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Why Was Delta Pumping Restricted in January?

By Scott Hamilton,
President, Hamilton Resource Economics

As of January 7th, more than 100,000 cfs (200,000 af/day) were flowing through the Delta to the Pacific Ocean when pumps that supply the State Water Project were operating at one-fifth of their capacity. As California struggles to recover from three years of intensive drought and the San Joaquin Valley desperately tries to restore its groundwater supplies, this management of such a scarce resource is mystifying. So, why weren't the pumps operating at full capacity?

The primary reason for the restrictions in mid-January was the need to protect the endangered delta smelt from entrainment at state and federal pumping plants in the Delta. Some background. Delta smelt are a small (2") native fish that resides only in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and adjoining waters. Delta smelt are mostly annual fish, meaning they typically hatch, grow, reproduce, and die in one year, although a few live two years. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife conduct fish surveys throughout the year in the Delta to detect changes in abundance and trends of many fish species, one of them being delta smelt. Some of these surveys have been conducted for more than 40 years. Con-

sequently, scientists have some idea of when the fish will be in certain locations and why.

So back to the current regulation. The theory behind the regulation is that delta smelt disperse to shallow, turbid, fresh water where they spawn following the first big inflow event of the water year (commonly called a "first flush", which started this water year at the end of December 2022). Then they typically stay in those areas. The premise is that pumping can be increased later because delta smelt will stay in those spawning areas away from the pumps. Unfortunately, the premise was based on a bad interpretation of a good scientific study.

A closer look at the data suggests the premise is without merit. When the first flush is very big, such as this year, delta smelt are far from the Delta pumps in January. A small percentage of them will move into the south Delta to spawn, generally starting around mid-February. So, given the hydrologic conditions in December and January, the regulation to protect delta smelt was unnecessary, but it cost the state as much as one-quarter of a million acre-feet of water.

Does any of this make sense? How can agency staff responsible for developing regulations so misinterpret scientific data and studies? Why is it so hard to

See **DELTA PUMPING RESTRICTED** on PAGE 4

Building a Better Ranch with Ranchbot



Easy installation for Ranchbot. (Photo: Ranchbot Monitoring Solutions)

By Audrey Hill,
Feature Contributor, Valley Ag Voice

Those who have worked in ranching know the time it takes and the importance of manually checking water storage tanks and troughs. Whether driving long distances, walking, or riding, the almost trivial task of checking livestock water sources every day undoubtedly adds hours to employees' paychecks and miles on the work truck. Andrew Coppin, a co-founder of Ranchbot, desired to reduce daily labor-intensive tasks with an automated process that

reduces business costs, all while saving water on the ranch. By using a small, solar-powered sensor installed onto a water tank, Ranchbot can turn what was half the day's work into a push of a button.

Coppin grew up cattle ranching in Australia and knows that water is the most essential resource on the ranch. Without sufficient water, heat stress and poor growth can significantly affect cattle's health. Coppin and his business partner Craig Hendricks started Ranchbot in 2016 during a major drought in Australia, intending to conserve and closely monitor what water was available. Now Ranchbot serves roughly 3,500 ranches with around 12,000 sensors in Australia and the U.S., although the product will be officially released into U.S. markets in early 2023. Currently, Coppin and his team are working on creating a production line in Dallas, TX, for all U.S. markets and strengthening the

product's cold resistance to better accommodate U.S. ranches.

Coppin states that buying a Ranchbot is like buying a smartphone. It will monitor water flow and pressure and will send info via satellite to another device. Certain features like rain gauges, pump controls, and trough sensors can be added, meaning water can be checked and turned on or off from another state. Alerts are completely customizable for the rancher and will only alert you in an emergency if that is preferred. "Connectivity Service" for the device is \$1 a day, and for any smaller monitors like the rain gauge, it is \$1 a week. Coppin is confident that his customers are happy with their switch and that Ranchbot will change the workday on the 20-head ranch, the 2,000-head ranch, and everything in between.

See **BUILDING A BETTER RANCH** on PAGE 5

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Holloway, Laurel Ag & Water to Host Grower Appreciation Happy Hour on February 15th at World Ag Expo

By Brian Milne, Vice President, Director of
Marketing & Communications The Holloway Group

February is here, which means bloom is right around the corner and the 2023 season is upon us here in California.

To kick off the season, and celebrate our farmers, Holloway and Laurel Ag & Water are co-hosting a Grower Appreciation Happy Hour on Day 2 of the World Ag Expo.

The event will be held Feb. 15, 2023, from 2-5 p.m. at the World Ag Expo Banquet Hall in Tulare. The Banquet Hall is located in the Heritage Complex near the front of the expo grounds.

"We just wanted to celebrate and thank our farmers



The Holloway team will be hosting a Grower Appreciation Happy Hour for farmers on Day 2 of World Ag Expo at the Banquet Hall in the Heritage Complex. RSVP at HollowayAg.com/WorldAg. (Photo: The Holloway Group)

See **GROWER APPRECIATION** on PG 13



FARM BUREAU NEWS

The United Voice of Kern County's Farming Community



President's Message

Welcome to 2023! Hope that you and your families had a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

**By Patty Poire
President, Kern
County Farm Bureau**

Starting where I left off in my January 2023 article, the state is continuing to experience

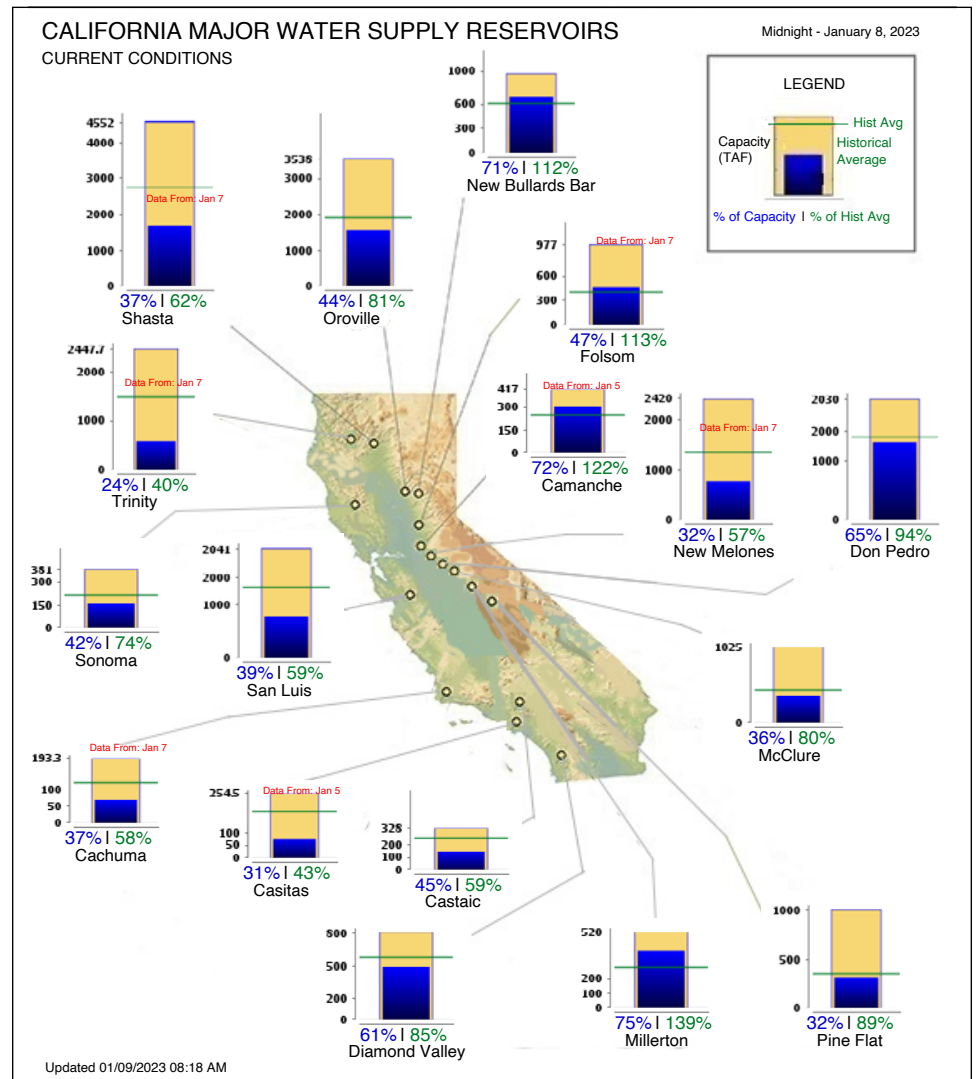
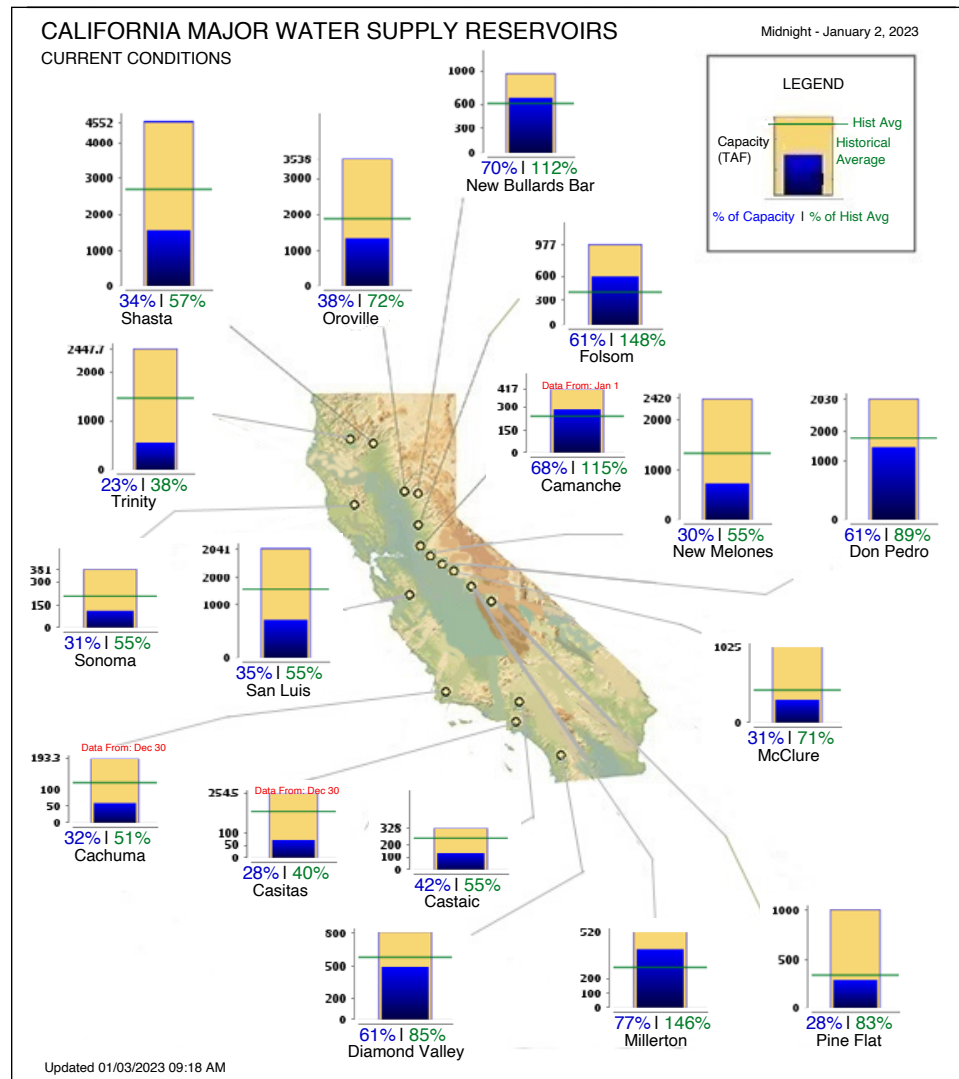
a series of powerful rain and snow events. Today as I write, the state is in the middle of the next round of a severe storm that the Department of Water Resources (DWR) is stating is the worst so far. This significant atmospheric river event is forecasted to continue to cause flooding. Because there

is no natural break between these events, there is no time for the water to recede, and no cleanup can be completed. Questions: did everyone think this possibility of having a "wet" year would never happen again? Was the state going to be in a drought always? Was everyone so focused on a drought that no plans were developed for a wet year? Are we in a position to store this water for future use? Are we looking to recharge the groundwater aquifers? Can the state pivot fast enough from a drought mindset to a wet-year

mentality? And if "climate change" is the root of all this (and state staff and legislators say that it is) should there be changes to how the state and federal water projects meet contract obligations? And, as I am writing this, four more of these atmospheric river storms are forecasted through mid-January.

