



# Merced County Farm News



## Concerns linger in Merced County over state decision to cut river water to local farmers

By: **Abbie Lauten-Scrivner, Merced Sun-Star**

**A**UGUST 11, 2021  
The impacts of a recent decision by the California State Water Resources Control Board could ripple into serious consequences felt by Merced County water users next year, Merced Irrigation District (MID) officials say.

The state board on Aug. 3 unanimously voted to issue “emergency curtailment” orders for the rivers of the Sacramento-San

Joaquin Delta watershed — severing Central Valley farmers from their main irrigation supply as the drought worsens.

Thousands of Valley farmers would be among the first to feel the impacts of being cut off from California’s main rivers and streams, including the more than 2,000 local growers within Merced Irrigation District.

The irrigation district oversees Lake McClure, a 1-million-acre-foot reservoir northeast of Snelling that serves as the primary water supply for Merced County growers and provides

water to about 100,000 acres in the eastern part of the county.

“That reservoir is essentially the only water source for our growers,” said MID spokesperson Mike Jensen. Water allocation for MID growers for 2021 is already set, but MID officials are wary about how the state board’s decision will play out locally in 2022 following an already challenging drought year — especially if dry conditions persist or the drought intensifies.

If emergency curtailment orders are in place during the storm season next

year, it will prevent the reservoir from storing runoff as it flows downriver, Jensen said. This is cause for concern not only for growers, but for residents of east Merced County as well, as drinking water supply could be potentially impacted.

It could also worsen concerns over the county’s groundwater basins. MID’s water operations provide more than 100,000 acre-feet of groundwater replenishment each year to a groundwater basin that is identified by

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## Senate approves Biden's bipartisan infrastructure bill with funds for California

By: **Jennifer Haberkorns, The Los Angeles Times**

**A**UG. 10, 2021  
WASHINGTON — The Senate on Tuesday approved an expansive bill to rebuild the nation’s aging roads and bridges, with \$8.3 billion specifically targeted to water infrastructure projects in the West and billions more to fund national projects to mitigate the impact of wildfires.

After months of negotiation among President Biden, Democrats and a group of moderate Republicans to forge a compromise, the Senate voted 69 to 30 in favor of the legislation.

In the end, it had support from 19 Republicans, including Minority Leader Mitch McConnell of Kentucky.

The plan, which is the first portion of Biden’s “Build Back Better” program, will next go to the House, where it faces challenges from progressives.

Ten centrist senators who worked on the bill, including lead negotiators Rob Portman (R-Ohio) and Kyrsten Sinema (D-Ariz.), said it would “create jobs, increase productivity and pave the way for decades of economic growth and prosperity — all without raising taxes on everyday Americans or increasing inflation.”

Biden similarly framed the

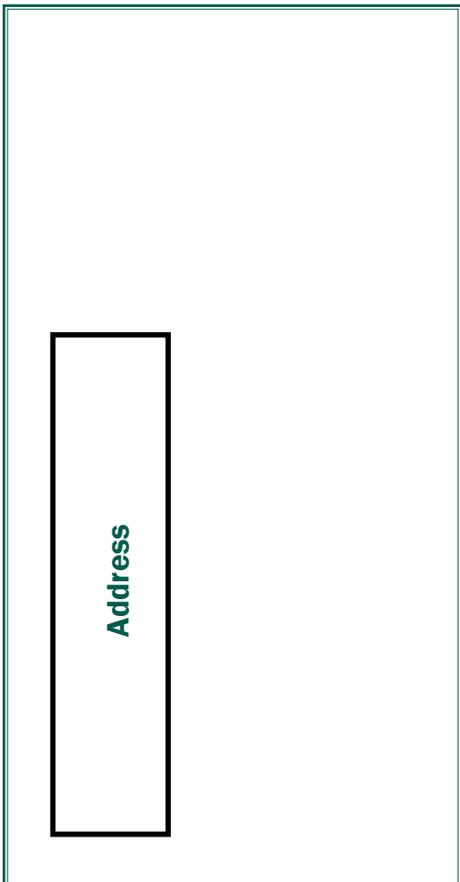
accomplishment as proof he has delivered on his campaign promise to govern from the political center.

“This is about us doing the real hard work of governing,” Biden said. “This is about democracy delivering for the people. This is about winning the future.”

The comity was short-lived. Just moments after the bipartisan vote on the bill, the Senate turned to the second portion of Biden’s infrastructure plan, an ambitious effort to reshape the nation’s social programs.

It could accomplish many of progressives’ top policy priorities, such

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*from the*  
**President's  
 Corner**  
**Eric Harcksen**

water situation and the air quality from every corner of this state. From the California State Water Resources Control Board (SWB) to the California Air Resources Board (CARB), they are continuing to chisel away at our rights. Little by little to the never-ending pressure from California

**M**erced County Farm Bureau appreciates everyone working hard during this difficult time. We are aware of the

and their unfriendly legislature. On August 3, the SWB voted on an Emergency Curtailment Order for the Delta and San Joaquin Watersheds. This affects pre and post 1914 water right holders. This is coming down after the governor declared a State of Emergency on April 21st. He then expanded it on May 10th to include the Sacramento and the San Joaquin Delta. I am afraid it will be the beginning of an emergency order from the governor who really has no timeline. We are working diligently to make sure our farmers and their livelihoods are our top priority.

CARB is developing regulations

that will affect you. Some of which are off road tier phase out of engine 25 HP and greater and changes to the low use provision. Zero emission forklifts are looking to be accelerated for fleets based on model year. On road regulations are to include heavy duty inspection and maintenance proposed regulations requiring emissions related inspections for non-gasoline vehicles over 14,000 GVWR. For more information you can visit [arb.ca.gov/futuremobileregs](http://arb.ca.gov/futuremobileregs)

The Farm Bureau office will be open during regular business hours and if you have any questions don't hesitate to call.

**C**urtailment orders are on the upswing in conversation as the California State Water Resources Control Board (SWB) recently adopted emergency orders. These emergency regulations are granted under Water Code section 1058.5, impacting water rights holders throughout the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Bay Delta watershed. All pre-1914 and post-1914 appropriative rights within the San Joaquin River watershed are subject to the curtailment. Riparian rights are also impacted but are subject to 'co-relative' (proportionate or pro rata) sharing of the current projected shortages. Please note that I am limiting my column to those in the San Joaquin watershed, but there are individuals impacted in the Sacramento as well.

There is a process that must take place. SWB adopted the regulations on Tuesday, August 3, however

these must also be approved by the Office of Administrative Law (OAL). Curtailment orders cannot be sent out to water rights holders until they have cleared OAL. The timeframe for this would occur sometime next week, with curtailment orders estimated to go out after August 16th.

Curtailment orders differ on reporting needs based on the amount of diversion. For those with water rights under 1,000 acre-feet per year, individuals will need to submit a certification online. This will need to include details on the underlying water right, attesting that you will cease diversions, etc. Diverters with rights over 1,000 acre-feet per year will need to submit the above along with possible additional information as required by the Water Board.

Aside from getting through this year, the larger issue of concern is the length that the regulation remains and curtailments are or are not in effect.

Much of this depends on the length of our drought and hydrology. Once adopted by OAL, the regulations will remain in effect into next year. Should we remain in drought conditions, the order can be amended or extended. If we have a good water year starting Oct. 1st with rain and snowpack, curtailments may be temporarily lifted or the regulations lifted all together with an actual end to the drought.

The concern for this coming winter through spring is serious, since many reservoirs have little or no carry over going in next year, and there is no telling now what conditions will be like next year. In all cases where you may have specific concerns or questions, I would encourage you to speak with a water rights attorney and carefully review the regulations on the water board's drought page at <https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drought/delta/>. A list of individual water rights claims can be found on the SWB's website



*from the*  
**Director's  
 Desk**  
**Breanne Vandenberg**

at [https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drought/delta/docs/072321\\_noticed\\_claims.pdf](https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/drought/delta/docs/072321_noticed_claims.pdf). Please reach out should you have questions on the above.



To further amplify your voice with elected officials and government agencies, Farm Team will be moving to a new platform, and we want to make sure you are aware of the change. You may notice new features for social media, phone calls and text messages. The new platform will not require you to do anything to keep receiving Farm Team emails. However, if you would like to receive text messages, please text the number 52886 and type "CFBF" in the message line.

## 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.

# Water

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the state as critically overdrafted.

Basins labeled as critically overdrafted see their annual average of groundwater extraction exceed supply. Most San Joaquin Valley basins are critically overdrafted.

Agricultural and urban groundwater users are directed to limit consumption under the state’s Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.

But Merced County growers feeling the direct effects of water being cut off may turn to sourcing their supply from wells, exacerbating concerns over the county’s critically over-drafted basins.

“If we don’t have adequate surface water supply for Lake McClure . . . our growers are going to be looking at pumping groundwater,” Jensen said, noting that increased groundwater pumping would put more demand on overdrafted basins.

MID officials have expressed apprehension to the state board about the emergency curtailment orders impeding the opportunity to capture valuable runoff for storage or water management activities if a storm event occurs next fall or winter.

As a result, local irrigation district officials have asked the state board to provide a point person to coordinate with to lift the orders if a storm does occur, thus allowing water to be put to use locally.

## FRUSTRATIONS EXPRESSED TO THE STATE

Last week’s move by the California State Water Resources Control Board marked the most drastic step since the drought was officially declared throughout a majority of California’s counties and surpasses any steps taken by the state during the previous drought.

The order affects those with direct legal rights to divert water from the rivers. The board pointed to the need to

preserve river flows for drinking water as well as endangered fish species as reason to curtail farmers’ water use.

Maintaining river flow prevents saltwater from the Pacific from rushing into the Delta. If that water gets too salty, pumping operations from the estuary through which much of California’s water is pumped may stop.

Assemblymember Adam Gray, D-Merced, condemned curtailment proposal prior to the unanimous vote. He criticized the state board for halting water flows to farmers who grow food while no mandatory statewide conservation requirements are in effect for urban water users.

“The Board’s history of failing to balance the necessary sacrifices required during times of severe drought against the real-life impacts of those sacrifices is well documented,” Gray said in a letter to the board.

“What’s more important, making sure farmers can grow food for your tables or making sure someone’s lawn in Bel Air never turns brown around the edges?”

The state board’s decision means residents living in rural areas like Merced County will bear the overwhelming economic and social burdens created by the drought, Gray said in a news release. Irrigation restrictions will result in the loss of thousands of acres of fruit, nut, dairy and vegetable production that will cost thousands of jobs, he said.

According to the state board, curtailment orders may be lifted when river flows increase or are projected to increase, with the intent of regaining reservoir storage. California reservoirs are near record low storage, including the ones that maintain salinity in the delta and supply drinking water to most of the state.

The board will assess by Oct. 1 whether to continue with the curtailment orders. Storms or increased river flows in the fall would allow a dam operator to begin storing water for next year.

