



# Merced County Farm News



*Happy Thanksgiving*

FROM MERCED COUNTY FARM BUREAU

## CALL TO ACTION: Merced County Releases American Rescue Plan Act Community Survey

**By: Merced County**

**Survey:**

[surveymonkey.com/r/ARPA-EN](https://surveymonkey.com/r/ARPA-EN)

On August 31, 2021, Merced County published its 2021 ARPA-SLFRF Recovery Plan which outlined existing and planned community engagement efforts. Merced County has developed a Community Survey to solicit feedback directly from its residents and to complement the existing feedback received by the Board of Supervisors. Information gathered from the survey will help to inform the Board of Supervisors as they

consider how to use the ARPA-SLFRF funding to provide long-lasting benefits to local residents. Members of the public may submit survey responses through January 31, 2022.

**Community Events**

Merced County will be meeting with local Municipal Advisory Councils throughout our communities to provide information and solicit participant feedback with on-site translation services available. The County will also be conducting an online Virtual Community Workshop with translation available. Additionally, a Public Hearing is anticipated to provide results of the community outreach.

Visit [www.co.merced.ca.us/3787/Community-Engagement](http://www.co.merced.ca.us/3787/Community-Engagement) for the schedule of upcoming community events.

### ARPA COMMUNITY MEETING: DELHI MAC

Attend our community meeting to learn about the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding received by Merced County and learn about how it can be used.

**Delhi Municipal Advisory Council (MAC):**

**DATE:** Dec. 9, 2021

**TIME:** 7 p.m.

**PLACE:** VFW Hall  
9799 Stephens St., Delhi

**Take the Survey:**

**DEADLINE:** January 31, 2022

[www.countyofmerced.com/ARPAsurvey](http://www.countyofmerced.com/ARPAsurvey)

**About ARPA**

As a result of the passage of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, Merced County received an allocation of nearly \$54 million. These funds can be used to:

- Support the public health response
- Address negative economic impacts
- Replace public sector revenue loss
- Provide premium pay for essential workers
- Make necessary investments in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure

Information gathered from the survey will help inform the Board of Supervisors on how to use the ARPA funding to provide long-lasting benefits to local residents.

Follow "Merced County" on:



Or visit us at [www.countyofmerced.com](http://www.countyofmerced.com)

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Address

**R**edistricting is a term that you may have heard as it crops up every ten years. Our organization has been redistributing information on it in recent months as it is a topic that all citizens should take part in. If you are new to the process, this occurs in line with the census data and is done to provide equal populations numbers within various representative districts. This happens for all levels of government from city through the federal level.

To date, draft maps have been distributed and various levels of government are still taking public comment, but this will close soon. Public input for the Congressional, California Senate and Assembly are being taken this week and into next. Specific dates apply to each body with November 22-23 being taken as additional feedback for any district. As for how the draft maps sit now, our Congressional District would change to being parts of Stanislaus, Madera and Fresno counties and all of Merced County. Our California Senate District would no longer include the coast but would include parts of Madera, Fresno and Stanislaus counties along with Mariposa, Alpine, Inyo, Mono, Amador, Calaveras and Tuolumne counties. Our California Assembly District also changes as instead of

being Stanislaus and Merced counties, it will now be parts of Merced, Madera and Fresno counties. In this scenario, Merced County will be split as Hilmar, Delhi, Ballico, Cressey and Snelling will all become grouped with the assembly district representing Stanislaus County. All maps, shape files and other documentation, including how to create your own and submit, can be found at [www.wedrawthelinesca.org](http://www.wedrawthelinesca.org).

The Merced County Supervisorial Districts are also being worked through simultaneously. The westside of the county has grown the largest and therefore will have to decrease in area somewhere, forcing Districts 1 or 4 to pick up territory. At the recent meeting, the supervisors have selected three maps to move forward although slight changes will be made to these for the next public hearing. The three maps to move forward are d71151, NDC 101 and NDC 103. You can find links to them all at [www.drawmercedcounty.org](http://www.drawmercedcounty.org) and I am happy to walk you through the areas that were discussed for slight changes.

You can submit your own map up until Tuesday, November 23 at 5:00pm. These can be done by an online mapping tool called District R found on the county's site. Final maps will be adopted in December to ensure

enough time for voting procedures and election compliance. Comments can be made on any of the maps to your current supervisor or at the next hearing.

Now that I've told you the changes to the various districts, you may be wondering how these are created. Taken from the slide deck that has been presented by the county's consults, the following comes into play:

#### **Federal Laws**

- Equal Population
- Federal Voting Rights Act
- No Racial Gerrymandering

#### **California Criteria for Counties**

- Geographically contiguous
- Undivided neighborhoods and "communities of interest" (socioeconomic geographic areas that should be kept together)
- Cities and CDPs
- Easily identifiable boundaries
- Compact (do not bypass one group of people to get to a more distant group of people)
- Prohibited: "Shall not favor or discriminate against a political party"

#### **Other Traditional Redistricting Principles**



## *from the* **Director's Desk**

**Breanne Vandenberg**

- Minimize voters shifted to different election years
  - Respect voters' choices/continuity in office
  - Future population growth
  - Preserving the core of existing districts
- Again, I cannot encourage you enough to participate. Please call, drop into our office, email – whatever works for you – and I would be happy to discuss the finer details with any of our members.



**If you are a member of ESJWQC,  
2022 Packets have been sent out.**

**If you need assistance filling out your INMP, please contact  
our office at 209-723-3001 to schedule an appointment.**

## **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.

**Register for CAFB  
Annual Meeting by visiting  
cxbf.com, deadline to register is  
November 28th**



**— 2021 —**  
**Annual Meeting and  
YF&R State Conference**

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## *Calendar of Events*

**November 25-26**

**Merced County Farm Bureau office closed for Thanksgiving**

**December 4-5**

**CA YF&R Conference (pg. 13)**

**December 5-8**

**CAFB Annual Meeting (pg. 13)**

**December 5-8**

**CAFB Annual Meeting (pg. 13)**

**December 24-December 31**

**Merced County Farm Bureau closed for Christmas and New Year's**

**December 31**

**Deadline to nominate for Golden Owl Award**

### **Merced County Farm News**

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# Virus-Tested ‘Vermillion’ Sweetpotatoes

*from the*  
**Farm Advisor**  
**Scott Stoddard**  
 UC Cooperative Extension,  
 Merced County



**Figure 1. Scott Stoddard grimaces at a sweetpotato with severe russet crack, a disease caused by feathery mottle virus.**

Several years ago at the U.S. Sweetpotato Convention in San Diego, a California grower told me that what the industry really needed was a new variety that was scratch resistant. Or at least had a tougher skin and could be handled a little rougher. California sweetpotatoes scratch easily when harvested and packed, and while this does not affect eating quality, too many scratches and the root is headed for the cull pile. As a result, each root is lifted carefully by hand off the harvest belt and gently placed into a bin. This makes harvest very slow, and expensive.

As luck would have it, I had a new red-skin variety in early testing with a unique “double skin” that hid scratches far better than anything else. Code named L-13-81, production was a little low compared to the standard variety, and it also did not have nematode resistance. Normally, this would cause me to throw it out, however,

the skin feature was unique and when coupled with the grower’s request, I kept the line in the trial for a few more years. Good thing, because this new variety also stored far better than any other red-skinned sweetpotato on the market. This variety has been officially released in 2021 by the LSU Agriculture Center, and named ‘Vermillion’ for a Parish in southern Louisiana.

Vermillion is an orange flesh sweetpotato cultivar with thick red skin. It is attractive, has good flavor, and stores very well. It is resistant to Pox and Fusarium, but susceptible to root knot nematodes. But virus tolerance is not known. Therefore, I compared “old” and “new” Vermillion seed in a field trial in Livingston.