It appears most believe that an La Niña pattern doesn't come with rain, but in actuality, when there is a transition from

See PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE on PAGE 9



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State Egg Supplies Limited by Avian Flu, Cage-Free Rule

By Ching Lee, Assistant Editor Ag Alert

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Even with eggs in short supply nationwide and prices climbing to new heights, it has not been enough to keep a 100-year-old egg farm from going out of business.

John Lewis Jr., president of Farmer John Egg Farm in Bakersfield, confirmed that the family operation will close its doors by the end of the month. The move comes as commercial poultry farms across the country have been pummeled by avian influenza, which has led to bird losses topping 57 million and shoppers facing sticker shock on eggs.

But Lewis said the family isn't calling it quits because of impacts from avian influenza. He said they're pull-

ing out because they can't afford the cost of going cage-free, now required by state law. Retrofitting the farm, he said, would cost \$4 million to \$5 million, and "we didn't have the money."

"They're telling me to clear out my desk," Lewis said. "I'm very disappointed because I have a lot of employees. They're working to the end, and then I guess unemployment and look for a new job."

At 75, Lewis has been in the egg business for 50 years and would "still rather be a farmer...rather be out there in the chicken coop." The farm once maintained 300,000 egg layers but stopped production last year when Proposition 12, the cage-free mandate, went into effect. Its facilities have since sat idle as the farm changed its business from producing eggs to strictly selling eggs from other farms.

As a distributor, Lewis said he has been short on eggs "all the time," as avian influenza ravaged U.S. egg farms, leaving him unable to get the egg sizes he wants and enough eggs to supply his customers. As the shortage got worse, he said he was paying \$6 a dozen and selling them for \$7, which "doesn't cover the margin." He said he expects California will remain short on eggs until all major U.S. egg farms go cage-free and can sell their eggs in the state.

"It takes a lot of money to convert to cage free—millions and millions of dollars—and it cannot be done overnight," he said.

Debbie Murdock, who heads the Pacific Egg and Poultry Association, said even without avian influenza, the Golden State already doesn't produce enough eggs to feed its population and relies on

See STATE EGG SUPPLIES on PAGE 9

Young Farmers & Ranchers



By Timothy Collins
Chair, Kern County
Young Farmers
& Ranchers

The new year is off to the races, and as we work to plan out 2023 for the Young Farmers and Ranchers,

we quickly focus on our third annual YF&R clay shoot fundraiser which will be held at 5 Dogs Range on Saturday, March 11th. This has quickly turned into our major fundraiser for the year and we are anticipating another successful event. Our clay shoot has given us the resources to hold monthly tours and meetings, to fund our Ag Grants for local 4H and FFA members, and to give YF&R members the opportunities to attend statewide and even nationwide YF&R events. One of our goals of YF&R is networking and building relationships in the industry that can last a lifetime. The money we raise each year funds events that make building those impactful relationships possible.

One of our goals for 2023 is to bring in more collegiate members and we are in the process of reaching out to our local ag programs at Bakersfield College and Cal State Bakersfield. YF&R should start before you graduate college, not after. YF&R is a great addition for students currently enrolled in Ag programs and gives

them the opportunity to get involved with those already working in the industry and to see local agriculture firsthand. This is another area where our fundraising greatly helps us in our mission to promote ag.

Additionally, we want to underscore that many people integral to the ag industry have little to no college education and they are an important part of YF&R as well. We are certainly not a club exclusive to Cal Poly and Fresno State grads. I only have an associate's degree from San Joaquin Delta College myself.

Being young, I will conclude on an optimistic note, and I think we have all gotten some joy out of the wet year so far. The rain brings a bit of hope that maybe some things do not get worse every year. One additional benefit of the heavy snowfall in the mountains is the great snowboarding conditions I have been able to take advantage of. While carving turns into the fresh snow is exhilarating; it is also comforting to know that as the snow melts, the water is on its way down to nourish our valley for another year.

For more information or to sign up for our Clay Shoot Fundraiser on March 11th, please reach out or follow us!

Email: KernYFR@KernCFB.com

Instagram: [@Kern_YFR](https://www.instagram.com/Kern_YFR)

Facebook: [KernYoungFarmersAndRanchers](https://www.facebook.com/KernYoungFarmersAndRanchers)

The Cattleman's Corner



By Austin Snedden
Ranching Contributor,
Valley Ag Voice

I have been thinking about what we call our free society and trying to think of the things we can own outright. Start thinking of the things you "own,"

and you will find that many of them you only own if you continue to pay a governmental toll. You will pay a toll in property tax for property or a home, or eventually not own it. You will pay a toll in income tax to hold and accumulate dollars. You can own a vehicle outright, but unless you want it to be a driveway paperweight, you will need to pay a toll in the form of registration, insurance, smog test, and gas tax on every gallon of fuel you put in it to use on public roads. The items we can own without paying an ongoing toll to the authorities are narrowed down rapidly to petty goods, animals, and food. (Keep in mind most of these are taxed at least once in the process. In a business situation, you will be asked to pay additional tolls in unsecured property taxes, inventory assessments, and capital gains if you choose to sell something.) The countless tolls become a burden to capitalism and the expansion of wealth.

As I was looking for an old truck part, I was praising the virtues of capitalism because even though there are not a lot of these rigs around anymore, there is still a dollar or two to be made by producing these parts—a benefit to me as well as the seller. Capitalism done right is a beautiful thing, voluntarily satisfying both parties' needs and desires through exchanging goods and services. Detractors of capitalism would claim that capitalism results in monopolies and

OPINION: Capi-Toll-ism

oligopolies that eventually trample the rights of the worker and the little man. While a notion of this is true, monopolies and oligopolies cannot sustain without the government's help. Government contracts fueled the Carnegie steel monopoly of the 1870s. The Rockefeller Standard Oil monopoly was built not on oil production but on lobbying efforts that allowed for imminent domain and crony capitalism to build the pipeline network. The oligopoly that we see in the meat packing industry today goes back to the early 1900s, built on preferential rail contracts and government-assisted placement of rails. The meat-packing oligopoly is sustained by the USDA and mountains of environmental, labor, and ambiguous food safety regulations that create barriers to entry for competitors. In a free society, when prices get too high or there are not enough options, the environment is ripe for competition, given there aren't unrealistic government tolls and barriers.

Capitalism in a society with a standard agreement about human rights, personal freedoms, and property is a beautiful thing that creates wealth and innovation. Unfortunately, this system which has proven to be the best way to provide for humanity, can only be squashed by government tolls and regulations and government-ordained trade with countries that don't share our common view of liberty. Private sector monopolies are unhealthy, but private sector monopolies not propped up by the government almost always collapse or contract. The government's voracious appetite gobbles up more taxes and tolls while devouring more liberties and may be beyond the cure of capitalism. It will take an awakening of the voting populous. Hopefully, sooner rather than later.



5 DOGS
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Kern County Young Farmers & Ranchers 3rd Annual Clay Shoot

March 11, 2023

Five Dogs Range

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- YF&R Ag Grant for FFA & 4-H Projects •
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Final Rule Seen as Muddying Waters for Ag Landowners

By Ching Lee, Assistant Editor, Ag Alert

Reprinted with Permission from the California Farm Bureau Federation

In its latest attempt to define which bodies of water fall under federal protection, the U.S. government said its new rule would provide more certainty for farmers and other landowners.

But farm groups say the new “Waters of the United States” rule, or WOTUS, will only create more confusion and cause disruptions to routine agricultural activities. They previously called on the Biden administration to halt its rulemaking until after the U.S. Supreme Court weighs in.

Instead, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of the Army late last month finalized the rule, which updates which “navigable waters” are subject to regulation under the Clean Water Act.

The agencies said the new version establishes “a durable definition” of WOTUS that’s more in line with what was in place prior to 2015, but with updates that reflect existing Supreme Court opinions and the latest science.

The new rule provides exemptions for certain croplands and water features commonly found on farms, such as irrigation ditches and stock ponds. But agricultural groups say the rule remains unworkable for farmers and ranchers because it does not give clear, stand-alone exclusions for agriculture.

They say the rule expands the federal government’s reach even further, allowing it to regulate almost any low spot on a farmer’s field where water sometimes stands or channels. This exposes farmers to unknowing violations of the law and requires them to obtain permits to carry out ordinary agricultural activities such as plowing, planting and fence building.

“We are particularly concerned about small farms and ranches needing costly legal or consulting expertise to farm ground they have already thoughtfully and sustainably stewarded,” said California Farm Bureau President Jamie Johansson.



Photo provided by the California Farm Bureau Federation

The updated rule replaces the Navigable Waters Protection Rule put in place by the Trump administration. Farm groups generally praised that rule, which based its definition of “waters of the United States” on principles outlined in a 2006 Supreme Court opinion written by the late Justice Antonin Scalia.

In that case, known as *Rapanos v. United States*, Scalia took a narrower interpretation of “navigable waters,” saying the law should apply only if there is a continuous surface connection to “relatively permanent, standing or flowing bodies of water.”

Finalized in 2020, the Trump rule rolled back the expanded powers of the federal government to regulate waterways and wetlands made by the Obama administration’s 2015 WOTUS rule.

The Obama rule relied largely on now-retired Justice Anthony Kennedy’s opinion, which said a body of water falls under federal jurisdiction if there is a “significant nexus” to a navigable waterway.

The 2015 rule set off a slew of legal challenges. Farm groups called it onerous and overreaching because it gave the federal government authority to regulate even small and isolated waters such as drains and ditches. The Trump administration repealed the rule and replaced it with its own version, but a

2021 lawsuit by environmental groups stopped its implementation.

The new Biden administration rule “doubles down” on Justice Kennedy’s “significant nexus” test, said American Farm Bureau Federation President Zippy Duvall. In doing so, the rule gives the federal government “sweeping authority over private lands,” he said, as it can make subjective determinations as to whether it can regulate large areas of farmland miles from the nearest “navigable” water.

“Instead of making federal regulations more clear, the rule reinstates confusing standards that have already caused decades of uncertainty and litigation,” Duvall said.

Courtney Briggs, AFBF senior director of government affairs, said when federal government expands its reach, the amount of permitting to which farmers and ranchers are subject gets worse. That means landowners will need to hire environmental consultants, attorneys and engineers to ensure they are in compliance, she added.

“Since this rule relies on case-by-case determinations and ambiguously defined terms, it is incredibly difficult for a farmer to understand if they have a jurisdictional feature on their property,” Briggs said. “There are civil and criminal liabilities attached

to Clean Water Act compliance, and that is why it’s so incredibly important to have a clear line of jurisdiction.”

Though the Trump rule provided the clarity and predictability that farmers sought, they acknowledge the changing definitions of WOTUS by different administrations through the years have forced them to navigate an ongoing regulatory pendulum.

Some seek a more permanent change to the rule through legislation, with more clarity from the Supreme Court as to what constitutes “waters of the U.S.”

In October, the high court revisited the issue in *Sackett v. EPA* and is set to rule on the scope of the Clean Water Act. A decision is likely this spring. The Biden administration rule takes effect 60 days after publication in the Federal Register, which means its timing could coincide with the Supreme Court ruling.

