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Is There Any Hope for Delta Smelt?

By **Scott Hamilton**,
President, *Hamilton Resource Economics*

Delta smelt have been protected under both the federal and state Endangered Species Acts since 1993. How have they fared with 28 years of protection? Their numbers are now less than one percent of the number at the time of listing. In order to assess status and trends, the fish are sampled in a number of surveys including the Fall Midwater Trawl (FMWT), a fish survey that samples around 80 locations each month from September through December. Delta smelt used to be abundant in the FMWT. During the last three years not one delta smelt has been captured in that trawl—that is, in nearly 1000 tries, delta smelt have not been observed.

Delta smelt are a small, delicate, native fish found only in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The number of factors contributing to their demise are numerous: lack of food, predation by non-native fish, loss of habitat, contaminants in their native waters, and entrainment at water diversion facilities.

And it is this last factor that has caused the fish's name to be known by many farmers in the San Joaquin Valley. The state and federal water projects that supply water to the San Joaquin Valley and southern California have fish salvage facilities upstream of the pumping plants located in the south Delta. These facilities were designed to capture fish headed towards the pumps so that they could be relocated back into the Delta many miles away from the pumps. For a number of reasons, these facilities fail to protect delta smelt. The waters near the fish salvage facilities team with predators. Some of the most reliable estimates indicate that for every delta smelt salvaged at the pumps, thirty fall prey to predators. Also, the fish diversion facilities are not perfect; so, small fish may well pass through them. And finally, if any are salvaged, delta smelt are so delicate that most of them do not survive the capture, handling, transportation and relocation process.

When an otherwise lawful process, such as pumping water, harms endangered species, special permits

See **DELTA SMELT HOPE** on NEXT PAGE

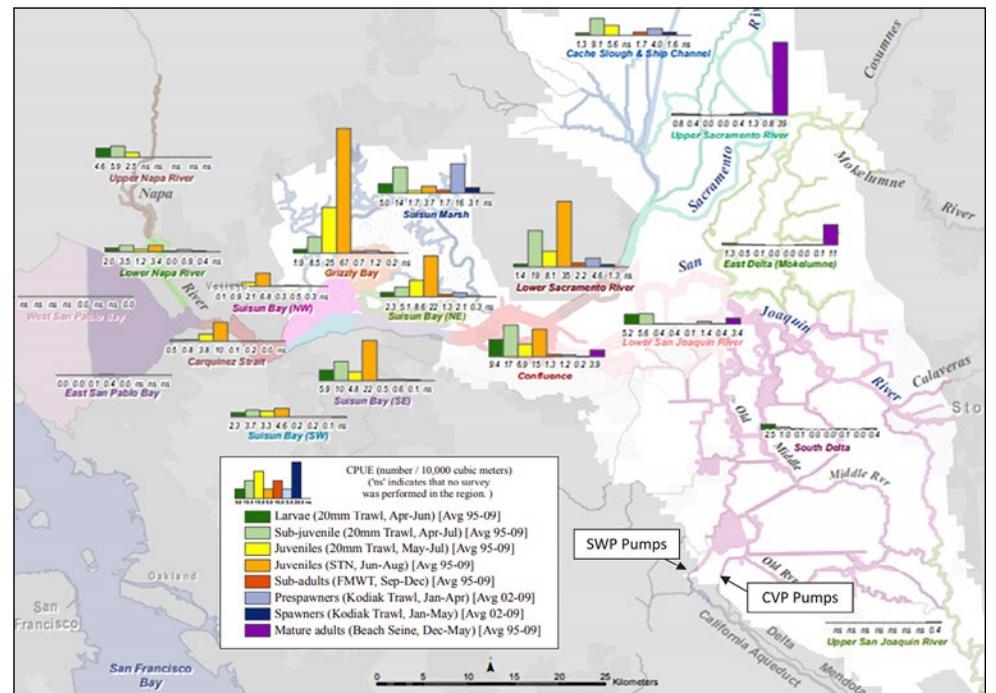


FIGURE 1. Average observed densities of delta smelt by life-stage and region. The numbers underneath the columns represent the average of the observed number of delta smelt per 10,000m³ of water sampled. "ns" indicates that no surveys were conducted for the given life stage in the given region. (*California Fish and Game Journal* 97(4):164-189; 2011, Figure 7)

COMMENTARY: Who's Actually Leading the State's Water Infrastructure?

By **Jenifer VanAlstein**, *Feature Contributor*,
Valley Ag Voice

California has been a state for nearly 200 years. One might think by now we would have our water system figured out. But, instead, we are plagued with navigating the most complicated water infrastructure system in the world—made only more complicated by the geopolitics of our state. The conditions in the Delta

continue to get worse, and we have had *many* drought years in recent history. Has our state's natural systems been changed *that* drastically? Is it climate change? Or is it water management? We know for certain that California will always have dry years. So, what is the State doing to avoid continued drought years?

The answer: not a whole lot. However, the taxpayers have approved multiple water bonds over the years.

See **WATER INFRASTRUCTURE** on PAGE 11

Are You Prepared for When Disaster Strikes?

A Re-cap on CCA's Wildfire Safety & Livestock Evacuation Workshop

By **Audrey Hill**, *Feature Contributor*, *Valley Ag Voice*

On June 23, 2021, The California Cattleman's Association hosted a virtual workshop entitled "Emergency Response, Livestock Access & Evacuation + Safety Considerations for Wildfires." The meeting was directed to mainly northern California counties where wildfires and wildfire season continue to hit harder and harder. Kirk Wilbur, meeting director and California Cattleman's Association (CCA) Vice President of Government Affairs, opened the meeting stating, "California fire season is already underway as you are no doubt aware, but if previous years are any indication, the worst is yet to come."

The meeting featured three speakers who provided a cohesive understanding of how to effectively inform our local and state governments of any wildfires, how to stay prepared with the correct resources, and how to act fast and efficiently when going behind fire lines to rescue commercial livestock. Speakers Todd Smith, ESF-11 Coordinator for US region 9, Sean Norman, Butte County Fire representative and Battalion Chief, and Tracy Schorr, Livestock and Natural Resources Advisor for UC Cooperative Extension, also informed attendees about developing emergency plans and

responses to wildfires, practicing staying alert and knowing who to call when disasters strikes. Mentions of Butte Ag Pass Program and Butte County Disaster Access Pass were discussed in detail with info on how to apply, acquire training, and obtain these passes that would potentially allow access behind fire lines to retrieve cattle from commercial operations.

Specifically, each speaker had a list of things to do when wildfires strike. Todd Smith gave this list to follow and gave his own contact info if help is needed with retrieving wildfire emergency resources in his domain (California, Arizona, Nevada, Hawaii and Guam): +1 (970) 631-3279, Todd.L.Smith@USDA.gov.

1. Make a list of available resources, human and equipment.
2. Know Who to Call and in what order. Starting with City and County Emergency Managers. Then, Ag Commissioners and Animal Control, then wildlife service professionals within reach.
3. Get in contact with the CDFA CARES Plan and Asha Raj, ESF-11 Point of Contact and Emergency Management Coordinator at State of California, to find any available resources. (Her contact information is Asha.Raj.CDFA@CA.gov, but should only be contacted in the case of an emergency.)

He also gave a warning that the number one issue always on a post disaster is communication failure and to reach out to the government about any wildfire not already reported.

See **ARE YOU PREPARED?** on PAGE 3

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How Much Are You Willing to Pay for Drought?

President's & Executive Director's Shared Message



By John C. Moore, III
President, Kern County
Farm Bureau



By Romeo Agbalog
Executive Director, Kern
County Farm Bureau

featuring hamburgers, steaks, baked potatoes, mixed green salads, and sweet and savory fruit. In fact, many of the delectable items featured on picnic tables across the country came from California and from Kern County, in particular. For example, Kern produces 80% of the country's carrots, 44% of our nation's grapes, 17% of citrus, and 10% of the world's pistachios, to name a few, and much like the streamers that lit up the sky, we are seeing a new trend in a different item skyrocketing. This time it's food prices. But why you might ask?

The answer can be summed up in one word: drought. What does drought have to do with spikes in food cost? Well, put simply, it's a matter of supply, and agriculture is a case study in supply and demand. As water becomes increasingly unavailable for irrigation, farmers must make a difficult decision to take land out of production, also known as fallowing. The decommissioned land no longer produces goods for public consumption, thereby decreasing supply and subsequently increasing cost to the end consumer. This regulatory-driven supply constriction produces no winners as farmers are price takers and not price makers, so the typical producer

doesn't realize the increased costs. The supply-demand component coupled with increased fuel cost for vehicles that transport produce from farm to market and a spike in crop protections materials and inputs results in higher food prices for the consumer.