In sweetpotatoes, virus exposure occurs rapidly under field conditions, but the impact is cumulative – the more years a plant is grown, replanted, and grown again, the greater the virus titer, and the greater number of different viruses, accumulate in the tissue. Depending on the variety, the age of the seed can have a significant impact on yield and quality of the harvested crop.

In 2021, I evaluated three varieties for the impact of new compared to old seed. “New” seed was from virus-tested plants that were grown for one year in the field (G1 seed); “old” seed was seed that I had been using in my variety trials for several years in a row and was at least 5 years old (G5+). Plants were grown under hotbed conditions typical for California, then transplanted May 24 into a grower’s field. Plots were 1-row by 50 feet, and were replicated 4 times. Harvest took place on Oct 13, 2021, using the grower’s harvester and harvest crew.

Before bedding, roots were



**Figure 2. Vermillion from new seed on the harvest belt.**

tested for 6 viruses known to infect sweetpotatoes. All roots, including G1 seed, were infected, but the old seed had greater number of infected roots as well as a much higher incidence of 2 or more potyviruses: 20% for G1 seed, 66% for G5+ seed. Preliminary field trial harvest results are shown in Table 1. The benefit of using virus tested seed for the varieties ‘Beauregard’ and ‘Vermillion’ is clear: a remarkable 100% increase in yield for both, and a reduction in culls of 68% for Beauregard and 81% for Vermillion.

In California, it would be very rare for growers to use seed that is 5 years old. Nonetheless, the trial illustrated the tremendous improvement in yield and quality that can occur with the use of clean seed. Vermillion is now available for purchase as virus-tested plant stock from Foundation Plant Services at UC Davis.

California growers are now growing a limited amount of Vermillion, and shipments are going out to various markets, just in time for Thanksgiving.

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**Table 1. Virus- tested seed trial harvest results 2021, Merced CA.**

Cultivar, generation	TMY, bins/A	Culls, %
Beauregard, G5	19.4	52%
Beauregard, G1	42.5	16.5%
Vermillion, G5+	29.0	21%
Vermillion, G1	61.0	4%

TMY = total marketable yield. 1 bin weighs approximately 1000 lbs.  
 Culls: unmarketable roots due to cosmetic blemishes (cracks, rough skin, off-color, etc.)

# UC Merced, UC Davis Are Ground Zero for Saving Farms and Environment

**By: Liz Juarez, GV Wire**

Valley researchers are about to play an even bigger role in helping farmers in California and the rest of the nation tackle the challenges brought by drought and the need to reduce groundwater pumping.

UC Merced and UC Davis, which are already deep into research on the effects of climate change, each landed \$10 million grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to come up with new ideas to keep water flowing to farms and the environment in the southwest United States.

Those grants were among a total of \$146 million in funding awarded to 10 universities.

“Critical issues like food insecurity, drought resilience and response, animal disease prevention, and market disruption require investments to help meet these challenges,” said USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack.

Dr. Carrie Castille is the director of the USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture. She says that it takes projects like these to produce long-term improvements in agricultural practices benefiting consumers, farmers, and the environment.

“We are excited to see impacts this research investment will generate for our nation to move us towards solutions that benefit all Americans,” Castille said.

**UC Merced Will Focus On Water Management in Farming**

For UC Merced, this grant is one of their largest awarded in its 16-year history. The effort will focus on water banking, trading, and improvements in data-driven management practices. The goal: develop a climate-resilient strategy for water-stressed regions.

Leading the project is Joshua Viers. He is a UC Merced professor, the associate dean for research in the school of engineering, and the director of Information Technology Research in the Interest of Society.

Their grant project, which is titled SWIM, will cover Utah’s Cache Valley, New Mexico’s Mesilla Valley, and the San Joaquin Valley.

“The United States has some of the most productive agricultural space and perhaps some of the most stressed

water supply, both in terms of surface water reliability and impacts from groundwater overdraft,” said Viers. “So that’s, you know, the primary reason our project is focused on that area and also because you see much of that is located in the Valley, and we want to be doing research that’s important for the region.”

The SWIM team will work on developing data-driven information systems that would help land and water managers make informed decisions after analyzing drought forecast and climate change trends.

**UC Davis Examines Groundwater Overuse**

Isaya Kisekka, who is an associate professor of agrohydrology and irrigation at UC Davis, applied for the grant and will now lead a team of more than two dozen scientists.

A blend of experts in plant and soil science, hydrology, engineering, the economy, and education from UC Davis and Arizona and New Mexico institutions will work together. Their charge: develop a management strategy to help ensure the sustainability of groundwater and irrigated agriculture.

The project will study aquifer systems in California’s Central Valley, central Arizona, and the lower Rio Grande basin in New Mexico.

Kisekka says the project team in California will work with groundwater sustainability agencies and growers to develop tools and data to help improve crop production and achieve the goals of the state’s Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.

“In the past, in California, before SGMA, whenever there would be a drought, growers had the option of pumping more groundwater,” said Kisekka. “But with SGMA, they cannot do that because the groundwater sustainability agencies have to achieve the SGMA sustainability goals.”

**How Will The Projects Help The Valley?**

Kisekka says a water shortage is the biggest threat to farming. However, their research could help minimize the risk of climate extremes facing Valley growers.

Fresno County Farm Bureau CEO

Ryan Jacobsen says water management is vital to agriculture.

“As a farm bureau and agricultural organization, we want to educate and we’re always happy to collaborate,” said Jacobsen. “As we know, agriculture is undergoing tumultuous times with water here in the Central Valley, and we appreciate the help we get with our partners to find solutions.”

**Projects Offer Educational Opportunities**

Apart from the benefits these projects provide to growers, consumers, and the environment, the research also will involve education.

“We’re going to be developing simple educational materials that sensitize the children and the general public on the importance of water in agriculture,” said Kisekka.

The educational aspect of these projects will help educate the youngest students in the community, starting from grade levels K-12 up to the graduate level.

One of the project participants is the Calteach program at UC Merced. The program certifies soon-to-be-teachers who will help develop educational materials for AgSTEM education pathways.

According to Viers, educators and graduate students alike will design lessons for rural and regional middle schools in underrepresented communities.

“The curriculum that we developed for Calteach will be made available to teachers throughout the Valley as well as to other participating locations,” said Viers.



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# California drought: Proposed ballot measure would fast-track construction of dams, desalination plants and other water projects

**By: Paul Rogers, Bay Area News Group**

California has not built enough new reservoirs, desalination plants and other water projects because there are too many delays, too many lawsuits and too much red tape.

That's the message from a growing coalition of Central Valley farmers and Southern California desalination supporters who have begun collecting signatures for a statewide ballot measure that would fast-track big water projects and provide billions of dollars to fund them — potentially setting up a major political showdown with environmentalists next year shaped by the state's ongoing drought.

The measure, known as the "Water Infrastructure Funding Act of 2022," needs 997,132 signatures of registered voters by April 29 to qualify for the November 2022 statewide ballot.

If approved by a majority of voters, it would require that 2% of California's general fund — about \$4 billion a year — be set aside for projects to expand water supplies. Those could include new dams and reservoirs, desalination plants, recycled water plants, and other projects like upgrading canals and pipes.

The money would continue flowing each year until 5 million acre-feet of new water supply was created, an increase of about 13% in the roughly 39 million acre-feet used in an average year by all the state's residents, farmers and businesses. That could take several decades and cost \$100 billion, according to an analysis by the non-partisan State Legislative Analyst's Office.

"We think conservation has an important role to play," said Edward Ring, a spokesman for the campaign, known as More Water Now. "But you can't get there any more just with conservation. If you want to be resilient against a prolonged drought, you have to have new supplies."

Supporters say California hasn't kept pace expanding its water supplies, leading to severe shortages for farmers in recent years and likely water rationing next year for many urban

residents if the state's two-year drought continues.