Briggs said it is “very likely” the Biden administration will need to make changes to its current rule in response to the Supreme Court decision.

“A ruling in the *Sackett* case could send WOTUS back to the drawing board, so it makes no sense for EPA to issue a rule that will only cause more disruption and uncertainty,” Duvall said.

The Waters Advocacy Coalition, which includes nearly 50 organizations representing agriculture and other industries, agrees, saying the Supreme Court decision “could negate or render irrelevant significant elements” of the new rule, creating more confusion for landowners and businesses.

Environmental groups called the Biden rule a victory for clean rivers, streams and wetlands, and vowed to fight back if the Clean Water Act is gutted.

Kari Fisher, senior counsel for the California Farm Bureau, said the Supreme Court ruling could go a number of ways.

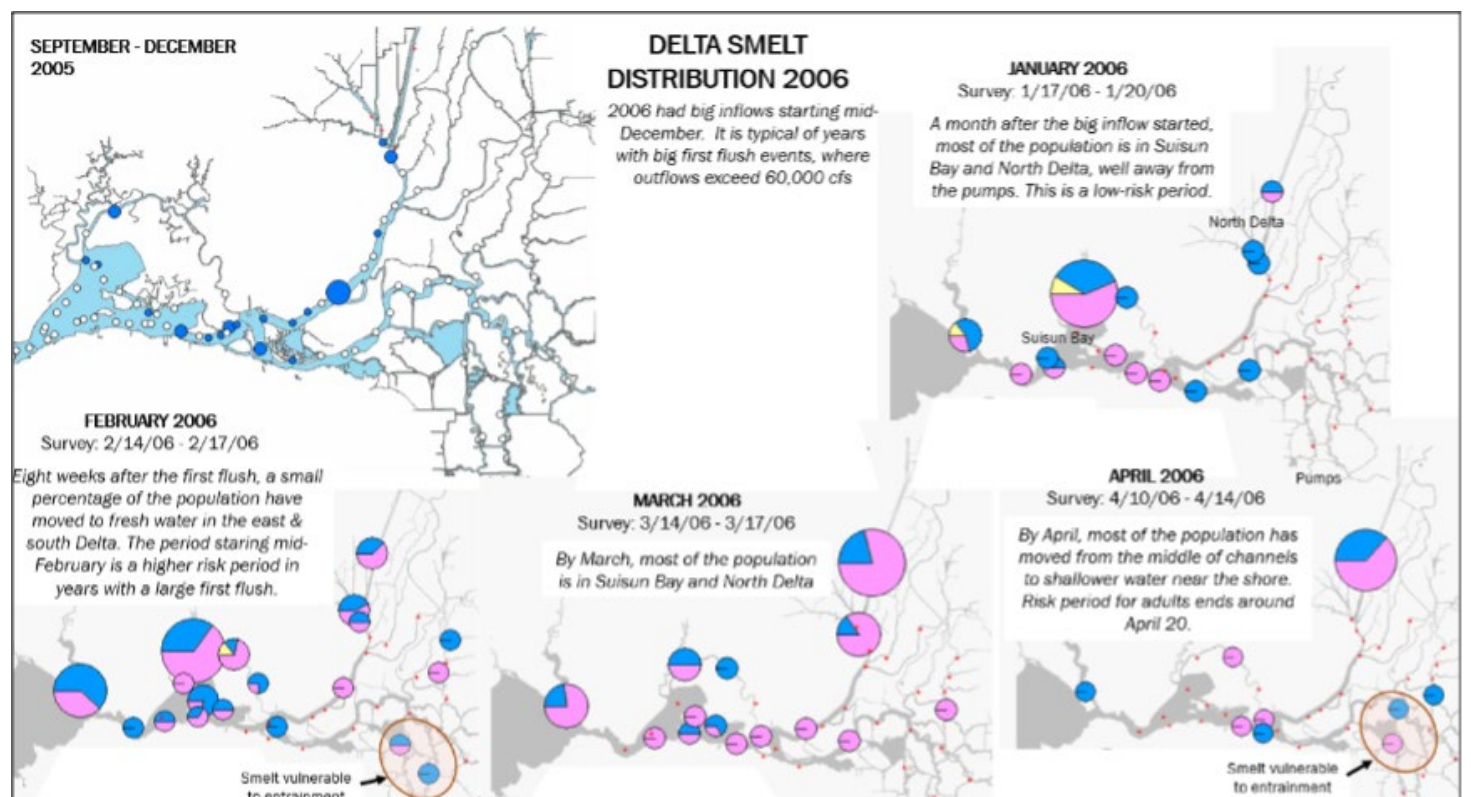
She said the high court could issue a decision that sides with Justice Scalia’s “relatively permanent” test or Justice Kennedy’s “significant nexus” test, or the decision could take a more middle ground. It could also decide that the new WOTUS rule renders the court case moot.

Delta Pumping Restricted

Continued from PAGE 1

change when the underlying premise is found to be faulty? Can misrepresentation of science in regulations be prevented? Tens of thousands of hatchery delta smelt (which have the same DNA as native fish) were added to the Delta last year to supplement the native population. Even if the projects do take some delta smelt when pumping, why can’t those impacts be mitigated by adding hatchery fish? These questions deserve answers.

These maps show the distribution of delta smelt during the water year 2006, a year with a big first flush, like 2023. The solid blue dots show the distribution of delta smelt in the fall. Blue pie segments represent males. Pink pie segments represent females. The bigger the pie, the greater the number of delta smelt observed at a location. These maps indicate: that delta smelt are not located near the water project pumps in years with large first flush events until mid-February, that restricting pumping in January does not help delta smelt, and that most delta smelt are never near the pumps. Source: Hamilton Resource Economics, compiled using maps from the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.



Snowpack, Storms Lift Water-Supply Hopes

**By Peter Hecht Chief Editor of Publications
for the California Farm Bureau Federation**

Press Release Provided by California Farm Bureau Federation

Barely more than a year ago, California's first seasonal snowpack survey provided promising results—a deep-snow measurement totaling 160% of average.

Then came the driest January, February and March in more than 100 years—resulting in unprecedented cuts in water deliveries to farmers, who went on to fallow an estimated 750,000 additional acres of cropland.

Understandably, the enthusiasm was muted early last week, when the first 2023 snow survey by the California Department of Water Resources revealed a snowpack of 55.5 inches, or 174% of normal for early January. It was the third-best seasonal snowpack report in 40 years, ranking behind 1983 and 2011.

But afterward, the latest in a series of atmospheric storms brought an additional deluge of snowfall to the Sierra Nevada. The National Weather Service reported as much as 10 feet of additional snow in parts of the Sierra by Sunday. Moreover, the series of so-called atmospheric river storms was predicted to continue, after storms last week caused widespread flooding, toppled trees and other damage, and left as many as 400,000 Californians without power.

Michael Anderson, DWR's state climatologist, said climate mapping indicates California may be transitioning from a dry La Niña weather pattern to a wet El Niño—perhaps “with neutral conditions” taking over first.

“Last year, we had a really productive December, but then everything shut off for the next three months,” Anderson said. “This year, we're seeing a different pattern, where we had some fall rains and we're watching this snowpack build.”

In what Anderson said could be a year of weather extremes, the series of “atmospheric rivers” fell short of rescuing California's depleted reservoirs, but many showed marked improvements. However, with flooding in the Sacramento Valley and dangers elsewhere, federal and state reservoir operators were maintaining ample space for flood control.

“The significant Sierra snowpack is good news, but unfortunately, these same storms are bringing flooding to parts of California,” said DWR Director Karla Nemeth. “This is a prime example of the threat of extreme flooding during a prolonged drought as California experiences more swings between wet and dry periods brought on by our changing climate.”

Jim Houston, California Farm Bureau administrator, said the storms—and the inability to capture and store



California Department of Water Resources Director Karla Nemeth, snow survey engineers Andy Reising and Anthony Burdock, and Water Supply Forecasting Manager Sean de Guzman conduct the first snowpack measurement of 2023 at Phillips Station in the Sierra Nevada.

even more water—pointed to California's continued failure to build water infrastructure overwhelmingly approved by voters in 2014.

Proposition 1 authorized \$2.7 billion for new water storage as part of \$7.5 billion in funding for public works projects. Among them is the planned Sites Reservoir north of Sacramento.

“This recent stream of atmospheric rivers with heavy precipitation in a short period demonstrates why additional water storage and infrastructure is needed,” Houston said. “New water storage, above and below ground, would capture more flood flows to help get us through dry periods and prevent flooding and wasting water to the Pacific.”

Amid the series of storms, the U.S. Drought Monitor downgraded California's drought status. In December, 80% of the state was listed in “severe drought” conditions or worse. That number dropped to about 39% on Jan. 5.

Many California reservoir levels remained low but showed significant improvement, with Lake Oroville at 44% of capacity and 81% of its historical average on Jan. 8, and Lake Shasta at 37% of capacity and 62% of normal. Lake Don Pedro was at 65% of capacity and 94% of its historical average, while Millerton Reservoir reached 75% of capacity and 139% above normal.

“We know that it will take quite a bit of time and water to recover this amount of storage, which is why we don't say that the drought is over once it starts raining,” said

Jeanine Jones, DWR's interstate resources manager and drought specialist.

The densely packed nature of the storms was also resulting in reduced water savings.

“It's really helpful if the storms would be so kind just to space themselves out a week or two apart so we have time for water to move through the system, move into reservoirs and all of that,” Jones said.

With California having endured three years of drought, she said the state will need more than 100% of normal precipitation to get back to 100% of water runoff from the Sierra Nevada.

Last month, California water officials announced an initial 2023 water allocation of just 5% from the State Water Project due to continued drought fears. That came after 2022 and 2011 water years both yielded final state water deliveries of 5%.

Meanwhile, there was no water available for agriculture from the federal Central Valley Project in 2022. Combined, the state and federal cutbacks resulted in vast surface-water shortfalls for farmers, more reliance on depleted groundwater and increased fallowing of crops.

According to a study by researchers at the University of California, Merced, California agriculture suffered \$1.2 billion in direct drought impacts in 2022, up from \$810 million in 2021. The sector lost an estimated 19,420 jobs from 2020 through 2022, the study concluded.

“If we think about what's the worst that could happen, think about what happened last year and the year before—the Central Valley Project had zero irrigation deliveries to its agricultural customers,” Jones said. “And this past year, the senior water-right holders and settlement contractors got a significant cut (from the state.) So that would be an example of the worst case.”

The storms also brought some cautious optimism for better fortunes—and water supplies—for agriculture this year. But for farmers in some areas, the series of storms created a different sort of concern—flooding dangers.

“Flood events are always a periodic threat in California's hydrology, which typically sees the water year determined by a handful of strong storm systems,” said California Farm Bureau Senior Counsel Chris Scheuring, who specializes in water issues. “And we are told that this will be even more pronounced in the future, with stronger atmospheric rivers.”

Building a Better Ranch

Continued from PAGE 1

One of those happy customers is Seth Scribner, Operations Manager for Centennial Livestock in the Central Valley. His testimonial and many other California ranchers are on the Ranchbot website. Scribner states that the cost savings is a significant benefit and “for every piece of information that we get from that Ranchbot previously would have been burning diesel and had to have somebody in the pickup driving there to that spot.” At the Wind Wolves Preserve, where Centennial Livestock has a grazing permit, there are six Ranchbots and four more incoming. Coppin mentions that that pattern of purchase is typical and that most customers

will buy a few Ranchbots and soon return to buy many more.

With water so closely monitored and maneuvered throughout the state, it only makes sense for ranchers to take back some of that control over one of their production inputs. Years of data from the monitoring system would provide excellent insight into seasonal rain patterns. As the weather becomes more extreme, careful monitoring made possible with this technology could lessen the blows of “flash droughts” and keep ranchers highly informed about the movement of the most critical resources on the ranch.

