation time before, or in lieu of, using supplemental paid sick leave. Employers are also no longer allowed to require employees to first use and exhaust supplemental paid sick leave while the employee is entitled to "exclusion pay." In other words, if Cal-OSHA standards require employers to maintain an employee's earnings when an employee is excluded from the workplace due to COVID-19, then employers cannot require an employee to first exhaust supplemental paid sick leave.

## 5. SB 114 Includes New Wage Statement Requirements

The new law expands an employer's requirements with respect to information contained on wage statements. Specifically, SB 114 requires employers to provide employees with written notice, either through a wage statement or a separate writing provided on the designated pay date with the employee's payment of wages that sets forth separately from regular paid sick days:

- the amount of supplemental paid sick leave available; and
- the amount of supplemental paid sick leave the employee has used through that pay period, including if the employee did not use any supplemental paid sick leave during the pay period.

If an employee has not used any SPSL, the employer shall list zero hours on the paystub. This should reduce the burden on employers from having to make complicated calculations each pay period (as required under the prior law). In addition, SB 114 says SPSL hours used should be listed separately from regular paid sick days.

## 6. SB 114 Includes a New Pay Rate Calculation for Non-Exempt Employees

Unlike SB 95, which required employers to utilize the rate of pay that was the highest under several different calculations, SB 114 defines regular rate of pay more in line with other paid sick leave methodologies. Under the new law, for nonexempt employees:

- The regular rate is calculated in the same manner as the regular rate of pay for the workweek in which the employee uses paid sick time, excluding any overtime pay if the employee works overtime in that workweek; or
- The regular rate is calculated by dividing the total wages, not including overtime premium pay, by the total non-overtime hours worked, in the full pay periods of the prior 90 days of employment;

For exempt employees, the regular rate is calculated in the same manner as other forms of paid leave time.

The amount of pay an employer is required to pay for supplemental paid sick leave is capped at \$511 per day and \$5,110 in the aggregate to a covered employee.

Laws requiring compliance by employers as to various aspects of COVID in the workplace are continuing to evolve on the federal, state, and local level. Please feel free to reach out to any member of our team if you have questions about the law in your jurisdiction.



# Projected cost of bullet train up by \$5 billion

By: Ralph Vartabedian, Los Angeles Times

California bullet train officials last week released a draft project blueprint that acknowledges that costs have risen roughly \$5 billion. It also seeks to address several issues that have generated blowback.

The 2022 business plan estimates that the full, 500-mile high-speed system between Los Angeles and San Francisco will cost as much as \$105 billion, up from \$100 billion two years ago. In 2008, when voters approved a bond to help build the railroad, the authority estimated that the system would cost \$33 billion. In its latest blueprint, the California High Speed Rail Authority abandoned a plan to save money by building only a single track for an initial 171-mile operating system between Bakersfield and Merced; instead, it plans to build a two-track system.

When it added the one-track system to its 2020 business plan, the authority asserted that additional capacity would not be needed. But the proposal came under fire; some experts said it would eventually cost more than building two tracks at the same time.

Some of the higher costs undoubtedly stem from changes the authority was forced to make to avoid impacts on San Joaquin Valley communities.

Another point of contention has been the uncertain location of the bullet train station in Merced, leaving the potential for it to be a

considerable distance from a rail hub serving the ACE and San Joaquin lines, conventional systems that link to the Bay Area and Sacramento. The authority said it is working with other agencies to develop a single station that would facilitate passenger transfers.

These issues were two among many that led leaders in the Assembly last summer to hold up granting a \$4.2-billion appropriation necessary for the 171-mile starter system. As a result, the rail authority had to adopt budget cuts that would slow down planned construction and delay the acquisition of trains.

Cost increases on the project have been sharper in past years, but the new \$105-billion estimate may not take full account of changed assumptions and conditions in certain segments of the route or other construction cost drivers, according to engineers who work on the project.

Other variables include when funding would become available for additional future construction, the time horizon for the entire project, preliminary designs that are subject to significant modifications and changes in the cost of acquiring land.

