

Farm Focus

A publication of Monterey County Farm Bureau

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2009 Legislative Calendar

Provided by Senator Abel Maldonado

February 27 - Bill introduction deadline. This is the last day for members to introduce new bills for the 2009 legislative session.

March-May - Committee hearings. All bills will be heard in a policy committee and most will be heard in the Appropriations Committee during this time. You can track the status of bills you are interested in by using the Web site provided above.

June 5 - House of Origin deadline. All Senate bills must be passed out of the Senate and all Assembly bills out of the Assembly by this date. If you check the status of your bill and it is still in its original house, it probably is not moving forward this year.

June 15 - Budget bill must be passed by the Legislature.

July-September - Committee hearings. Senate bills will be heard in Assembly committees and Assembly bills will be heard in Senate committees.

September 11 - Last day for bills to be passed out of the Legislature.

October 11 - Last day for governor to sign or veto bills.

Revised Code Enforcement Ordinance adopted

The Board of Supervisors adopted a new Code Enforcement Ordinance January 13 amid compliments to Building Service Director Tim McCormick from all sides.

Paula Lotz, Jan Mitchell, Pam Silkwood, Bob Perkins and John Bailey praised McCormick for his department's effort to work with all segments of the community to resolve differences and to craft an ordinance with broad support. Several speakers suggested his approach could help with future, controversial ordinances.

Coalition office closing

Please note that the Santa Maria office of Central Coast Ag Water Quality Coalition will be closing due to cuts in California Proposition Funding grants, reported Kay Mercer.

Currently, the Coalition does not have funding to work in Southern San Luis Obispo County or in Santa Barbara County. The Central Coast Ag Water Quality Coalition will continue to operate in areas where funding does exist and, of course, will pursue alternate funding sources during this suspension of grant funding.

The Central Coast Ag Water Quality Coalition's office in Soquel will be closing the end of March 2009. If you are interested in the purchase of office furniture please contact Kay Mercer.

Please note that the telephone number (805) 928-6301 and fax number (805) 928-6312 will be disconnected. You may call Kay Mercer on her cell phone at (805) 208-8039. Her new fax number is (805) 226-8973. Additionally, the e-mail address sbagcoalition@verizon.net will be discontinued at the end of January. For the present, please contact Kay using the e-address klmercer@charter.net.

Giannini appointed to Preservation, Inc., committee

Farm Bureau Vice President Dirk Giannini has been formally appointed to represent the organization on the Ag Committee of Central Coast Water Quality Preservation, Inc.

The committee is working to get renewal of the region's conditional ag water discharge waiver through the Regional Water Quality Control Board.

Giannini is chair of Farm Bureau's Water Committee.



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Some groups put fish ahead of people

By Mike Wade,
Executive Director
California Farm Water Coalition

"Water needs to be managed first for the needs of fish, and second for the needs of people."

A statement like this is sure to inflame individuals in California's water industry who struggle to provide the water needed by both our farms and cities. However, it is important to go beyond the immediate reaction to the statement and realize what this statement means to California's water future.

The statement was taken from a presentation at last month's International Sportsman Exposition in Sacramento and was made by an attorney for the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). This group has long been a strong advocate toward increasing the water supply dedicated for the environment and it hasn't mattered what the cost might be for others. NRDC has repeatedly used the court system to push its agenda.

The real surprise resulting from the statement is that it publicly acknowledges what many of us have thought for years--- radical environmentalists will do whatever is necessary to take water away from farms and cities.

This approach to claiming increased water supplies for the environment has certainly been proven in recent years. One only has to take a look at the amount of water that has been redirected, mostly from farmers, to the environment since 1991---

1991...National Marine Fisheries Service biological opinion, 80,000 acre-feet.

1992...Central Valley Project Improvement Act, 800,000 acre-feet.

1994...Bay-Delta Accord, 1.1 million acre-feet.

2000...Trinity Accord, 600,000 acre-feet.

2006...San Joaquin River Restoration Settlement, up to 200,000 acre-feet if water recovery under the Settlement is not realized.