For more information, visit Ranch-bot.com.

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USCA Joins Large Coalition Urging Enactment of The American Beef Labeling Act

Press release provided by the US Cattlemen's Association

On January 10th, 50 cattle, farm, rural and consumer groups sent a joint letter to U.S. Senate and House members who, during the last session of Congress, cosponsored the American Beef Labeling Act that restores mandatory country of origin labeling (MCOOL) for beef.

The letter expressed the groups' gratitude for the congressional members' leadership and support of the American Beef Labeling Act during the last session of Congress and urged them to reintroduce the measure in the new Congress that started on January 3, 2023. In their letter, the groups pledged their support to assist Congress in the swift enactment of the bill.

"We're appreciative of the diverse coalition of groups who understand the importance of having accurately labeled beef in the grocery store," said U.S. Cattlemen's Association (USCA) president

Justin Tupper. "When we come together as an industry like this, producers, as well as consumers, benefit. This sort of collaboration brings us closer to our shared goal of reinstating truth in labeling on U.S. beef"

The letter was addressed to the American Beef Labeling Act's bipartisan group of Senate cosponsors: Sens. John Thune (R-SD), Jon Tester (D-MT), Mike Rounds (R-SD), Cory Booker (D-NJ), John Hoeven (R-ND), Ben Ray Lujan (D-NM), Cynthia Lummis (R-WY), Martin Heinrich (D-NM), John Barrasso (R-WY), and Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY); and to its bipartisan group of U.S. Representatives: Reps. Lance Gooden (R-TX), Ro Khanna (D-CA), and Morgan Griffith (R-VA).

Groups that joined the letter include: American Economic Liberties Project, American Grassfed Association, Buckeye Quality Beef Association (OH), Campaign for Contract

Agriculture Reform, Campaign for Family Farms and the Environment, Cattle Producers of Washington, Coalition for a Prosperous America, Colorado Independent CattleGrowers Association, Consumer Federation of America, Dakota Rural Action, Farm Action Fund, Farm Aid, Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance, Food & Water Watch, Government Accountability Project Food Integrity Campaign, Hometown Credit Union in Kulm, ND, Independent Beef Association of North Dakota, Independent Cattlemen of Missouri, Independent Cattlemen of Nebraska, Independent Cattlemen of Wyoming, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement, Kansas Cattlemen's Association, Kansas Farmers Union, Missouri Rural Crisis Center, Montana Cattlemen's Association, Montana Farmers Union, National Dairy Producers Organization, National Family Farm Coalition,

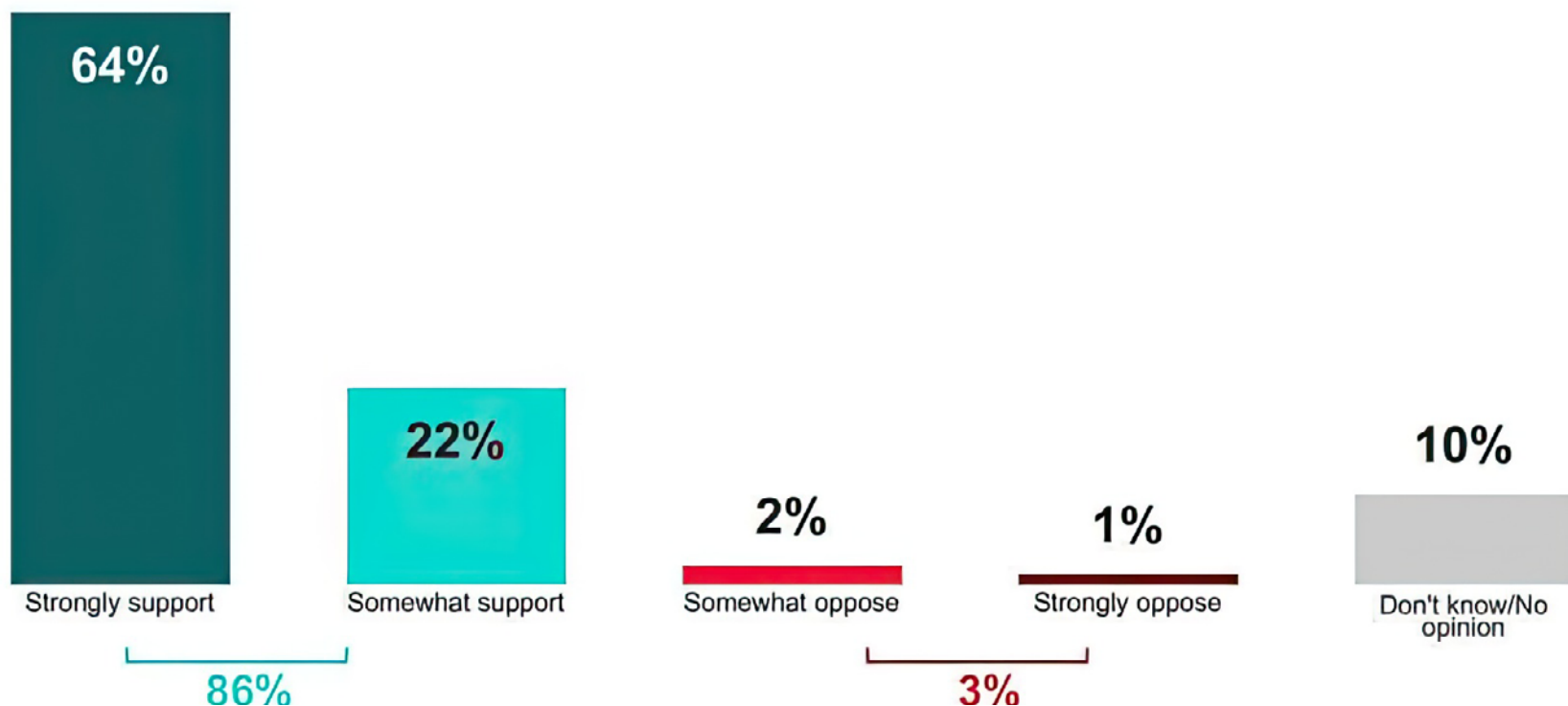
National Farmers Union, National Latino Farmers & Ranchers Trade Association, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, National Women Involved in Farm Economics (WIFE), Nebraska Chapter of WIFE, Nebraska Farmers Union, Northern Plains Resource Council, Oglala Sioux Livestock & Landowners Association, Oklahoma Independent Stockgrowers Association, Organization for Competitive Markets, Pennsylvania Farmers Union, R-CALF USA, Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA, Rural Vermont, South Dakota Stockgrowers Association, Southern Colorado Livestock Association, Stevens County Cattlemen's Association (WA), Texas Animal Protein Producers Prosperity & Security Group (TAPPPS Group), United Food & Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW), United States Cattlemen's Association, and Western Organization of Resource Councils.

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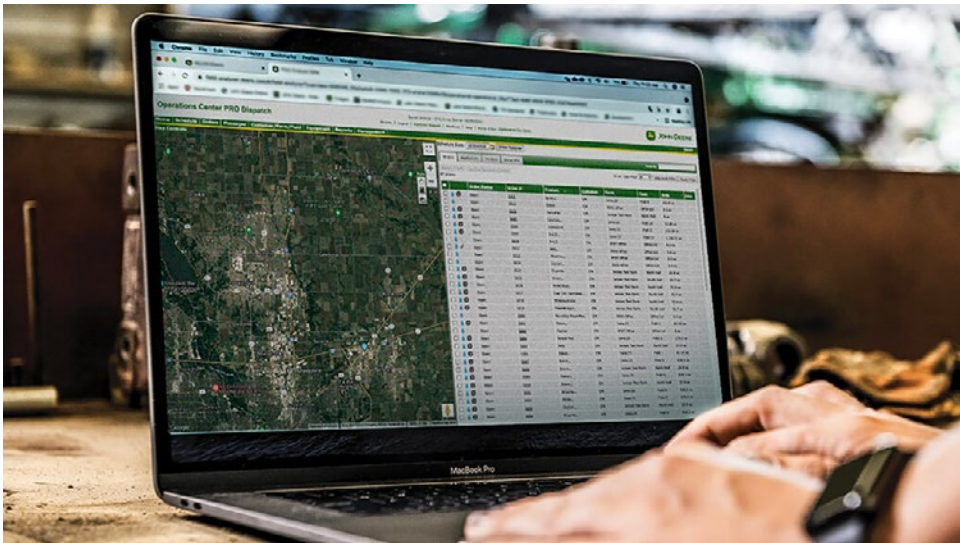
AMERICAN BEEF LABELING ACT

Support for the American Beef Labeling Act is high, with nearly nine in ten voters (86%) saying they support the legislation.

As you may know, the 2002 and 2008 Farm Bills required mandatory country of origin labeling for beef being sold in the United States. However, Congress repealed the mandatory country of origin labeling law for beef in 2015. The American Beef Labeling Act is a proposed piece of legislation that would reinstate mandatory country of origin labeling on beef being sold in the United States. This would ensure only beef born, raised, and harvested in the U.S. could legally have a 'Product of U.S.A.' sticker on the package. Do you support or oppose the American Beef Labeling Act?



John Deere Introduces Operations Center PRO For Ag Retailers



Operations Center PRO gives ag service providers professional grade tools to manage the complexities of running a large commercial fleet. (Photo JohnDeere.com)

Press release provided by John Deere

On January 18th, John Deere released Operations Center PRO, an all-new level of the John Deere Operations Center™ built specifically for ag service providers requiring specialized fleet and logistics management capabilities beyond what is currently provided with Operations Center.

Operations Center PRO Dispatch, the first specialized tool within Operations Center PRO, integrates features from AgLogic™, John Deere’s previous dispatching solution, into the Operations Center suite of fleet and data management tools. Operators receive and manage work orders from the PRO

and tender location and status in real time, analyze machine productivity, and easily manage agronomic data for customers.

New to Operations Center PRO Dispatch, is the ability to also send work orders directly to Generation 4 displays paired with JDLink™ modems, without operator input. “This automatic flow of data reduces operator setup time and data entry mistakes,” said Ryan Stien, marketing manager for John Deere.

“Operations Center PRO helps ag retailers efficiently manage equipment fleets and agronomic data on the same platform many of their farmer-customers



PRO Dispatch is a complete dispatching and work order management solution for mixed fleets. Designed to help you apply more acres per day, PRO Dispatch keeps your operators and customers satisfied. (Photo JohnDeere.com)

dispatch system on a mobile app that works for all equipment brands, providing a complete fleet solution for ag retailers.

Operations Center PRO Dispatch integrates with most leading retailer back-office systems providing a seamless flow of work orders and prescriptions between the equipment and the back-office system for billing. Fleet managers can also view equipment

currently use,” said Stien. “This allows retailers to more effectively serve their customers while still giving farmers control of their data through secure permissions management.”

The core John Deere Operations Center will remain free of charge to farmers and ranchers. To learn more, visit johndeere.com/OperationsCenterPRO or contact your local John Deere dealer.

California Farm Bureau Congratulates Speaker Kevin McCarthy



Photo: HorizonUI / Shutterstock.com

California Farm Bureau President Jamie Johansson applauds California’s Kevin McCarthy on his election as Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.

“As a former member of the House Agricultural Committee who hails from California’s vital Kern County farming region, Speaker McCarthy has long been an advocate for farmers and ranchers in the Golden State,” Johansson said. “He understands the importance of the nation’s leading agricultural economy and its bounty

of ‘California-Grown’ products, which feed America and the world beyond. We look forward to partnering with Speaker McCarthy on key issues to help California farmers, ranchers and agricultural businesses prosper for generations to come.”

The California Farm Bureau works to protect family farms and ranches on behalf of nearly 29,000 members statewide and as part of a nationwide network of 5.3 million Farm Bureau members.