How do we fix it? Yes, Mother Nature can help by producing an abundance of rain and snowpack. Though we cannot always predict nature's next step, we can mitigate the effects of a historically dry California climate. State and federal public officials can help protect the region immensely. For years, unelected bureaucrats at both the state and federal levels have used flawed data and consistently misinterpreted policies restricting the amount of water flow down two of the state's water conveyance systems depriving farmers, municipalities, and disadvantaged communities of the much-needed resource to grow the food that feeds the world.

Kern County Farm Bureau President John Moore recently took to the television on Fox News' America's Newsroom to explain this phenomenon. He noted that in addition to decreased water flows, the state's water delivery infrastructure is sorely needing improvement. Built in the 1960s, the canals, reservoirs, and dams

were intended to serve a population considerably less than the population of California today. The system could only work under the premise that farmers and the communities they support would receive contract surface water rather than have that surface water diverted to scientifically devoid uses under the Golden Gate Bridge. Additionally, of the \$138 million bill paid in full by farmers for 978,000-acre feet of water, only 5% will be sent to our region. The system is failing because the system is not being utilized to its intended use.

The Kern County Farm Bureau understands the importance of water and the need for investment in water infrastructure, and thankfully the voters do too. Californians passed a water board bond (Prop. 1) several years ago, and the state of California has been slow to act. In addition to higher food prices when farms go fallow, unemployment increases, and rural communities struggle. Australia has seen devastating impacts on their rural communities based on water mismanagement and the same could happen here. An unemployed population with very little to no money plus skyrocketing food prices is a deadly combination. We will continue to pray for Mother Nature's intervention. In the meantime, we expect our federal and state officials to act now. We cannot afford inaction, lest we'll soon be unable to afford to put food on the table. Visit the Kern County Farm Bureau to find out how you can help.

Young Farmers & Ranchers



By Allie Cushmyr
Chair, Kern County
Young Farmers
& Ranchers

One of the reasons I joined this group in 2015 was because I wanted to find a way to give back

to our community. Little did I know that I would get to do that each and every year with the farmer's market, plus other events we do too. The 2021 Charity Farmer's Market was once again a huge success, and we could not have done it without the local farmers who donated to us. We also are so thankful for the support of the Kern County residents who came out and get their grocery shopping done at the market once a year. We sold out of items like watermelons,

jellies, pickles, honey, almonds, and stone fruit. We were blessed to promote the market on local radio shows and news stations who recognized the benefit to local students. Norris Middle School also joined us with their own booth selling raffle tickets for a beautiful wooden American flag, and they shared what they have learned by being a part of the SLED (Students Leading Education) garden. The money raised from this fundraiser will go towards their SLED garden and various YF&R projects.

July was busy with the market, so as a way to relax a bit this month, we plan to go on a tour of 2nd Phase Brewing in Downtown Bakersfield on July 29th. If you are lucky enough to read this article before the event, please join us that evening for a tour of their facility, learn how they brew, and get to know others in the ag industry.

The August meeting has also been scheduled, so please join us at JSS Almonds on August 17th for a dinner and tour of their processing facility. They are located in Bakersfield at 5600 Norris Road, right off Highway 99. Details will be emailed out and posted on social media. There is no cost to attend. While other meetings may have been kid friendly, this one is unfortunately not. Be sure to RSVP via email if you plan to attend so we have enough food for all.

As always, I want to share that being a part of the Kern County Young Farmers and Ranchers comes at no cost, and we welcome everyone between 18-35 years old. This is a great group to be a part of to give back to the community, network with other professionals, and have a good time with friends. If you would like to jump on our email list to receive information about upcoming events, please reach out to us. We are also active on both Facebook and Instagram.

Email: KernYFR@KernCFB.com
Instagram: [@Kern_YFR](https://www.instagram.com/@Kern_YFR)
Facebook: [KernYoungFarmersAndRanchers](https://www.facebook.com/KernYoungFarmersAndRanchers)

Delta Smelt Hope

Continued from PREVIOUS PAGE

called Incidental Take Permits are required to enable operations to continue. The regulatory agencies have the duty to protect the listed species and so, in approving the permit, they require project operations to be modified. Typically, this means reducing the quantity of water pumped when the fish are likely to be near the pumps. Delta smelt typically disperse from the northern regions of the Delta towards spawning grounds following the first big storm of the year. This brings a small proportion of adults, and then their offspring, within the vicinity of the pumps in the winter and spring (see Figure 1). Even though only a small proportion of the fish appear to be near the pumps, with so few delta smelt remaining, regulators are being cautious. Over time, the regulations to protect delta smelt and other listed fish has resulted in millions of acre feet less water being brought into the San Joaquin Valley—an impact felt by many farmers, particularly with the implementation of SGMA and another year of drought.

Were the regulatory agencies justified in imposing their protective measures? Did the measures have a population benefit? Were the measures based on the best available science? These questions have been the basis of several lawsuits and a number of scientific studies. There remains no definitive answer, and so the controversy and the fights continue. But as one attorney put it, what has been done has helped neither the fish nor the farmers.

Enter Paul Souza, the new regional director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. From his earliest days in Sacramento, he has been asking for a defensible list of the best actions that can be implemented to help delta smelt. Faced with massive loss of their native habitat, the management options for delta smelt are limited. Likely, any solution needs to be big and bold—implementing small, isolated projects is unlikely to reverse the population decline. But



Few delta smelt remain in the wild (University of California, Davis)

implementing big, bold and expensive restoration projects is a risky business many managers are unwilling to stick their neck out for. A number of stakeholders have now embarked on what is called a structured decision-making process, which is a commonsense approach to applying rigorous science in a collaborative framework to identify the best set of solutions. That work, funded largely by the water exporters, is underway. Due to the scientific complexity, the process will take several years to complete but, in the end, should give Souza his answers. In the meantime, Souza is not waiting. US Fish and Wildlife survive are developing a propagation program (a hatchery for delta smelt) to put tens of thousands of delta smelt back into the estuary. Whether they will get eaten by predators, starve, or flourish remains to be seen. But, if successful, there will likely be no benefit to the water supply. Pumping restrictions are unlikely to change for many years. Rather, a better method of diverting water is needed, one that does not harm the fish or attract them to predator filled waters (see Valley Voice, May 2021). The elusive goals of achieving both a self-sustaining delta smelt population and improved water supplies remains a long way off, but there are a large number of scientists and managers working behind the scenes to try to make that happen.

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(Bakersfield College)



RENEGADE ROUND-UP

Bakersfield College's Agriculture Department



By Dr. James Selgrath
Professor of
Agribusiness &
Animal Science,
Bakersfield College

"Summertime, when the livin' is easy, fish are jumping and the cotton is high." So starts the song "Summertime" from the opera Porgy and Bess. For those involved in agriculture in the central valley, fighting drought and summer heat, living is anything but easy. Early mornings caring for plants or animals are part of everyday agricultural life. Agriculture educators are also busy in the summertime. Teaching summer school, writing grants, reflecting on the previous semester in order to develop new curriculum, and preparation for upcoming classes. It is also a time to reflect upon the positives in the department and move forward.

The Bakersfield College Agriculture Department is truly a positive source for reflection. Five years ago, the department consisted of five full-time faculty. Since Kern County is recognized as one of the largest agricultural counties in the world, the need for more faculty to meet local industry educational requirements was apparent. To answer that need, the department has actively grown and now consists of eleven full time and twelve adjunct faculty. The increase in staff has allowed our department to expand its efforts in the early college program and develop new pathways to student success.

The excitement is evident in the department. With the expansion and funding of the Mechanized Agriculture program, our college is better positioned to meet the need for Heavy Equipment Operators and Engine Repair personnel. Our exciting new Food Science and Technology program will bring food production safety and innovation to the forefront of our department, as well as allowing Bakersfield College to produce its own brand of olive oil. The Forestry group is rewriting the program's curriculum to serve the need for urban foresters in order to continue to be strong in the areas of forestry and recreation. A recent article in "Hispanic Education Outlook" magazine identified the Agriculture Business program as one of the top ten in the nation. Bakersfield College was the only 2-year program mentioned in the article and it indicates how progressive and active the

Agriculture Business program has become. Grant funding is allowing the department to modernize the educational farm on campus, with new irrigation systems, animal handling equipment, and new crop systems that will allow our students to be at the forefront of agricultural technology. The present programs offered by the department are listed below.

- Agriculture Business
- Animal Science
- Food Science and Technology
- Forestry and Natural Resources
- Mechanized Agriculture
- Plant Science
 - Crops Emphasis
 - Horticulture Emphasis
- Veterinary Technician

And the future of the department is very bright! The construction of the new agriculture building is scheduled to begin in the near future. The new facilities are designed to contain laboratories for all our programs, including a tissue culture lab. The building will also have new technology to support distance learning opportunities, as well as the latest in computer laboratories for the Agriculture Business classes. The new Horticulture area will have modern greenhouses and be able to provide a complete hands-on educational experience for students.