2007...Federal court decision preserving water for Delta smelt, 600,000 acre-feet.

The combined total of these actions on an annual basis amounts to more than 3 million acre-feet of water. To put that in perspective, the contracted annual delivery of water from the State Water Project calls for 4.1 million acre-feet and annual contracts from the federal Central Valley Project total 7 million acre feet. Of course, neither of these projects is delivering anything near that amount of water this year.

California is entering a third consecutive year of drought and the prospect for water deliveries this year is not looking good. It will take all water interests working together to

survive what is shaping up to be a crippling water year for all. If we are going to plan for a future that will adequately provide water for all Californians, then we must be willing to work together. It appears the National Resources Defense Council does not plan to be a part of that effort.

Food Grows Where Water Flows: Support California Farm Water Coalition, 5999 Freeport Blvd., Sacramento, CA 95822, (916) 391-5030, www.farmwater.org

General plan begins new round of hearings

The county's General Plan Update was set to start a new round of hearings in February that could lead to adoption. The first stop was the Planning Commission on February 11.

Most of the controversial issues in the plan had been resolved last year -- or at least accepted by opposing organizations. Release of the Draft Environmental Impact Report raised new questions that, Farm Bureau said, could stand in the way of adoption of the plan.

Election of Supervisor Jane Parker last November also raised questions about whether the plan can be adopted. Parker hasn't revealed her strategy on the plan, although she has expressed concern about the policy for agriculture on slopes.

Some members of LandWatch have displayed interest in revisiting some of the other controversial areas of the plan.

Monterey County Farm Bureau filed two letters commenting on the EIR.

One letter opposed new policies that would create a countywide habitat protection plan and extend protection to a wide range of species that are not listed a threatened or endangered.

The other letter questioned a policy recommended by the EIR that called for the county to support a regional water program. Farm Bureau has opposed transfer of water out of the Salinas Valley Water Project and worried that a general plan policy of support, for an as-yet-undefined plan, could leave agriculture's water supply at risk.

In public comments on habitat protections, Farm Bureau cited similar costs in other counties that suggested a countywide plan here could cost up to \$4 billion. Farm Bureau also noted the firm that prepared this recommendation is one of the top firms in the state for these kinds of programs, raising an appearance of conflict of interest.

Group to look at pesticides and reproductive health

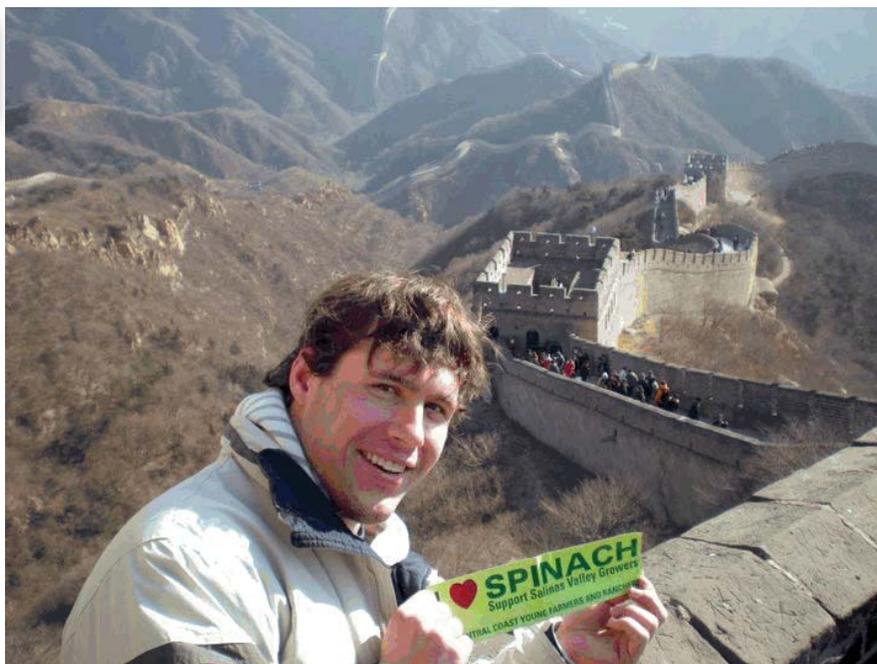
Over the next several months, a newly-formed group will review anecdotal, local, and published information on pesticides and the reproductive health of farmworkers and their families in the Pajaro Valley.