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# Calendar of Events

**August 26**

**Merced YF&R Social @ Vista Ranch (pg. 13)**

**August 26**

**Farm Bureau Extension CE Course (pg. 18)**

**September 17**

**Deadline to apply for CAFB Farm Dog Contest (pg. 15)**

**September 30**

**Deadline to apply for CAFB Photo Contest (pg. 17)**

# Kirby Manufacturing Inc. Celebrates 75 Years

**By: Denelle Flake, Farm News Editor**

Valuing their customers and being a leader among the cattle feeding industry have been the ingredients to success for Kirby Manufacturing Inc., since 1946. We visited Ric Kirby to learn more about Kirby's development over the past 75 years. Ric Kirby's great-grandfather moved from Missouri to California in the 1930s and opened his own tractor dealership selling Minneapolis Molines. After World War II, Ric's grandfather Tom Kirby and his brother Bill started manufacturing small

implements and selling them through their dad's tractor dealership in 1946. The family went away from selling tractors to focus on manufacturing cattle feeding equipment. The Pedrozo Family bought the very first self-unloading Kirby feed wagon. The Kirby's bought back the original feed wagon and had it restored in the 90s. It now sits on display in front of the Merced location.

Ric's great-grandfather built the company on serving their customers. They have successfully lived by the motto, "don't go looking for new customers, if you can't take care of the



**Ric Kirby, President of Kirby Manufacturing Inc.**

ones you have". In California, they provide 24-hour service and act as their own distributor, so they can work directly with the farmer. Since 1946, Kirby Manufacturing has expanded to dealing equipment in 14 other states. They even export to global dealers in areas such as Japan, the Middle East, and Mexico.

With exceptional customer service, comes a caring staff. Ric stated the staff is "like having another family". In California they have 65 employees, many of whom have worked for Kirby over 20 years. Recently, long-time employee Tom Day, retired after working for the company for 40 years, finishing his career as the Tulare store manager. Kirby has an in-house service department and a fleet of on-farm service trucks, allowing them to be there for their customers whenever they need.

To keep up with ever-changing farming practices, Kirby Manufacturing is constantly refining designs to increase efficiency and have been a leader in innovation. Their specialty is "helping you get more done in less time". While they started their production with the self-unloading forage wagon, their product line has expanded to include manure spreaders, feed

delivery boxes, hay feeders, silage harvesting equipment, feed mixers, and more. Regarding innovation, Kirby has recently started manufacturing electric stationary mixers, allowing famers to reduce emissions.

The company has enjoyed seeing new generations getting involved in their family farming operations over the years. Kirby values promoting their customers and their products. For example, one of Kirby's customers, that typically sells cheese to restaurants, was hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic. Ric purchased a pallet of their cheese to gift to his employees. Furthermore, if you visit the Merced store, instead of a soda machine, you will see a refrigerated case of Natcher milk. Currently, they have been highlighting customers on social media, to educate consumers and share some feel-good stories. Be sure to follow them on Instagram @kirbymanufacturing and give them a like on Facebook @kirbymfginc. Next time you are driving down Highway 59, stop into Kirby to say hi to their friendly staff and grab a cold bottle of Natcher milk!



**Kirby's first self-unloading feed wagon**



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# Trump told California to sweep the forest floors. What's Biden's plan to combat wildfires?

By: Gillian Brassil & Dale Kasler, The Sacramento Bee

**A**UGUST 10, 2021  
WASHINGTON  
Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack and Gov. Gavin Newsom stood side by side, in a forest that burned badly a year ago, pledging to work together against California's raging wildfires.

Vilsack, acknowledging criticisms that the U.S. Forest Service hasn't done enough to fight fires, said the Biden administration was ready to spend billions beefing up the agency.

"We're partners," Newsom said during an appearance last week with Vilsack at the Mendocino National Forest.

After four years of antagonism between Sacramento and Washington, the state has a friend in the White House — and, perhaps more importantly, a president who agrees with California's leaders on the root cause of the wildfire crisis plaguing the West.

Former President Donald Trump — like his successor — said Western forests have to be managed more aggressively to reduce fuel loads that have built up over the decades. Newsom signed a memorandum of understanding last year with the Trump administration in which each side promised to "thin" a half-million acres of forestland each year. CLAIM OFFER

But Biden, unlike Trump, says the country must address climate change and the lethal effect it's having on the increasingly-flammable landscape of the West.

California's clash with Trump over climate issues took many forms — including years of litigation over the state's efforts to reduce carbon emissions from cars.

But the conflict may have crystallized in one extraordinary moment last September, when the president held a roundtable discussion with state leaders in Sacramento as the Mendocino forest was being scorched during the worst wildfire season on record.

During the meeting at the former McClellan Air Force Base, the secretary of the California Natural Resources Agency, Wade Crowfoot, challenged Trump to do something about climate change.

In a response that went viral, Trump said global warming was reversing itself. "It will start getting cooler," he told an incredulous Crowfoot. "Just you watch."

Biden, during a recent video meeting with Newsom and other Western governors about wildfires, took a different approach. He said one of his goals is to "convince the American people there is a thing called climate crisis."

## WILDFIRE PREVENTION

En route to a meeting with California Gov. Gavin Newsom about wildfires in September 2020, Trump told reporters that when trees fall and dry out, they become like a "matchstick" and "explode."

"Also leaves, if you have years of leaves, dried leaves on the ground, it just sets it up. It's really a fuel for a fire," he added. "So they have to do something about it."

Beyond the rhetoric, Trump signed legislation in 2018 to give \$2 billion per year to the U.S. Forest Service specifically for wildfire fighting, instead of forcing it to borrow money from other parts of the agency.

## CANNABIS WEEKLY

"We need to have adequate forest management, grassland management, so that we don't have the buildup of fuels which ultimately fuel such a more hot fire," Sen. Mike Crapo, R-Idaho, who helped introduce that legislation, said in an interview last week. "When we rob the very budgets of the agencies that are supposed to be managing the land so that it's not as susceptible to fire, then we actually add to the problem."

Despite that, Vilsack said the U.S. Forest Service has actually been "robbing Peter to pay Paul" — taking money away from the U.S. Forest Service's wildfire kitty and spending it elsewhere. That's left forests badly overgrown and susceptible to wildfire. He promised to direct billions to the

forest service, with an emphasis on funding forest-management projects — but those dollars will depend in large part on Congress passing Biden's infrastructure bill.

Biden said thinning out the forests is an obvious aid in preventing fires. Trees that have been damaged by insects, fires or climate change "become real tinder" if left standing. "It becomes like dropping a match in a pool of fuel," he told the Western governors.

The recently appointed chief of the U.S. Forest Service, Randy Moore, previously served as a regional forest manager in California. He accompanied Vilsack to the Mendocino forest.

A spokeswoman for the agency, Babete Anderson, wrote in an email

that Moore will "bring perspective informed by a long career in the Forest Service, some of which he served as the Regional Forester in California during a decade when the state saw a dramatic increase in catastrophic wildfire."

He has started on some of the issues already, Anderson wrote, included staffing and paying firefighters, looking at climate change and forming better partnerships with federal, state, tribal and private land managers.

## CLIMATE CHANGE AND WILDFIRES

Trump frequently shrugged off suggestions that climate change was contributing to California's wildfire problems. After touring the devastation

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## Infrastructure

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as implementing paid family leave and a universal prekindergarten program, expanding Medicare and enacting a pathway to citizenship for some immigrants.

Because the proposal is sharply opposed by Republicans who say it is too expensive, Democrats hope to enact it through a legislative procedure that doesn't allow for a GOP filibuster. But significant hurdles remain: All of the legislation has to be deemed to meet a narrow set of rules for how the procedure can be used and Democrats have to remain politically united.

The Senate voted 50 to 49 along party lines to start work on that plan. The framework is expected to be approved in the early hours of Wednesday after an hours-long series of amendment votes. A detailed plan is not expected to pass until after the August recess.

The approximately \$1-trillion bill approved Tuesday would address a wide range of infrastructure deficiencies and expand the availability of broadband internet throughout the country.

About \$110 billion would go to roads, bridges and other major surface transportation projects. Passenger rail gets \$66 billion, public transit gets \$39 billion, and safety programs for highways and pedestrian walkways get \$11 billion. About \$55 billion would go to expanding access to clean

drinking water.

Congress didn't choose which specific projects would be funded. Those decisions will be made later by government agencies.

There could be big winners in California. For instance, the California High-Speed Rail Authority is already eyeing pockets of money it can apply for to fund its rail project between San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Authority spokeswoman Melissa Figueroa said the agency sees about \$20 billion to \$40 billion in the bill that it could be eligible to compete for and, pending finality of the legislation, plans to apply.

"The message that we're getting out of the federal government is that they want to invest in clean, green electrified rail and high-speed rail, and that's what we're under construction on here in California," she said. "That's the direction we think they want to go, and that makes us very competitive."

Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg declined to predict which projects might be selected for funding.

In an interview, he called California's project "a major high-speed rail vision. It's well underway, and I imagine that there will be multiple opportunities to seek support that will be helped by the funding we are hopefully about to get."

A handful of other provisions could have an outside benefit to California in particular.

More than \$3.3 billion would fund wildfire risk reduction, such as mechanical thinning and controlled burns. Billions more would pay for

infrastructure projects that could mitigate the impact of wildfires and other natural disasters, such as rehabilitating burned lands, burying power lines and fireproofing homes. It would also boost the pay of federal wildland firefighters to bring them to parity with state firefighters.

The most sizable fund that will directly affect the state is the more than \$8 billion for water initiatives in the West. That includes \$1 billion for water recycling systems and more than \$1 billion for water storage and groundwater storage projects to take advantage of wet years.

"It's welcome money that's going to bring benefits for years," said Felicia Marcus, a fellow at Stanford University's Water in the West Program and former chair of the California State Water Resources Control Board. "The modern configuration of the Western United States is impossible without massive infrastructure improvement."

Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.), whose office worked with that of Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Chairman Joe Manchin III (D-W.Va.) on several water provisions, says much of the funding will go to California projects.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, which oversees water management in the West, will ultimately decide what projects get funded. But there is a relatively small universe of water projects that will be eligible, and many of them are in California, giving the state a leg up.

Old dams, canals and other infrastructure will be upgraded with

\$3.2 billion over five years. Although that's short of the \$4.6 billion the bureau identified as needed over the next five years, it's significantly more than its annual budget.

Congress is using the money to move the bureau to more forward-looking water policy, particularly on water recycling and employing nature-based solutions, such as using tools that mimic nature to conserve water.

"They had a lot of experience and history in building the hard traditional infrastructure [such as] dams and canals. So as we looked to the future, we were thinking about what does a 21st century water agency look like?" said an aide involved in the bill who was not authorized to be identified.

To that end, there is \$100 million for natural infrastructure projects, such as using nature or tools that mimic nature to conserve water, and another \$100 million to improve overall watershed health. The bureau will also have new funding for aquatic ecosystem restoration projects that are designed to improve wildlife habitat.

The new funding for groundwater storage comes amid a shift for the federal government, which provided no sizable amount of money for such efforts before 2016, according to water policy experts.

"Water recycling and desalination programs in particular will help California stretch supplies without diverting water from rivers and the delta or harming the environment," Feinstein said. "Ecosystem restoration, water conservation and water-use-efficiency funds will help us more wisely use what water we do have."

## Wildfire

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in Paradise, where 85 people were killed in November 2018, he said, "No, No," when reporters asked him if the Camp Fire changed his mind about climate change.

Biden, meanwhile, has linked his spending priorities to climate change. Several pieces of the bipartisan infrastructure bill are connected to climate change and thus fires, Biden said.

That includes provisions on droughts, floods and funding for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, as research shows tribal nations have been disproportionately impacted by climate

change. And \$3.37 billion out of the \$1 trillion deal is dedicated directly to wildfires, including for forest management, satellite fire detection, controlled burns, firefighters and post-fire restoration.