Bakersfield College's Agriculture Department is a dynamic and growing entity in agriculture education. The excitement felt by the faculty is also felt by the students. The past year has been difficult for all of us. But even then, there are positive outcomes from the experience. The Agriculture Department is now capable of teaching the majority of its classes in an online environment in addition to being geared up for distance learning opportunities. But most exciting to many of the students is the ability to attend classes on campus in fall 2021. The feeling of being able to interact directly with students is positive for both faculty and students in the department.

The Agriculture Department at Bakersfield College is looking forward to continuing to meet the needs of our students and our business stakeholders in agriculture. The expansion of our faculty, the modernization of our curriculum with industry input, the modernization of our facilities and the incorporation of new programs bodes well for the department to continue leading the way in educating students for the needs of agriculture today and in the future.

If you want to learn more, visit BakersfieldCollege.edu.

Are You Prepared?

Continued from PAGE 1

Sean Norman discussed his focus in the field and advice after his 28 years of experience. He greatly stressed the need for situational awareness at all times if a wildfire is nearby, not only if behind fire lines.

"No matter how familiar you are with a piece of ground and the weather up there, what we're seeing is fire behavior so dramatic, and the fires are moving so quickly [since] the fuels are so dry," Norman stated, "that even firefighters with decades of experience are being caught in places because they just didn't anticipate it."

He spoke about L.C.E.S. (Lookout, Communication, Escape Route, Safety Zone) and the saying "Fire goes where water flows." Even normal fluxes in weather, such as thunderstorms, can cause extremely irregular and deadly fire movements. For those cattlemen and women responsible for going behind fire lines when their cattle need to be rescued there are a few additional risk factors. Upward slopes burn quickly, power lines go down frequently and can electrify barbed wire, cattle guards, gates, water and even powder fire retardant. Not only this but thick smoke can ground a power line, making any nearby area dangerous. This demands keeping situational awareness and effective movements of utmost importance.

The meeting's last speaker, Tracy Schohr, spoke about the importance of being prepared before wildfires strike. For example, small things that can greatly affect a building's "save-ability" are tree limbs overhanging the roof, birds' nests under the eaves, pine needles in rain gutters and wood mulch and shrubs touching the wooden panels of a building. She also described the process one would need to take in order to effectively remove their livestock. After the fire lights and an

emergency is declared by the state, one should notify the Ag. Department and UC Cooperative Extension about receiving resources. When it comes time to remove cattle, Sheriff/CAL-FIRE will decide if it's safe for pass-holders to go behind fire lines and remove their livestock safely. However, it is important to note that training and receiving an agriculture/cattle removal pass from your local government will not ensure your clearance through fire lines if the Sheriff/CAL-FIRE deem it unsafe.

Her emergency contact list:

1. County Ag Department
2. UC Cooperative Extension
3. County Sheriff (for Non-Emergencies)
4. County or Closest Cal-Fire Office
5. Veterinarian Contacts, Haulers and Neighbors

She also mentioned the importance of having a truck and stationary packing list.

After extensive discussion about Ag Passes and programs developed by counties with histories shaped by wildfires that are granting cattle operators access behind fire lines, Assembly Bill 1103 carried by assembly member Megan Dawley was mentioned. This bill would, as put by Kirk Wilbur, "streamline and facilitate adoption of these ag pass programs throughout the state. Those would still be under the local control of the counties, but this bill would do three main things." Those three things summarized as: Establish minimal requirements for an ag pass, provide statewide training programs for ranchers, and help ensure cattlemen and women have the opportunity to retrieve their cattle. The CCA is working to get this bill passed in hopes that less harm would come to cattlemen and women, and equally as important keep livestock protected, while making the process safer for everyone.



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Cannabis Economy Benefits Communities, Creates Jobs



**By Geoffrey Taylor, MA
Hemp Contributor,
Valley Ag Voice**

It's been a long road back into working full-time in the cannabis industry, but I'm grateful to pursue my passion for the plant in a position that pays well

but unfortunately is over two hours from my home in Bakersfield.

While this opportunity to make a better living and follow my heart into an industry I've known all too well for many years is a welcome one, it does not exist within the city limits of Bakersfield, Delano or other larger Kern County cities and it does not exist within the boundaries of Kern County. Isolated pockets of legal cannabis activity exist in hamlets like Arvin and California City, but they're simply not large enough or concentrated enough to make an economic splash. With limited commercial and industrial real estate, the number of employers is limited.

It doesn't have to be this way. With common sense commercial cannabis ordinances to protect schools, neighborhoods and other sensitive use areas, our city and county have the opportunity to create a wave of economic activity associated with commercial cannabis, and the service providers who serve the industry, that can make a substantial difference in

the lives of families across our region.

I've often made the argument that our region's agricultural heritage lends to our ability to produce some of the finest cannabis in the world. From cultivation to distribution, manufacturing to processing and every other facet of the industry, Bakersfield and Kern County can experience immense economic growth simply by allowing for recreational and medical commercial cannabis activity within their boundaries while also collecting new tax dollars generated by the industry. A report on the cannabis industry from the University of California, Santa Barbara estimates that over 211,000 direct jobs have been created in the cannabis industry nationwide up to 2020.

Let's use Santa Barbara County as an example of tax revenue generation and employment numbers. The County of Santa Barbara generated \$2.4 million in additional tax revenue from cannabis in Quarter Two of the 2020-2021 fiscal year according to the *Lompoc Record*. According to the *Lompoc Record*, over \$600,000 of cannabis tax revenue helped keep the Santa Barbara County Library System maintaining hours and providing services through the pandemic. In addition to this, the University of California Santa Barbara reports that over 6,000 new direct and indirect jobs have been created as a result of commercial cannabis activity in Santa Barbara County through 2020.

Another economic stimulus is the need for service companies to provide an array of services for cannabis businesses. For example, the facility where I



Regulated cannabis production, like this licensed indoor cannabis grow operation in Adelanto, bring immense economic benefit to their local communities (Geoffrey Taylor)

work in Adelanto, a small city in the high desert of San Bernardino County, has recently experienced problems with our electrical and diesel generator systems along with our air conditioning throughout the building. We utilized local service providers to resolve our issues and put our corporate dollars back into the community where we operate.

Another indicator to consider is the average salary in California's cannabis industry. According to ZipRecruiter, the average reported salary of cannabis industry workers is around \$63,106 in the state of California. According to 2020 Census data, the

average household income in the City of Bakersfield is \$60,058, implying that the average statewide cannabis salary can easily provide for the average Kern County family with a person working in the cannabis industry.

The last major consideration is philanthropy in the cannabis industry. One of my recent articles highlighted an Arvin cannabis business who held a benefit for the City of Arvin Parks and Recreation Department to improve the city's baseball and softball fields. In Santa Barbara County, Carp Growers Association, a group of Carpinteria Valley cannabis businesses, has provided grants and scholarships to a wide variety of organizations from food pantries to local high school sports teams, including a 2019 donation to the Carpinteria Unified School District from \$189,000. This type of corporate philanthropy is often built into the ESG initiatives of many upstart cannabis operations as a component of their corporate models.

All I'm really getting at here is that it's time to end the archaic bans, bring regulated commercial cannabis activity to our own backyard and watch our economy not only further diversify but also experience growth from a wave of development and hiring surrounding the industry. Let's look to the future and take the commonsense approach to cannabis—it's not going anywhere and our region is missing out on the taxation and economic growth that comes with it. Now is the time for a change.

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Cattlemen Applaud Biden Executive Order to Restore Competition in the U.S. Economy



U.S. President Joe Biden (Yasamin Jafari Tehrani / Shutterstock)

Press Release Provided by the United States Cattlemen's Association

On July 9th, President Joe Biden issued an Executive Order to establish a government-wide effort to promote competition in the American economy. The Order includes 72 initiatives by more than a dozen federal agencies to tackle some of the most pressing competition problems across the U.S. economy.

Of particular importance to U.S. cattle producers, the President's Executive Order:

- Directs USDA to consider issuing new rules under the Packers and Stockyards Act making it easier for farmers to bring and win claims, stopping chicken

processors from exploiting and underpaying chicken farmers, and adopting anti-retaliation protections for farmers who speak out about bad practices.

- Directs USDA to consider issuing new rules defining when meat can bear "Product of USA" labels, so that consumers have accurate, transparent labels that enable them to choose products made here.

United States Cattlemen's Association (USCA) President Brooke Miller issued the following statement:

"USCA applauds President Biden for hearing the calls from cattle country regarding increased consolidation in the U.S. cattle industry, and then issuing his own call for prompt action within his Administration.