With climate change, they note, scientists say California's droughts are becoming more severe. The state needs more reservoirs to save water in wet years, they say, particularly as hotter temperatures melt the Sierra Nevada snowpack.

"When we have big storm events, there is surplus water and we need to harvest it," Ring said.

The measure has already been endorsed by 27 state lawmakers, including 18 Republicans, one independent and eight Democrats, including one from the Bay Area, Assemblyman Tim Grayson, D-Concord.

Environmentalists, however, say the measure goes too far, and are preparing to fight it.

"For next November's ballot, this is the number 1 priority of environmental groups," said Jonas Minton, a senior water adviser to the Planning and Conservation League, a Sacramento nonprofit. "That's due to the destruction to California's environment that would result from the unsupervised spending of billions of dollars each year without environmental oversight."

Under the measure, the money would be spent each year by the California Water Commission, a nine-member panel appointed by the governor.

The measure would streamline environmental reviews. For water projects on the coast, the California Coastal Commission would be required to make a decision within 90 days, and could be overruled by the state's Secretary for Natural Resources.

Jack Ainsworth, executive director of the coastal commission, said the measure would "significantly weaken" the state's coastal protections.

"Drought in California is our new normal and the commission understands that responsibly designed desalination facilities will be an important part of California's water portfolio going forward," Ainsworth said. "We don't need to gut the Coastal

Act in order to provide safe, reliable, affordable drinking water."

Environmental impact reports would still be required. But if opponents filed lawsuits, courts would be required to rule on them within 270 days.

Minton noted that many of the state's political power players could oppose the measure because money guaranteed for water projects means less for other spending in the state budget.

"This is the largest scam in California history to take over \$100 billion of taxpayer funds away from nurses, teachers and firefighters in order to pay for the sponsors' special interest projects," he said.

Political observers say the measure will have a challenge collecting enough signatures to qualify for the ballot. But if the drought continues and water restrictions are tightened statewide, as local and state water officials have predicted will occur, it could become a populist issue that might have a chance at passage.

"The drier it gets, the better the prospects for this measure," said Jack Pitney, a professor of political science at Claremont McKenna College in Los Angeles County.

"If I were running the no campaign, I would frame it as a giveaway to agribusiness," he said. "But for a lot of Californians, if we get to August and are in a severe drought, the attitude is going to be 'to heck with the

environment, I want my shower.'"

Supporters have so far raised about \$100,000, mostly from Central Valley farm interests. The organizers include Wayne Western Jr., a board member of the California Farm Water Coalition; Geoffrey Vanden Heuvel, director of regulatory and economic affairs for the California Milk Producers Council; and several supporters of building a new desalination plant in Huntington Beach: Steve Sheldon, president of the Orange County Water District board of directors and Shawn Dewane, a member of the Mesa Water District board of directors in Costa Mesa.

California voters approved a major water bond, Proposition 1, in November 2014 during the last drought. That \$7.45 billion measure has funded projects from upgrades to drinking water plants to recycled water efforts. It also included \$2.7 billion for new storage projects.

But none have been built yet. In 2018, the California Water Commission approved spending \$2.5 billion on eight storage projects — four new dams and four underground storage projects — including expanding Los Vaqueros Reservoir in Contra Costa County and building a new reservoir in Santa Clara County near Pacheco Pass.

But before the projects can receive the money, they need to obtain all permits, finish environmental studies and identify other funds to pay more than 50% of their costs.



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# Comprehensive California Groundwater Update Released to Provide Better Understanding of Groundwater Basins

**By: Ryan Endean, California Department of Water Resources**

**S**ACRAMENTO, Calif. – With California facing a severe drought and an increased reliance on the State's groundwater basins, today the Department of Water Resources (DWR) released the final version of California's Groundwater – Update 2020. The report, also known as Bulletin 118, contains critical information about the condition and use of the state's groundwater, which is especially important as California faces the real-time impacts of climate change and drought.

"Groundwater plays a central role in sustaining our state's ecosystems, businesses, agriculture, and people, with some Californians relying solely on groundwater for drinking water," said DWR Director Karla Nemeth. "The updated California's Groundwater provides key information for the state and locals to better understand and manage groundwater as we adapt to variations in climate and navigate a historic drought."

This version of California's Groundwater provides a comprehensive look at statewide groundwater conditions and activities, including implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) and the framework it provides to share information as locals work to improve groundwater management. It also focuses on emerging topics such as water markets and the impacts of climate change on groundwater and summarizes groundwater information for each of

the state's 10 hydrologic regions.

The report contains a Highlights overview section in English and Spanish, 10 Hydrologic Regional Summaries and a detailed Statewide Report, which features current knowledge of groundwater resources including information on the location, characteristics, use, management status and conditions of the state's groundwater. The bulletin also presents findings and recommendations that support the future management and protection of groundwater.

This information also supports statewide actions being implemented as part of Governor Gavin Newsom's 2020 California Water Resilience Portfolio.

California's Groundwater is organized to share the growing amount of groundwater data that is available now and will continue to be submitted by local agencies in the future as part of the implementation of SGMA.

New this year, DWR has developed a companion web-based dashboard, called California's Groundwater Live, that leverages the California Natural Resources Agency's Open Data Platform to improve the timeliness of statewide groundwater information and make it easily accessible for water managers and the public. California's Groundwater Live is a dynamic platform with real-time data that will help generate greater awareness and improved understanding of groundwater to support more informed decisions over the long term.

To access California's Groundwater – Update 2020 and associated documents, please visit the California's Groundwater webpage.

# OpenET: A Transformative Tool for Tracking Water in the U.S. West

## OPENET IS A SATELLITE-BASED DATA RESOURCE SUPPLYING CRUCIAL WATER USE INFORMATION IN 17 WESTERN

## U.S. STATES.

**BY: Aries Keck, NASA**

**U**sing the best available science to provide easily accessible satellite-based estimates of water use, OpenET is being used to improve U.S. water management. The data is available on 17 western states, most notably the area covered by the Colorado River basin.

The "ET" in OpenET stands for evapotranspiration, which is the process through which water leaves plants, soils, and other surfaces and returns to the atmosphere. It's a measurement that farmers can use to estimate the amount of water being taken up or used by their fields and crops and that will usually need to be replaced through irrigation or rainfall.

Knowing how much water is transferred to the air allows farmers to better calculate crop water requirements, helping them to use water more efficiently and better plan irrigation. This makes evapotranspiration a crucial measurement for farmers and other water resource managers, especially in the western United States where the majority of the water used by people goes to irrigate crops and produce food.

The primary satellite dataset for OpenET is from the Landsat program, a partnership between NASA and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS). The most recent satellite in the program, Landsat 9, successfully launched on

Sept. 27, 2021.

Because the OpenET system uses open source software and open data sources, it will help water managers establish an agreed upon measure of evapotranspiration across agricultural areas, said lead project scientist Forrest Melton of NASA's Western Water Applications Office.

Different estimates of evapotranspiration have previously been a source of confusion for water managers, he said, explaining that water users and managers currently have to evaluate a variety of methodologies to measure water use and evapotranspiration, which often leads to different numbers and debates over accuracy.

OpenET provides a solution to those debates, said project manager Robyn Grimm. "OpenET brings together several well-established methods for calculating evapotranspiration from satellite data onto a single platform so that everyone who makes decisions about water can work from the same playbook, using the same consistent, trusted data," said Grimm.

Denise Moyle is an alfalfa farmer in Diamond Valley, Nevada, and an OpenET collaborator. "What OpenET offers is a way for people to better understand their water usage and, more importantly, their water loss through evapotranspiration," she said. "Giving farmers and other water managers better information is the greatest value of OpenET."