"Overlaying all this is a necessity successfully confront climate change," Biden said in the meeting with governors.

Biden referenced the infrastructure bill and said that hopefully its two corresponding pieces of legislation, which have been heavily amended, will pass in the next month.

"We can't ignore how they overlap and they intertwine," he said. "Extreme heat, prolonged drought and supercharged wildfire conditions are affecting the country."

Biden also suggested to governors that they consider creating a "civilian climate corps" to specifically tackle climate change, comparing it to civilian corps in the Depression.

"California is proving your theory," Newsom said in the meeting with Biden on Friday, describing the California Climate Action Corps, established in 2020, which helps protect high-risk communities from wildfires, among other works. "It's inspiring beyond words."

### FIRE SUPPRESSION IN CALIFORNIA

Newsom's biggest beef with the Biden administration has been the Forest Service's approach to fighting fires — a crucial issue in that the federal government controls 57% of

California's vast forested land. He and others said the agency was too slow to react to newly-ignited fires, such as the Tamarack Fire, which is burning in California and Nevada.

"There's a culture that too often is 'wait and see,'" Newsom told Biden. "We can't afford that any longer."

Biden agreed to offer more federal support, noting that the administration was running into supply chain issues with firefighting tools such as hoses. Moore issued a directive saying the Forest Service would get more aggressive on new fires, but warned that the agency is still struggling with manpower shortages and will have to prioritize those fires that directly

## Wildfire

continued from page 6

threaten people and property.

“You only have so many firefighters,” Moore told The Sacramento Bee during the visit to the Mendocino forest.

Trump did provide California with more equipment. He signed a provision of the defense authorization bill added by Sen. Dianne Feinstein, D-Calif., in 2018 to give air tankers that drop fire suppressant to Cal Fire. Three of the seven promised aircraft have been transferred.

Trump focused less on firefighter pay than Biden. The Biden administration recently boosted pay for federal firefighters to \$15 per hour and said it would raise pay more as part of the infrastructure bill.

“Up until a couple weeks ago, firefighters in California were getting

paid less than the minimum wage,” Rep. Josh Harder, D-Turlock, who pressed for the raise, said in an interview last week.

“I don’t think that made a lot of sense — and they didn’t think it made a lot of sense either, which is why we had a lot of fire trucks sitting idle.”

# Wildfire Resources

**By: UC Davis Western Center for Agricultural Health and Safety**

**H**ow do wildfires affect the health and safety of people in agriculture?

Farmers and farmworkers are at a greater risk for exposure to wildfire smoke, ash, and chemical residue due to their work outdoors and long shifts, both during an active fire as well as during cleanup and recovery. Due to the nature of agricultural work, it is difficult for farmers and farmworkers to stop working due to wildfires. Lost workdays and the potential destruction of crops can have an economic effect on both farmers and workers.

Regardless of their proximity to wildfires, agricultural workers can struggle with stress and other mental health issues related to the effects of wildfires. Income, access to healthcare, and immigration concerns increase the vulnerability of the farmworker population.

When a wildfire occurs, what protections and information are employers required to provide to employees?

The newly adopted regulation §5141.1 “Protection from Wildfire Smoke,” which went into effect on July 29, 2019, uses the local air quality index (AQI) for PM2.5 to determine when worker protections are needed.

If employers reasonably anticipate that employees may be exposed to wildfire smoke, they must:

Monitor the Air Quality Index (AQI) for PM2.5

Provide training to workers, including how to determine AQI, identify health effects of wildfire smoke exposure, and how to use NIOSH-approved respirators

Establish worker protection procedures, including a plan to reduce worker exposure to wildfire smoke

Communicate the above workplace procedures to staff and employees

What is included in the wildfire smoke safety training and resources provided by WCAHS?

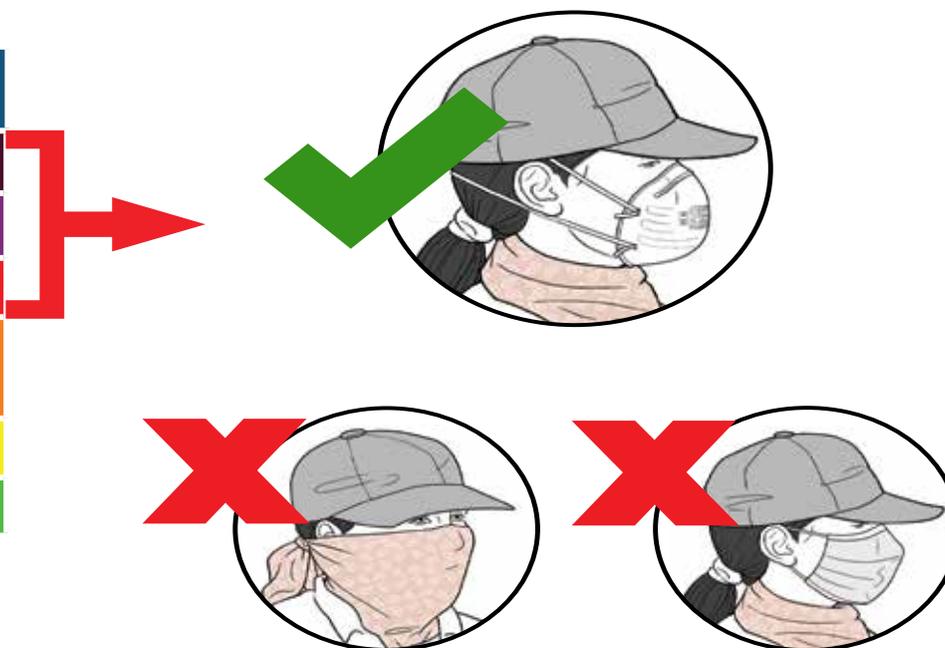
WCAHS provides safety resources on wildfire smoke for both employers and employees. An employer checklist outlining the above action items is available in English and Spanish. For training purposes, a double-sided poster and accompanying discussion guide are available in English and Spanish and are useful tools for tailgate trainings and safety reminders in the workplace.

WCAHS offers trainings for agricultural employers and employees that provide a more comprehensive and in-depth review of the health effects of wildfire smoke exposure, worker protection procedures, and more.



## Monitoring the AQI for PM2.5

Air Quality Index	
301–500	Hazardous
201–300	Very Unhealthy
151–200	Unhealthy
101–150	Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups
51–100	Moderate
0–50	Good



# Another year, the same old ‘whoops’

**By: Mike Wolcott, Editor of Chico Enterprise-Record**

“Whoops! Clumsy me!”

If this situation wasn’t so sickening, so heartbreaking, so horrific and gut-wrenching awful, you wouldn’t know rather to laugh or cry. But some comedy of errors are so bad and so redundant, there’s nothing comic-like about them — despite the combined Keystone Cops-like efforts of those who keep this sick show alive.

“Whoops! Clumsy me!”

Remember that line? It’s from an old pizza commercial on TV. The gag was, these two clownish oafs were making pizza and kept “accidentally” spilling more stuff into the mix, resulting in a bigger and thus more filling pie.

“Whoops! Clumsy me!”

If they remade that commercial today, the people making the mess that’s churning our stomachs would be representing PG&E and the state of California and a few other choice entities, and the only thing that’s cooking is damn near every square inch of northern California.

Again. And again. Year after year after year, and the ingredients they’re throwing into the mix might as well be napalm and gasoline.

“Whoops! Clumsy me!”

Look, there goes another equipment fail — PG&E just started another fire! And boy, look at that blaze take off, thanks to decades of no forest management, extra-dry conditions and nobody giving a damn, unless it looked like a mighty fine day to swoop into town for a photo op.

Speaking of which, Governor Newsom came up to a remote stretch of Glenn County on Wednesday, where he talked about climate change and the August Fire (which has been out since last fall). He waited until Saturday to visit the 26-day-old Dixie Fire, which is near the half-million-acre mark and shows little signs of slowing down — especially after blasting into Greenville on Wednesday night, leaving behind little but charred remains of buildings and the crushed lives of innocent people with generations of mountain blood in their veins.

500,000 acres. It sounds like a mighty poor way to describe a fire

these days. Remember when a 5,000 acre fire was considered huge? Or 20,000 acres? Hell, these days, that’s barely an adequate description of one day’s worth of fire growth.

If I didn’t know better, I’d be tempted to think the Dixie Fire has already covered more square miles than we’ll ever see from the floundering \$100 billion bullet train, which continues to suck money out of taxpayers’ pockets with the same velocity as those wild embers flying around Plumas County. So we don’t have money to keep the Susanville prison (and its inmate firefighting program) open — but just think of how fast we’re going to be able to get from Merced to Fresno!

“Whoops! Clumsy me!”

It’s beyond sad how the self-proclaimed “most advanced state in the nation” cannot get a grip on this. It has spun completely out of control and, as we noted in our “What’s left to burn?” story a few days back, we are a long, long way from being out of this sick series of horror shows — most of which continue to star the same bad actors.

Camp Fire? Whoops, PG&E equipment started it. The Dixie Fire, which started very close to the same spot as the Camp Fire, almost three years later, despite repeated assurances of safety improvements? “Uh, yeah, whoops, we might have started that one too.” And then the Fly Fire, which ended up merging with the Dixie Fire? “Yep. Sorry. That might be our bad too. Clumsy me!”

And if you think the point of this column is to lay all of the blame on PG&E, you’re wrong. They barely qualify as a co-star in this inept lineup of overpaid charlatans.

For example, we’ve got a state led by a guy apparently more concerned with sagging poll numbers and a mounting recall election than anything having to do with fire protection, an effort he admitted he “accidentally” overstated by almost 700 percent recently. And hey, how about that decision to close the prison in Susanville earlier this year, which (pending a judge’s restraining order last week) killed off the inmate firefighting program? Think those well-trained and experienced men might be a valuable resource for our

overwhelmed fire crews in helping to battle these infernos in the future?

“Whoops! Clumsy me!”

What about that undergrowth? All those dangerous trees next to power lines, on public lands and elsewhere? Well, guess what — have you tried to cut down a tree in this state lately? There’s so much environmental red tape suffocating most common-sense clean-up efforts, you couldn’t cut through it with a king-sized Husqvarna and a 24-inch-bar.

And let’s not forget who actually owns most of the forest land in our state: the federal government. But they’re so busy scrambling to cover a mishandled pandemic and a still-wide-open southern border — “Come on in! No mask required. Whoops! Clumsy me!” — you have to wonder if anyone other than Doug LaMalfa could actually find Butte or Plumas County on a map.

But other than our congressman, who has asked for federal help to fight these fires, none of these other people are ever going to breathe this smoke or walk across these charred lands. It’s apparently little more to them than another political football, a reason to point fingers and send sarcastic staff-written tweets, or (especially) a chance to blame everything on the person on the other side of the aisle. Clumsy you! In short, we’ve been led into a burning chasm of hell-like intensity by people who offer nothing but election-year promises that they cannot keep, because they have no idea how to actually solve any of this, and refuse to listen to any of the people who do.

And let’s talk about climate change. It’s a very popular pastime right now for people on one side of the aisle to point fingers at the other and say “These science deniers refuse to do anything about climate change and that’s why the fires are out of control and the lakes are so low!” But here’s the thing: the people who are doing the finger-pointing — that would be the Democrats — have ALL of the power in this state. If they wanted to craft and enforce the strictest climate change laws in the history of the planet today, there is absolutely nothing James Gallagher or Jim Nielsen could do to stop them. The Republican legislators in this state have no power. Zero. Zilch. Nada. To blame climate change

and thus the fires on them is ... well, typical.