"This Executive Order comes just weeks after USCA Vice President Justin Tupper testified before the Senate Agriculture Committee on the detrimental effects of a U.S. cattle and beef industry controlled by just four major meatpackers, two of which are foreign-owned and operated. USCA's testimony was loud and clear – the Big Four meatpackers have held their thumb on the scales for far too long, tilting the playing field to their advantage, and forcing more and more independent cattle producers out of business.

"A centralized food system is a threat to our national security. USCA believes in pushing forth policy solutions that strengthen the bottom lines of U.S. agricultural producers in order to strengthen our nation's food security. President Biden's Executive Order is an important step towards restoring a fair and equitable food system."

New USDA Competition Driver Applauded by Cattle Group

Press Release Provided by R-CALF USA

The largest U.S. producer-only cattle trade association, R-CALF USA, applauded the July 9th announcement by Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack to use his fiscal authorities to drive efforts to restore competition in livestock markets.

Today, Vilsack announced the availability of \$500 million for making investments in meat processing and for developing a strategy to ensure the investments effectively jumpstart and sustain competition over the long haul.

"It is clear the Secretary intends to open the bottleneck created in the cattle industry because there are too few remaining beef packers to effectively and timely harvest the tens of millions of cattle

produced each year by America's cattle producers," said R-CALF USA CEO Bill Bullard.

The vulnerability of America's food supply chain became obvious to all when grocery stores ran out of beef following the 2020 onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This suggested the current structure of the cattle and beef industry is inadequate to ensure national food security.

Bullard says competition has been purged from the cattle and beef supply chain, and this has caused the relationship between beef prices and cattle prices to disconnect. As a result, he says, consumers have been paying very high prices for beef – as if there was a shortage – and cattle producers have been receiving severely depressed prices for their cattle – as if there was a surplus.

"This exemplifies today's broken cattle supply chain in which there is no shortage of cattle, just a shortage of marketing outlets for which to bring those cattle to market," said Bullard.

We're looking forward to working with the Secretary by responding to the forthcoming Request for Information soon to be issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture that will give us the opportunity to recommend how best to use this money to ensure the permanent return of competitive market forces within the cattle industry," Bullard concluded.



U.S. Department of Agriculture Administration building (AndreasJ / Adobe Stock)

The Cattleman's Corner Excuses Better Have Some Quality



By Austin Snedden
Ranching Contributor,
Valley Ag Voice

Most excuses we get on a day-to-day basis are almost impossible to verify. But for the last eighteen months the COVID excuse has run rampant. We must be nearing the end of the legitimacy of the COVID-based excuses, but I think some folks and businesses got in too deep and developed a deep dependency on "because of COVID."

"Because of COVID I couldn't get your fuel filter ordered." "Because of COVID we will need to add another two weeks on to that delivery." I recently went to a local retailer to buy some two-inch pipe, and they had morphed their excuses, combining the exhausted COVID excuse with a heat excuse. The county I live in (Kern) is full of independent folks and, overall, has struggled to get most of us to follow the COVID prodded herd; some businesses required masks and some didn't. In terms of masks, I have always been willing to do what the business asked me to do, and in recent months you rarely are asked to wear a mask.

COVID culture shock just hit me recently at the above-mentioned pipe retailer. I arrived early afternoon on a Friday, the front door of the office adorned with COVID "Safety for employees, Do not enter, Use side door." The side door was behind a locked gate. I returned to the door adorned with signs banning my entrance, I poked my head in, and was informed

that not only was I not supposed to be in there (sales office) but also I couldn't buy a pipe because it was too hot outside for their employees. I am not immune from excuses, and this recent interaction inspired me to make sure that my excuses come across fresh and creative.

The truly motivated person after an experience where they were on the wrong side of a weak excuse would commit to not making excuses themselves, but it takes a true artist to use that experience to inspire better excuses in their own life. This face-to-face encounter with weak excuses caused introspection, and I realized that as the COVID excuse is for many, I have certain excuses that I have overused. My go-to excuse crutch is "wind."

Bad loop in my rope... wind. Bad rifle shot... wind. Bad golf shot... wind. Bad ping pong serve... you get the idea. My overuse of the wind excuse is due in part to my lack of creativity but also because of the quality of the wind excuse itself. It's almost impossible to verify, as rogue gusts can be almost anywhere at any time; wind is a powerful excuse if you can use discretion to not ride it to the ground, as I have. Wind trumps my second favorite excuse, "sun was in my eyes," because the sun only shines from one direction. (Expert tip: the wind and "sun in eyes" excuses are far less effective indoors.)

I am urged to do better when I hear the weak excuses of others, but I am truly inspired by the excuse makers that go above and beyond my capabilities. The expert excuse maker infuses multi variable excuses into the vocabulary. When the expert excuse maker commits a mistake in physical performance, not only will you hear things about wind and sun, but also humidity, barometric pressure, moon phase, and climate change. Prepare yourself for when the expert excuse maker is late for something or misses a deadline. You will hear things about relatives' food allergies, zodiac calendar, systemic alarm clock failure, and deforestation. Let's collectively make our excuses more believable, if not entertaining. Or we could drop excuses all together... but who wants to do that.

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Lalo Garcia looks over a soil sensor in a field planted to organic processing tomatoes near Los Banos. Garcia's employer, Bowles Farming Co., is among the agricultural operations that rely heavily on sensors and online data portals—and therefore on good broadband connections. (Kevin Hecteman)

By Kevin Hecteman, Assistant Editor, Ag Alert

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Farmers and ranchers in the 21st century are increasingly turning to soil sensors, online data hubs and other advanced technologies designed to help them develop more precise uses of water and other inputs, and keep up with the paperwork.

None of this is possible, they say, without a good connection to the internet—something that can be dodgy in rural parts of the state. Only 46.5% of rural households in California can adopt broadband with download speeds of 100 megabits per second or faster, according to the 2020 Broadband Action Plan, produced by the California Broadband Council.

“Broadband and high-speed connectivity is that next era for the California farmer to maintain our competitive advantage,” said Robert Spiegel, a California Farm Bureau policy advocate.

The issue took on new importance with the COVID-19 pandemic, which forced much of the world online.

“COVID highlighted it for the importance for business operations,” said Cannon Michael, who runs Bowles Farming Co. in Los Banos. Michael named “consistency of service” as a top issue.

“It’s a wireless connection that’s beamed from several

Farm Tech Depends on Broadband Access

different towers to our tower,” Michael said of his digital access. “You get a little bit of spottiness, so it’s a little inconsistent, but it’s been getting better.”

Lalo Garcia, who handles technology at Bowles Farming, said one of his broadband-reliant projects involves soil sensors in fields, which record water and temperature data and help the farm make irrigation decisions. The farm also uses an app that allows an agronomist to send details of applications of crop-protection materials to an employee’s phone.

“The worker receives it and completes the action, and all that goes to the office where they keep track of it for the county,” Garcia said.

It wasn’t just business operations that were affected. Michael said his farm has housing for employees and their families.

“A lot of the kids, obviously, were at home,” Michael said. “We partnered with the provider that we are using, and we paid for the cost to get them service. They were trying to do stuff off of cellphones.”

In Monterey County, Mauricio Flores, production technology coordinator at Braga Fresh, said his farm has several technological programs in place that rely, at least some extent, on a good connection. One is HeavyConnect, which allows managers and employees to file reports pertaining to food safety, planting, inspections and other operations from the field.

“Whatever is input into HeavyConnect stays on your phone until you get to a reliable source of internet, that being either a good connection or Wi-Fi,” Flores said. “Once you get to any of those locations, then it automatically updates for us.”

Farm-machinery operators also are encouraged to use the app to report issues with the equipment, Flores added.

“It allows the people at the shop to see the reports that are being created in real time,” Flores said. “That way they can get to fixing them as fast as possible, instead of waiting for them to bring in the machinery.”

Flores said the farm also has a tracking app that allows the operation to keep tabs on field work done by the

machinery and its operators.

“We need a good service for that one,” Flores said. “When the tracking system is working, it’s telling us how much time was spent out in the field. If we have spotty service or no service at all, then we’re not getting accurate information.”

Efforts are underway to help bring better broadband access to rural areas. The proposed state budget for fiscal year 2022 includes \$6 billion to \$7 billion for rural-broadband investment. Though some details remain to be worked out, about \$3.75 billion will go to “middle mile” projects and an additional \$2 billion is allocated to “last mile” work, Spiegel said.

“The way to look at it is, you have the urban core, but when you get out to rural communities, you truly need a hub,” Spiegel said. “That hub then becomes that middle-mile connector to the last mile.”

Identifying potential hubs is the aim of Senate Bill 28 by Sen. Anna Caballero, D-Salinas, which is pending in the Assembly.