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Application Process Opens for \$4.1 Million Innovation Grants to California Dairy Producers, Processors

Submissions for Second Round of Dairy Business Innovation Initiative Funding Due February 28, 2023

Press release provided by California Dairy
Innovation Center

California producers and processors are invited to apply for funding up to \$1 million for innovation initiatives to become more competitive in a second round of dairy business grant awards recently announced by the Pacific Coast Coalition's Dairy Business Innovation Initiative (PCC-DBII), hosted by California State University Fresno.



Photo by Seventyfour / Adobe Stock

The PCC-DBII will award funding to assist with innovative dairy product development, production, marketing, and distribution. Dr Carmen Licon, Project Director and Assistant Professor in Food Science and Nutrition at Fresno State said grants will range from \$50,000 to \$1million with the potential for up to 12 projects selected for funding. Application forms and submission details are available at <https://www.dairypcc.net/> with a deadline to submit by February 28, 2023.

"This second set of grants is larger in size and have the potential for major impact on our California dairy business community," said John Talbot, CEO of the California Milk Advisory Board. "The scale of available funding allows larger processors to apply for new-to-market projects, while smaller operations and farmstead producers can still apply for projects that will allow them to add value to their milk by developing new products, testing new processes and evaluating feasibility of packaging innovations."

CMAB's California Dairy Innovation Center (CDIC), a major partner in the Coalition, has resources to guide qualified California dairy businesses to take advantage of this opportunity. Information and assistance is available by contacting Veronique Lagrange, Director of the CDIC at vlagrange@cmab.net.

Funded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service,

DBII program funded initiatives focus on product, process and packaging innovation and serve to:

- Diversify dairy product markets to reduce risk and develop higher value uses for dairy products,
- Promote business development that diversifies farmer income through processing and marketing innovation, and
- Encourage the use of regional milk production.

Grants are available to anyone operating a dairy farm or dairy processing plant in California but focus on product, process, packaging innovation for dairy manufacturing. This includes feasibility studies and workforce training. Proposals can include requests for funding for qualified equipment, feasibility studies, innovation in packaging as well as training of the workforce. This is a reimbursement program with applicants reimbursed upon presentation of invoices/receipts for approved projects.

The CDIC's Steering Committee, which includes representatives of California Dairies Inc., California Dairy Research Foundation, California Milk Advisory Board, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Dairy Management Inc., Fresno State University, Hilmar Cheese, Leprino Foods, and UC Davis assisted in the thorough review process and recommended funding applications based on objective criteria.

About the California Dairy Innovation Center

The California Dairy Innovation Center (CDIC) coordinates pre-competitive research and educational training in collaboration with industry, check-off programs, and research/academic institutions in support of a common set of innovation and productivity goals. The CDIC is guided by a Steering Committee that includes California Dairies Inc., California Dairy Research Foundation, California Milk Advisory Board, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Dairy Management Inc., Fresno State University, Hilmar Cheese, Leprino Foods, and UC Davis.

About the Pacific Coast Coalition Dairy Business Initiative (PCC-DBII)

The PCC-DBII is funded through the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service and hosted by California State University, Fresno in collaboration with Cal Poly Humboldt, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Chapman University, Chico State, Oregon State University, UC Davis, Washington State University, and the California Dairy Innovation Center. For more information: <https://www.dairypcc.net>.

Citrus Industry Welcomes Federal Funding for New Citrus Breeding Program in Parlier, California

Press Release Provided by California Citrus Mutual

California Citrus Mutual (CCM) and the Citrus Research Board (CRB) welcome more than \$1 million in new federal funding for critical research programs that support the U.S. and California citrus industries.

The 2023 Appropriations bill passed by Congress in December of 2022 includes continued funding to help stop the deadly citrus plant disease Huanglongbing (HLB) that has devastated citrus production in Florida and other parts of the country. Additionally, \$1 million in new funding was approved to establish a citrus breeding program at the USDA Agriculture Research Service (ARS) field station in Parlier, California. This funding will be re-appropriated annually.

Championed by California Senator Alex Padilla and Representatives Jim Costa and David Valadao, the new California citrus breeding program will identify new citrus varieties that are best suited for changing climatic pressures such as drought, consumer taste preferences, and resistant to pests and diseases such as HLB.

The program is an expansion of the existing national USDA ARS citrus breeding program located in Florida, which is focused primarily on varieties that are optimized for Florida growing conditions. The Florida program has resulted in new varieties with higher yields, increased disease resistance, improved color, and a longer shelf life.

With such promising advances being made in Florida, CCM and the CRB saw the need for a similar program in California to breed fresh citrus varieties that are better adapted to the unique environmental conditions of California's production regions.

The CRB, which is a grower-funded organization

aimed at furthering the industry's research priorities, has committed \$500,000 toward establishing the new breeding program in Parlier, with the goal of bringing additional representation to California's industry.

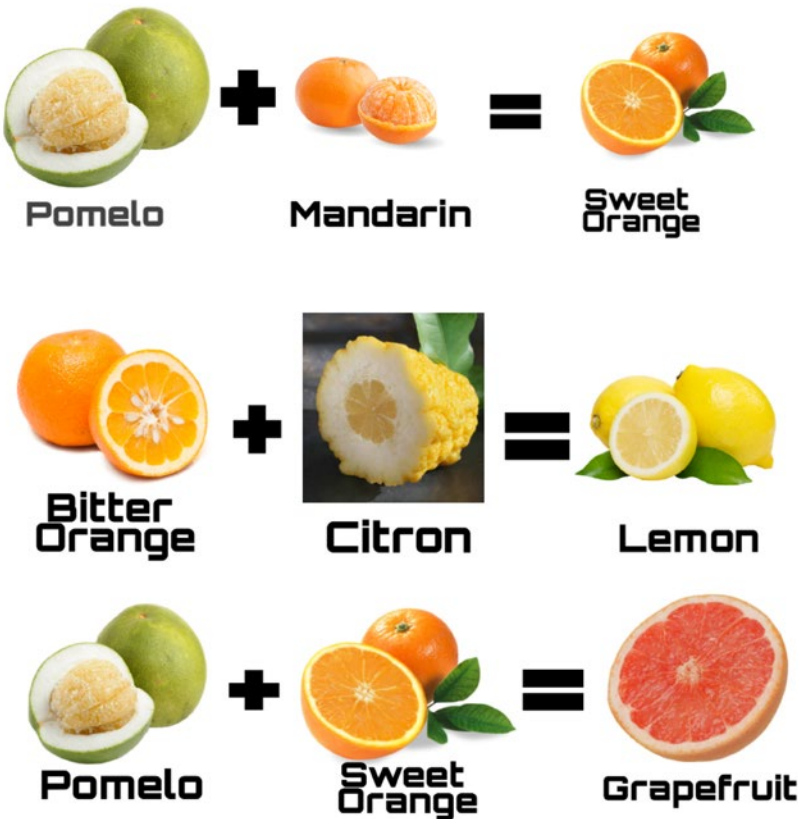
"The commitment of the citrus industry to delivering quality research and innovation for all farm use has taken a big step forward with the support of congress funding the citrus breeding program in Parlier," said Justin Brown, CRB Chairman.

Marcy L. Martin, CRB President, added, "Expanding the current national citrus breeding program into California will have a significant impact on California's citrus industry as growers aim to mitigate the evolving issues that affect production and increase yield through varietal research."

The Florida and California breeding programs along with the continued efforts of the University of California citrus breeding program at UC Riverside will work together to deliver the best results for California citrus growers.

"The addition of the breeding facility in Parlier will make the ARS Citrus Program a truly national project," said CCM President and CEO Casey Creamer. "We look forward to watching the growth of this program and its collaboration with the UC breeding program to find solutions to the issues California citrus growers are faced with every day."

Additionally, the 2023 Federal budget includes continued funding for the Citrus Health Response Program, which supplements industry and state funding for on-the-ground efforts aimed at preventing the spread of the HLB and continued funding for the Huanglongbing Multi-Agency Coordination group, which funds research programs aimed at identifying short term solutions to HLB.



President's Message

Continued from PAGE 2

an La Niña to El Niño, storms of this caliber have occurred where the El Niño drives the weather pattern. It happened in the wet winter of 1997-98; El Niño drove the weather pattern. The state continues to explain that they use historical weather patterns to assist in their decision-making, so based on that, we should have been ready for this. There should have been plans to reduce the flooding, and beneficial users of the water should have had plans to take the water. In just one week, the storage capacity difference has changed dramatically (compare Reservoirs Conditions for January 2 and January 8, 2023 at CDEC. <https://cdec.water.ca.gov/resapp/RescondMain>)."

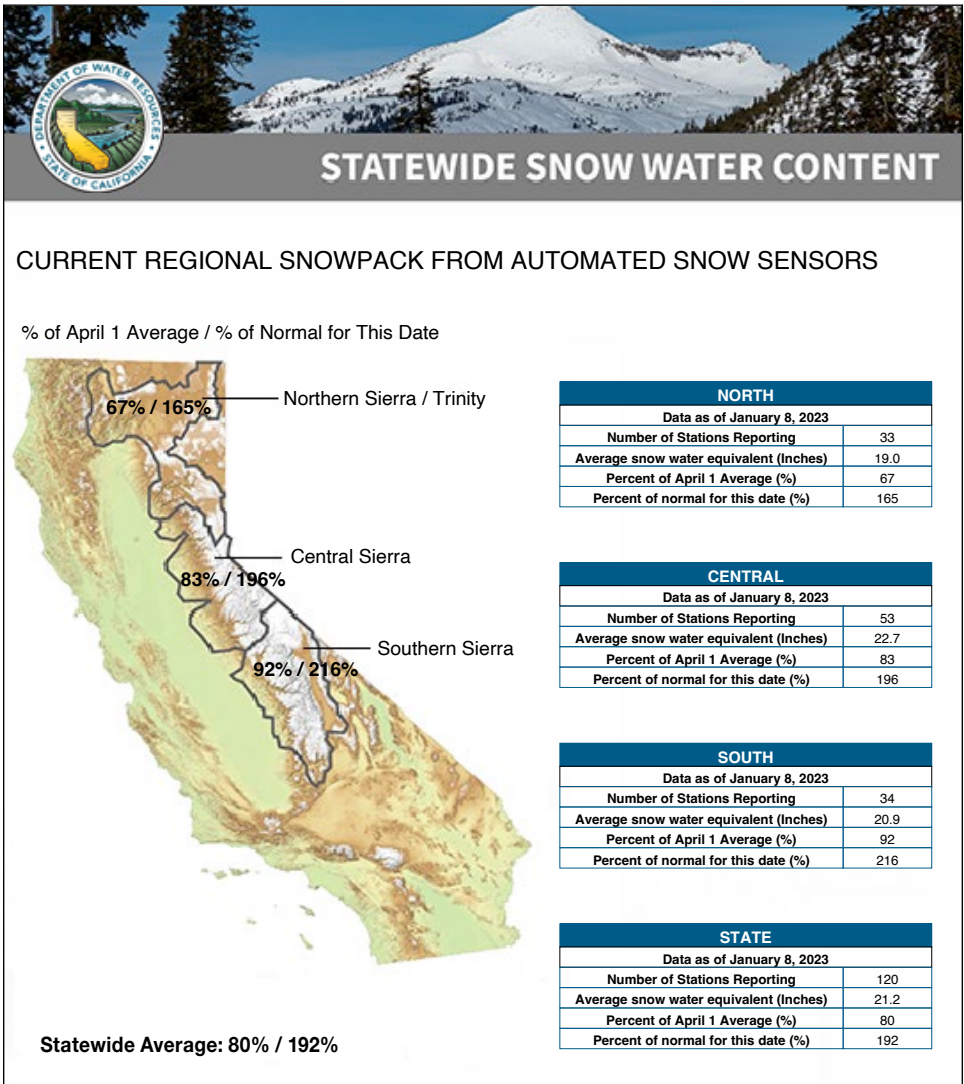
The weather hasn't just brought precipitation but has also placed a "white" blanket over the Sierras. DWR conducted the first snow survey on January 3rd, and the manual survey recorded 55.5 inches of snow depth and a snow water equivalent of 17.5 inches. This is 177 percent of the average for the location where the snow survey was taken – Phillips Station. DWR uses this snowpack survey as a critical component

of water supply forecasting. Statewide the snowpack is 174 percent of the average on January 3rd. USDA says snowpacks across Nevada and the eastern Sierra are 136% to 258% of their median (see current Statewide Snow Water Content at <https://cdec.water.ca.gov/snowapp/sweq.action>).