The truth is, many of these people in power are frauds. All they care about is fundraising and getting re-elected; period. And we’re the ones paying the price, figuratively and literally. Clumsy me? More like Stupid Us.

Finally — let’s go back to the first day of the Dixie Fire. Cal Fire, being fully aware of the location and potential for a big spread, called for air attacks. But with the fire still in the single-digit acre stage, they had to ground the air attack that first day — and again the next morning — because somebody was flying drones in the area. Who knows how this fire could have turned out differently if the air attack had continued and the fire progress slowed? Would we even be talking about this today? And why aren’t we just shooting these damn drones out of the sky in this kind of situation? How stupid IS this, anyway?

“Oh, sorry I grounded your airplanes. But look at all these cool pictures I got from my new drone! Clumsy me!”

If I sound mad, and even more over-the-top than usual, well, guess what ... I am. Honestly, I’m so pissed at this point — there’s a word you don’t see in print often — I’m swinging out at everything in my inflammable-brush-covered path. And I don’t really care who I hit or whose feelings I hurt, so long as they’ve got anything to do with the problem that’s absolutely killing our counties and our rural communities. And until some of these people — our so-called “leaders,” and supposed brightest minds — get locked in a room with people who know what the hell they’re talking about and make an actual, true, real, no-holds-barred commitment to changing the landscape, none of this is going to stop. We’ll keep watching plumes of smoke in the sky every summer and fall as our surroundings burn through a hellish eternity while those in charge shrug, point fingers and pose for the cameras.

That’s why I’m so angry. If you’re offended or hurt by anything I said here today, my best guess is you’re probably part of the problem too.

Whoops. Clumsy me.

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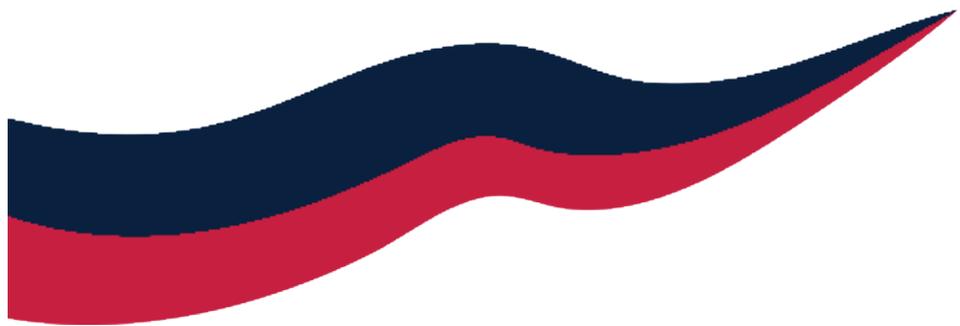
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# Poor control of common chickweed with ALS-inhibitor herbicides reported in multiple small grain fields in the southern SJV.

## Is it a new case of herbicide resistance in California?

**By: José Luiz Carvalho de Souza Dias and Nicholas Clark, UCCE Merced County and UCCE Kings County**

Common chickweed (*Stellaria media*) is a winter annual found throughout California and considered to be one of the most common broadleaf weeds infesting cereal crops (also referred as small grains) in the state. Herbicides can provide effective control of chickweed; however, overreliance on a single herbicide (or group of herbicides with the same site of action), is likely to result in resistance to that herbicide (or group of herbicides). Even though herbicide-resistant common chickweed populations have not been confirmed in California, lack of effective control with post-emergence applications of the ALS-inhibiting herbicides pyroxsulam (Simplicity) and tribenuron (Express TotalSol) was observed in several triticale fields located in the southern San Joaquin Valley in early 2021 (Figure 1. A, B and C). Additionally, ALS-resistant common chickweed has been identified in other states in the US and Canada. Therefore, the main objectives of this article are to discuss how UCCE plans to investigate this possible new case of herbicide resistance in California,

as well as to provide information to help Pest Control Advisors (PCAs) and growers in developing more diversified integrated weed management programs for cereal crops.

### Herbicide resistance and herbicide use patterns in CA cereal crops

Currently there are a total of 30 confirmed cases of herbicide resistance in California, with most occurrences corresponding to single resistance to ALS- or EPSPS-inhibiting herbicides. One of the most important weed management strategies to delay the selection of herbicide-resistant weeds is the adoption of integrated weed management strategies with the use of multiple effective herbicide's sites of action (SOA); thus, one might ask "how diverse is the cereal crops herbicide program in California"? We analyzed the CA wheat, barley, triticale, oats and rye pesticide use reports (PURs) data, available at the California Pesticide Information Portal (CALPIP 2021), from 2015 to 2019. In summary, the main findings were:

- 1) The most widely applied SOAs were ALS inhibitors (39.8% of all treated acres), synthetic auxin (28% of all treated acres) and PPO inhibitors (24% of all treated acres), respectively.
- 2) The five most applied active

ingredients were tribenuron (20.3%; WSSA 2), carfentrazone (17.7%; WSSA 14), pyroxsulam (15.2%; WSSA 2), MCPA (14.9%; WSSA 4) and 2,4-D (6.7%; WSSA 4), respectively.

3) The most individually applied SOAs were also ALS inhibitors (37.8%), synthetic auxin (31.8%) and PPO inhibitors (17.7%).

Based on these findings, a greater herbicide diversification and greater use of multiple effective SOAs would benefit CA cereal crops overall weed management program. The first step in the development of diversified herbicide use starts by knowing the chemical family and site of action to which an herbicide belongs. With that in mind, we created a table (Table 1) to help in planning a more diversified common chickweed chemical control program. It lists all the herbicide options available for common chickweed control in cereal crops with their respective SOAs. Please, remember to always refer to the label for guidance as herbicide use and availability are crop specific.

### Is herbicide resistance to blame?

It can be tempting to blame herbicide resistance for all cases of poor weed control with herbicides. However, several biotic and abiotic

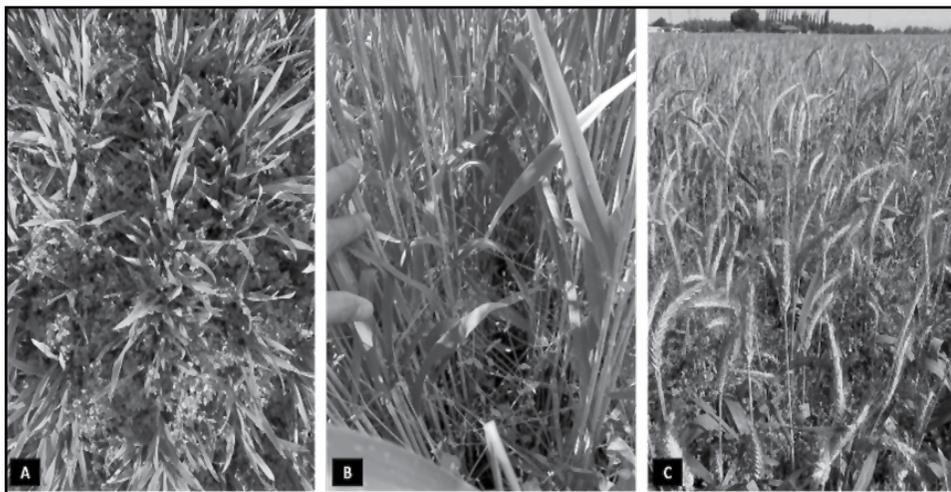
factors can also significantly impact herbicide effectiveness. Therefore, it is important to eliminate the following possible reasons that can lead to herbicide failure before assuming that surviving weeds are herbicide-resistant (PES 2021):

1) Herbicide application related causes: poor spray coverage and/or incorporation, inadequate rate, improper timing of application of post-emergence herbicides (after weeds are too large to control), failure to use an adjuvant (if needed), excessive dust on leaf surface with post-emergence applications, "wrong herbicide" for the present weed spectrum, and possible antagonism between two or more herbicides.

2) Soil and/or climatic conditions related causes: seedbed condition (clods, etc.), excessively wet or dry soil, herbicide adsorption to soil particles or organic matter, stress conditions (such as hot and dry), and lack of timely rainfall (or irrigation) for pre-emergent herbicides activation.

In addition to these steps, conducting a small herbicide efficacy trial is another helpful approach that can provide insight on the possibility of herbicide resistance. We established such a trial in a triticale field located

*See 'Chickweed' Page 11*



**Figure 1. Common chickweed infestation in a triticale field located at Tulare County where ALS-inhibiting herbicides resistance is suspected. Each picture corresponds to a different triticale growth stage throughout the season: A) late tiller/jointing; B) heading and C) flowering.**

Site of action	WSSA Group	Chemical family	Active ingredient	Products example
Microtubule Inhibitors	3	Dinitroaniline	trifluralin	Treflan HFP, Trifluralin HF
			pendimethalin	Prowl H2O, Pavilion H2O
ALS Inhibitors	2	Sulfonylureas (SUs)	chlorsulfuron	Glean XP
			mesosulfuron	Osprey
			tribenuron	Express TotalSol
		Triazolopyrimidine - Type 2	pyroxsulam	Simplicity
Synthetic auxins	4	Phenoxy-carboxylic-acid	2,4-D	Amine 4, Weedar 64
			MCPA	MCPA 4 Amine
		Benzoates	dicamba	Banvel, Clarity, Rifle
PPO Inhibitors	14	N-phenylphthalimide	carfentrazone	Shark EW
		Phenylpyrazoles	pyraflufen	ET Herbicide

**Table 1. Herbicide options for common chickweed management in CA cereal crops. Some herbicide labels give different application rates or crop injury potentials for different cereal crops. Labels should be checked before an application is made and all label instructions must be followed.**

## Chickweed

continued from page 10

in Tulare County. The treatments were applied at the late tillering stage of triticale and included pyroxsulam (Simplicity CA) and tribenuron (Express TotalSol) applied at 2X and 4X label rates. Visual estimates of common chickweed ground cover (or canopy) were taken 4 weeks after treatment (WAT). Results from this trial indicated that none of the treatments exhibited good activity on common chickweed, regardless of the rate (Figure 2-A, B and C). The only treatment that provided a significant reduction in common chickweed canopy, as compared to the untreated, was tribenuron at 4X label rate. However, it was only a 50% reduction which likely allowed treated plants to recover and survive.

### UCCE future efforts

The lack of effective control using above-recommended label rates is concerning and an indicator that this common chickweed population might, indeed, be ALS-resistant;

however, more robust studies are still necessary to confirm this possible new case of herbicide resistance. Common chickweed seeds were collected from the problematic fields and dose-response bioassays will be conducted to test for herbicide resistance. Additionally, UCCE also plans to develop and conduct a series of integrated weed management studies looking at cultural practices such as sowing rate, sowing time, and row spacing in combination with chemical and mechanical weed control to prevent or delay the selection of herbicide-resistant weeds in cereal crops.

### Extension collaborative work

Early identification of herbicide-resistant weed populations and corresponding changes to management tactics can reduce the spread and establishment of these biotypes. If you believe you have herbicide-resistant common chickweed populations in your small grains fields and would like to collaborate with us in this project, please, complete this on-line survey (<https://arcg.is/1nSCn51>) and/or call my office (209-385-7403). Thanks!