Taylor Roschen, a Farm Bureau policy advocate, likened the system to roads, with the state highways as the middle mile and local or county roads as the last mile to the farm.

“I think the administration’s proposal is to use that middle mile as sort of like an open source,” Roschen said. “Because the fiber optic cables are being laid by the state, and the costs are borne by the state or the federal government, the providers don’t have to pay those costs. It will be like an open access for any provider that wants to utilize that network.”

The last mile, she added, will take more of a grant-based approach, with the message to providers and others being “if you want to come match funds with us to build out that last mile and connect to the middle mile,

then we’ll help you get there.”

“Farm Bureau has always articulated a concern about rural connectivity for decades,” Roschen said, adding that the pandemic provided a new opportunity to raise the same points “and to amplify them in different contexts.”

At the federal level, two bills in Congress seek to improve rural Americans’ access to broadband. One, the Eliminating Barriers to Rural Internet Development Grant Eligibility Act, or EBRIDGE, would allow for public-private partnerships and give communities flexibility to comply with funding-match requirements. The other, the Broadband for Rural America Act, would authorize more than \$7 billion for U.S. Department of Agriculture programs such as ReConnect, which awards grants and loans to facilitate broadband deployment.

Sara Arsenault, California Farm Bureau’s federal policy director, said Farm Bureau supports both bills and is active in a pair of coalitions working toward better broadband access: the American Connection Project Policy Coalition and Connect Americans Now.

Spiegel said the pandemic provided an opportunity for broadband challenges “to be very well known,” and the implications are wide-ranging.

“To respond to the wildfire crisis and the energy crisis, you need to have those real-time updates about what happens,” Spiegel said.

In agriculture, he added, “you need to know the real-time inputs of what it is that you have on farm to be able to meet the challenges brought about by climate change or water availability, or a lack of labor. Now is the moment that we have to ensure that rural California is not left behind and remains competitive with the rest of the state.”

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Rural California Hammered as Drought Spreads



**By Christine Souza,
Assistant Editor, Ag Alert**

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from California Farm Bureau
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With depleted reservoirs and limited water supplies across California, Gov. Gavin Newsom last week expanded the drought emergency order to nine additional counties and signed an executive order calling on all Californians to voluntarily reduce water use by 15%.

The action by the governor follows drought disaster orders issued in April and May, and brings a total of 50 of the state's 58 counties under the drought state of emergency. Nine counties added to the drought declaration include: Inyo, Marin, Mono, Monterey, San Luis Obispo, San Mateo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara and Santa Cruz.

Brent Burchett, executive director of the San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau, said, "In our county, we weren't waiting for the governor's declaration to make local changes.

"SGMA (Sustainable Groundwater Management Act) is the more acute regulation that we're mindful of regarding cutbacks coming to agriculture," Burchett said. "We're already prepared for that, but this current drought is just another reminder of how bad things can be and how quickly they can change."

The declaration also directs state agencies to take further actions to address drought impacts. Following the earlier drought declarations, state regulators imposed emergency regulations and sent notices of water unavailability to farmers who are trying to negotiate their crops through another drought year, in part with groundwater, California's backup supply in drier years. Under groundwater plans now in place throughout the San Joaquin Valley, however, historic pumping levels must be significantly ramped down.

Drought declarations issued this spring led to water curtailments for Russian River watershed counties of Mendocino and Sonoma, the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta watershed and are currently being considered for the Scott and Shasta rivers.

"There are no silver-bullet opportunities to just 'use less water' without sacrificing productivity and the livelihoods of people in farm communities," Jamie Johansson, president of the California Farm Bureau, said. "While demand for water can be reduced, one thing will not change and that is the public's demand for food."

The new proclamation calls on urban, municipal, industrial and agricultural water users and purveyors throughout the state to voluntarily reduce water use by 15%. But a map from the California Farm Water

Coalition showing water cutbacks indicates agricultural regions throughout the state have already far exceeded this level in the form of reduced allocations, water rights curtailments and proposed or existing emergency regulations.

Johansson noted that one-quarter of the state's irrigated farmland has already seen a 95% reduction in its expected water supplies, and more than half of that farmland is getting no surface water at all.

Norm Groot, executive director of the Monterey County Farm Bureau, said the primary concern at this point is 2022.

"If we don't have precipitation this winter, our reservoirs will not have sufficient water supplies to continue releases for consistent recharge in 2022," Groot said. "We are conscripted to release water throughout the year due to NOAA Fisheries requirements for habitat and fish passage, which helps with groundwater recharge but doesn't allow us to manage our water storage for long-term efficiency."

Farmers in San Luis Obispo County also are worried about another drought next year, Burchett said.

"That's when reservoir levels will start dropping to that 10-15% level that gets scary for drinking-water purposes, not just agriculture," he said.

Having to do more with less is a way of life for most farmers, said Monterey County vegetable grower Colby Pereira, who serves as president of the Monterey County Farm Bureau.

"Farmers have and will continue to utilize best management practices with water usage in mind," she said, adding that farmers are by nature resourceful with not only water but all inputs.

California farmers and ranchers have always demonstrated a willingness to find better ways to conserve natural resources, including water, Johansson said, adding that they have invested billions of dollars in more water-efficient technology and infrastructure, including drip and microsprinklers, soil-moisture monitoring, computerized irrigation controls and remote sensing.

"As Gov. Newsom has pointed out, California can't just 'tighten its belt' periodically in response to drought and hope to survive years like this," Johansson said. "Rather, life must be breathed into the storage and infrastructure projects that we have been discussing for years, such as construction of Sites Reservoir, the Friant-Kern Canal fix and more.

"This is another opportunity to streamline and take action on projects that alleviate future droughts," he added.

State officials estimate that an additional 15% voluntary reduction from 2020 levels could save as much as 850,000 acre-feet of water over the next year for future use, or enough to supply more than 1.7 million households.

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State Water Contractors' Response to California's 2021-22 State Budget

Budget Includes Historic Investments in California's Drought Resilience and Critical Water Delivery Infrastructure

Press Release Provided by the State Water Contractors

On June 28th, the California State Legislature passed the Budget Act for the next fiscal year. As part of the enacted budget, nearly \$3 billion has been appropriated to a drought relief package as California faces its driest conditions in decades with about 85% of the state facing extreme drought conditions.

Consistent with the Administration's Water Resilience Portfolio and the Governor's emergency drought proclamations, the state's spending represents a commitment to meet the immediate and future challenges presented by extended drought and climate change by:

- Repairing subsidence damage to California's State Water Project (SWP) and Central Valley Project (CVP) water delivery infrastructure with a one-time \$100 million down payment for this year and a promise of another \$100 million next year toward Senator Melissa Hurtado's SB 559;
- Providing access to safe drinking water, building water supply reliability, and funding for sustainable groundwater management;
- Providing immediate drought support at local and regional levels;
- Enabling improved data collection and forecast

improvements; and

- Protecting fish and wildlife from drought impacts.

"Droughts don't come in cycles anymore; they are simply our new normal. Today's budget is a reflection of that fact. We must continue to invest in California's State Water Project as the backbone of our economy and the lifeblood of our communities – supporting 2/3 of all Californians statewide," said Jennifer Pierre, General Manager of the State Water Contractors. "Back in the 1960's, California visionaries dreamed big when they built the largest state owned and operated water system in the world to support 16 million people. With 27 million Californians relying on that same system today, we need to continue to invest in this multi-billion-dollar asset to ensure it can meet our state's water needs as we adapt to our new climate reality."

"Addressing these realities means making smart investments to repair subsidence damage to this outdated infrastructure like SB 559. It means bringing together varied interests to cooperate on the first ever Voluntary Agreements to improve water management. It means continuing to build and expand local sources of water supplies. It means we all have a stake in California, and the investments outlined in this state budget will help ensure clean, affordable water for all, even as the climate changes."

Governor Newsom Expands Drought Proclamation to Include Nine New Counties as Drought Conditions Persist Throughout the State

reflects the fact that 85% of the state is facing extreme drought conditions. The

announcement comes on the heels of the historic \$3 billion appropriation for a drought relief package included in the state budget passed by the legislature on June 28.

The Governor is calling for a 15% voluntary reduction in water use, underscoring the urgent need for continued investments in California's State Water Project (SWP) – the infrastructure two thirds of the state relies on that allows for the movement of water into storage under wet conditions, to support families, farms, businesses and communities during extended droughts.