# Gustine FFA Attends the 93rd National FFA Convention, Followed by a Trip to Our Nation's Capital

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

What an amazing 9 days Gustine FFA had in Indianapolis, Indiana and Washington DC! Gustine FFA had 16 current members and 3 Gustine FFA alumni attend the 93rd National FFA Convention and Expo in Indianapolis. Students that were awarded the trip participated in many Gustine FFA events as well as events and competitions at the sectional, regional, and state levels during the 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 school years. The students that attended included Daniel Gomes, Christina Moitozo, Kaitlin Dore, Grant Hazan, Garret Gomes, Emma Woods, Austin Bell, Blake Codorniz, Mikayla Silveira, Lalanie Brace, Jacob Salsa, Savanna Barcellos, Tyler Borba, Ashlyn Alamo, Janai Navarro, Kailyn Medeiros, Darian Nunes, Joseph Lopes and John Toste.

Students arrived in Indianapolis on Tuesday October 26th. On Wednesday, students woke up early and boarded onto a bus on its way to Louisville, Kentucky. We had the opportunity to tour and watch bats being made at the Louisville Slugger Bat Factory. We then drove over to the Churchill Downs horse race track where we were able to watch a 3D video about racing horses, and tour the famous horse racing track. After a busy day of touring around Louisville, Kentucky we made our way back to the hotel and got ready for the Brett Young concert we were attending later that night. Students took advantage of the opportunity to meet new people and rock out to some of their favorite songs from Brett Young.

"I really enjoyed going to the National Convention. It gave me the opportunity to meet new people and go to workshops where I learned tools on how to be a better leader, which I am able to bring back to my chapter," commented Kaitlin Dore.

Thursday morning kicked off the Convention for Gustine FFA students. The first session of the 93rd National FFA Convention and Expo

was definitely one for the books! The excitement as thousands of FFA students filled the Lucas Oil Stadium was amazing. Through the remainder of the week Gustine FFA students attended leadership workshops, heard from a variety of keynote speakers, attended the college and career show, shopped at the FFA Mall and listened to the retiring addresses from the outgoing National FFA Officers.

On Saturday, students attended the American Degree Ceremony hosted by the National Officers. John Toste was recognized on the National FFA stage and awarded his American Degree. The FFA American Farmer Degree is the highest degree an FFA member can receive in the FFA Organization. The American Farmer FFA Degree symbolizes the recipient's dedication to his or her chapter and the organization. This year Gustine FFA has 4 well deserving recipients, Camille Alamo, Gianna Azevedo, Darren Borba, and John Toste. Congratulations on such a big accomplishment and thank you for continuing to make Gustine FFA proud!

Later that day members attended the final session, where they were able to listen to the retiring address from the National FFA President, and meet the 2021-2022 National FFA officer team. After the convention was formally adjourned Gustine FFA headed over to the airport where 6 students headed back home while 11 students headed to Washington DC where they would be able to spend 4 days at our Nation's Capital.

Sunday members toured and visited the Spy Museum, the Holocaust Museum, the Air Force Memorial, and Mount Vernon. Due to it being Halloween, later that day students took part in a ghost tour in downtown Alexandria, Virginia.

On Monday Morning, students headed over to Gettysburg, Pennsylvania where students had the opportunity to learn more about the Civil War and the weapons and strategies used. We also were able to take part in different simulations, allowing us to experience and learn more about our American History.

Later that day members took a night tour around the White House and its surrounding area.

Tuesday was our last full day in DC. In the morning we headed over to the capital and met with Congressman Jim Costa. Gustine FFA members asked questions on a variety of agriculture topics. We then visited the Washington Monument and got the opportunity to tour the top of the tower. After lunch students toured the National Archives and headed over to Arlington National Cemetery.

This year students from the Gustine FFA Chapter were able to participate in a wreath laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington. Christina Moitozo, Mikayla Silveira, Daniel Gomes, and Garret Gomes were the students chosen to represent Gustine FFA in actually laying the wreath donated by Gustine FFA. It was the honor and experience of a lifetime and an amazing event that all attending Gustine FFA students took part in.

Christina Moitozo shared her experience, "Participating in a once in a lifetime experience at the Arlington National Cemetery is an experience I will never forget. Laying the wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was a touching moment in my life. I feel

honored and proud to be an American and to be able to show respect to the men and women who paid the ultimate price for the freedoms we enjoy today. Learning that there are thousands of unidentified soldiers who are honored through this tradition, truly humbled all who witnessed and took part in the ceremony."

To end our trip, students toured and visited a variety of monuments on the National Mall. The monuments included the Jefferson Memorial, the Lincoln Memorial, the Marther Luther King Memorial, the World War 2 Memorial, the Albert Einstein Memorial, and the Vietnam Veterans' Memorial. Touring the monuments and memorials helped us all to learn more about the people and events that have helped shape our great nation.

The nine days spent at the FFA National Convention and in Washington DC were absolutely incredible! We would like to thank the National FFA Organization for hosting such an amazing convention, the Gustine Unified School District for allowing us to attend, Gustine FFA advisors for planning a great trip, and our Gustine Ag Boosters for helping to pay for students to have this opportunity.



**Members that attended the Washington DC trip meet with Representative Jim Costa.**  
**Top Row Left to Right: Mr. Wyman, Grant Hazan, Jacob Salsa, Garret Gomes, Mr. Baffunno, Tyler Borba**  
**Middle Row Left to Right: Ashlyn Alamo, Congressman Jim Costa, Daniel Gomes**  
**Bottom Row Left to Right: Blake Codorniz, Christina Moitozo, Kaitlin Dore, Janai Navarro, Savanna Barcellos, Mikayla Silveira**

# Merced County Farm Bureau Heritage Members

## Platinum Heritage Members



## Gold Heritage Members

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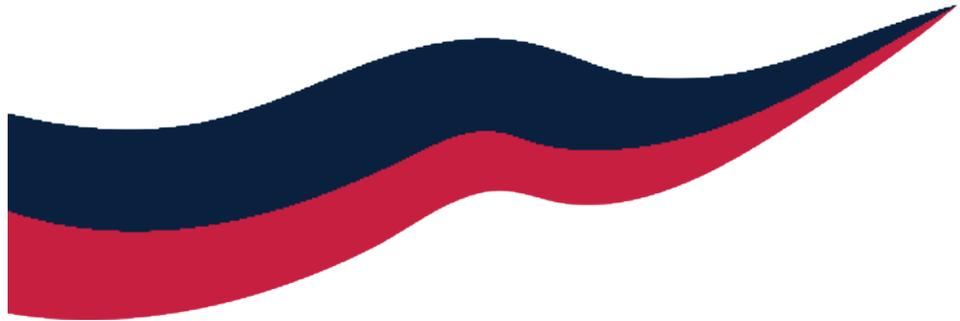
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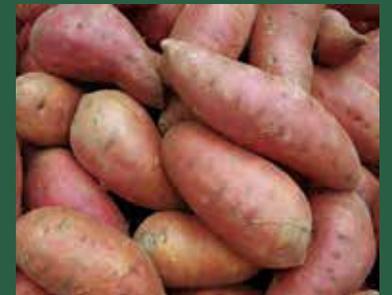
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# Buhach Colony FFA Member takes TOP HONORS at the National FFA Convention



**Isabelle Dillsaver competed at the National FFA Convention in the Extemporaneous Public Speaking contest, and was awarded 2nd place overall**

**By: Buhach Colony FFA**

**B**uhach Colony FFA is so proud of their alumni member Isabelle Dillsaver who

competed at the National level this past October at the National FFA Convention in the Extemporaneous Public Speaking contest, and was awarded 2nd place overall. Isabelle worked hard in the contest area over her four years while at Buhach and studied hard, keeping current on the current issues facing agriculture as well as the newest technological advances to the industry. Beyond her studies, she perfected her speaking and presentation skills. In this contest area, participants are provided a barrage of topics in which they blindly choose two. From those two topic selections they are given a short couple of minutes to choose the one they wish to speak on before their fifteen minute presentation preparation time begins. When the preparation time has concluded, students are immediately ushered in front of a panel of judges where they are to present their topic in

speech format that must be no less than four minute and no longer than six. Finally after the conclusion of their speech presentation, they are subject to a five minute round of questioning pertaining to their topic from the judges.