The group, called the Pajaro Valley Health Action Team Collaborative, held its first meeting in February in Watsonville.

The study is supported by grant funding and is being assisted by Planned Parenthood.

Participants include representatives of farmworkers, agribusiness, academia, environmental health, public health, pesticide activist groups, and farmworker advocacy groups.

Facilitated by David Barkan, Ph. D., of the Barkan Consulting Group, the Collaborative will convene once a month from February through May 2009, and will host a summit in June 2009. Simultaneous Spanish-English translation services will be available for all meetings.



That well-travelled Spinach bumper sticker made it to China's Great Wall recently with owner Mark Metzger. When we last saw Mark and the Spinach sticker, he was visiting a town in North Korea. (Discoloration is due to conversion of the photo file.)

Sherman, Salinas Valley and the liquid fire

(In his Memoirs, famed Civil War General William T. Sherman recalled his early career when he was stationed at Monterey for several years beginning in 1846. This brief excerpt describes Sherman and fellow soldier Lieutenant Ord crossing the Salinas Valley.)

I can well recall that (Lieutenant) Ord and I, impatient to look inland, got permission and started for the Mission of San Juan Bautista.

Mounted on horses, and with our carbines, we took the road by El Toro, quite a prominent hill, around which passes the road to the south, following the Salinas or Monterey River.

After about twenty miles over a sandy country covered with oak-bushes and scrub, we entered quite a pretty valley in which there was a ranch at the foot of the Toro. Resting there a while and getting some information, we

again started in the direction of a mountain to the north of the Salinas, called the Gavillano.

It was quite dark when we reached the Salinas River, which we attempted to pass at several points, but found it full of water, and the quicksands were bad. Hearing the bark of a dog, we changed our course in that direction, and, on hailing, were answered by voices which directed us where to cross. Our knowledge of the language was limited, but we managed to understand, and to founder through the sand and water, and reached a small adobe-house on the banks of the Salinas, where we spent the night:

The house was a single room, without floor or glass; only a rude door, and window with bars. Not a particle of food but meat, yet the man and woman entertained us with the language of lords, put themselves, their house, and every thing, at our "disposition," and made little barefoot children dance for our entertainment. We made our supper of beef, and slept on a bullock's hide on the dirt-floor.

In the morning we crossed the Salinas Plain, about fifteen miles of level ground, taking a shot occasionally at wild-geese,

which abounded there, and entering the well-wooded valley that comes out from the foot of the Gavillano.

We had cruised about all day, and it was almost dark when we reached the house of a Senor Gomez. His house was a two-story adobe, and had a fence in front. It was situated well up among the foot-hills of the Gavillano, and could not be seen until within a few yards.

We hitched our horses to the fence and went in just as Gomez was about to sit down to a tempting supper of stewed hare and tortillas. We were officers and caballeros and could not be ignored. After turning our horses to grass, at his invitation we joined him at supper.

The allowance, though ample for one, was rather short for three, and I thought the Spanish grandiloquent politeness of Gomez, who was fat and old, was not over-cordial. However, down we sat, and I was helped to a dish of rabbit, with what I thought to be an abundant sauce of tomato. Taking a good mouthful, I felt as though I had taken liquid fire; the tomato was chile colorado, or red pepper, of the purest kind. It nearly killed me, and I saw Gomez's eyes twinkle, for he saw that his share of supper was increased. I contented myself with bits of the meat, and an abundant supply of tortillas. Ord was better case-hardened, and stood it better. We staid at Gomez's that night, sleeping, as all did, on the ground, and the next morning we crossed the hill by the bridle-path to the old Mission of San Juan Bautista.