California State Governor Gavin Newsom (Matt Gush / Shutterstock)

This Second Expansion of the Emergency Drought Proclamation Now Covers 50 out of California's 58 Counties and Calls for a 15% Voluntary Reduction in Water Use

Press Release Provided by the State Water Contractors

On July 8th, Governor Newsom issued a second expansion of the original April 21 drought emergency proclamation, building on the May 10 expansion to bring roughly 86% of California into a state of emergency due to the current drought. Today's expansion of the drought emergency proclamation

"Droughts present an existential threat to California's climate resiliency, food security, ecosystem health and our economy – all of which depend on the consistent and reliable movement of water through the SWP," said Jennifer Pierre, General Manager of the State Water Contractors. "Conservation measures such as the call for a 15% voluntary reduction in water use are important tools for managing our state's limited water supply during droughts, but conservation will only take us so far. If we do not commit to repairing and maintaining the SWP's outdated infrastructure through smart investments like SB 559, we risk diminishing the SWP's ability to help California respond to future droughts."

Wildfire Insurance Legislation Heads to the Governor

By Kevin Hecteman, Assistant Editor, Ag Alert

Reprinted with Permission from California Farm Bureau Federation

A bill that would allow California's insurer of last resort to write policies for California farms and ranches cleared the Legislature last week and awaits the governor's signature.

The California Farm Bureau sponsored Senate Bill 11, which allows farm buildings and equipment to be covered under the California FAIR Plan.

FAIR, or Fair Access to Insurance Requirements, is a state program that acts as insurer of last resort when no other coverage is available. Previously, only private residences were eligible for the program.

Jamie Johansson, president of California Farm Bureau, hailed the bill's unanimous approval in the Assembly and Senate. The bill would take effect immediately upon being signed.

"With the passage of Senate Bill 11, California's farmers and ranchers are one step closer to having a property insurance option of last resort," Johansson said. "California's FAIR Plan provides added protection for those farmers and ranchers who have found their insurance policies canceled or not renewed.

"Given the current wildfire challenges facing California, our agricultural community is fearful of what may happen this year," he added. "We have already faced significant wildfire losses, and so too have our rural communities."

Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara undertook a listening tour in concert with California Farm Bureau and county Farm Bureaus in areas devastated by



Wildfire on wheat field stubble (Gorlov-KV / Shutterstock)

wildfires in recent years. In a May 23 visit to a Calistoga winery that lost a warehouse to a wildfire last year, farmers and ranchers from Napa and Sonoma counties explained that their insurance policies were not being renewed, and that new coverage was difficult if not impossible to obtain—and what was available was prohibitively expensive.

Once SB 11 becomes law, the FAIR Plan has 90 days to submit insurance forms, guidelines and rates to the California Department of Insurance for approval. The FAIR Plan and the department have been developing a farm policy framework, and Farm Bureau said it believes coverage may be available by the end of the year.

The bill was authored by Sen. Susan Rubio, D-Baldwin Park.

"We thank Sen. Rubio for championing this legislation to protect California's farmers and ranchers," Johansson said. "It's critical that Gov. Newsom signs the legislation and supports the efforts of the agricultural community, insurance companies and California Insurance Commissioner Ricardo Lara to find a viable solution."



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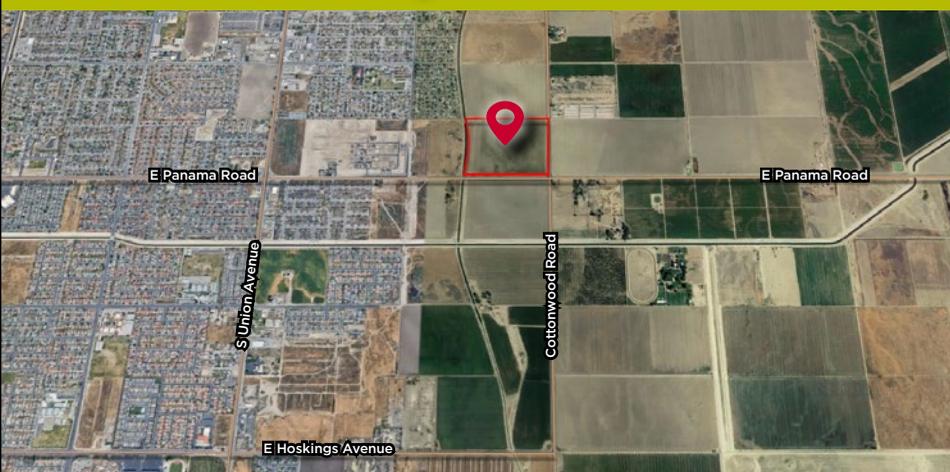
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ALMONDS AND OPEN GROUND \$27,289±/AC 111.42± ac, 1 well, 1 domestic well and 3.14 AF Wheeler Ridge Maricopa WSD contract water, Grade 1 Excellent Soils	ALMONDS AND FARMLAND \$21,790±/AC 995.11± acres, Wasco Area, Semi-Tropic WSD Contract and non-contract water, 5 wells, Productive Soils, and Almonds in full production.
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DWR to Use Innovative Airborne Tech to Map State's Groundwater Basins

Press Release Provided by California Department of Water Resources

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) is using an innovative, helicopter-based technology to gather information about the state's groundwater aquifer structure to support drought response and the implementation of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA).

DWR's use of airborne electromagnetic (AEM) surveys advances Governor Newsom's Water Resilience Portfolio goal of using technology to support the State's understanding of groundwater resources.

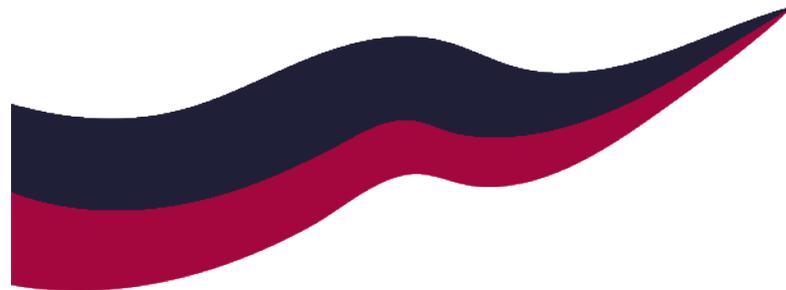
"The data collected during these surveys will provide a better understanding of California's groundwater systems, and in turn support more informed and sustainable groundwater management and drought preparedness and response approaches," said Steven Springhorn, DWR's SGMA Technical Assistance Manager.

Beginning this month, DWR will conduct AEM surveys of groundwater basins in the Salinas Valley, Paso Robles and Cuyama Valley. During the surveys, a low-flying helicopter tows a large hoop with scientific equipment approximately 100 feet above the ground surface. The helicopter, flown by experienced and licensed pilots, will make several passes over the survey areas and may be visible to residents.

Surveys will be conducted over the next several years in high- and medium-priority groundwater basins around the state, where data collection is feasible.

Survey data creates an image of the subsurface down to a depth of about 1,000 feet below ground surface and provides information about large-scale aquifer structures and geology. This information supports the implementation of local groundwater sustainability plans (GSPs), which can help local agencies sustainably manage groundwater during drought.

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Water Infrastructure

Continued from PAGE 1

One major water bond, Proposition 1, passed seven years ago, and we have yet to see a completed project from this funding. Voters approved this water bond because it is common knowledge that we simply do not have enough water storage. Yet, the State Water Commission has delayed much needed infrastructure projects. There was a San Joaquin Water Blueprint which created a 2-10 year plan to identify the structural changes needed to find a water balance in the Valley. Unfortunately, due to timing (I believe), the water bond to fund much of these projects failed in 2018.

The last major water infrastructure project was the San Luis Obispo reservoir, and that was built in the 1960s. That was 60 years ago! In the 1970s there were studies conducted by the Bureau of Reclamation showing groundwater overdraft occurring primarily on the east side of the San Joaquin Valley. Environmental groups in the 1970s and 1980s stopped water projects and claimed victory for their cause. But all it did was stop projects; it did nothing to actually solve anything. It didn't stop the problem of 1 million acre-feet of overdraft occurring every year. Their "victory" simply slowed surface water delivery, only exacerbating the overdraft problem. On top of that, in the 1970s, the state's implementation of the Endangered Species Act only added to the problem.

But California was still a great place for farming because of our rich soil. (Fun fact: Did you know

we are the only place in the world where you can harvest carrots twice a year?) Markets began to change and many farmers went from row crops to permanent crops, which added to the demand of water. The 2008/2009 Biological Opinions took another 1 million acre-feet of surface water from the very farmers who paid for the infrastructure. This means that even during the wettest years, we still can only get 50% of the water originally allocated.

Most of the problems we are dealing with are the result of settlements between environmental groups (who have absolutely nothing to lose by suing the government) and the state and federal governments. That's because the enviros have no recourse. Just ask our friends in oil. Environmental groups can make any claim they want, and it is the industry that has the burden of proof. It's the complete opposite of "innocent until proven guilty." They use the legal tactics to push their agendas, but offer no real solutions to anything. They're just groups of "no."