# Interested in Becoming a Merced County Master Gardener?

**By: Tom Dinwoodie, UCCE Master Gardener-Merced**

**D**o you love gardening? Do you have an interest in growing flowers, veggies and/or trees? You may be a perfect candidate to become a Master Gardener volunteer.

For more than a hundred years University of California Cooperative Extension advisors and specialists have worked with communities across the state to address economic, agricultural, natural resource, youth development and nutrition issues. For forty years of UCCE's history, UC Master Gardener volunteers have shared researched-based horticulture information with the public.

The first Master Gardener program was founded in 1973 by Dr. David Gibby of Washington State University Cooperative Extension. After presenting a series of community-based gardening workshops, the demand for advice from the general public out-paced the time available by cooperative extension agents/advisors. To meet the high demand for urban horticultural and gardening advice the first Master Gardener program was developed. The concept has spread worldwide to include fifty-two counties in California.

The University of California Master Gardener program has been in existence in Merced County since 2009. Our mission is to extend research-based knowledge and information on home horticulture, pest management, and sustainable landscape practices to residents in Merced County.

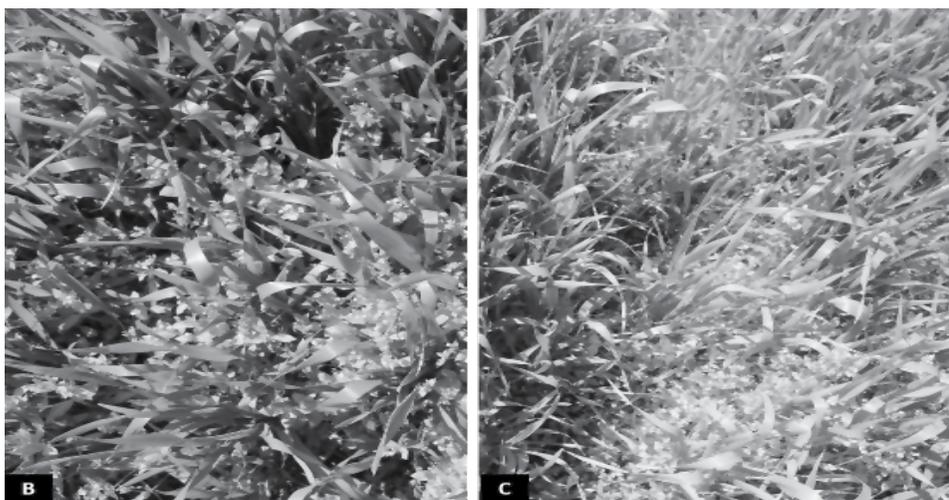
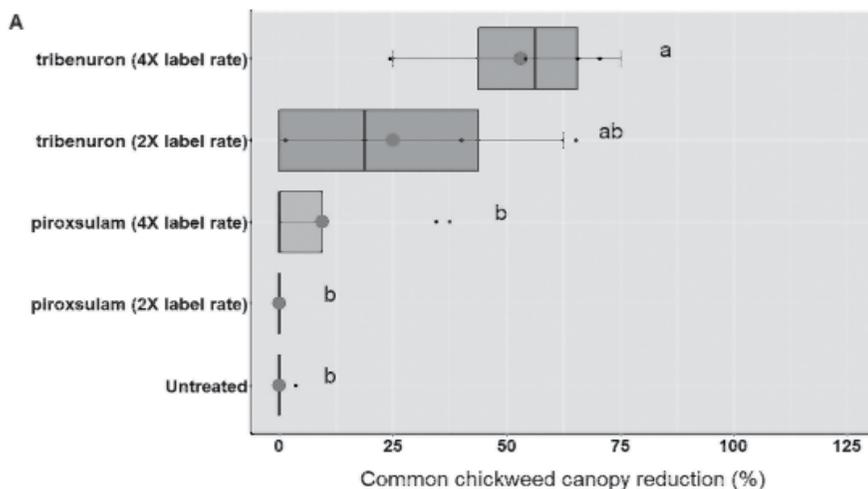
Merced County Master Gardeners are UC trained volunteers who educate the community about home horticulture. They share the information they have learned through a variety of programs and projects, including workshops, seminars, helplines, farmers market and school gardens. No gardening experience necessary, just curiosity and a willingness to learn and to answer community members' questions about gardens and landscapes. Classes include training and hands on experiences on: tree and lawn care, home vegetable gardening, water management and conservation, home orchards, weeds, plant pathology, soils and fertilizers, composting, insects, plant propagation and much more.

The next training class will be held every other Saturday starting January 22, 2022...graduating May 14, 2022. In the between weeks, trainees will self-pace approved on-line topics and reading assignments with small group/mentor interaction and support. Information sessions will be held on September 18th following the fall/winter vegetable workshop and 25th, with applications due October 21st. For more information, please refer to our website at [cemerced.ucanr.edu](http://cemerced.ucanr.edu).

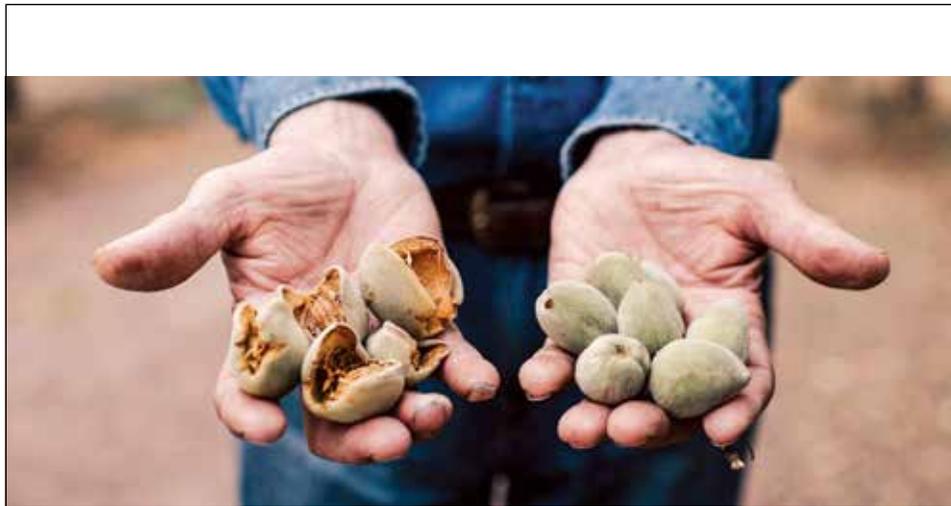


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**Figure 2. A) Chickweed visual % of canopy reduction in triticale 30 days after treatment. Means followed by the same letter are not significantly different according to Fisher's protected LSD test at  $P \leq 0.05$ ; B) pyroxsulam at 0.1 lbs ai acre-1 (2 X label treatment) 30 DAT; and C) tribenuron at 0.031 lbs ai acre-1 (2 X label treatment) 30 DAT.**



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# El Capitan FFA Chapter Officer Team Rises Up Together to Plan for Upcoming School Year



By Makayla Ward, El Capitan FFA Chapter Reporter

The El Capitan FFA Chapter Officer team and advisors were excited for the opportunity to attend the annual El Capitan FFA Chapter Officer Retreat last month. Advisors and the officer team, comprised of 8 students, escaped the Central Valley heat for three days and headed to San Luis Obispo. The retreat involved the planning of this upcoming year's calendar, identifying the goals the El Capitan FFA Chapter would like to accomplish, and strengthening the relationships among the team through team-building.

Team building among the officer team included a 4-mile hike up to

Bishop Peak, kayaking, problem-solving and teamwork activities with advisors, and working as a team to plan events. The chapter officers also visited two agriculture businesses, City Farm SLO and The Luffa Farm, where they enhanced their agriculture knowledge and identified potential Supervised Agricultural

Experience projects that they can share with other students in their FFA chapter.

The goals that were developed by the chapter officers this year include ensuring all students feel welcomed, comfortable, and supported within their chapter. The second goal is to break the stigma around FFA only being for students with agriculture backgrounds. Lastly, the chapter officer team wants to help open the door to new students so they can experience person growth, explore career opportunities, and find new passions. Overall, the officer team wants to help current students feel like they have a second home within the ECHS Agriculture Department. The 2020-2021 school year came with challenges due to distance learning, but the officer team plans to encourage members to focus on the future of their FFA Chapter and continue heading in a successful direction. Therefore, the theme chosen by the officers for the upcoming school year is "Together We Rise". "We are excited to be back together this year, and use this opportunity for students to rise up together," said El Capitan FFA Chapter President, Nikolas Williams, "we have planned many fun activities for this school year that will allow students to meet new people, gain leadership skills, and join our FFA family."

The newly elected 2021-2022 El Capitan Chapter Officer team includes: President- Nikolas Williams, Vice-President- Anika Niles, Secretary- Annika Cook, Treasurer- Marisa Ortiz, Reporter- Makayla Ward, Sentinel- Autumn Miller, Historian- Jade Velasquez, and Parliamentarian- Berlin Saxton. For more information, please visit our website at [www.elcapitanffa.org](http://www.elcapitanffa.org) or follow us on social media.

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# Merced County Young Farmers & Ranchers Update

**By: Alexis Rudich, Project Assistant**

The Merced Young Farmers and Ranchers are back up and running. At the end of June, we elected a new Executive Committee. The team is as follows: Kim Mesa-Chair, Andrew Ornelas- Vice Chair, Alexis Rudich and Denelle Flake-Secretary/Social Media Co-Chairs, Heath Souza- Treasure/Fundraising, Pierce and Karyn Hanning- Social Chair/Membership Recruitment Co-Chairs, and Sarah Baskins- State YF&R District 9 Rep. In July, we were invited by Stanislaus YF&R for a YF&R Meet Up at the Modesto Nuts Game. We had 15 attendees at the game, and the Nuts won! We also had 5 members attend the California YF&R Summer Leaders Meeting at Sonoma County Farm Bureau. It was

a great meeting where we were able to network with other YF&R members from other counties, and share some great ideas for future events.

If you are between the ages of 18-35 and are interested in leadership development, networking opportunities, learning about agriculture issues and meeting other young people who are passionate about agriculture, YF&R is for you! If you are interested in joining YF&R, email us at [mercedcoyfr@mercedfarmbureau.org](mailto:mercedcoyfr@mercedfarmbureau.org) or call the MCFB office at 209-723-3001. Please join us for a social at Vista Ranch in Merced on August 27, 2021 at 6pm. RSVP: [info@mercedfarmbureau.org](mailto:info@mercedfarmbureau.org) or 209-723-3001.



Members of Merced YF&R at Stanislaus County Farm Bureau's Family Night Out hosted at the Modesto Nuts



Members of Merced YF&R at California YF&R's Summer Leader's Meeting in Santa Rosa

**MERCED YF&R SOCIAL**

Come join us for a YF&R Social at Vista Ranch for an evening of networking and music! Woodfired pizza and drinks available for purchase.

**Friday August 27th 6pm**  
7326 East Highway 140, Merced  
RSVP: 209-723-3001 or [info@mercedfarmbureau.org](mailto:info@mercedfarmbureau.org)



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# Golden Valley FFA Member named National American Star Farmer Finalist

**By: Golden Valley FFA**



**Josh Heupel, one of the 4 American Star Farmer Finalists in the country**

**F**our finalists will vie this year for the National FFA Organization's top achievement award: American Star Farmer which highlights the top agricultural production project in the country.