Isabelle perfected the art as she participated in numerous speaking contests over her tenure at Buhach and in the Spring of 2021 she was recognized as the second high individual in the state of California in the contest area, and earned a spot to compete in the National preliminary finals competition. During this preliminary competition, all of the top state contestants competed in a virtual competition and only the top 16 state representatives were able to advance to the National Finals. Isabelle was soon a top 16 competitor and headed to Indianapolis, Indiana this past October vying for a national

title. Over the week of competition in Indiana, she competed for a spot in the final four. From there, those four gave one final performance to determine final placings and Isabelle proudly brought home a 2nd place finish - in the NATION!

We could not have been more proud of Isabelle and her representation of not only our state, but our chapter and all its members! She is definitely a role model for others and her hard work and dedication is something that should be commended.

Isabelle is now home front the National FFA convention and is back to focusing on her studies at Fresno State as a SmittCamp Scholarship recipient. We wish her the best of luck in her studies there and know she has some of the most wonderful things to look forward to in the years to come. Congratulations again, Isabelle Dillsaver on a job well done!

## Fall Festivities

**By: Gabriella Butticci, Merced FFA Reporter**

**T**his month was jam-packed with exciting activities. With the Halloween spirit in full swing, our chapter hosted several entertaining events that allowed us and others to step outside our comfort zones and have a good time. Our advisors kicked off the month by taking two greenhand teams and our chapter officer team to Gustine for the Opening and Closing Contests. Fifteen other chapters were competing, and we are thrilled to report that our chapter officers took home a gold medal, as well as one silver and one gold medal for our greenhand teams. We would like to recognize three greenhands who came home with titles from Gustine. Starting with team A, we'd like to congratulate Naomi Stagno for being named the Outstanding Reporter in the competition. On team B, we have Christian Santa Maria, who was named Outstanding Vice President,

and Preslee Hunter, who was named Outstanding President. Congratulations to all of you; we are incredibly proud of you, and we extend our heartfelt gratitude to those who competed.

On October 21st, our advisors took 4 of our officers and 38 members to Dell Osso Farms up in Lathrop. Isabella McDaniel, a sophomore, says, "I thought it was fun there was a lot to do, to see, and the pumpkin patch was pretty," along with Jonathan Clingham, also a sophomore saying, "Del Osso is like the holidays. It brings people together to spend the time they have with each other" A huge thank you to all of those who participated in going, and we hope you guys have a great time.

Our chapter also hosted a fall fest here at Merced High School on October 27th. Over 13 clubs participated and we had a great turnout from the community. There were lots of popular activities, such as the haunted trailer and the costume contest. Our chapter invited the Ag Ambassadors from Merced College to

participate, which consisted of a past secretary, Debbie Miller, and 2020-2021 president Michel Sanchez! Our leadership students made many unique booths such as the photo booth, feed sack race, two-liter toss, "What Did the Bear Eat," the haunted trailer, and

more! Our chapter looks forward to sponsoring more enjoyable activities in the future and breaking through what's next! Thank you to everyone who participated and all of the hard work the students put into making it memorable.



**Merced FFA Fall Fest**

# Apple Pistachio Crisp



- 3 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon tapioca flour

## Instructions

### Make the Streusel

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Place the raw pistachios on a sheet pan in a single layer and toast for about 7 minutes until the pistachios are slightly browned. Remove the nuts from the oven, allow them to cool and then coarsely chop.
2. Place the flour, both sugars, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt in a medium size bowl and whisk to combine. Cut the butter into small pieces, add it to the dry ingredients and rub the butter with your fingers until the mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Add the chopped pistachios and toss to mix them in.

### Make the Apple Filling

1. Lightly butter a 9 x 1-inch round baking dish.
2. Peel the apples and cut them into 1/2-inch chunks. Place the cut apples in a large mixing bowl. Sprinkle the apples with lemon and toss gently to coat the apples. Sprinkle the sugar and the tapioca over the apples and gently stir with a large spoon to mix in the sugar and tapioca. Allow the apples to sit for 10 minutes.
3. Pour the apples into the prepared baking dish. Cover the top evenly with the streusel by pressing it together into large clumps and then breaking it into smaller pieces as it is sprinkled over the top. Bake the apple crisp for 30-35 minutes until the apple juices are bubbling.
4. Remove the apple crisp from the oven. Allow it to cool for 10 minutes and then serve warm with vanilla ice cream or whipped cream.

This Apple Pistachio Crisp by our friend Chery Norris from Bakes by Brown Sugar is everything you want in a fall dessert – sweet/tart California apples, warm spices, and a buttery, crunchy pistachio topping. It's special enough to serve at a holiday meal, but easy enough to throw together on a weeknight (why not?).

**Course:** Dessert

**Cuisine:** American

**Prep Time:** 20 minutes

**Cook Time:** 42 minutes

**Servings:** 8 servings

**Author:** Cheryl Norris, Bakes by Brown Sugar

## Ingredients

### For the Streusel Topping

- 1 cup all-purpose flour 125 grams
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar 100 grams
- 1/2 cup light brown sugar 100 grams
- 1/4 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 8 tablespoons butter 114 grams, room temperature
- 1/2 cup raw pistachios 80 grams, toasted and roughly chopped

### For the Apple Filling

- 1-3/4 pounds Granny Smith Apples, chopped into 1/2-inch cubes
- 2 teaspoons fresh squeezed lemon juice

# New UC ANR publication educates public on cycles of cattle production, grazing and economics

By: Mike Hsu, UC ANR

The pandemic has brought more people into nearby parks and public lands for hiking, biking and other recreational activities. In areas like the East Bay Regional Parks – a San Francisco Bay Area park system totaling more than 120,000 acres where about 65% of the land is grazed by livestock – visitors might see goats, sheep and, most likely, cattle.

Those encounters with animals (or their manure) represent a prime opportunity for members of the public to learn about agriculture and the ecological benefits of rangelands, according to Larry Forero, a UC Cooperative Extension livestock and natural resources advisor.

"In addition to supporting the raising of meat and other by-products, rangelands provide a variety of ecosystem services, including vegetation and watershed management, fire fuel control, and, increasingly, management of habitat for rare and endangered species," Forero explained, noting that working rangelands cover around 40% of California's land area.

As livestock grazing (mostly by beef cattle) constitutes a significant portion of land use across the state, Forero – along with fellow UCCE advisors Sheila Barry and Stephanie Larson – recently authored a UC Agriculture and Natural Resources publication summarizing the mechanics of cattle production.

"Beef Cattle on California Annual Grasslands: Production Cycle and Economics," published in October and available as a free download on the UC ANR Catalog, describes the seasonal phases of cattle production and the factors that impact ranchers' financial calculations and management decisions.

"This concise publication walks through annual stock flows and calendar of operations and gives tables for estimating costs, return over cash, and gross income under various scenarios," said Forero.

By covering care practices, infrastructure needs, grazing management and economics, Forero said the publication offers a succinct overview of beef cattle production and rangeland use for land managers, decision makers and the park interpreters (such as docents and guides) who educate visitors as well as the interested public.

"Even if only a relatively small percentage of park goers are interested, you still touch a lot of people with a document like this," Forero explained.

He said he hopes park signage and QR codes will direct visitors to the publication for more information about the cattle and their seasonal movements.

"People often wonder where the cattle go when they leave the park and when they will return," co-author Sheila Barry said. "The cattle may go to grass or feed yards in other places in California or even out of state."

But, as this new UC ANR publication explains, the cattle production cycle turns over anew.

"There will be more cattle next fall, I promise," Barry said.