Now, this sounds like a fantastic start to this new water year, similar to last year at this time; however, last year these results were followed by three months of extremely dry conditions and by April 1st of last year, the survey results at the Phillips Station were the third lowest on record. So, does this mean the State and DWR need to store when there is water and not let one drop go unaccounted? Again, time will only tell if we learned anything from the previous year.

Welcome to 2023, and just maybe, this might be the year known for a return to water deliveries of at least 55% to 65% of contracts. Of course, I would say 100%, but let's not kid ourselves.

P.S. I hope you have addressed AB 2183 – "card check bill." The Kern County Farm Bureau is here to help if you need assistance.



Statewide Snow Water Content as of January 8, 2023 provided by the California Cooperative Snow Surveys. (Graphic: DWR)

Stay up-to-date with current reservoir conditions here:
<https://cdec.water.ca.gov/resapp/RescondMain>

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State Egg Supply

Continued from PAGE 2

out-of-state eggs to fill the gap. No commercial egg-laying hens in California so far have been affected by avian influenza.

Murdock noted all proteins have increased in price due to infrastructure issues. Now add to that the rising cost of fuel, packaging materials, chicken feed, labor and other inflationary pressures.

"(It's) the perfect storm," she said. "To top it off, people eat a lot of eggs—a great protein."

Though avian influenza is a main reason for the recent egg shortage, Marty Zaritsky, a San Bernardino egg farmer and supplier, said some production issues can be traced to the start of the pandemic in 2020. When egg sales to restaurants and other food service dried up, hatcheries and farms reduced production. Those numbers remain below pre-COVID levels, he said. Then came

avian influenza and producers losing their flocks.

"I work with producers all over the country, and a lot of them have not been repopulated," he said, adding he thinks eggs will remain in short supply into the summer or beyond if another bout of avian influenza pops up this spring.

But he noted wholesale egg prices have already come down from their peaks during the holidays, when demand is usually highest. He said he expects shoppers will begin to see lower prices within the next two to three weeks.

On the production side, Zaritsky said all his barns are filled and producing at capacity. He said there's a limit to the number of birds he can house due to state law.

Proposition 2, which passed in 2008, mandated more room for hens to extend their wings, stand up, lie down and turn around. Proposition 12, which voters approved in 2018, phased out caged housing systems altogether.



Photo: California Farm Bureau Federation

COMMENTARY: In Defense Of Alfalfa: Important Crop Gets a Bad Rap



By Mike Wade
California Farm
Water Coalition

*Reprinted with Permission
from the California Farm
Bureau Federation*

California is the most populous state in the nation and the nation's biggest agricultural producer. That combination can occasionally lead to misunderstandings between consumers in cities and suburbs and growers in farming communities.

That extends to public perceptions about decisions farmers make to grow crops such as alfalfa. The crop is an important part of our food chain that most of us depend on every day. But very few people understand that.

The Family Farm Alliance and the California Farm Water Coalition, which is supported by the California Farm Bureau, have set out to educate the public about why farmers grow the crops that they do. We see it all the time when water supplies are scarce. Critics emerge, confident that they know how the state should manage water resources and what crops farmers should and shouldn't be growing.

In 2015, during the last drought, almonds were the target. At other times, it may have been rice or cotton. Whatever the case, public criticism of agricultural irrigation practices is often based on a lack of understanding about why farmers do what they do.

In response to recent criticism of alfalfa, the Family Farm Alliance and California Farm Water Coalition co-authored

a white paper to educate consumers, media professionals and members of the Legislature on the important role alfalfa plays in our lives. Educating consumers and others with fact-based information is essential if we expect their support for domestic food production in the future.

Titled "Our Food Supply at Risk: the Importance of Alfalfa Production in the American West," the white paper helped open a dialogue about crop production and the connection every American consumer has with the American farmer. The report was recently distributed to 1,000 attendees at the Colorado River Water Users Association conference in Las Vegas, as well as elected officials, policymakers, and state and federal agency staff in 17 Western states. It may be found at familyfarmalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Alfalfa-Report-FINAL-111522.pdf.

Alfalfa is grown in many parts of California. It ranks third in the U.S. in terms of production value. California is also the No. 1 dairy state in the nation, meaning there is a local market for alfalfa, reducing the environmental impacts from trucking it in from other states. Because California alfalfa production is so efficient, it takes roughly 2 acres in most other states to replace the production of 1 acre here at home.

Alfalfa, once again, became a high-profile target last summer after the Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation, Camille Calimlim Toutin, called on water users across the Colorado River Basin to take actions to prevent Lake Powell and Lake Mead from falling to critically low elevations that would threaten water deliveries and power production.

Immediately following her testimony at a June 14 U.S. Senate hearing, the general manager of the Southern Nevada Water Authority summarized impressive urban



Egrets and other birds visit an alfalfa field in Yolo County. Despite the crop's importance to wildlife and dairy and beef production, it is often a target of water critics.

efforts to reduce per-capita water use. He then took issue with many farmers using Colorado River water to grow alfalfa, suggesting that "they carefully consider crop selection to optimize irrigation efficiency."

What was missing was an understanding or acknowledgment of why farmers grow alfalfa. It is critical to domestic food production, and it's what allows livestock to produce the variety of dairy and beef products we buy at grocery stores. Whether it is hamburgers, steak, cheese, yogurt or ice cream, alfalfa is key.

Alfalfa is also good for the environment. Alfalfa fields are the beginning of a food chain for a host of wildlife. The fields attract insects and songbirds, as well as gophers, ground squirrels and other rodents that thrive because alfalfa is a perennial crop that remains intact for several years. All this activity helps support a population of predators, including hawks, raptors and foxes. Alfalfa

fields also support beneficial insects that help control harmful pests.

Alfalfa is also a global trade crop. Despite unfounded criticisms over exporting "virtual water," alfalfa helps keep agricultural trade balanced. In 2019, for the first time in 50 years, U.S. agriculture ran a trade deficit, meaning we imported more farm products than we exported. The high export demand for alfalfa boosts our overall agricultural economy.

Editorial boards, academics, water managers from other states and others suggest that alfalfa production is just "animal feed," or that it should be abandoned in favor of other "higher-value" crops or ones that use less water. We want to remind them that we all depend on alfalfa as the basis for much of California's food production. It is also water efficient, and it supports the local economies of rural communities throughout the West.

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Rule Banning Older Trucks is a Challenge for Agriculture



Trucks pass farm fields in the Salinas Valley. A new California Air Resources Board rule, which went into effect on Jan. 1, prohibits large trucks and buses made before 2010 from operating in the state. (Photo: California Farm Bureau Federation)

By Caleb Hampton, Assistant Editor Ag Alert

Reprinted with Permission from the California Farm Bureau Federation

As of Jan. 1, under a newly implemented state rule, large trucks and buses made before 2010 are prohibited from operating in California. The rule, which includes restrictions on the big rigs that transport much of the state's agricultural produce, is the final phase in a set of clean air regulations passed by the California Air Resources Board in 2008.

The rule applies to diesel vehicles that weigh at least 14,000 pounds. At the close of the year, CARB estimated that around 70,000 big rigs, or roughly 10% of the state's commercial trucks, were not in compliance with the rule.

The Air Resources Board created the regulation because newer engines are better at filtering out toxic particulates. According to state regulators, big rigs emit more than half the vehicle-related pollution in California even though they make up just 6% of the motor vehicles registered in the state.

In a memo released last year, CARB Deputy Executive Officer Craig Segall called the regulation one of the board's "biggest successes in protecting public health."

However, as the final requirements of the rule go into effect, farmers and trucking company owners say it imposes a heavy burden, especially for small trucking businesses and agricultural producers using older trucks on a seasonal or part-time basis.

Business owners looking to replace noncompliant trucks with newer big rigs face a steep financial hill.

With the rule now in effect, the older trucks "have no resale value," said Katie Little, policy advocate for the California Farm Bureau. "The market is saturated with these old trucks, which you have to sell across state lines, so the resale value has really just dropped."

The next step, purchasing a newer big rig, has been complicated by pandemic-related supply chain issues that have created a monthslong backlog for new diesel trucks and inflated the market for used vehicles. To get a big rig made in 2010 or later, prices run anywhere from \$50,000 to around \$200,000.

For the most part, large trucking companies have had time to transition their fleets, as they get enough use out of them for the investment in new trucks to pay off.

Those who have expressed the most concern about the rule, Little said, have been "smaller family farms that have a truck or two and use them during harvest season or planting season," but not year-round. "It's for part-time use, and the cost of investment (to get a new truck) is just really a heavy lift right now," she said.

Until this year, an agricultural exemption had allowed big rigs made before 2010 to run up to 10,000 miles per year. But that exemption ended as part of the final phase of the rule. People using noncompliant

big rigs for agricultural purposes must now abide by a general 1,000-mile limit.

Tom Barcellos, owner of Barcellos Farms, a Tipton-based dairy farm and trucking company, has a fleet of 24 trucks, including six that were made before 2010. Under the 10,000-mile agricultural exemption, Barcellos could use his older trucks to haul feed between his two dairies, which are 3 miles apart, and haul silage from the field.

Now, under the new limit, he may have little choice but to sell those trucks at a low price, as he can't get the work done while staying within the new limit. "The thousand miles is what's going to kill us," Barcellos said.

For some farmers, even just a 2,000-mile limit might be enough. But "unfortunately, the department is sticking hard and fast to their thousand-mile limit," Little said.

At the same time, Barcellos and other farmers with similar operations don't put enough miles on their trucks to make it worth investing in new ones that are compliant with CARB regulations.

"It's not going to generate enough income to pay its bills and warrant that kind of money," Barcellos said. "It's challenging for a lot of people."

The state has provided incentive programs and financial assistance to upgrade to newer diesel trucks, but the return on investment still doesn't add up for everyone. According to news reports, some business owners, including those shipping fresh produce in the Salinas Valley, have downsized or left the trucking sector altogether rather than buy expensive new diesel trucks.

Trucking company owners are also weighing other challenges, including higher diesel prices and looming regulations aimed at further curtailing pollution and carbon emissions.

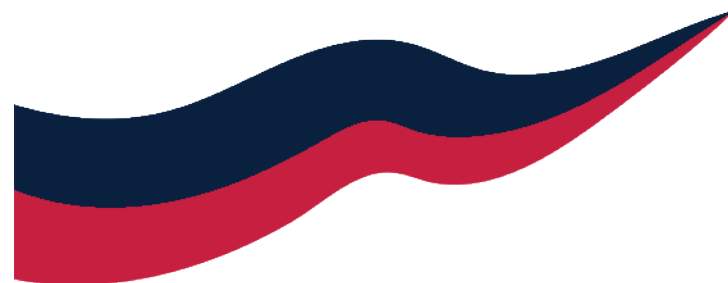
At the moment, CARB is considering a proposed regulation to phase out big rigs and other trucks with internal combustion engines and replace them with zero-emission vehicles, forcing some trucking companies to begin converting their fleets in 2024 and prohibiting the sale of all new fossil-fueled trucks by 2040.

"It seems like these rules are all stacking up against each other, and farmers are going to have to make an investment now (in a newer diesel truck) and then make another large investment (in a zero-emission truck) when the electric vehicle rules come through," Little said. "It doesn't give our members a lot of time to recoup the costs of these regulations that seem to be bearing down on them."