The finalists include Josh Heupel, a 2019 graduate from Golden Valley High School in Merced, and Sophomore from Fresno State. Heupel was named the California State Star Farmer winner in 2019 and National Proficiency Winner in 2020. Heupel is the son of Scott and Jackie Heupel from Le Grand, CA. Josh's FFA Advisor is Cody Jacobsen.

#### **American Star Farmer**

- Josh Heupel from Le Grand, California
- Grady Johnson from Holdrege,

Nebraska

- Kurt Muggli from Carson, North Dakota
- Raegan Klaassen from Hydro, Oklahoma

The American Star Awards represent the best of the best among thousands of American FFA Degree recipients. The award recognizes FFA members who have developed outstanding agricultural skills and competencies by completing a supervised agricultural experience (SAE) program. A required activity in FFA, an SAE allows members to learn by doing. Members can own and operate an agricultural business, intern at an agricultural business, or conduct an agriculture-based scientific experiment and report the results.

Other requirements to achieve

the award include demonstrating top management skills; completing key agricultural education, scholastic and leadership requirements; and earning an American FFA Degree, the organization's highest level of student accomplishment.

A panel of judges will interview the finalists and select one winner from each award category for the 94th National FFA Convention & Expo, held in Indianapolis this fall. The winner will be announced during the convention.

Case IH, Elanco Animal Health, NAU Country Insurance Company, Pepsico Inc, RAM Trucks and Syngenta sponsor the American FFA Degree recognition program.

Visit [FFA.org/stars](https://www.ffa.org/stars) for more information about the American Star Awards.

## A Year of Growth

**Written by: Gabriella Butticci, Merced FFA Chapter Reporter**

**A**fter a year of distance learning, Merced FFA continues to find ways to grow. We are excited to announce that we were able to have our first plant sale in three years. When students returned to school, they desired to get their hands dirty and jump back into action. They learned about the importance of plant growth and pest management. Starting the project, they planted seeds and nurtured them over two months. The students had to develop a plan to market the sale and generate interest. We had many people show up to support our students and all their hard work. Along with purchasing a plant, the buyer got a behind-the-scenes look at what it took to make it to that point. Students documented their journey throughout the project and created a QR code to access the project. This allowed the public to see their documentation process and get an inside look at what it's like to grow and nurture a plant themselves.

We want to thank those who supported our members through the plant sale and would like everyone to be on the lookout for the next one.

After a virtual auction in 2020, the ag students from Merced High were able to have an in-person animal auction in 2021. There were a total of 52 participants representing Merced FFA. This included 8 sheep, 12 goats, 21 pigs, and 11 rabbits. Many of our students placed high in their market class and showmanship. Their hard work and dedication shined in the ring. One of our top exhibitors was Alona Garcia, who came away with the title of FFA Reserve Grand Champion Single Fryer. Our chapter would like to congratulate Alona as it's not an easy thing to do, and we are proud of all of the time and dedication you put into your SAE. The rabbit was bred and raised in our school rabbitry, which currently consists of 10 Californians purchased from various renowned breeders in California. The school rabbitry is student-run, with all decisions being made through the rabbit managers. We are so incredibly

proud of how everyone did at the fair. Each member was passionate about their Supervised Agricultural Experiences (S.A.E) and showed their hard work and dedication to the

program through their animals. We are continuing to increase the quality and quantity of our rabbitry to be able to provide fulfilling and affordable S.A.E. for our members.



**Merced FFA Plant Sale**

# Gustine FFA Will Host the Annual Tractor Pulls!

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

September 18th at the Gustine High School track. The show will start at 5:00 pm.

After a year of closures and staying home, we are looking forward to inviting everyone out to GHS. Bring the family down to have some fun, enjoy food and friends, and watch a show like no other!

We can't wait to see you there!

From the loud sounds, to the thick smoke, we are excited to announce that the Gustine FFA Truck and Tractor Pulls are back! This year Gustine FFA will host the 36th annual truck and tractor pulls on



# Newly Elected Gustine FFA Officers Attend the Annual Officer Retreat

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

The Gustine FFA officer team recently held its annual officer retreat in the Sonora-Pinecrest area, from July 18-20.

During the trip, officers had the opportunity to collaborate with one another and learn about each other's strengths and weaknesses through team-building activities.

One of the activities the officers participated in was the "Marshmallow Challenge" which is where officers had 20 pieces of spaghetti, 1 marshmallow, tape, string, and 2 index cards. During the activity the officers had to work together in hopes of building the tallest tower.

"The marshmallow tower challenge was a great activity to help me work on my team building skills and to help build my connections while working alongside one of my fellow officers" Savanna Barcelos, chapter Vice President shared.

Meal planning was another

activity that the newly elected officers participated in. During the 3 days, teams of 2-3 were drawn out of a hat where each member was assigned one of the meals from each day to cook. Savanna and Christina were assigned Monday morning's breakfast, while Garret, Tyler, and Janai were given Monday's dinner, and Daniel and Austin were assigned Tuesday's breakfast. Each team had to create a recipe and shop for supplies to cook for the entire group. This activity allowed for members to communicate and work together to create a unique and delicious dish for all members and advisors to share.

This year the Gustine FFA officers had the opportunity to have some fun at Pinecrest Lake. Members swam, jumped off of rocks, hiked, and rode the paddle board around the lake. Mr. Baffunno had his own fun during the lake visit by scaring visitors with a fake snake tied to fishing wire. Later that day we also played a game of mini golf which allowed for our team to have some fun and learn more about

one another.

"The officer retreat was a great way for us Gustine FFA Officers to work with one another for this upcoming year by planning events, learning and participating in team building activities, and also creating bonds with each other so this year runs smoothly and efficiently" stated chapter Secretary Christina Moitozo.

During the retreat Gustine FFA was able to plan multiple events and come up with a theme for the year. The officer team decided on the theme of,

"Unmask Your Potential".

"This year our officer team looks forward to working to ensure that every member within our chapter finds their path and passion within this organization and we look forward to all of the opportunities in the upcoming year," returning chapter President Daniel Gomes said.

The Gustine FFA officer team looks forward to hosting multiple events and can't wait to kick off the year by hosting the 36th annual truck and tractor pulls on September 18, 2021.



From left to right we have Savanna Barcellos (Vice President), Janai Navarro (Historian), Daniel Gomes (President), Christina Moitozo (Secretary), Garret Gomes (Reporter), Austin Bell (Treasurer), and Tyler Borba (Sentinel).



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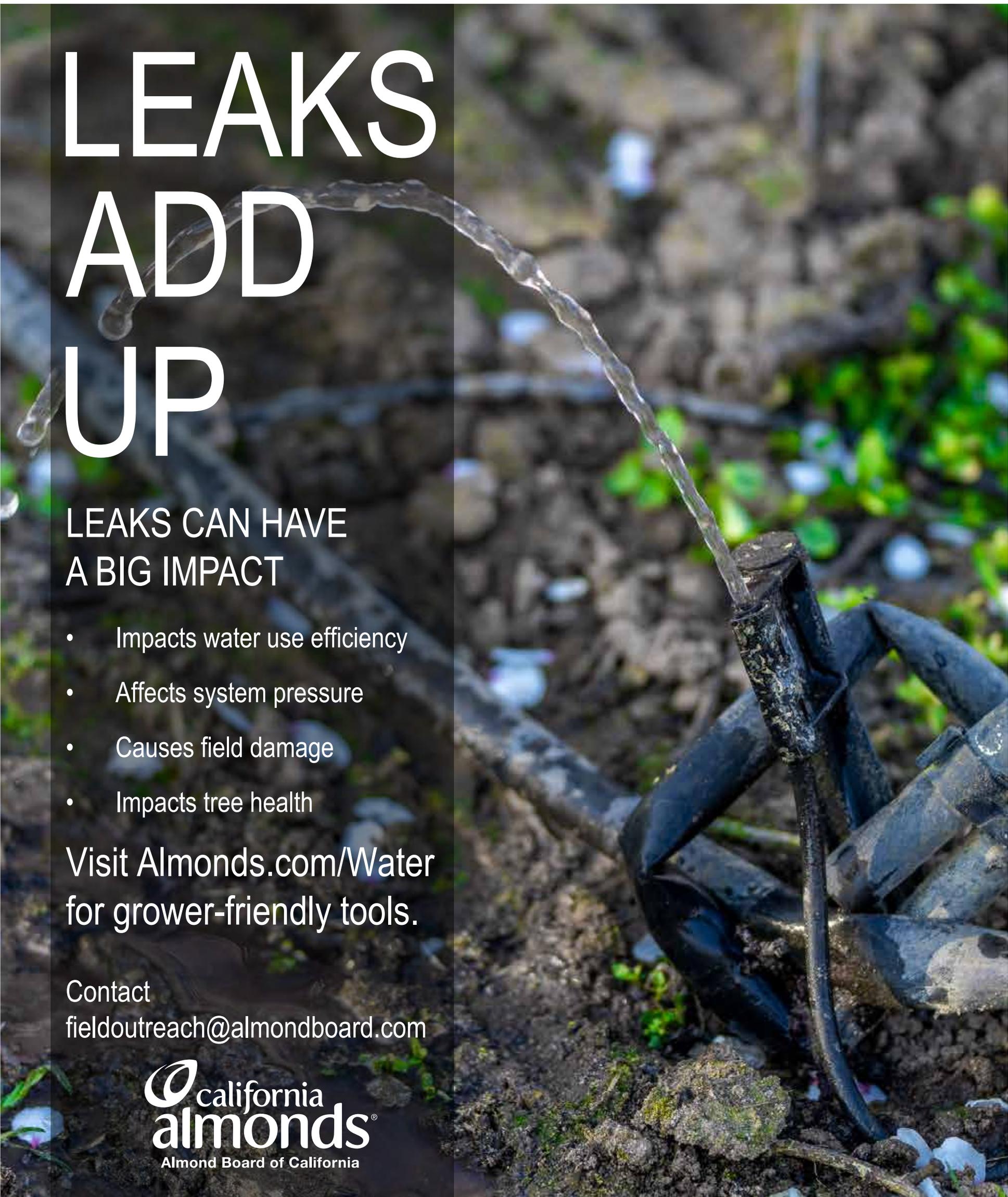
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# Artificial Intelligence Institute at UC Merced helping tackle agriculture challenges

By: **Elisa Navarro, ABC 30**

**A**ugust 6, 2021  
MERCED, Calif. (KFSN) -- UC Merced received a \$20 million federal grant to research artificial intelligence, which experts say can be vital for the Central Valley agriculture industry.

Associate professor John Abatzoglou said the hybrid approach has a grand goal.

"To improve outcomes in the face of continued drought continued water scarcity and this year is once again

providing another stress test for the sort of conditions where it highlights the need to find solutions," Abatzoglou said.

The university is now part of a multi-institutional research collaboration tackling Artificial Intelligence or A-I, solutions for the ag industry's ongoing challenges.

"Issues related to water, labor, weather, climate and we are trying to bring it together. The frontiers of technology, AI, to these working lands," said Abatzoglou.

The institute is a collaborative effort

involving faculty and scientist with backgrounds like computer science.

Four UC Merced professors will be co-investigators and part of the institute, and at the moment, a small group of grad students will be taking part in the research.

Doctorate student, Anshika Kandhway, is helping with the research. She said she's excited for her work to hopefully make a lifelong impact.