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Central Coast loses influence in Senate

Monterey County and Central Coast agriculture took a double jolt in the state Senate when our two senators lost power and when an outspoken critic of agriculture was named agriculture chairman. These events remind us that Farm Bureau must be closely involved in legislation and in politics.

Senator Abel Maldonado was replaced by Senator Dean Florez as chair, but Maldonado remained as vice chair of the Food and Agriculture Committee. Senator Jeff Denham was removed from the committee.

Florez promised to bear down on food safety and implementation of Proposition 2 the treatment of farm animals act approved by voters in November 2008.

Maldonado earned a reputation as a centrist who understands agriculture, but Florez is a hard-liner. In a press conference announcing the changes, Senator Florez was joined by a number of groups, including Humane Society of the United States; Center for Race, Poverty and the Environment; Food Empowerment Project; Center for Food Safety; Community Alliance with Family Farms; Food and Water Watch; and National Association of Nutrition Professionals.

Denham, who plans to run for lieutenant governor in 2010, was the other agriculturist on the panel until his removal.

Instead, Senator Dennis Hollingsworth was named to the panel. He comes from Southern California agriculture, growing up on a dairy and selling bull semen. He also worked for Farm Bureau before winning a seat in the Assembly, then moving up to the Senate.

Florez is expected to bring a different approach to a couple of key issues:

Food safety: Agriculture understands the difficulty of pinpointing causes of foodborne illness and has developed an unprecedented program to minimize the risk. Meanwhile, Florez consistently condemned the industry's efforts and demanded more regulation. Growers know putting more government inspectors in fields and in plants will do little to detect contamination but will add new costs.

Animal welfare: Florez aims to push implementation of Proposition 2, the recently-approved ballot measure that will force the egg industry out of California. Newspaper articles noted "the committee's oversight was expanded to focus on farms and treatment of farm animals." That means animal "rights" issues will be front and center, which should give livestock producers more to worry about.

California Farm Bureau Federation took a positive approach. Stressing that healthy families depend on healthy farms, the California Farm Bureau Federation said it will work with the state Senate's Committee on Food and Agriculture to insure food security for everyone. California Farm Bureau President Doug Mosebar issued the following statement:

"Healthy families depend on healthy

farms and we have always supported farm policy to promote both healthy families and sustainable farms.

"Sustainability is not just limited to the farm. There is a host of external factors that need to coalesce for our local food production systems to thrive. California must address the need for improved water infrastructure, including surface storage; a robust program to keep invasive pests out of our state; full funding of the Williamson Act to protect farmlands; a labor force adequate to meet demand; and a revamped regulatory program that promotes innovation and provides flexibility to farm productively and efficiently.

"The ability to produce food for our nation is a national security issue – a food security issue. That includes assuring that people have access to fresh and affordable food and farm products. By enhancing its scope of work, the

California Senate Committee on Food and Agriculture is recognizing the contributions that California family farmers and ranchers make in assuring food security for all.

"Working farms and ranches contribute nearly \$37 billion to the California economy. We encourage the committee to recognize that value as it crafts policy to protect our food supply and nourish consumers around the world, while maintaining the viability of California's family farms and ranches.

"We cannot replace productive soil once it has been paved over for strip malls and we cannot plant a crop if we do not know if there will be water available to nurture it. In 1935, California had 151,000 working farms and ranches – and that number has fallen to 75,000. Let's reverse this trend through leadership and innovative solutions that will benefit everyone," Mosebar said.

County drafts oak woodlands voluntary guidelines

Draft oak woodlands guidelines were distributed by the county for comment in January.

The Agricultural Advisory Committee discussed some changes to wording about grazing. Monterey County Farm Bureau also offered revised wording about the "regeneration problem" where few or no young trees are observed.

The guidelines can be found on the Planning Department's website through a link on the Planning Commission agenda for January 28.