**With this publication, urban residents can get a deeper understanding of beef cattle production and the ecological benefits of working rangelands. Photo by Sheila Barry**



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# Modesto Junior College student wins in Farm Bureau's Collegiate Discussion Meet

**By: CAFB**

**B**raden Crosson, an intern in the Modesto Junior College School of Agriculture's crop unit, has won the 2021-22 California Young Farmers and Ranchers Collegiate Discussion Meet.

Crosson, of Galt, emerged as the winner of the competition finals, held in Bakersfield on Nov. 13. The event featured a policy discussion on the long-term viability of livestock processing following the COVID-19 pandemic.

In his winning presentation, Crosson addressed how California Farm Bureau efforts can lead to easing government regulations to enable long-term economic viability for local animal processing facilities, while

also protecting workers and ensuring that healthy products are delivered to consumers.

As the winner of the contest, Crosson receives \$1,250 and will now represent California in the national competition held in February 2022 during the American Farm Bureau Federation's Young Farmers and Ranchers Conference in Louisville, Kentucky.

The competition, part of the Farm Bureau's Young Farmers and Ranchers program, simulates a committee meeting, in which each committee member is expected to actively participate in a policy discussion. The idea is for participants to improve their discussion skills while learning about important agricultural issues. Ultimately, they learn to work in groups to pool knowledge, reach consensus and solve problems.=

"You are working right alongside your competitors," Crosson said. "And it creates an interesting dynamic, where you're not only trying to get across your own points but you're also trying to understand your competitors' points and then come together and bring about a possible solution and how you can implement it in your local county Farm Bureau."

The Collegiate Discussion Meet featured participants from two colleges in at least three rounds of discussions. The top four contestants competed in the final round, moderated by Regina Pozzi, the California Young Farmers and Ranchers State Committee Representative from District 17.

California State University, Fresno student Lindsey Swall, of Tulare County, was awarded \$750 as the first runner-up in the competition and two classmates, Brenden Black of Clovis and Corie Falaschi of Dos Palos, each earned \$500 as finalists. Fresno State won the collegiate team award, earning another \$250 prize.

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# Hilmar Colony 4-H Pumpkin Contest

Judged by Jose Campos of Merced County 4-H.



1st Place & Best Decorated Pumpkin - Omar Hernandez



2nd Place & Most Creative - Hudson Meneses



3rd Place - Adin Romero



Best Use of Pumpkin - Trevor Nyman



Best Sibling Pumpkin - Emiliano Hernandez



Scariest/Ugliest - Gianna Silveira



Best Carved Pumpkin - Sebastian Romero

*Thanksgiving*

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November 25th and 26th

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# Asking Applicants for Vax Status? Not so Fast, Employers

**By: Robin Shea, Constangy, Brooks, Smith, and Prophete, LLP, FELS**

October 13, 2021 -

I'm not sure the ADA will let you do that.

There has been a lot in the news lately about job applicants who include their COVID-19 vaccination status on their resumes, employers who ask applicants for that information, and employers who refuse to consider anyone for hire who doesn't include their vaccination status on their resumes.

The comments from employment lawyers who are quoted in these articles can be summarized as follows:

"Be careful, employers. You might be discriminating against an employee who couldn't get vaccinated for a medical or religious reason, which would violate the Americans with Disabilities Act or Title VII, as the case may be."

"Be careful, employers. You might inadvertently learn about other medical conditions the applicant has -- or the applicant's religious beliefs -- which could taint your hiring decision."

I don't disagree with either of these points, but I think there is an even simpler answer for employers.

The ADA, as it has been consistently interpreted since the 1990s, says employers can't ask for medical information at the applicant stage of the hiring process.

Let's put aside the applicant who voluntarily discloses that he or she has been vaccinated. If the applicant chooses to do that, and as long as the employer didn't require or request it, and gave fair consideration to applicants who didn't disclose, the employer should not have any problem under the ADA.

But if the employer requires or requests that information from an applicant -- or refuses to consider for hire an applicant who has not disclosed that information -- then that does arguably violate the ADA requirements on pre-employment medical inquiries and examinations, which apply to all individuals, whether they have disabilities or not.

"But, Robin!" you may exclaim. "As you have written many times before, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission has said that employers may ask employees

for their vaccination status, may ask for proof of vaccination, and may even fire employees who refuse to get vaccinated (provided that they don't qualify for a reasonable accommodation)."

"Why," you continue, "wouldn't the same rule apply to employers who are screening employment applications?"

The answer comes from the ADA itself. The ADA has rules about medical information that employers can request, and the rules are different depending on whether the individual is a job applicant, someone who has received a conditional offer of employment, or a current employee.

Here are the rules. I like to envision them as a window with different degrees of closure.

**Applicant stage:** Window slammed shut. The employer can't make "disability-related inquiries" of an applicant unless another federal law requires it to do so. (A "disability-related inquiry" is anything that would tend to elicit information about a disability. That's why employers stopped asking how many days an applicant missed work at a previous job due to illness. Or asking applicants to list all elective surgeries they've had. In other words, the standard -- as applied in real life -- is much stricter than just asking the applicant whether he has a disability.)

Only the most innocuous "medical information" can be requested before an offer of employment has been made -- for example, if an applicant shows up for a job interview with a cast on her leg, it would not violate the ADA for the interviewer to say, "Oh, man. How did you break your leg?" It also doesn't violate the ADA for the employer to ask an applicant, "How are you doing?" (Good to know!) But just about anything else is verboten, including follow-up to these innocent questions.

For the same reason, I would argue that it violates the ADA for an employer to refuse to consider for hire an applicant who did not "voluntarily" disclose "disability-related" information. This strikes me as just a more sophisticated way of getting around the "no-medical-information-at-the-applicant-stage" rule.

"Have you been vaccinated for COVID-19?" seems to be all right if the answer is yes. But if the answer is "No, I can't, because I've

been getting chemotherapy, and I'm immunocompromised . . ." Well, you get the idea. The question itself seems to be likely to elicit information about a disability, applying the very strict standard that has applied in the past. And, if so, the employer is not even allowed to ask.

**Post-offer stage:** Tear open the shutters, and throw up the sash! Once a conditional offer of employment has been made, just about any medical question is fair game. The employer can also send the offeree for a physical or psychiatric examination. And the examination doesn't even have to be relevant to the job!

The only limitations at this stage are (1) the same information must be requested of all offerees in that same job category -- in other words, you can't single out a particular offeree -- and (2) the information cannot be used to discriminate against the employee -- for example, by withdrawing a job offer after you learn that the applicant had a hysterectomy five years ago.

The post-offer stage would obviously be the ideal time to ask whether the individual has been vaccinated against COVID, or whether the individual at least intends to do so, and if not whether reasonable accommodations might be appropriate.

**During employment:** Cracked a bit. Once the individual starts work, the employer is again under restrictions about the medical information it can request. However, it's not as restricted as it was at the applicant stage. An employer can request medical information if doing so is "job related and consistent with business necessity."

So, if, say, an employee claims that his poor performance is due to a disability and requests reasonable accommodation, the employer can ask about the nature of the disability, engage in the interactive process with the employee, and even send the employee for a medical examination. The employer can also obviously get information necessary to determine whether an employee needs leave under the Family and Medical Leave Act for a serious health condition, to handle a workers' compensation claim, or to determine whether an absence from work should be excused or unexcused.

The employer is also allowed to request medical information from

employees in connection with a voluntary wellness program.

And the employer can ask current employees whether they have been vaccinated against COVID-19, ask for proof of vaccination, ask where they are in the process if they have not been fully vaccinated yet, and take appropriate action (reasonable accommodation, administrative leave, or termination of employment) if the employee is not vaccinated.

Because the rules for current employees and job applicants are so different, I don't think the EEOC's position on current employees necessarily applies to applicants. I'd love to hear what my fellow ADA nerds think about this issue.