"Being here, being a part of all these types of fields they are working on, it's a great opportunity for the

stakeholders and for me," said Kandhway.

The Ag-AID institute will be working hand in hand with local farmers during the four to five-year research project.

Abatzoglou said these efforts and collaboration are essential.

"We are going to be focusing on issues in the central valley, working with farmers, so there is a lot of things going on here, and it's great to see these projects," said Abatzoglou.

A new approach with high hopes for the future of agriculture nationwide.

## Newsom recall basics: How to vote in California's election

By: **CalMatters Staff**

**When is the recall election?**  
Sept. 14, though local election offices must start sending out mail ballots by Aug. 16.  
**How do you vote?**

Every registered voter will get a ballot in the mail. You can track your ballot — when it is mailed, when it's received once you vote and when it's counted — by signing up here (<https://california.ballottrax.net/voter/>).

There will also be in-person polling sites that open Sept. 4, plus drop-off boxes, with the exact number depending where you live. You can check your registration status here (<https://voterstatus.sos.ca.gov/>) and can update your registration here (<https://registertovote.ca.gov/>). The

deadline to register is Aug. 30.

**What will be on the ballot?**

Two parts. The first requires a yes or no answer. It asks: "Shall GAVIN NEWSOM be recalled (removed) from the office of Governor?"

A yes vote is against Newsom and is to kick him out of office. A no vote is for Newsom and to keep him as governor.

The second part allows you to pick one replacement candidate from a list. It says: "Candidates to succeed GAVIN NEWSOM as Governor if he is recalled:"

The list doesn't include Newsom, so you can't vote for him.

**Who is running to replace Gov. Newsom?**

The final certified list of 46 includes Republican politicians, media celebrities, activists and Californians

from all walks of life.

**Can you write-in a replacement candidate?**

Yes, and no. You can write in any name you want. But for your vote to count, it must be someone from the certified list. Write-in candidates have until Aug. 31 to file. Any write-in votes for Newsom also won't be counted.

**What happens after the election?**

If more than 50% of voters say no, Newsom continues as governor; his term ends on Jan. 2, 2023.

If more than 50% of voters say yes, Newsom will be removed from office. Then whoever has the most votes among the replacement candidates — no matter how few and even if they don't win a majority — will become governor in late October for the rest of Newsom's term.

**Do you have to vote on both parts?**

No, you can vote on just one or the other — and your vote still counts. For example, you can vote against removing Newsom on the first question, but also skip choosing a potential replacement (which is what Newsom and party leaders are telling Democrats to do).

**But if I oppose recalling Newsom, can I still pick a replacement candidate?**

Yes, a vote on the second question won't invalidate or affect your vote on the first.

**Will there be any state measures on the ballot?**

No.

**Isn't there an election for governor in 2022?**

Yes, voters will pick someone for a full four-year term in November 2022. Newsom is already running.



MEMBER REFLECTIONS

2021 California Farm Bureau  
PHOTO CONTEST

# Glimmer of hope for Stanislaus-area water storage in federal infrastructure deal

**By: Garth Stapley, The Modesto Bee**

Whenever politicians are asked about the California water wars that threaten our well-being in Modesto and Stanislaus County, eventually the talk gets around to something like, “Well, you know what we really need is more water storage.” As in dams, mostly, and also off-stream reservoirs holding water captured in wet years for use in dry ones.

They say something similar when reporters ask about drought, and sometimes about wildfires and climate change.

I’m tempted to roll my eyes, because everyone has always said the same thing for the three decades-plus I’ve been in journalism in this Central Valley. But nothing ever changes.

New Melones Reservoir on the Stanislaus River was the last major dam built in California, in 1979, and two-thirds of the state’s dams are at least 50 years old. In more than a generation, we’ve seen nothing new despite big talk from countless bigwigs who are fast to identify the cure and slow to admit reality — that the environmental lobby is powerful, and that water projects are just ungodly expensive.

Then-new Congressman Josh Harder of Turlock piqued a fair amount of interest when he first trotted out the vision of a future dam in Del Puerto Canyon near Patterson, in April 2019. But it would need lots of money in a time when little seemed available.

Until now, maybe.

Tuesday’s landmark U.S. Senate approval of the \$1.2 trillion infrastructure bill feels like a turning point. Finally, government seems willing to move beyond lip service and dedicate meaningful funding to something we’ve needed for so long.

It’s not a small thing, in a time of bitter partisan divide, that 19 Senate Republicans found enough in the bill to support it, joining all 50 Democrats. The bipartisan embrace is noteworthy and encouraging.

Harder deserves some recognition. He presented a wishlist for the infrastructure bill back in March, with water projects at the top, and at an

April House Appropriations hearing, he pushed Interior Secretary Deb Haaland to include the Del Puerto project in the package.

In June, Harder said he and House Republican Rep. David Valadao of Hanford were behind a letter urging congressional leaders to make sure water storage funding got into the bill. Two other California GOP representatives signed on, as well as seven Democrats. That was impressive, and we should give credit where it’s due.

It started to feel real when the White House on July 28 released the actual text of the infrastructure compromise, confirming in black and white our hopes for water storage funding. But the most significant corner-turn came Tuesday with the Senate vote, because everyone assumes some version will sail through the House once it’s back in session, in September.

## APPLAUSE FOR INFRASTRUCTURE DEAL

Specifically, the infrastructure deal provides \$8.3 billion for water projects in western states, including \$1.15 billion earmarked just for water storage.

“Today is an important day for our community,” Harder agreed Tuesday. Of bipartisan cooperation, he told The Modesto Bee, “That’s what I came to D.C. to do. We’re rounding the final bend, and I’m going to keep pushing to make sure this package gets across the finish line.”

People here will see actual results of Tuesday’s vote in other things — like spending on roads and bridges, and probably broadband and maybe even new water pipes — long before California welcomes a new dam. That’s still years off, if not decades.

And I should note that the Del Puerto project is not identified by name in the bill. So more work remains to be done — a lot more.

And growers face more immediate challenges, particularly in recent sobering news that an appointed Sacramento bureaucrat in theory could decide whether our farmers will get river water if the drought persists next year.

But those looking for even a

glimmer of hope for California water storage on Tuesday finally found one.



Farm Bureau Extension's offerings continue with a CE series of classes held virtually. Join California Farm Bureau on four dates this summer and fall for relevant content that meets your CE requirements for pesticide licensing. Subject matter experts will share information immediately applicable to your business operations and advance your professional development. CE Certificates will be sent for each webinar attended after successful completion of a simple quiz on the material.

This CE Series consists of four classes which will take place from 10-11 a.m. and is free to all agricultural Farm Bureau members.

### CE Class Dates & Topics:

August 26: Common Violations

October 7: Pesticide Training Requirements

November 18: Updates: PPE and Closed Systems

For more information or to register, visit [cbbf.com](http://cbbf.com)

# We Are Here For You

## By: Merced County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services

Merced County Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS) is here for you during this very difficult time, and our goal is to support the physical and mental wellbeing of our County family, friends and colleagues.

“We want to promote a healthy mental state while being mindful of the Public Health orders, which is why our department wants to encourage people to self-screen for both mental health and physical health symptoms” says Genevieve G. Valentine, Director of Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS).

“During this difficult time it’s important for everyone to beware of their health, including behavioral and mental health. It’s crucial that anyone who may be feeling that their well-

being is at-risk, prioritizes their health and seeks assistance to address their needs.

BHRS continues to provide specialty mental health services in the Merced, Los Banos, and Livingston clinics, and our clinical and medical professionals continue to use their discretion when face to face services are imperative for treatment. BHRS is also providing telephonic and tele-med services for anyone in need of mental health support but can’t come into the offices due to COVID-19 fears or health limitations.

In alignment with our vision and mission, BHRS has also launched a **free 24/7 Youth Warm Line (1-209-381-6800)**. This is a non-emergency resource for any youth seeking emotional support. “BHRS wants to promote preventative and proactive support to our youth and families. This warm line will provide a voice of hope

for our community” says Genevieve G. Valentine, Director of BHRS.

If you are feeling depressed, anxious, or showing signs of stress, remember that Behavioral Health and Recovery Services is here for you. In times like these, stressful feelings are normal and you should acknowledge those feelings; it is important that you care for your own physical and mental health during this time.

If you have specific questions about BHRS services, or if you or a loved one needs immediate mental health assistance, please feel free to reach out

(via email or phone) to BHRS:

TollFree:(888)334-0163  
TDD/TYY:(866)293-1818  
**Staff is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week**  
Email: [bhrs@countyofmerced.com](mailto:bhrs@countyofmerced.com)

Behavioral health resources can be found on the Merced County website in two locations:

<https://www.countyofmerced.com/78/Behavioral-Health-Recovery-Services>  
<https://www.co.merced.ca.us/3395/Behavioral-Health-Resources>

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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.

## **REPAIRS & SERVICES**

AC King.....	722-3552
Atwater Radiator & Muffler, Inc. ....	358-2638
Car Plus.....	722-3552
SS Blue .....	722-2583

## **CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTORS**

Allison Sierra, Inc. ....	966-4082
Dias Construction, Inc.....	634-9601
M-Mig Construction, Inc.....	631-6017

## **FARM EQUIPMENT**

Garton Tractor, Inc.....	726-4600
Holt Ag Solutions .....	723-2021
J M Equipment Co Inc .....	386-1797
Kirby Manufacturing .....	723-0778
Laird Mfg LLC.....	722-4145
N&S Tractor .....	383-5888

## **REAL ESTATE**

Flanagan Realty.....	723-4337 (Merced)
Flanagan Realty. (559) 665-1313 (Chowchilla)	
Property Team .....	769-4698
Dick Templeton Property Team .....	761-4441
Rucker Real Estate.....	722-6532
Valley Real Estate Sales, Inc. ....	854-1000

## **GROUPS & ORGANIZATIONS**

Blue Diamond Growers.....	(559) 474-2996
California Farmland Trust .....	(916) 544-2712
California Sweet Potato Council .....	385-7403
California Women for Agriculture .....	723-5878
Central CA Irrigation District.....	826-1421
Cortez Growers Association.....	632-3118
Dos Palos Co-op Gin.....	387-4151
Farmers Rice Cooperative .....	(916) 923-5100
Gustine Drainage District .....	854-6782
Hilltop Ranch Inc. ....	874-1875
Livingston Farmers Assoc.....	394-7941
Merced Boosters .....	761-0815
Merced Irrigation District.....	722-5761
Merced College Ag Division .....	384-6250
Turlock Irrigation District.....	883-8205
UCCE Merced.....	385-7403

## **FARM SERVICES**

A-Bar Ag Enterprises .....	826-2636
Agri-Valley Consulting .....	769-2357
Caddy Shack Rodent Servc.....	(559) 363-3315
Cal Ag Safety.....	351-0321
Cal Corn Growers Inc.....	(559) 665-5775

Chipponeri Electric.....	634-4616
Dutch Door Dairy.....	648-2166
Farm Management Inc. ....	667-1011
Guerrero Farm Labor .....	492-0408
Horizon Farms, Inc. ....	383-5225
J & F Fertilizer.....	854-6325
La Follette Enterprises, Inc.....	632-1385
Mass Energy Works.....	(530) 710-8545
Machado Feed Company.....	658-5943
Maciel & Co .....	777-0911
Mid Valley Ag Service .....	394-7981
Modern Dairy.....	722-7452
Modesto Dairy Supply.....	669-6200
Silva & Sons Custom Spreading.....	667-2566
Stone Family Spreading.....	756-1491
The Pollination Connection.....	(877) 970-BEES (2337)