Business owners said the cost of abiding by the regulations will be borne by farmers and ultimately by consumers.

"Looking beyond myself, this is going to end up raising the rate in agriculture in general," Barcellos said. "No matter what it is—we haul (farm) equipment for other people—the rates are going up because of all the added costs."

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Friant Water Authority Welcomes New Board Officers for The 2023-2024 Term

Press release provided by the Friant Water Authority

Three new Board Officers will assume leadership roles during the January 30 Friant Water Authority (FWA) Board of Directors meeting. Jim Erickson of Madera Irrigation District, who just finished a term as Board Secretary/Treasurer, was elected Chairman; Rick Borges of Tulare Irrigation District and Josh Pitigliano of Lower Tule River Irrigation District will serve as Vice Chair and Secretary/Treasurer, respectively. Their terms will continue through the end of 2024.

“As a director representing farmers who receive their Friant Division water supplies from the Madera Canal, I’m moved by the Board’s decision to elect me Chairman,” said Chairman Erickson. “Their confidence in my ability to provide leadership on behalf of all Friant Contractors, regardless of how they receive their supply from Millerton Lake, underscores the strength and unity of the Friant family.”

Director Erickson was born, raised, and still lives on the original home ranch his great-grandfather bought in 1924 in Madera. He has more than 40 years of experience in the agricultural field and currently runs his family’s farming operations with his sons. He is also a second-generation director for the Madera Irrigation District.

Director Borges is a fourth-generation farmer in Tulare, and his son Greg is the fifth generation working on the family’s farm. He also previously served as a director for the Friant Water Users

Authority, FWA’s predecessor, and serves as a director for the Tulare Irrigation Company, Kaweah and St. Johns Rivers Association, and Kaweah Basin Water Quality Association.

Director Pitigliano is a fourth-generation farmer and works alongside his father and two brothers. Their diversified farm and farm management business is spread across multiple irrigation districts. He previously served as chairman of the Tulare County Farm Bureau Young Farmers and Ranchers Committee and later as a director on the Tulare County Farm Bureau board.

In addition to Director Erickson’s change in office, two other 2022/2023 Board officers – Chairman Cliff Loeffler of Lindsay-Strathmore Irrigation District, and Vice Chair Edwin Camp of Arvin-Edison Water Storage District – will remain in an advisory role on the Board and as members of its Executive Committee.

“Directors Loeffler and Camp presided over some of the most exciting but tumultuous times in the Friant Division’s history,” said Chief Executive Officer Jason Phillips. “There’s no question that their leadership was crucial to the success of the Friant-Kern Canal Middle Reach Capacity Correction Project and also kept us united during the ‘calls’ on water stored in Millerton Lake by the Exchange Contractors. We were also fortunate to have Director Erickson as part of that leadership group, and are likewise grateful that he’ll serve as Chairman.”

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173 - The 2023 Agriculture Round Table

John Moore is the former President of the Kern County Farm Bureau, and real estate agent with a demonstrated history of working in the agricultural industry. His main focus is on maintaining economic...

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AFBF Signs Right to Repair Memorandum of Understanding with John Deere



Press Release Provided by the American Farm Bureau Federation

The American Farm Bureau Federation and John Deere signed a memorandum of understanding today that ensures farmers' and ranchers' right to repair their own farm equipment. The MOU, signed at the 2023 AFBF Convention in San Juan, Puerto Rico, is the culmination of several years of discussions between AFBF and John Deere.

"AFBF is pleased to announce this agreement with John Deere. It addresses a long-running issue for farmers and ranchers when it comes to accessing tools, information, and resources, while protecting John Deere's intellectual property rights and ensuring equipment safety," said AFBF President Zippy Duvall. "A piece of equipment is a major investment. Farmers must have the freedom to choose where equipment is repaired, or to repair it themselves, to help control costs. The MOU commits John Deere to ensuring farmers and independent repair facilities have access to many of the tools and software needed to grow the food, fuel and fiber America's families rely on."

David Gilmore, John Deere Senior Vice President, Ag & Turf Sales & Marketing said, "This

agreement reaffirms the longstanding commitment Deere has made to ensure our customers have the diagnostic tools and information they need to make many repairs to their machines. We look forward to working alongside the American Farm Bureau and our customers in the months and years ahead to ensure farmers continue to have the tools and resources to diagnose, maintain and repair their equipment."

The MOU sets parameters and creates a mechanism to address farmers' concerns. John Deere commits to engaging with farmers and dealers to resolve issues when they arise and agrees to meet with AFBF at least twice per year to evaluate progress.

The agreement formalizes farmers' access to diagnostic and repair codes, as well as manuals (operator, parts, service) and product guides. It also ensures farmers will be able to purchase diagnostic tools directly from John Deere and receive assistance from the manufacturer when ordering parts and products.

The MOU has the potential to serve as a model for other manufacturers and AFBF has already begun those discussions.

Grower Appreciation

Continued from PAGE 1 for their efforts during what was a challenging 2022 season," said Holloway CEO Brian Maxted, "and wish them a fruitful 2023 season. In a lot of ways, World Ag Expo kicks off the season each year, and we wanted to let the farming community know we appreciate all of the work they do and the food they help put on all of our tables."

This farmer-focused event is open to all growers, from California and beyond, and complimentary drinks and appetizers will be provided for all growers in attendance. Holloway and Laurel Ag & Water will also be giving away prizes and plenty of swag at the event. For more details and to RSVP for this free grower event, visit HollowayAg.com/WorldAg.

More Information:

Grower Appreciation Happy Hour at World Ag Expo

- **Where:** World Ag Expo Banquet Hall (Heritage Complex), 4500 South Laspinas St., Tulare, CA 93274
- **When:** Wednesday, Feb. 15, 2023, from 2 p.m. – 5 p.m.
- **About:** Join the local farming community on Day 2 of World Ag for free drinks and appetizers at the World Ag Expo Banquet Hall, as we thank and celebrate our growers heading into the 2023 season.
- **RSVP:** HollowayAg.com/WorldAg or email your contact details to Brian.Milne@HMHolloway.com or BSterling@Laurel-Ag.com!

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American Farm Bureau Establishes 2023 Policies

New Grassroots Leaders Also Elected



Credit: AFBF Photo, Michael LoBiondo

Press Release Provided by the American Farm Bureau Federation

Farmer and rancher delegates to the American Farm Bureau Federation's 104th Convention today adopted policies to guide the organization's work in 2023. Key topics ranged from expanding risk management programs and improving dairy pricing transparency to battling hunger.

Delegates were polled regarding their farms at the beginning of the voting session. The results show almost 99% (334 delegates) of those who cast votes

operate family farms and almost 65% represent small- to mid-size farms as defined by USDA.

"Delegates demonstrated the strength of Farm Bureau by coming together to represent hard-working farm families from all 50 states and Puerto Rico," said AFBF President Zippy Duvall. "There's a lot of work to do in 2023 as Congress drafts the next farm bill, and the policies set forth today will guide AFBF as we work to ensure farmers and ranchers can continue to meet the growing needs of families in America and around the world."

Delegates to the American Farm Bureau business meeting voted to modernize the farm bill by expanding baseline funding, developing more flexible disaster relief programs and extending protection to more specialty crops.

They also voted to bring more transparency to the federal milk pricing system. Several changes to policy include support for more USDA audits of processing costs to ensure data remains accurate, and a Federal Milk Marketing Orders voting procedure that requires cooperatives to communicate more clearly with members regarding proposed changes. The results of an FMMO forum hosted by AFBF in October served as a guidepost for policy changes.

Recognizing growing food insecurity in the United States, delegates approved new policy to support access to nutrition programs including connecting farms directly with food banks, increasing the number of SNAP-approved food sales outlets, and other efforts to make produce available to families living in food deserts.

On trade, delegates added policy for USDA to continue working with the Mexican government to drop a proposed ban on imports of biotech corn. The new policy also encourages USDA to urge the Mexican government to accept established science on the safety of U.S. biotech products.

Voting delegates also formalized Farm Bureau's position opposing the 2022 Waters of the U.S. rule and a proposed Securities and Exchange Commission rule if it requires Scope 3 emissions reporting from farms.

Beyond policy changes, delegates also elected members to serve on the AFBF board of directors and national program committees.

Chris Hoffman, president of Pennsylvania Farm Bureau and Wayne Stafford, president of Maryland Farm Bureau (Northeast Region) were elected to fill one-year terms on the AFBF board of directors. Joe Newland, president of Kansas Farm Bureau (Midwest Region); and Scott Mugrage, president of Alaska Farm Bureau (Western Region) were elected to two-year terms on the AFBF board of directors.

Fifteen other state Farm Bureau presidents were re-elected to two-year terms to represent their regions on the board.

Midwest Region

Rich Guebert, Illinois
Randy Kron, Indiana
Brent Johnson, Iowa
Dan Glessing, Minnesota

Northeast Region

David Fisher, New York
Joe Tisbert, Vermont

Southern Region

Tom McCall, Georgia
Jim Harper, Louisiana
Mike McCormick, Mississippi
Shawn Harding, North Carolina
Rodd Moesel, Oklahoma
Eric Mayberry, Tennessee
Russell Boening, Texas

Western Region

Stefanie Smallhouse, Arizona
Jamie Johansson, California

National Program Committees

Matt Fimon of Virginia was elected chair of the Young Farmers & Ranchers Committee, taking over the position in March at the end of the Young Farmers & Ranchers Conference for a one-year term. Heather Graham of Kentucky was elected vice chair and Joel Currier of Colorado was elected secretary. They will each serve one-year terms.

Isabella Chism of Indiana was re-elected chair of the Women's Leadership Committee and Lorenda Overman of North Carolina was re-elected vice chair, each for a two-year term. Lou Nave of Tennessee (Southern Region), Lisa Wherry of Pennsylvania (Northeast Region), Marieta Hauser of Kansas (Midwest Region) and Shawn Wood of Arizona (Western Region) were re-elected to two-year terms.

Daryn Westergard of Utah was elected chair of AFBF's Promotion & Education Committee; Alan Clark of Idaho was elected vice chair. Both will serve two-year terms beginning in March.

AFBF thanks the more than 60 speakers and nearly 5,000 registered attendees who helped make the 2023 Convention such a success. Registered attendees may view selected workshops and sessions on-demand on the convention virtual platform (<https://event.me/EDEv29>) for the next 90 days.

Planning for the American Farm Bureau's 2024 Convention has already begun. Mark your calendar to meet us January 19-24, 2024, in Salt Lake City, Utah.

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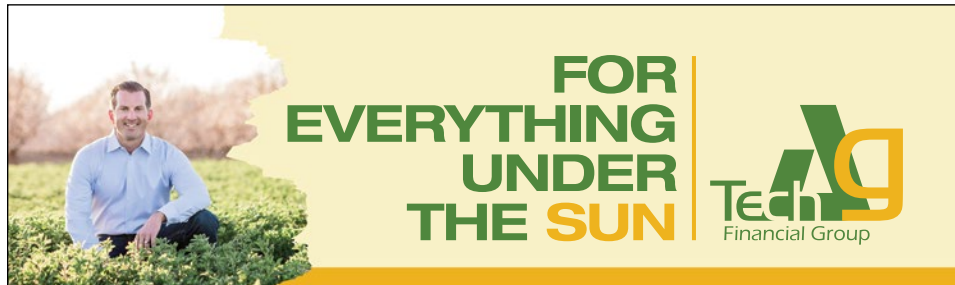
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CDFA Awards Funding for 2022 CalAgPlate Grant Program



Press Release Provided by the California Department of Food and Agriculture

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) has awarded \$247,956 for organizations to enhance agricultural education and leadership opportunities under the 2022 California Special Interest License Plate (CalAgPlate) grant program.