And now the State Board is saying they need to "update their plans." In my experience, when a government agency "reviews" a law, it means they're going to add more restrictions. This happens in the air world all the time. The Environmental Protection Act states that the EPA must review their rules and regulations every so often. The bureaucrats have interpreted this as: we need to set new limits every time we review our rules and regulations. After the State Board updates their plan, most likely, they're going to take unimpaired flows (what the flow would be if there were no dams on the rivers). The state

is looking at it as if the Delta flow is the only answer. The problem is the state is letting the environmental activists set the agenda to solve the problem, but we need scientists to solve the problem. I also thought we were in an age of "follow the science," but I promise you that is not the case in Sacramento.

My question to Governor Newsom is: why are you letting this happen? Why are environmental advocates leading the discussion and not scientists, engineers, or water managers? I'm not saying there's no place for environmental groups. They can certainly have a seat at the table. We all want to make sure we are being good stewards of the environment. But they by no means should be leading the discussion. Or to the majority party in Sacramento: why are you letting this happen? There have been great bills presented in Sacramento (one was carried by Democrat Senator Melissa Hurtado, but it failed). I have no idea why—other than what goes on in that building—defies all rules of logic. One thing is for sure, SGMA is not the solution.

As I have said before: we do not have a groundwater problem. We have a surface water problem, which resulted in a groundwater problem. But what we really have is an ostrich problem. Everyone in power keeps sticking their heads in the sand. If we had the storage capacity in place in 2017 and 2019 (during wet years), we would not be in the predicament we are today. Metropolitan Water was able to build large storage and therefore they were able to keep overflow during wet years, which is currently saving their customers. (I understand their budget is larger



California Aqueduct (Darren J. Bradley / Shutterstock)

than most county budgets... but still.)

Unfortunately, I believe the current federal administration also has the opportunity to make an already bad situation worse. If President Biden reverses what President Trump did (the new biological opinions), we will be in a world of hurt. Those biological opinions actually started under President Obama, so hopefully this won't happen. The biggest win was that environmental advocates are not allowed to influence biological opinions—this is huge. President Trump set up independent scientific reviews as well, only to be SUEd by Governor Newsom simply because it smells of Trump. We can only hope President Biden takes the opportunity to ratify that the study is sound.

This narrative that environmental groups have painted of the rich farmer abusing the land and over drafting water while he rakes in his millions couldn't be farther from the truth. Our Valley farmers are suffering, yet persevering. It is our job as Californians to support them.



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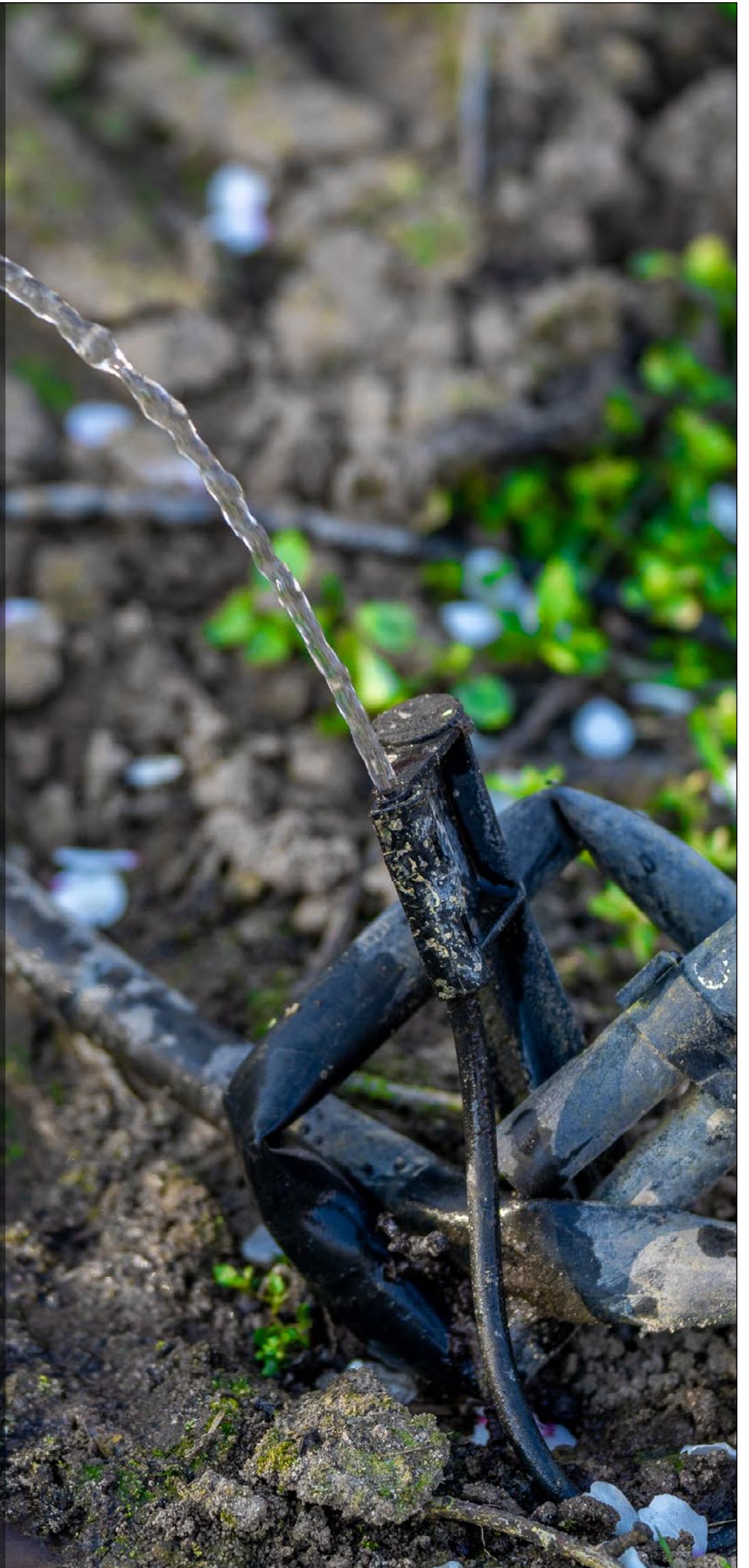
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California Establishes Quarantine to Prohibit the Introduction of the Spotted Lanternfly into California



Spotted lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*) (Nancy J. Ondra / Shutterstock)

Press Release Provided by the California Department of Food and Agriculture

A state exterior quarantine has been declared to prohibit the introduction of the spotted lanternfly (SLF), *Lycorma delicatula*, into California. Spotted lanternfly was first detected in North America in 2014 in Pennsylvania and has now spread to nine states.

The quarantine prohibits the entry into California of SLF, its host plants, and a variety of articles, including conveyances, originating from any area where an SLF infestation exists. Specifically, articles and commodities covered by the quarantine include the following:

- Spotted lanternfly, a harmful invasive species that threatens California's agriculture and natural resources,
- All plants and plant parts including firewood, if exposed to the environment,
- Outdoor industrial and construction materials, equipment, and waste,
- Shipping and storage containers including personal moving containers,
- Outdoor household articles,
- Conveyances of any type including but not limited to, cars, trucks, recreational vehicles, boats, and trailers,
- Agricultural equipment including but not limited to, tractors, harvesting equipment, and rigid containers,
- Any other article, object, materials, or means of conveyance when it is determined by a California State Plant Quarantine Officer to present a risk of carrying or spreading any life stage of SLF.

All the articles and commodities covered above are prohibited entry into California from areas under SLF quarantine with the following exceptions:

- Certificate of Treatment issued by an authorized state agricultural official,
- If originating outside of a SLF infested area and moving through a SLF infested area during March through December, the regulated article must be in an enclosed vehicle or conveyance or completely covered,
- Any articles transported by a conveyance that has a GPS data report indicating that it did not travel

through a SLF-infested area,

- Indoor articles not exposed to the environment, including, but not limited to, household articles, house plants, and indoor furnishings,
- Articles and commodities covered above that are accompanied by the appropriate permit, phytosanitary certificate, Compliance Agreement, or checklist for individuals moving from a SLF infested area into California.

The spotted lanternfly feeds on at least 103 species of plants (mostly trees) in 33 families. The immature stage (nymphs) is much more polyphagous than the adults, which strongly prefer tree of heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*) and grapes (*Vitis* species). Other hosts include maples, birches, hickory, beech, ash, apple, stone fruit, oaks, and willows. Their feeding produces large quantities of fluid, referred to as honeydew, that covers stems and leaves and promotes the growth of sooty mold. The feeding weakens the plants, and the sooty mold that grows on the honeydew decreases photosynthesis, which may have a greater impact on the plant than the feeding itself. Infestations weaken the plants and can eventually kill them.