The recently enacted \$1.2-trillion infrastructure bill in Washington offers hope for additional funding, though nothing has been granted yet. The rail authority clearly has high expectations, saying, "New federal funding will also enable the Authority to invest dollars statewide to advance the program, make capital investments to improve mobility and advance the connectivity of high-speed rail with existing passenger rail providers."

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**May**

- Corbin Cash Distillery Tour & Bottle
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**June**

- Trip to Yosemite
- Basket of Blaker Brewing and Vista Ranch

**July**

- Half a hog (cut and wrapped) raised by Atwater FFA
- Wolfsen's gift basket

**August**

- Red Wing boots
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**September**

- CenCal Escape Room for 10
- Buchanan Hollow gift basket

**October**

- Kid's Electric Gator
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# USDA Announces the Appointment of Karli Moore to Serve on the Farm Service Agency State Committee in California

**By: USDA**

The USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) today announced the appointment of Karli Moore to serve on the FSA state committee in California which ensures the effective and efficient delivery of FSA federal farm programs to the state's agricultural producers.

Members of the FSA state committee are appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture and are responsible for the oversight of farm programs and county committee operations, resolving program delivery appeals from the agriculture community, maintaining cooperative relations with industry stakeholders, keeping producers informed about FSA programs and operating in a manner consistent with USDA equal opportunity and civil rights policies.

Moore, of Stanford, California (Santa Clara County), is a doctoral student at Stanford University and has an extensive background in agricultural work. She was raised on a family farm in Lumbee tribal homelands - an experience that has shaped both her studies and professional work. She is actively focused on Indigenous agriculture and advocacy for tribal producers. Moore was most recently the Director of Programs at the Native American Agriculture Fund, where she worked to combat the legacy of racial discrimination in the agriculture industry through capital and infrastructure investments in Indian Country.


Over the past year, she has also served in an equity-focused advisory role with Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program. In this role, she learned the specific barriers that other underserved populations face when trying access USDA programs. Moore has a deep knowledge of agricultural economies across the country, understanding of racial and economic disparities in agriculture, experience working on tribal lands, and commitment to climate-smart

agriculture as a solution to addressing climate change.

More appointments will follow as USDA seats the three to five member FSA state committees for each state and Puerto Rico. The state committee chairperson will be named when all committee members have been appointed.

The Farm Service Agency serves farmers, ranchers, foresters and agricultural partners through the effective, efficient and equitable delivery of federal agricultural programs. The Agency offers producers a strong safety net through the administration of farm commodity and disaster programs. Additionally,

through conservation programs, FSA continues to preserve and protect natural resources and provides credit to agricultural producers who are unable to receive private, commercial credit, including targeted loan funds for beginning, underserved, women and military veterans involved in production agriculture.



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All 18-35 year olds welcome! Tacos are included!



# Walnut market to flatten in years ahead, forecast analysts

**By: Brad Hooker, Agri-Pulse**

**R**abo AgriFinance analysts have published a five-year outlook for walnuts, and the market looks to be flattening after record growth. Yet promising signs lay ahead for long-term market opportunities, despite a tumultuous year for port congestion, a supply chain crunch and a potentially deepening drought.

The new report follows a record production year globally, at 2.34 million metric tons, capping a 5% annual growth rate for the last decade, which makes a decline in production—of about 3% this year—all but inevitable. David Magaña, a senior RaboResearch analyst covering fresh produce and tree nuts, told Agri-Pulse the average 2022 U.S. crop should be somewhere between the record progress last year and the more modest 2019 year.

Planted acreage has growing only marginally over the last few years and the current prices are not likely to either incentivize more plantings or to pull a large number of acres out of production. The expectation of lower production and availability led to stronger prices at the start of this marketing season, but recent months have brought downward pressure on prices, said Magaña. This is due to a 20% drop in exports from this time last year—the same drop as seen in the almond industry.

“If exports don't recover, you may miss some marketing opportunities, given these logistical bottlenecks that marketers are facing,” he said, adding that shortages for containers, chassis and truck drivers will likely create problems going into 2023. “We could see container prices declining a little bit by the second half of 2022. However, I don't think we can expect that container rates will go back to pre-pandemic levels.”