Associate Planner Paula Bradley explained:

These guidelines are entirely VOLUNTARY and are not part of any regulatory or mandatory requirements such as CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act) mitigation measures or County land use policies, plans or ordinances. It is not a State or County land use plan that requires public review or notice. This document is required by the Wildlife Conservation Board, authorized to implement the State Oak Woodlands Conservation Program, to allow County landowners, non-profit and public agencies to be eligible to apply for funds for voluntary oak woodland conservation. In order to participate in this program, the Monterey County Board of Supervisors must adopt an "Oak Woodlands Management Plan" that meets the State program's minimum requirements, by a resolution. After that, the County is required to certify that applications submitted to the Wildlife Conservation Board are consistent with this document to compete for grants.

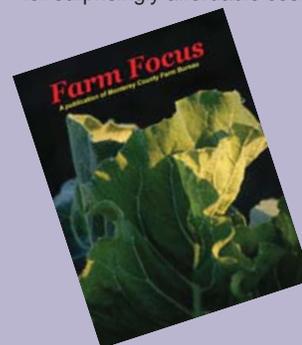
In a completely separate effort, as requested by the County Board of Supervisors,

the County will work with the public to explore mitigation options related to oak woodlands as required by CEQA. This will begin in Spring 2009 and will entail revisions to County plans and ordinances.

If you have any questions, have any trouble opening the three documents, please call Bradley at 831 755-5158 or email bradley@co.monterey.ca.us.

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Don't Hibernate – Participate! With CCYF&R

Usually winter months, mean hibernation, sitting by the warm fire and catching up on movies – but not for the Central Coast Young Farmers and Ranchers! February has been filled with activities, events and the CCYF&R monthly general meeting.

February kicked off with National and State Young Farmers and Ranchers Conference in Sacramento. CCYF&R sent sending more than 15 representatives' to learn from speakers, tour different agricultural operations and network with YF&Rs from all over the United States. CCYF&R also showcased Monterey and San Benito counties agriculture through the Taste of California program – showing the nation that the Salinas Valley is Salad Bowl of the World. CCYF&R sampling the commodities the Valley is famous for, along with some up and coming items, including apricots and carrots.

CCYF&R's February meeting was held in conjunction with a mixer for the California Ag Leadership Program at Pessagno Winery. Ag Leadership officials gave a program overview and answered questions regarding program admission and requirements. CCYF&Rs had the opportunity to network with past, present and prospective candidates and learn about one of the premier agricultural leadership programs in the nation.

February also brings CCYF&R's most

popular event – the 5th Annual Crab Feed. This year's event featured all-you-can-eat crab with all of the trimmings, garlic bread, pasta and salad. A No-Host Bar and dancing

to the famous Shan Johnson Band rounded out one of the best evening the Salinas Valley can offer.

A Rice Farming Lawyer in Salinas???

This will be the case once Monterey College of Law student and Central Coast Young Farmers and Rancher Historian Rita Gordon graduates. Rita, daughter of a third generation Butte County rice farmer, plans to graduate in 2010 and begin work in agricultural and land use law.

"There are similar issues that affect agriculture through the state," Gordon said. "I hope to be the one helping to solve those issues across the state."

Rita attended Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo and later graduated from Chico State with a degree in Agricultural Business in 2006. After college, Rita moved to Monterey County and began working in Sales at Tanimura & Antle. After more than two years with T & A, Rita left to focus on school full time.

Since moving to the Salinas Valley, Rita's time

has been split between Monterey and Butte County. Rita's family currently farms more than 2,000 acres of rice in the Sacramento Valley from Colusa north to Princeton. Despite being

more than three hours away, Rita still makes time to help her family. During rice harvest, typically September through November, Rita travels north to help harvest, drive tractor or do anything that needs to be done around the family's ranches.

Rita also enjoys other activities that come with life on a rice farm, including duck hunting. Rita is an avid sportswomen, hunting large game as well as fly fishing. She also enjoys spending time at the family's home in Montana at least twice a year.



Rita Gordon
Age: 27
Hometown: Princeton, CA
Occupation: Student, Rice Farmer – RLG Farms, Princeton, CA
Hobbies: Hunting, fly fishing, camping



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Proposed septic system regulations would impose huge costs, require inspections

Proposed new regulations for septic systems withdrawn at the end of January after meeting with a firestorm of criticism. The State Water Resources Control Board withdrew the regulations and accompanying EIR, promising to schedule new hearings once the plans have been rewritten.