Meanwhile, here are some hiring tips that should help employers who want to "stay safe":

**No. 1: DON'T** ask about vaccination at the applicant stage. You might even want to post a notice telling applicants not to volunteer such information.

**No. 2:** If you require employees to be vaccinated, **DO** post a notice on your application sites informing one and all that you require employees to be vaccinated, with only limited exceptions. (Or "with exceptions only as required by law.") That should alert anti-vaccination applicants who aren't entitled to reasonable accommodations to select themselves out of the process.

**No. 3:** **DO** ask about vaccination status at the post-offer stage. You can also explore possibilities for reasonable accommodation and decide whether a refusal to be vaccinated in a timely manner for a non-medical or non-religious reason should be ground for withdrawing the offer of employment. Heck, if you require post-offer medical examinations, you could even have your offerees vaccinated as part of the examination. With their prior consent, of course.

**No. 4:** **DO** continue to follow the EEOC guidance with respect to your current employees. Also, whenever (if ever) the Occupational Safety and Health Administration issues its Emergency Temporary Standard for employers with 100 or more employees, you'd need to comply with that if you have 100 or more employees. And, if you're a federal contractor, do everything Cara Crotty tells you. (And sign up for her webinar, which is only four short days away!)

# Bonnie confirmed as undersecretary for farm production and conservation

**By: Steve Davies, Agripulse**

The Senate on Tuesday confirmed an important member of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack's team at USDA, approving the nomination of Robert Bonnie to be undersecretary for farm production and conservation.

The vote was 76-19, with more than two dozen Republicans backing Bonnie, including farm-state lawmakers such as Joni Ernst and Chuck Grassley of Iowa, John Thune and Mike Rounds of South Dakota, and Arkansas Sen. John Boozman, ranking member of the Agriculture Committee.

Bonnie will oversee the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service and the Risk Management Agency and play a key role in implementing the

administration's climate policy, including its Climate-Smart Agriculture and Forestry Partnership Initiative, designed to fund regional pilot projects using climate-smart practices.

The administration hopes to begin doling out money for those projects in the first part of 2022. Nearly 400 comments were received with recommendations on what to fund.

Assuming Congress passes the President Joe Biden's Build Back Better plan, Bonnie also would be responsible for overseeing \$27 billion in new conservation funding

"Taken together, the Farm Service Agency, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Risk Management Agency provide the first line of defense for our farmers and ranchers against droughts, floods and wildfires and other extreme weather,"

Agriculture Committee Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow, D-Mich., said on the floor before the vote.

"Throughout his career, Mr. Bonnie has built strong partnerships with farmers, with ranchers, with foresters, with communities."

Boozman said in a statement that Bonnie "is no stranger to USDA, having previously served at the department during the Obama administration. During his previous tenure, Mr. Bonnie developed a reputation of listening to stakeholders, an approach I expect will continue as he is sworn in as undersecretary for farm production and conservation.

Bonnie served as undersecretary for natural resources and environment at USDA during the Obama administration.

Bonnie has been serving as a senior climate adviser to Vilsack while

awaiting confirmation. He also was co-chair of the Biden administration's transition team for USDA and was vice president for land conservation at the Environmental Defense Fund.

He has advocated for using the Commodity Credit Corp. to set up a carbon bank to encourage carbon sequestration efforts by farmers, ranchers and foresters. Republicans have pushed back against the idea, but at his confirmation hearing in July, Bonnie said USDA could use CCC to incentivize climate-smart practices.

At the same time, he said any such proposal would have to have the support of producers.

Vilsack is planning to fund the Climate-Smart projects with the CCC authority.

Bonnie was nominated in April, but an unknown number of senators had put holds on his nomination.

## Legislature Approves \$215 million in Agricultural Equipment Upgrades

**By: California Ag Today**

November 16, 2021 - With only a few days left in the 2021 legislative session, the California State Legislature voted to approve a budget proposal that included over \$215 million dollars dedicated to incentive programs. These programs focus on the replacement of Tier 0's, 1's and 2's level equipment, and pay a percentage of the cost for a Tier 4 piece of equipment.

The popular FARMER Funding program will receive \$170 million for this next year, with that chunk of money being split amongst all agricultural representative Air Districts. An additional funding allocation of \$45 million was provided to the Carl Moyer Program. The Carl Moyer program is split amongst several funding programs that all

target older, diesel-fired equipment. The FARMER Funding has been instrumental in helping the San Joaquin Valley replace a massive amount of older diesel equipment.

The San Joaquin Valley faces a mandatory rule to replace all Tier 0, 1 and 2 tractors and would require tractor fleets be reported to CARB similar to the Truck and Bus Regulation.

This proposed regulation is avoided if the agricultural industry is able to replace 12,000 tractors, or reduce emissions by a proposed 11 tons/day. CARB staff has recognized the extensive work that agriculture has been able to achieve, CARB has recommended supporting future incentive funding efforts to help achieve this goal. If you need any assistance in your incentive program application, please feel free to reach out to the Association for help.



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# Supply chain delays disrupt California agriculture exports

By: Adam Beam, Associated Press

November 4, 2021 - SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP) — Amid an historic drought posing threats to future harvests, California farmers now say they have no way to export the crops they do have because of a kink in the global supply chain that has left container ships lined up off the Southern California coast with nowhere to deliver their goods.

Problems with the supply chain have retailers worried their shelves — and their customers' online shopping carts — will be empty during the crucial holiday shopping season, prompting emergency actions from state and federal leaders to clear up the logjam.

But the backlog of ships entering U.S. waters also means there are fewer making the trek back across the Pacific Ocean, leaving the farmers in one of the nation's most important agriculture regions with nowhere to send their products.

"We're at the mercy of foreign shipping companies," said Roger Isom, president and CEO of the California Cotton Ginners and Growers Association and the Western Agricultural Processors Association. "We're in a game, somebody changed the rules on us and we have no way to correct it."

California is the nation's biggest supplier of tree nuts — almonds, walnuts and pistachios. Most of them are sold to other countries, totaling more than \$8.1 billion in exports in 2019, according to the California Department of Food and Agriculture.

But last month, Isom said more than 80% of scheduled shipments were canceled. Processors have resorted to paying much more to ship their products to other ports, sending pistachios and walnuts by train to Texas and Maryland and flying bales of cotton to Peru. Isom said they are losing money on these sales, but they have to do it or else risk losing their customers.

It's particularly a problem for walnuts, which are in high demand in Europe for the Christmas holiday. But

Isom said California's orders are "now being filled by other countries."

"One of our members lost \$7.5 million in one month of sales because of an inability to fill timely commitments," Isom told state lawmakers on Wednesday during an informational hearing on the global supply chain problems.

One reason for the shortage of ships is the intense demand for products has driven shipping prices so high that many ocean carriers simply hurry back to Asia once they leave Southern California, bypassing the smaller port in Oakland where most of the state's tree nuts are shipped.

Danny Wan, executive director of the Port of Oakland and the president of the California Association of Port Authorities, said last week one of the port's container terminals was empty of both containers and ships.

"The operator tells me this is the first time in the history where they are operating in Oakland where they have not had one vessel call," Wan said. "This is an example of the supply chain dictating this kind of market distortion."

But the solution is not as easy as simply turning some ships around in Los Angeles and sending them north to Oakland. Assemblyman Patrick O'Donnell, chair of the Assembly Select Committee on Ports and Goods Movement, said ocean carriers need relationships with terminal operators, trucking companies and warehouses — all which require contracts to be negotiated.

"That takes time. You can't just turn on a dime," he said.

Mike Jacob, vice president and general counsel for the Pacific Merchant Shipping Association, said "it's important to us" to reestablish shipping connections in ports in both Northern California and the Pacific Northwest, adding three companies have dedicated direct service calls to the Oakland port while two more have plans to start in January.