In comparison, pistachio exports have kept pace over the past year, driven by record production and strong marketing campaigns promoting quality, food safety and protein benefits. This while competitors are experiencing lower production, with the Iranian pistachio crop down as

much as 50% due to catastrophic weather events, according to Magaña.

U.S. walnut producers, however, are seeing more competition in the international trade market. With a 14% annual growth rate, Chile has been rising quickly by improving both quality and quantity, leading to more exports to markets traditionally dominated by U.S. products, like Germany, Spain and India. Magaña warned that the U.S. continues to face tariffs in India and China. Like many California products, walnuts are still prized for the high quality and attention to food safety, serving as “a differentiator” in exporting markets.

One silver lining to the increased competition is that having more walnuts of good quality could drive demand higher. Magaña pointed to the avocado industry as a case in point. About two decades ago, few Mexican avocados were entering U.S. markets and California growers worried about granting access to the imports.

“But what we've seen is that having a more consistent supply and consistent quality has been driving more consumers to buy that commodity on a more regular basis,” he said.

More competition for walnuts could propel new collaborations with some Chilean exporters, allowing the industry to grow and expand into new markets, benefiting food manufacturers and retailers with a more reliable supply.

Constraints in the supplies of crucial inputs are also adding pressure to profit margins. Fertilizer prices are up as much as 300% over last year due to elevated gas prices in Europe and geopolitical issues. Shipping delays are limiting equipment supplies. And two dry winter months are leading to uncertainty for water supplies this year.

“If we don't see any more rain, we will be in the third year of drought, and that could be putting some pressure on yields,” said Magaña. “If we consider likely impacts on yields from deficit irrigation last year in some regions, we could be facing not a good combination of things.”

Magaña does see opportunities on the far horizon though. Many food retailers, manufacturers and restaurants

are setting aggressive sustainability targets for cutting greenhouse gas emissions throughout the supply chain, known as Scope 3 emissions.

“Walnuts—and California tree nuts in general—are well-positioned to take advantage of these aggressive targets,”

he said, adding that doing so would open up new long-term contracts for growers.

California farmers are also taking advantage of plant-based diets and more plant-based menus offered in restaurants, he noted.



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# NASDA reveals priorities for next farm bill

By: Agri-Pulse

The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture revealed its priorities for the next farm bill as lawmakers begin hearings on the legislation.

The group's 10 priority policy areas include animal disease, conservation and climate resiliency, hemp, invasive species, local food systems, maintaining specialty crop block grants and trade promotion, NASDA CEO Ted McKinney said at the group's winter policy conference.

Programs in the 2018 farm bill generally expire in 2023. The House Agriculture Committee recently began hearings on the legislation.

McKinney said NASDA's focus on animal disease comes amid both concerns about avian flu and "African swine fever, the threat that's there." The association is recommending funding and developing an early detection plan for pathogens that will connect government and industry for a "One Health" approach.

NASDA is pursuing a three-pronged approach to tackle environmental and conservation concerns, including increased funding for the Agricultural Conservation Easement Program and the Environmental Quality Incentives Program, as well as incentive programs for farmers implementing climate-friendly practices.

On hemp, a sector that McKinney called the "wild wooly west," NASDA is advocating for amending the federal definition of hemp to increase the allowable THC concentration in plants to 1%. The association said hemp should also be extended eligibility for specialty block crop grants through dual designation for its intended use or horticultural use.

NASDA is also focused on addressing equity in the food system.

In a written statement, McKinney said the bill must secure "a commitment to American agriculture and the critical food and nutritional assistance programs for those who need it most."

To expand access to food systems, NASDA is advocating for the next farm bill to include provisions to create increased equity for the socially disadvantaged and people of color in the ag community, a farm-to-school grant program, and a program for more

farmers markets and local grocers to accept SNAP benefits.

NASDA is also advocating for

increased funding for USDA's Market Access Program to help expand commercial export markets for U.S.

goods and pushing for additional funding to the plant pest and disease management and disaster prevention

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# Farmers Feel the Squeeze of Inflation

By: Patrick Thomas, The Wall Street Journal

Inflation is growing on the farm. American farmers are paying significantly higher prices for their weed-killing chemicals, crop seeds, fertilizer, equipment repairs and seasonal labor, eroding some of 2021's windfall from rising crop prices. Higher farm costs could help push up grocery bills further in 2022, analysts say, following a year in which global food prices rose to decade highs.