The board had completed 11 workshops statewide on their proposed septic regulations. The new regulations are the result of the board's implementation of AB 885 (Hannah-Beth Jackson, D-Santa Barbara) that was signed into law in 2000.

After an overflow crowd resulted in the cancellation of the January 27 Santa Rosa workshop, the board rescheduled the workshop for two identical sessions on February 9. The Sacramento hearing on the regulations originally scheduled for February 9 was postponed. The public comment period on the proposed regulations was extended to February 23 at noon.

AB 885 required the Board to develop the regulatory proposal for discharges of waste from onsite septic systems that impair or threaten to impair surface water or groundwater quality. At minimum, property owners with existing systems would be required:

- Inspect septic tanks (\$325 estimated cost) every five years

- Sample & analyze groundwater of onsite domestic wells every five years

- Retrofit tanks if found to be causing pollution (\$45,000 estimated cost)

Farm Bureau was set to provide written comments and oral testimony and urged its members to weigh-in on the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) proposed regulations targeting septic systems.

Landowners swarmed the workshop in Santa Rosa, forcing the SWRCB to cancel the function. Farm Bureau said turnout like this sends a message and urged members to participate in future hearings on this issue.

Monterey County Supervisors approved a letter objecting to the regulations and urging the county to leave enforcement at the county level.

EIR released on coast water project

The draft environmental impact report for Cal Am's Coastal Water Project has been released. It includes an environmental review of the regional water supply project devised by the group formerly known as REPOG.

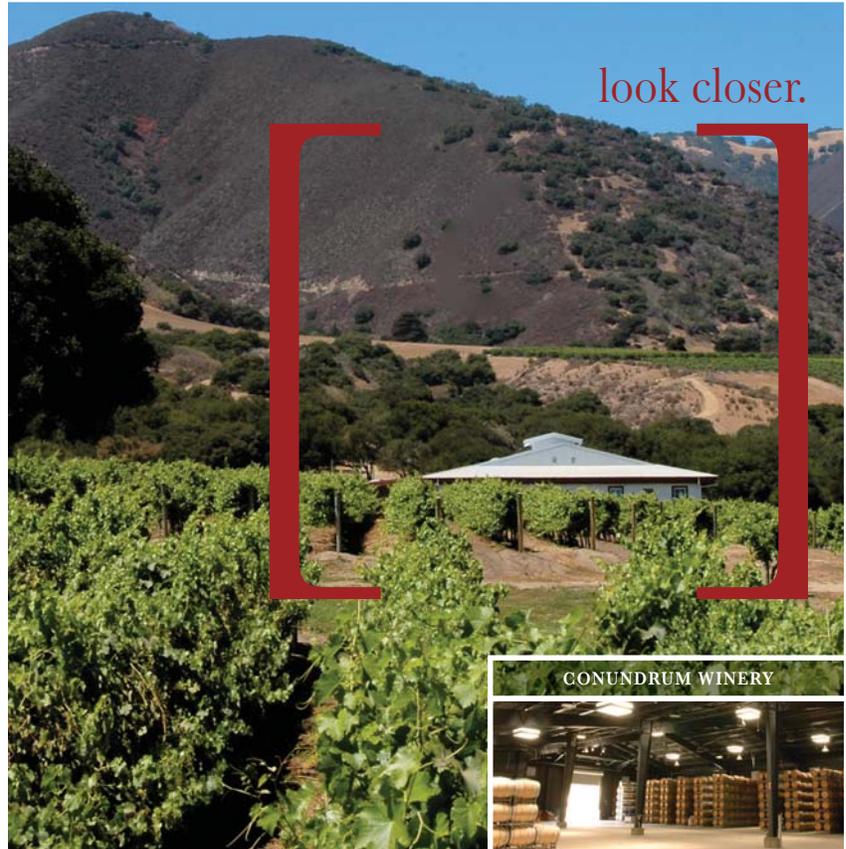
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