The Biden administration announced last month the Los Angeles port would soon begin operating 24 hours a day to help

clear the backlog of ships. California Gov. Gavin Newsom, a Democrat, has waived some state regulations to allow companies to pack more cargo on trucks.

"In order to solve this problem, every single stakeholder in supply chain have to step up and make difficult choices — including the state," said Dee Dee Myers, a senior advisor to Newsom and director of the Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development.

Fruits and nuts are California's fifth-largest export sector, according to an analysis of trade data by Michigan State University, trailing electrical and industrial machinery and motor vehicle

and their parts.

California exports accounted for more than 10% of all U.S. exports in 2020. When it comes to agriculture, California accounted for 16% of all U.S. exports in 2019.

"A great deal of attention is on imports and issues confronting these entities bringing in goods which are important," said Assemblywoman Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, a Democrat whose rural Northern California district includes lots of farmers. "However, California agriculture depends heavily on the exporting of its goods and — I cannot overstate this enough — we are in an urgent position."



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# Biden infrastructure funds will help state bullet train, but not as much as boosters hoped

By: **Ralph Vartabedian, Los Angeles Times**

The infrastructure bill that President Biden plans to sign Monday contains a historic amount of new funding for passenger rail service and aims to remake its role in American transportation, but any boost for the nation's bullet train ambitions will be limited at best.

Exactly how much money will reach various rail projects — including the financially challenged California bullet train — is still an unknown and will depend on how the complex law is administered and developed into grant programs.

Hopes for a \$100-billion national high-speed rail program, a goal backed by former secretaries of transportation, labor unions, major engineering firms and rail advocates, were dashed by the bipartisan infrastructure bill. Most of the money for rail systems will go to Amtrak's service on the East Coast, various long-distance Amtrak routes and freight rail systems.

The follow-up social and climate legislation, the so-called Build Back Better bill, contains a \$10-billion clause for high-speed rail projects across the country, as well.

The clause, sponsored by high-speed rail advocate Rep. Seth Moulton (D-Mass.), has speed requirements that could be met only by California's ongoing project, as well as proposed projects in Texas and a Cucamonga-to-Las Vegas train. Whether the funding stays in the legislation and whether the entire bill will pass the Senate is unclear.

If that \$10 billion is spread out, the benefit to the California High-Speed Rail Authority will be modest. One consultant, speaking on background, estimated that the California bullet train might get about \$4 billion out of both pieces of legislation.

It would clearly help the project, which is experiencing sharp cost increases in Central Valley construction, but it is a small fraction of what is needed to connect future tracks through mountain tunnels to Southern California or the Bay Area.

In a September board meeting,

rail authority Chief Executive Brian Kelly outlined that the infrastructure bill contained about \$21 billion of new funding on top of existing appropriations that the authority could pursue. About half of the \$1.2-trillion infrastructure bill comes from existing funding commitments.

Why California came up with so little and the East Coast was rewarded with the largest rail investment in half a century is complex. Lobbyists say the Northeast states came together with a unified proposal, backed by multiple state delegations. It was boosted by a president who is an Amtrak fan.

By contrast, the schedule and cost problems of the California bullet train may have hurt its chances. It long ago lost bipartisan support within the state, and House Minority Leader Rep. Kevin McCarthy (R-Bakersfield) opposed the project. The infighting hurt the state's chances of getting more federal money.

Although the dedicated \$10 billion in the social and climate change bill is greater than what the Obama administration's stimulus bill provided a decade ago, it is not a game-changer for high-speed rail in America.

"It is a typical federal approach," said Joseph Schofer, a Northwestern University civil engineer and creator of the podcast "The Infrastructure Show." "You take an ounce of peanut butter and spread it over five loafs of bread and you say everybody got something."

Schofer said the infrastructure bill is important to redress decades of neglect, but a serious problem remains unanswered: How did the nation get into such serious disrepair and how do we avoid it in the future? "The bill is a once and done," he added.

Proponents of the rail spending see hope.

"We celebrate each incremental step we take," said John Roberts Smith, chairman of the advocacy group Transportation for America and former Amtrak chairman.

Deputy Transportation Secretary Polly Trottenberg, a former New York City transportation commissioner, earlier this week called the bill a "remarkable achievement" and described some of its far-ranging benefits for transit systems, electric

vehicles, airports and ports, among much else. But a fact sheet put out by the department included few details about spending that will be spread out over the next decade.

A lengthy passage of the bill, Section 22307, indicates that much of the funding will be allocated on a competitive basis, meaning how it ultimately gets spent is unpredictable, according to Schofer.

In a statement to The Times, Amtrak officials said that \$22 billion of \$66 billion in infrastructure funds for rail will be allocated to its capital projects and fleet acquisitions across its system.

It would include such projects as the Hudson Tunnel and East River tunnels in New York, a Connecticut River bridge, and station projects in Washington and Boston.

The other \$44 billion would be provided to the Federal Railroad Administration for grants to Amtrak, state systems and "other rail projects." Outside of the Northeast, the full package would provide new passenger equipment for long-distance trains and "state supported" trains. It would also bring Amtrak-served stations into compliance with disability laws.

Regional transportation agencies, political consultants and lobbyists are still trying to unpack the details of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act — a document that contains 414,000 words of technical legalese, often clauses that reform prior laws.

Amtrak is the biggest winner, likely to get the vast majority of the \$66 billion to build new tunnels and upgrade track on the Northeast

Corridor from Boston to Washington. A smaller portion would be used to "support and upgrade corridors all across the county," said Trottenberg, but the amount appears undermined.

Smith, the Transportation for America chairman, said he believes there exists billions of additional dollars for rail spread throughout the legislation, an assertion that U.S. transportation officials could not confirm.

"The number is the biggest we have ever seen invested in passenger rail," Smith said. "More importantly, they have transformed the mission of Amtrak to meet intercity passenger rail needs of the U.S."

The money would rebuild at least two key tunnels that are bottlenecks, one in New York City and another in Baltimore. It would purchase new trains and fix decrepit track.

The law will put new emphasis on long-distance Amtrak routes, which have been sharply cut back over the years to stem financial losses. It will put in place a new board of directors, require live ticket agents in stations and even improve meal service.

The corridor is where the Acela, Amtrak's fastest train, operates. It hits a top speed of 150 mph, but only over a limited section.

The multibillion investments in the route will cut the trip time from Boston to Washington from six hours to possibly five, according to Transportation Department documents. Faster, to be sure, but not fast enough to meet international standards for a bullet train.



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**T**here's nothing like waking up in the morning, stepping outside and inhaling the unmistakable, earthy aroma of rain! After months

and months of eating and breathing red, clay dust, Mariposa County finally got a much needed soaking. I'm still not sure what a bomb cyclone is, but let's just say that the hurling house scene from the Wizard of Oz came to mind as I attempted to attach a tarp to the dog kennel.

All of the wickedly, wild winds were worth it, as the rain gauge registered almost 3.5 inches when the sun came out the next day. Each and every year, I'm amazed at just how quickly the grass starts shooting up after the first decent rain befalls us. It literally took a mere two days, and a faint green carpet was beginning to cover the hills, what a glorious sight!

The lingering drought has hit livestock producers hard, we've been feeding hay for way too long and our bank accounts show it! The cost for producers has skyrocketed, the cost for consumers is jaw dropping and it doesn't look like prices will be declining any time soon. When massive government spending, escalating inflation, mandates, paying employees not to work combines, we've got a recipe for calamity. I refuse to give in or give up, it's time to buckle up and stand up for our convictions. We need a untied

front, and this is not the time for complacency.

For the moment, I feel extremely blessed and relieved for the rain reprieve we've gotten so far. We are basking in the radiant glow of the "green gold" growing on our hillsides. The Good Lord willing, there will be more grass growing storms coming

soon. I'd like to wish everyone a very Happy Thanksgiving and as always, 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.



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