"I just don't see how I'm going to get paid this year," said Brooks Barnes, a second-generation farmer in Wilson County, N.C.

Mr. Barnes said he spent more than he ever had to operate his farm last year. Higher commodity prices at the time covered most of those cost increases. Facing even higher prices now, he doesn't expect that to be the case for 2022.

On his farm where he grows tobacco, corn, soybeans, wheat and sweet potatoes, Mr. Barnes in the spring of 2021 said he paid \$16 a gallon for Bayer AG's Roundup, the world's most commonly used weedkiller, for his crops. By September he bought it for about \$40 a gallon and in February, his Nutrien Ltd. retailer told him it was \$60 a gallon, he said. One of the fertilizers he buys, 24s, cost him \$500 a ton from \$175 last spring, he said. Float bed plastic, which holds water for his tobacco plant trays to float on in his greenhouses, cost him \$82 a roll, compared with \$70 a year ago.

"I've always been excited to start a new crop but I'm not excited at all for this one," said Mr. Barnes, who has been farming full-time since 2004.

Supply-chain constraints and staffing problems are leading to higher prices for products and supplies across a variety of industries, especially food. U.S. inflation hit its fastest pace in nearly four decades last year. Food prices surged 7% in January, the sharpest rise since 1981, the Labor Department on Thursday said, as meat and egg prices continued to climb at double-digit rates.

A rally in prices for agricultural commodities such as corn and soybeans, which kicked off in mid-2020, pushed up incomes for U.S. farmers and led them to spend more freely on farmland and machinery.

In 2021, U.S. farms' net income was estimated to be about \$117 billion, up 23% from 2020, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Even as crop prices remain high, supply costs are expected to outpace the price of agricultural goods in 2022, according to a January report from the Federal Reserve Board. Net income for farmers in Kansas is estimated to fall 65% from a year ago, according to a January study from Kansas State University.

Growers' biggest expenses each year, including fertilizer and crop chemicals, such as glyphosate, used to kill weeds and other pests are soaring in price. Glyphosate, Roundup's active ingredient, is up about 250% from what it was 12 months ago, said Dean Hendrickson, vice president of marketing and business development at CHS Inc., a farm cooperative and major retailer of seeds and chemicals.

Bayer attributed the recent increases in glyphosate prices to a global shortage caused by weather events, energy restrictions, high demand for transportation and global supply-chain challenges, a spokeswoman said.

"We expect challenges to the global ag industry to remain in 2022 and beyond," the company's spokeswoman said.

Bayer said Monday that a supplier of an ingredient for glyphosate ran into mechanical problems that may hamper production of the herbicide. The company said the supplier is on track to restore production, and Bayer said it expects any impact to be marginal in terms of its annual glyphosate production.

Seed prices are also up. Crop-seed and pesticide supplier Corteva Inc. said prices that it charges farmers for seeds rose 10% in its most recent quarter and its crop-protection products were up 6% compared with the prior year to offset inflation. "We've demonstrated that we can move prices to cover costs and grow margins," said CEO Chuck Magro.

The price of anhydrous ammonia fertilizer is up more than 200% from a year ago at \$1,492 per ton, an all-time high, according to agricultural research firm DTN. Fertilizer price increases partly stem from elevated natural-gas prices, a key ingredient for nitrogen-based fertilizers, as well as severe storms in the U.S. that disrupted production plants earlier this year.

Major fertilizer producers including China, Turkey, Egypt and Russia also curbed exports in the second half of 2021, further pushing up global prices, analysts and retailers said.

Some farmers also blame fertilizer companies for the rising prices. A recent study from Texas A&M, commissioned by state corn growers associations, suggested that fertilizer costs tend to go up when corn revenues increase, even after accounting for natural-gas prices and higher demand.

"Our cost to buy products from our suppliers went up and therefore our prices for customers have increased," said Jeff Tarsi, head of global retail operations at Nutrien, a major fertilizer supplier.