## **FOOD PROCESSING**

A V Thomas Produce .....	394-7514
Dallas Distributing Co .....	394-2803
Del Rio Nut.....	394-7945
Minturn Huller Co-op.....	(559) 665-1185
Parreira Almond Processing Co.....	826-1262
Sensient Natural Ingredients (800) 558-9892	
Yosemite Farms.....	383-3411

## **HARVESTING & HAULING**

Baldes Hay Co .....	(559) 718-9714
Bertuccio Hay .....	761-6247
Castillo Brothers Hay.....	392-3817
Diamond J Farms .....	564-0870
Minturn Huller Co-op.....	(559) 665-1185
Northern Merced Hulling .....	667-2308
Wallace & Son .....	382-0131

## **IRRIGATION, WELLS, & SEPTIC**

Allison Sierra, Inc. ....	966-4082
Agri-Valley Irrigation .....	384-8494
Dickey's Pump Service .....	394-3112
Irrigation Design & Construction, LLC.....	387-4500
Pacific Southwest Irrigation .....	460-0450
Precision Aqua.....	756-2025
Quality Well Drillers .....	357-0675
Rain for Rent/Westside Pump(559) 693-4315	
Robal Inc.....	826-4540
San Luis Pump Company.....	383-0464
Shannon Pump Company .....	723-3904

## **INSECT & WEED CONTROL**

Environmental Spraying Service .....	667-1038
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Malm Ag Pest Management .....	392-6905
Star Creek Land .....	704-1790

## **FARM SUPPLIES**

Ag Flag .....	357-3424
Cal Farm Service .....	358-1554
Kellogs Supply .....	722-1501
Livingston True Value .....	394-7949
Hardware & Farm Supplies.....	394-7949
Marfab .....	826-6700
Modesto Dairy Supply.....	669-6200
Stanislaus Farm Supply.....	723-0704

## **FUEL SERVICES**

Amarants Propane Service .....	358-2257
Hunt & Sons, Inc. ....	(916) 383-4868
Western States Petroleum Assoc. ....	(661) 321-0884
Valley Pacific Petroleum.....	948-9412
Van De Pol Petroleum .....	667-0236

## **INSURANCE**

Barlocker Insurance .....	383-0220
Fluetsch & Busby Insurance .....	722-1541
Diane Norton Insurance .....	357-3626
Rico, Pfitzer, Pires and Associates ..	854-2000
Walter Mortensen Insurance .....	353-2700
Western Valley Insurance .....	826-5667
Winton Ireland Insurance .....	394-7925

## **FINANCIAL SERVICES**

Alice B. Contreras CPA .....	722-6778
American Ag Credit .....	384-1050/826-0320
Central Valley Community Bank.....	725-2820
Grimbleby Coleman CPAs .....	527-4220
Trans County Title Company .....	383-4660
Yosemite Farm Credit .....	383-1116

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

Berliner Cohen LLP .....	385-0700
The Hat Source.....	357-3424
Merced County Fair.....	722-1506
P. B. Iyer, M.D.....	854-1120
Razzari Auto Center.....	383-3673
Santa Fe Pet Hospital .....	383-5050
Unwired Broadband .....	(559) 336-4157

## **BUSSINESS SUPPORT FARMERS**

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# Here We Go Again



*from the*  
**Mariposa CFB**

**Danette Toso**

**A**s the blistering heat incinerates the already parched earth, we watch helplessly as our grasslands, crops, trees, yards and gardens dry up and perish. We have lost entire towns due to California wildfires, with so much of our rich history literally going up in smoke! My heart goes out to every soul affected by these senseless tragedies and I'm praying for relief for all. For several years, we have watched

helplessly as much of our state has been destroyed by this man-made drought, and it's absolutely despicable!

One slight inkling of hope during our annual heat wave has been the ability to remove the face coverings and actually take a deep breath and flash a smile at the people we come in contact with. No matter what you call the restrictive device, a mask, face covering, muzzle, face diaper, freedom restrictor, it's been wonderful to enjoy our freedom to breathe freely. Yet, here we go again.....

As I'm writing this, Mariposa County has locked down our government offices, and we are awaiting additional news from Gavin Newsom. With the threat of vaccination mandates, I see, hear, and feel the frustration and fear of many citizens in our community. Our economy has been hit hard by Covid, and more government overreach could completely devastate our fragile state of affairs. Yet, here we go again.....

We will not be detoured from our agricultural mission! The Mariposa County Farm Bureau has scheduled our annual fundraiser dinner for October 9th and we will do everything in our power to hold this event. The Mariposa County Fairgrounds, Building A, has long been reserved and we are making preparations to

make this dinner one of our most successful yet. We hope you will save the date and join us in our ongoing support of agriculture. Once again, we will be serving a delicious, gourmet, Ribeye Steak Dinner. We will be announcing our "Friend of Agriculture" honored guest very soon, and here we

go again!

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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To be included in the directory, join Mariposa County Farm Bureau as a business member by calling 742-5875.

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- Mariposa Feed & Supply.....966-3326
- Bootjack Equipment Rental & Feed.966-3545

**ASSOCIATIONS**

- 35-A District Agriculture Assn.....966-2432
- Mariposa Chamber of Commerce....966-2456
- Mariposa County Farm Advisor .....966-2417
- Mariposa County Farm Bureau .....742-5875

**CONSTRUCTION**

- Bucks Construction .....878-3702
- Tobey Guenthart Construction .....374-3334

**FINANCIAL SERVICES**

- Inter-County Title Company.....966-3653
- Yosemite Bank.....966-5444

**HARDWARE STORES**

- Coast Hardware.....966-2527
- Foster Ace Hardware .....966-2692

**MEDICAL**

- Mariposa Physical Therapy.....742-7242

**MISCELLANEOUS**

- Allison Sierra Inc .....966-4082
- Happy Burger Diner .....966-2719
- Mariposa Friends of the Fairgrounds Foundation.....742-4680
- Hugh A. Yamshon Ranch
- Mariposa Gun Works .....742-5444
- Miners Roadhouse 14 .....966-2444
- Pony Expresso .....966-5053

**REAL ESTATE**

- Cathey's Valley Real Estate.....742-2121

**SERVICES**

- Chases Foothill Petroleum.....966-3314
- Edward Lien & Toso Ag Appraisers...634-9484
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# MCFB Land Use Committee Visits Castle Air Force Base

**By: Denelle Flake, Farm News Editor**

On July 27th, the MCFB Land Use Committee visited the Castle Air Force Base (Castle AFB) to hear about the current developments and possibilities for the grounds. The committee met with Merced County's Community and Economic Development Director, Mark Hendrickson and the Deputy Director of Economic Development, Mark Mimms to discuss the potential Castle AFB has to offer. They were also visited by Merced County's Water Resources Manager, Lacey McBride to discuss land repurposing strategies to achieve sustainable ground water basins. The committee was greeted by MCFB's Executive Director, Breanne Vandenberg, as she explained that the purpose of the land use committee is to receive feedback, advise, and make connections with members in affected areas around Merced County.

## Forward Thinking on Land Repurposing Strategies to Achieve Sustainable Basins

In 2015, Merced County adopted a Groundwater Mining and Export Ordinance. This was the bridge to the Sustainable Ground Water Management Act (SGMA), a state mandate to bring local subbasins into compliance. Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) are tasked with creating the structure of the Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs) to move forward.

The GSAs are in the following four subbasins: Delta-Mendota, Turlock, Merced, and Chowchilla. Delta-Mendota, Merced, and Chowchilla submitted and adopted their GSPs in January 2020 and the Turlock subbasin has until January 2022 to submit to the state. While McBride's focus is on water, she recognizes the connection that water has to land use.

The Merced Subbasin is facing the largest amount of groundwater use reduction. They are estimating the Merced Subbasin GSA will have an annual reduction of about 130,000-acre feet by 2040. This GSA does not have enough surface water rights to offset this reduction, but she has submitted a water rights application to the state.

The GSAs are currently discussing ways to reduce groundwater demand and increase projects. Some ideas that have been discussed are water allocation per acre, extraction fees, financially encouraging reduction, and land repurposing. Knowing there will not be enough water to sustain the amount of agriculture production we have currently in 2040, the GSA board is focused on land repurposing incentives. Programs are being developed to transition land into other uses, such as wildlife friendly recharge areas, drinking water protection for disadvantaged communities, or creating environmental habitats. Moving forward, McBride stressed the importance of working with the farm bureau to create programs that stakeholders will be interested in.

## Economic Development and Investment Opportunities at Castle Air Force Base

Castle AFB closed the military installations in 1985 and in December of 2006, Merced County obtained ownership of 1,912 acres as an economic development conveyance. Castle AFB is an enterprise fund; every penny spent on Castle AFB is pulled from the revenue generated on the grounds, therefore the project does not tap into general funds. Castle AFB is home to around 75 tenants, with the largest being Waymo, Google's self-driving car project. Hendrickson used Blaker Brewing's The Tarmac as an example of when government works effectively with the private sector. Hendrickson stated, "Blaker had a vision and successfully turned an old gas station into The Tarmac. If Castle were a blank-slate, it would have the potential to develop about 8.2 million square-feet of space."

The county has worked to target industries that are going to create the most success. Hendrickson stated that Castle is attractive for reasons, such as the affordability of Merced County, its central location, proximity to the Silicon Valley, and accessibility to UC Merced via the Atwater-Merced Expressway. Castle AFB will be an industrial complex, as Hendrickson calls it, a "job center". One industry that has been of primary focus is auto-tech. Google's Waymo has built

the largest propriety vehicle testing facility right here in Merced County. This has caught the attention of many other entities in the auto-tech industry interested in testing at the grounds. Therefore, Merced County, with the help of Assembly Member Adam Gray, secured a 6.5-million-dollar grant from the state to build a 225-acre non-proprietary auto-testing facility.

With potential to develop a railway hub and open an airport, Hendrickson highlighted the benefit this can have on shipping opportunities for agriculture. Two-thirds of the land mass is part of the aviation parcels, and those parcels can only be used for aviation purposes as ruled by conveyance. Castle AFB has a 11,802-foot-long runway, which makes it the 5th longest runway in the Western United States. The county has plans to develop a 200-acre rail district to grow their BNSF

connections to serve the agriculture industry. Hendrickson stated, "There is potential to be leveraging Castle AFB to ship things all over the world". Merced County exports agricultural commodities to around 80 countries and Hendrickson sees Castle AFB providing agriculture lower cost alternatives for shipping.

Hendrickson is optimistic that Merced County can increase future investment through Castle AFB's potential. Thank you to Mark Hendrickson, Mark Mimms, and Lacey McBride for taking the time to meet with our Land Use Committee. Thank you to Stacie Guzman, Executive Director of Merced County Association of Government for arranging transportation around Castle AFB, courtesy of The Bus. Give us a call if you're interested in talking more about our committee opportunities!



**MCFB Staff and Land Use Committee with Mark Hendrickson, Merced County's Community and Economic Development Director at Castle AFB. L to R: Mark Hendrickson, Denelle Flake, Alexis Rudich, Breanne Vandenberg, Bob Giampaoli, Eric Harcksen, John Lourenco, Dante Migliazzo, Lloyd Erlandson, Dan DeWees**



**Bus Tour of Castle AFB**