The CalAgPlate program is funded with proceeds generated through the sale of special interest, agriculture-themed license plates through the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). Over the past several years of administering this program, \$1.9 million has been awarded to support agricultural education and leadership development. Current grant recipients include:

1. Anaheim Union High School District: \$9,800.00

This project will help Title 1 students focus on agriculture education, career awareness, and leadership development while filling students' nutritional gaps by developing a community garden and mini orchard. Students will have the opportunity to taste test the produce they grow, create healthy dishes representative of their identities, and develop their self-efficacy. Having access to healthier foods for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds inspires social change by addressing food insecurity within the community. The objective is for students to be empowered to create change through sustainable gardening techniques that they can practice at home.

2. California Association, Future Farmers of America: \$210,000.00

CalAgPlate grant funding will continue to provide support for student leadership and program development for California's statewide Future Farmers of America (FFA) program, which has 355 school chapters throughout the state that provide integral leadership instruction through the FFA student organization to 98,969 student members. This program will increase student access to information about career, leadership, and programmatic opportunities.

3. California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom: \$8,870.00

The California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom will offer a new pre-kindergarten educational unit that focuses on Life on the Farm while providing a traditional thematic unit that introduces modern agriculture. Students will be led through a visually engaging video to gain an understanding of what

California farming looks like today. This project has the ability to reach approximately 12,000 educators in public and private school sites within California.

4. California Women for Agriculture – Ventura County Chapter: \$5,000.00

The California Women for Agriculture will conduct a Farm Day at a local Ventura County school to provide students with fundamental information about California agriculture. Students will be invited to attend the event and rotate through a variety of interactive stations each focusing on a different aspect of agriculture. Organizations such as local farmers, 4-H, and Future Farmers of America students will bring equipment, animals, produce, and other educational farming-related subjects to teach local elementary school students about the importance of the agricultural economy which operates right in the students' communities.

5. San Joaquin County Foundation for Agricultural Education: \$10,000.00

This project will help teach young consumers about San Joaquin County's booming agricultural industry and nutrition education through four field days each school year. These field days include experiential learning opportunities through presentations and hands-on displays about agriculture and nutrition education. Approximately 10,000 third-grade students will participate in the AgVenture field day events.

6. San Joaquin County Office of Education: \$4,286.00

The Agricultural Careers Exploration project will offer opportunities for San Joaquin County junior and senior high school students to learn about agriculture careers from current agricultural industry professionals. Students will visit up to eight different agriculture businesses to meet agriculture industry professionals, tour their operations, and discuss required training, growth opportunities, and impact on California agriculture within the field.

Please support agricultural education and the CalAgPlate program by purchasing a special interest license plate from the DMV (<https://www.dmv.ca.gov/portal/vehicle-registration/license-plates-decals-and-placards/california-license-plates/order-special-interest-and-personalized-license-plates/>).

State Agencies Fast-track Groundwater Recharge Pilot Project to Capture Flood Waters for Underground Storage



An aerial view of agricultural fields covered with water in Butte County

*Press Release Provided by the California Department of
Water Resources*

The Department of Water Resources (DWR) is partnering with the State Water Resources Control Board to fast-track efforts to capture flood waters to recharge groundwater basins. Water captured during extreme wet periods such as the one California is now experiencing will be stored in groundwater basins for use during dry periods.

Governor Newsom's "California Water Supply Strategy, Adapting to a Hotter, Drier Future" calls on DWR and the State Water Board to work with local agencies to significantly expand the State's ability to capture water from winter storms and adapt to more extreme weather patterns caused by climate change. DWR and the board are working together to expedite the regulatory steps necessary to store significant rainfall and excess water underground, while still ensuring protections for the environment and other water users as required in State law.

“The State is capturing more water supply by accelerating groundwater recharge permitting and projects that mitigate the impacts of prolonged drought and support long-term sustainable groundwater management,” said DWR Director Karla Nemeth. “Projects that capture available precipitation, stormwater, or floodwaters to recharge depleted groundwater basins need to be ready to capture high flows when they are available during each wet season, typically October through April in California.”

The State's efforts reached a milestone January 6 when

the State Water Board approved a six-month permit that will enable multiple landowners to divert excess flows from Mariposa creek near the City of Merced to recharge a key groundwater basin. The Merced Project permit, the first approved under a new pilot regulatory assistance program, is expected to pave the way for future projects to allow water from wet-weather storms to be captured and diverted. The permit will cover multiple diversions by multiple landowners in a coordinated fashion managed by a groundwater sustainability agency.

The pilot program began in August 2022 with an application from the Merced Irrigation District and the Merced Irrigation-Urban Groundwater Sustainability Agency to divert and store water from the Mariposa creek. The permit application authorizes diversion of up to 10,000 acre-feet of water from the creek during periods of high flows that would otherwise likely flow through the system. The Merced Subbasin is one of 21 basins in the state of California identified as Critically Overdrafted by DWR.

“The review process for these permits is complex and must consider impacts to the environment and existing water rights, including those dependent on specific Delta conditions and state and federal water project requirements,” said State Water Board Chair Joaquin Esquivel. “In acknowledgement of this complexity, we have streamlined the process, so we issue them in a timely way and help local agencies succeed in capturing stormwater for recharge and bringing stressed



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Agencies Fast-track

Continued from PAGE 17
groundwater basins into balance.”

Since 2016, the State Water Board has approved 20 temporary permits. Currently there are five applications pending (https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterrights/water_issues/programs/applications/groundwater_recharge/pending_applications.html), with two more projected to be approved next week. The remaining three are going through a public noticing process.

The Merced Project's permit includes multiple points of diversion. Diversions will be directed to a number

of agricultural fields to support groundwater recharge consistent with the Merced Subbasin Groundwater Sustainability Plan. Water diverted for recharge purposes will be applied to working agricultural lands only, and water stored will be accounted for in the upcoming growing season as the first irrigation water to be pumped from the aquifers.

“Merced Irrigation District is excited to partner with DWR supporting GSAs with this crucial pilot project intended to help groundwater basins become sustainable by turning potential flood waters into groundwater recharge opportunities,” said Hicham Eltal, Deputy General Manager, Merced Irrigation District. “The project is intended to show that the subsidence being experienced in part of the Merced Groundwater Basin

along the San Joaquin River can be addressed while simultaneously reducing recurring flood events from local creeks tributary to the San Joaquin River. The goal is that this effort paves the way for acquiring temporary permits to divert flood flows by GSAs throughout the State to help groundwater basins reach sustainability.”

As part of the Newsom's Administration water supply strategy, the State is looking to expand groundwater recharge by at least 500,000 acre-feet in potential capacity. By expediting groundwater recharge projects, the State can help local agencies prepare now to take advantage of future heavy precipitation events. Early pilot project efforts, like the Merced Project, will demonstrate the feasibility of capturing available high flows for groundwater recharge while minimiz-

ing flood risks, and provide insight to support further streamlining of this process.

Groundwater basins serve as the state's water savings account and are intended to provide a reliable water source when we have less rain and snowmelt. As weather patterns have become more variable and extreme from the effects of climate change, resulting in more frequent and consequential droughts and high flow events, replenishment of depleted groundwater basins is an essential part of California's long-term water resilience and drought mitigation efforts. Significant expansion of groundwater recharge projects such as the Merced Project will be required to support environment, agricultural uses, and ability to withstand future droughts.



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Even When Church Is Canceled, Church Isn't Canceled

By Joshua Stevens
Faith Contributor, Valley Ag Voice

On Sunday, February 9th, 2014, several dozen students at Corban University gathered in a dorm to listen to testimony and sing together. Given most normal circumstances, this would be a heartwarming but normal occurrence. But this was no ordinary circumstance.

That week in 2014, Salem, Oregon, was hit with a significant snowstorm that slowed most of the city, and events were canceled due to the weather (Tomlinson, 2015). Late into the evening on Saturday, February 8th, students around the campus began receiving texts or notifications that churches across the city had canceled their services for the following day.

Over the next few hours, a couple of students began working on a plan to arrange a church service in the dorm at 9:00 AM. They went to the computer lab, printed two dozen pages of lyrics for people to use, planned songs, and asked several other students to share their testimonies. Working into the late hours of the night to ensure everything was correctly set up and prepared. They came up with a theme, "Even when Church is canceled, church isn't canceled."

On the morning of Sunday, February 9th, those students prayed, gathered chairs, had pages of lyrics ready to hand out, and by 8:58 AM, it was just those five students and a few others

sporadically spaced out around the room quietly talking amongst themselves. However, within the next few minutes, dozens of students would begin to walk in from all over campus. So many came in that people needed to share the handouts with two or three people to one. Together they prayed, worshipped, and listened as they participated in church.

Everyone heard from three students who were asked to give their testimony. They were not the first students you might think would be sharing their testimony at a Christian university. Some were quiet and soft-spoken; some were jokesters who were loud enough to be heard clearly across the campus. But each student was Christian, believing in the risen Christ and transformed by the grace of the gospel.

I often think about this day, not because some grand miracle occurred by college students walking across the snow and being late to church or because they had to overcome some great obstacle to participate in church. The inconvenience was relatively small compared to what a great many believers must do to attend a similar service. I like to think about this day for a few reasons.

First, it is a beautiful reminder of the power of the body of Christ. Where a few people set out to give a place for believers to come together and worship, we saw the body respond. We saw people willing to lead worship and share their testimony. Students trek across a small,



On Sunday, February 9th, 2014, several dozen students at Corban University gathered in a dorm to listen to testimony and sing together—despite a significant snowstorm. (Photo: Joshua Stevens)

steep, and frozen campus to join in praising our God and listening to how God worked in other people's lives.

For many students who came and participated, it was their first time living alone or away from their families. This was a moment for them to make their faith their own. No one was forcing them to wake up, get ready, and go to this. Due to the weather, no one would judge them for shrugging their shoulders and sleeping in. But they overcame and joined the others to worship and fellowship.

Those students joined in a great tradition of those who love Christ overcoming obstacles to join in song, in fellowship, and devotion to the Lord. The sacrifice these students made cannot be compared to the sacrifice of the early church or even churches spread across the globe. Hopefully, it is the closest they will ever get to being in such a situation. I hope it deepened their faith as much as it has mine.

"Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." **James 1:2 (Crossway Bibles, 2001)**

Lord, thank you for the constant provision you have provided so that we may be allowed to worship and praise you. Thank you for the opportunities each of us has to gather together to fellowship, share hardships, pray, celebrate victories, learn, and support one another. As we continue into this year, may each of us grow to appreciate our communities more and allow us to grow deeper in our faith with our brothers and sisters in Christ. In Jesus' name, I pray, amen.

¹Tomlinson, S. (2015, February 5th). *February 2014 snowstorm: A look back at the snow, the ice, the misery and the fun*. Retrieved from OregonLive: OregonLive.com/Weather/2015/02/February_2014_Snowstorm_a_Look.html

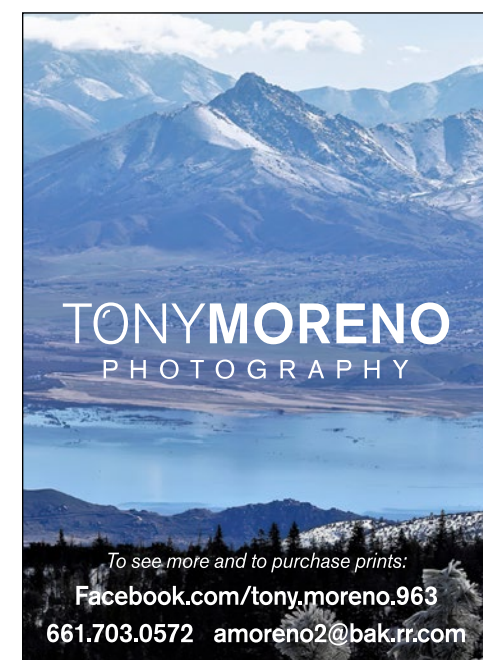
²Crossway Bibles. (2001). *The Holy Bible English Standard Version*. Wheaton: Good News Publishers.

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