The potential for higher farming costs to cut into production of corn and other crops could fuel continued food-price inflation, analysts said. Higher corn and soybean prices, for example, raise the cost of animal feed for meat companies, which pass along the increase to consumers.

"I don't think there is any reprieve for food prices to come down," said

Kevin McNew, chief economist for the Farmers Business Network, an online marketplace for agricultural supplies. "It's not just a logistics issue, or supply-chain issue to grocery stores, it's deeper rooted than that."

Because of the higher costs, Mr. Barnes said he is holding back on many of the purchases he had hoped to make this year, including a new combine. He put his annual hunting trip to Saskatchewan, Canada, on hold this year, for fear his budget might be too tight.

Like many other U.S. farmers, Mr. Barnes also plans to adjust this year by reducing acres dedicated to fertilizer-intensive crops, and planting more soybeans and wheat, which tend to require less nutrients. Planted U.S. acreage of soybeans this year is projected to be up about 6% from last year and exceed corn for the second time in history, according to Farm Progress, a division of research firm Informa. The only other time was in 2018.

"My goal for the year is just to break even," Mr. Barnes said.



The Rooted in Agriculture Rewards Program asks teachers to incorporate at least one agriculturally based lesson into their curriculum between February 21, 2022 and May 4, 2022 and submit a completed application for a chance to win \$500 for school supplies.

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# Merced County Business Member Directory

*Businesses Supporting the Farm Bureau*

To be included in the directory, join Merced County Farm Bureau as a business member by calling 723-3001.

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# Our Calendars Are Full



from the  
**Mariposa  
CFB**  
Danette Toso

It's that time of year, fundraising season is in full swing! Our calendars are full of upcoming events and we are looking forward to contributing to many worthy organizations. The Mariposa Lions Club kicked off the season with their annual crab feed this month. The Hornitos Patron's Club Enchilada Dinner will be held March 5th in Hornitos. The Mariposa County Search and Rescue Dinner will be held March 26th at the Mariposa County Fairgrounds. In April, we have The

Taste of Mariposa Dinner on the 2nd, Merced/Mariposa Cattlemen's Dinner April 9th, the Mariposa County Farm Bureau Annual Rib Dinner April 16th, Mariposa Butterfly Parade April 23rd, and finally, the Mariposa FFA Dinner April 30th.

Now, let's get back to April 16th and the Mariposa County Farm Bureau's Annual Rib Dinner. We will be serving our famous pork ribs skillfully prepared by our barbeque professionals. Tony Toso will be stirring the homemade bean pots, and we will have the customary coleslaw and dinner rolls served by our board of directors. We will be serving single dinners as well as racks of ribs to be enjoyed later. The funds raised, support our local youth agricultural programs such as the Bud Swift Memorial Carcass Contest, Range Camp, agricultural scholarships, and funding to 4-H and FFA members at the Mariposa County Fair.

I hope you have room on your busy calendar to attend these events and support Mariposa County. With this, I encourage farmers, ranchers and conservators to invite friends, neighbors and family members to join the collective voice of the Farm Bureau. Together, we can make our organization stronger than ever, one member at a time.

Mariposa County  
Farm Bureau's  
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Saturday, April 16th  
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Racks of ribs will be available as well

Mariposa County Business Member Directory

Businesses Supporting the Farm Bureau

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# Funding opportunity for agricultural water conservation and efficiency projects

**By: California Water News Daily**

January 24, 2022 -

The Bureau of Reclamation is working with the Natural Resources Conservation Service to make federal funding available to improve agricultural water use efficiency throughout California. These partnership-funded projects

help communities build drought resiliency through modernizing water infrastructure and maximizing water use.

Reclamation plans to award up to \$2 million in fiscal year 2022 (subject to appropriations) through grants or cooperative agreements to water or power delivery authority entities, including water and irrigation districts, to help improve agricultural water

delivery efficiency use. NRCS will then announce a separate program to provide funding to farms within those districts for water conservation practices to complement projects selected via Reclamation's Notice of Funding Opportunity. Past eligible projects have included canal lining or piping, turnout metering, weir structures, and more.