SLF can move between natural landscapes and agricultural production. SLF egg cases are deposited on trees (especially trees with smooth bark) as well as a wide variety of outdoor objects--natural and manmade--including vehicles, recreational vehicles, stone, outdoor furniture, and storage and moving containers. The most likely pathway for long-distance spread of this invasive species is the movement of SLF egg cases.

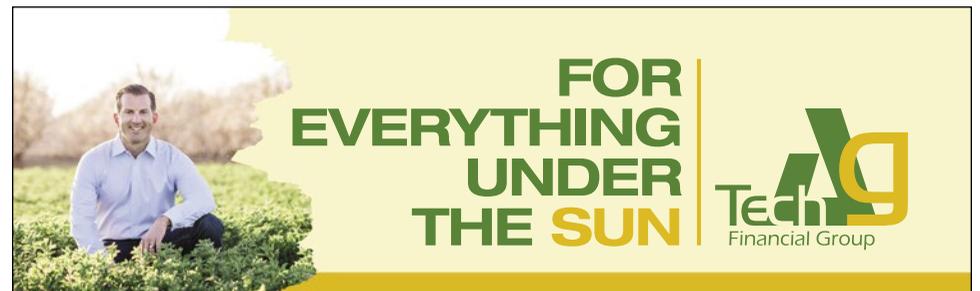
In addition to this quarantine, CDFA has taken the following proactive steps to protect California from SLF including, but not limited to, A-rating from the California Primary Entomologist, training for county regulatory staff through CDFA's Pest Prevention University, advisories to state/county staff, Border Protection Station inspections, air cargo inspections, dog teams in parcel facilities looking for unmarked packages, CDFA participation in national SLF Summit and coordination meetings, yearly visual survey for SLF in California, creation of a Science Advisory Panel to inform development of an SLF action plan to be used if SLF is detected in California, training module for UC Master Gardeners, host specificity testing, risk based maps and models, research on suitability of specialty crops, and biological control research.

More information on the SLF can be found here – CDFA.CA.gov/Plant/PDEP/Target-Pest-Disease-Profiles/Spotted-LF-Profile.html

More information on the SLF quarantine can be found here – CDFA.CA.gov/Plant/Regulations.html

Checklist for individuals moving from a SLF infested area into California can be found here – CDFA.CA.gov/Plant/PDEP/Docs/Spotted-LF/SLF-ChecklistCA.pdf

If you believe you have seen the spotted lanternfly, please contact our Invasive Species Hotline at 1-800-491-1899, via Report a Pest- CDFA.CA.gov/Plant/ReportAPest, or by contacting your local County Agricultural Commissioner here – CDFA.CA.gov/Exec/County/CountyMap



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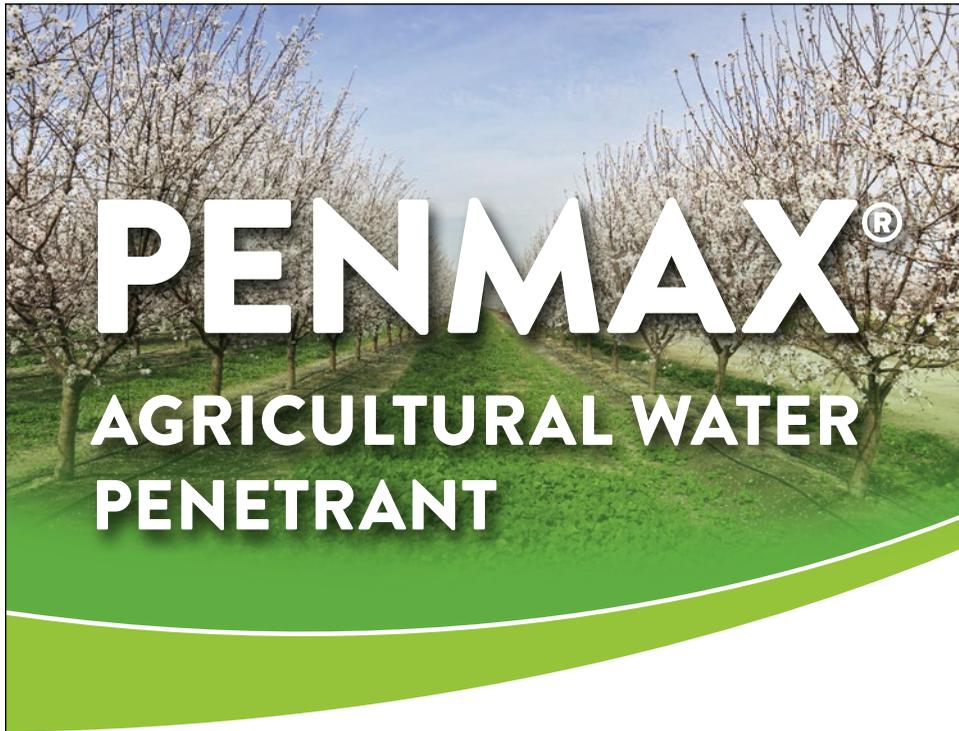
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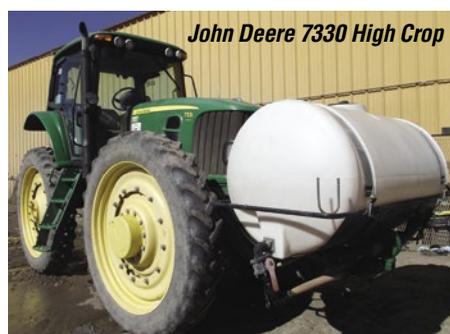


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Faith * Family * Farming

By Sandy Mittelsteadt
Faith Contributor, Valley Ag Voice

The choice to retire from writing the “Faith in Farming” column was not an easy choice for me. Writing the column has been both exciting and interesting for me. I am thrilled by the fact that I have grown closer to the Lord in writing these articles. However, I have retired from spending fifty years in education and my husband and I plan to do a lot of traveling. Writing a column and meeting deadlines would be difficult with a traveling schedule, so I bit the bullet and made the difficult decision of resigning from writing the “Faith in Farming” column.

I want you to know that writing the “Faith in Farming” column has been an important part of my life. I will greatly miss you all. Even though I do not know all of you, I have met many of you, my readers. Your comments and conversation are etched in my memory. I will continue to pray for the Valley Ag Voice newspaper and its success and for its writers and readers. To have a newspaper in Kern County that celebrates the farming people who are the backbone of our society is noteworthy.

A Farewell and a New Beginning

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you, my readers, for your support. And, I am grateful to Russell Johnson and Elizabeth Vaughn for their encouragement and help. I would also like to thank Ed Tudor for his invitation to start writing this column, which was his idea.

It is now my honor and privilege to introduce you to Andrea Wright, the newest author of the “Faith in Farming” column. I have known Andrea for many years, and I know you will come to love her as much as I do.

“I was born into an Italian Catholic farm family, the Compagnoni family,” says Andrea Wright, “and was raised on a farm on a long dirt road in Pumpkin Center, which made me the person I am today. I can sort through my life’s happenings, as it is much like going through the moments of time. I have learned that the simple things are the most important, and my fondest childhood memory is just being ‘a farmer’s daughter.’”

Growing up on a farm, Andrea did farm chores, was a member of Panama 4-H Club, participated in church activities, and was even the Alternate Representative

for Kern County Dairy Princess. In her adult life, she still lives on a farm and says she is “still a farm girl at heart.” She and her husband, Jack, farm and have an almond orchard. They are blessed to have ten grandchildren from the ages of 9 to 24 and one great-grandson named Jack Dean Wright. Andrea is making sure that family traditions are passed on into the next generation. She feels that living on a small farm keeps their family roots connected.

Andrea’s vocation is in education. In fact, I met Andrea in 1998 when I worked at Kern County’s Superintendent of Schools and she came to assist me in their School-to-Career Program. She went on to supervise the JobsPlus! Program. She has been involved with many activities that expose local students to the “real world of work,” including Farm Day in the City, Teacher’s Ag Seminar, College Night, Derricks to Desks, Engineering Day, and Leaders in Life. As an educator, Andrea has also facilitated and taught many workshops at local, state, and national educational conferences. Andrea retired from the Kern County Superintendent of Schools and continues to volunteer in youth educational projects.

To sum up my introduction of Andrea, allow me share



Andrea Wright (left) and Sandy Mittelsteadt (right) celebrating after lifted COVID-19 restrictions

a photo of us taken recently and to quote her: “For me, it’s all about faith, family and farming, and making a lifetime of memories reflecting on our family values.” To learn more about Andrea Wright and her farm life, read her first book, *Pumpkin Center and the County Towns “A Road Runs Through Them,”* and her second book, *Pumpkin Center and the County Towns: The Farm Families: “Our Land and Our Passion.”*



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