View this funding opportunity

at <https://www.grants.gov> with key words such as agricultural water use efficiency and conservation projects, CFDA – 15.572, or opportunity number R21AS00553. Proposals are due March 4 at 12 p.m. PDT and must be submitted online. They will be selected through a competitive process focusing on achieving the outcomes identified and outlined in the Notice of Funding Opportunity.

## 2M beehives imported to California for almond bloom

**By: Ed Boling, The Packer**

February 9, 2022 -

California grows 1.5 million acres of almonds, and every spring, all of that acreage must be pollinated.

With almond blossoms being a rich source of food for honeybees, it's a natural symbiotic relationship. The problem in California is that there aren't enough bees to pollinate such a large number of almond trees.

To help mitigate this problem, the state imported roughly 2.1 million beehives for the 2021 almond pollination. Assuming each hive contains roughly 20,000 worker bees, this comes out to 42 billion bees. Hive imports will likely increase in 2022, as more almond acreage enters bearing age, according to Jacob Wenger, assistant professor of entomology at California State University, Fresno.

There are several reasons for the gap in honeybees to pollinate almond orchards. One reason has to do with the growth of the almond industry. California's climate also plays a role, as does crop diversity.

"With the boom in almond planting, demand has skyrocketed and more hives have had to be imported," Wenger said. "On the flip side, it is challenging to increase hive supply in California due to the state's

Mediterranean climate, which limits the availability of floral resources in the summer and fall. Another issue is increased agricultural intensification, which has led to less crop diversity, again reducing the availability of flowers for honeybees to feed upon."

That being the case, the number of imported hives the state needs is five times greater than its own hive population.

"It's recommended to use two hives per acre during pollination. So, for the California almond crop, 3 million beehives are recommended," said Josette Lewis, chief scientific officer at the California Almond Board. "Unfortunately, only about half a million beehives exist in California. The rest must be imported."

Almond trees must be pollinated, and they produce a lot of nectar that feeds the honeybees.

"The honeybees are only in almond orchards for four to six weeks, although they spend several months in the state. They're imported in November and December. Beekeepers house the bees so they can adjust to the California climate," Lewis said. "Then, they are moved to almond orchards around early February when blossom season begins. Finally, once their work is done, many of the honeybees are shipped back across the U.S."

The return home is still triggered by

nature, after the almond bloom is over.

"Most hives will leave shortly after almond petal drop in mid to late March," Wenger said. "This is because outside of the bloom season, almond orchards are a veritable food desert for honeybees with little to no flowering plants for them to forage on."

Not all bees return to their home states, though. Some will move north to the state of Washington to assist in the pollination of apples, pears and cherries, according to Buzz Landon, president of the California State Beekeepers Association.

A small number of hives will stay in California for a few months to pollinate other smaller acreage crops,

such as stone fruits, cane berries, apples, melons, squash and seed crops, Wenger said.

About 40% of commercial beehives travel to the upper Midwest because of the natural prairie grasses and conservation farms in those states, which provide the honeybees with a variety of forage. Just like humans, honeybees need variety, Lewis said.

As it turns out, the journey also boosts the honeybee population.

"Many beekeepers double their hives during the almond pollination," Lewis said. "Most hives are less active in winter. They're not growing as hives. The hives come out stronger from almond blossom."



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# Merced County Farm Bureau 104th Annual Meeting

Friday, March 25, 2022



**Keynote Speaker**  
Former U.S. Army  
Black Hawk Pilot  
Elizabeth McCormick

**Merced Fairgrounds**  
**900 MLK Jr. Way, Merced, CA**

**No-Host Social - 5:30 p.m.**  
**Dinner & Program - 6:45 p.m.**

**\$50 Per Person**

**Table of 8 can be reserved for \$400**



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## Reservation Form

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please reserve \_\_\_\_\_ tickets for me at \$50 per person.**

**Please reserve a table of 8 at \$400 per table for:**\_\_\_\_\_

**Please RSVP BY March 4, 2022**

**Call the Merced Farm Bureau office at 209.723.3001 for more information.**

**[info@mercedfarmbureau.org](mailto:info@mercedfarmbureau.org)**