



Merced County Farm News



Proposition 19 Puts Family Legacies at Risk

By: Ted Gaines, Former CA State Senator

A massive change to property tax law is coming soon that could cost families thousands of dollars a year and affect how parents and grandparents pass down properties through generations.

Proposition 19, passed by California voters last November, makes major adjustments to the “parent-child” and “grandparent-grandchild” exclusions, all to the harm of taxpayers. Prior to Prop. 19, parents and grandparents could transfer their principal residence to a child or grandchild with no value limit and without adjusting the property tax base-year value, meaning that

the child or grandchild would not be saddled with a huge new property tax assessment when they became owner. The person receiving the property could live there, rent it out, use it as a second home, or let it sit empty – there were no restrictions on property use to qualify for the exemption.

Prop. 19 changes all of that. Once the new law goes into effect on February 16, 2021, the unlimited value provision disappears. The new formula will be the current taxable value of the property plus one-million dollars. This change will hit many coastal property owners in the pocketbook as they inherit or receive property that appreciated wildly in California’s multi-decade housing boom. Modest homes in Silicon Valley neighborhoods

owned and transferred by middle-class families will face stratospheric tax bills under the new regime.

As bad as that will be, it is another provision that is more likely to cause havoc and financial loss for many Californians. Under Prop. 19, a person receiving property under one of these exclusions must now use the property as their primary residence to qualify. That means if you have moved to a different city, you would have to move back and occupy the home to receive the exemption. It means that if you are happy with your current home, you would have to give it up and move to qualify for the exemption.

The date these changes go into effect is right around the corner. If you are planning on transferring property

to a child or grandchild, please be aware of the very different landscape that awaits you and them after February 16.

There are a thousand unanswered questions regarding these changes that are not clarified in the proposition language. What happens if multiple children receive a property but only one makes it a primary residence, for example? What happens if someone qualifies for the exclusion, then moves out of the primary residence for a time, then moves back in? Does the exemption kick back in or is it lost forever? It was an initiative written with little concern for detail.

Proposition 19 does provide

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As state attorney general job morphs post-Trump, who will be Newsom’s pick?

By: Laurel Rosenhall, CalMatters

Feb. 8, 2021 - The last time a California governor chose a new attorney general, Donald Trump had just been elected president. As Democrats geared up to make California the “Resistance State,” newly appointed state attorney general Xavier Becerra quickly went to work suing the Trump administration.

He kept it up at a mind-boggling clip, filing 110 lawsuits over the next four years.

With a Democrat now in the White House, the attorney general who broke records suing Trump has been nominated for a cabinet position by President Joe Biden. If he’s confirmed, Democratic Gov. Gavin Newsom must pick a new attorney general for a decidedly different time.

California’s next attorney general will likely turn the focus inward. The office has huge responsibilities within the state, including consumer protection, gambling and firearms regulation, internet

privacy enforcement and criminal investigations.

“AG’s are really an often unknown, often overlooked, but very critical component to state and national governance,” said Samantha Corbin, a Sacramento lobbyist whose “Age of AG’s” podcast examines attorneys general around the country.

Under a new law signed last year, the California attorney general also will be tasked with investigating all

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Address



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

Greetings Merced County Farm Bureau. January went out with a bang giving us more than 3 inches of well needed rain for our crops. Thankfully during this time, our watersheds received several feet

of snow. Hopefully, the miracle March scenario will come through now.

I would like to give a great big “Thank You” to all of you that were involved in our fundraiser for Nolan Pedretti. I feel that it was a huge success and we appreciate the generous support from those that bought tickets or gave donations. This would not have been possible without our exceptional staff at the Farm Bureau! A big shout out to the hard work and planning that went into helping a member of our community

and Farm Bureau.

Almond bloom is coming fast and bees are moving about. Please make sure that you are aware of where the hives are and keep back from the hives. The bees have a very important job to do and they will be out to get it done. If you have any questions regarding bees or what you should or shouldn't spray or when to spray please inquire with the chemical company or you can reach out to your beekeeper. I hope everyone has a great February and a great bloom!

Although our lives have not returned to a normal setting, we are starting to track up on meetings that are on a topic other than COVID. It has only taken close to a year.

In October 2020, Governor Newsom signed Executive Order N-82-20 which, among other things, requires the development of a Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy by October 2021. This will serve as a framework of short and long-term actions to accelerate carbon sequestration and advances carbon neutrality and resilience. As an early

action, the Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) was charged to host farmer-rancher led roundtables to solicit feedback to inform the strategy and the Scoping Plan. These meetings have already begun with the Livestock and Dairy happening this past week; however, we strongly encourage participation from our local members should you be able to find some time on the below dates:

Row and Field Crops

- Meeting #1: Tuesday, February 16, 2-4pm
- Meeting #2: Friday, February 19, 2-4pm

Trees and Vines

- Meeting #1: Tuesday, February 23, 2-4pm
- Meeting #2: Friday, February 26, 9-11am

All meetings are taking place on Zoom and our staff is happy to send you the links to the various meetings.

I would also encourage you to mark your calendars for Tuesday, March 23, 2021 for California Farm Bureau's Capitol Ag Conference. This is the same event as Leaders Conference just with a fresh name. Typically, we will hear from several speakers and then hit the capitol for legislative visits.

Due to COVID, this year will obviously look a little different, but any member of Farm Bureau can sign up for the speaker session. The keynote speaker for this year's event will be Secretary Jared Blumenfeld of the California Environmental Protection Agency. If you would like to sign up, please contact our office or look for registration information in our next e-newsletter.

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



Lastly, I will say to keep an eye on your mailboxes. In the next few days, you should receive detailed information on our MCFB Sweepstakes which takes the place of our typical Annual Meeting. We are incredibly excited to offer this as a means of our appreciation to our community that has done so much to support our efforts each year.

Join CDFA discussions to help find climate-change solutions in agriculture

**Row and field crops (annual crops):
Feb. 16 & 19**



**Livestock and dairy:
Feb. 8 & 12**

These stakeholder meetings will help us gather feedback on farmer- and rancher-led climate solutions that sequester carbon, reduce greenhouse gases, and enhance biodiversity.

For details and to register, visit:
www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/climate





**Trees and vines (perennial crops):
Feb. 23 & 26**

Merced County Farm Bureau's Mission Statement

Merced County Farm Bureau is an independent, non-governmental, grassroots organization that advocates for the men and women who provide food, fiber, and nursery products for our community, state, and nation.

Merced County Farm Bureau exists for the purpose of improving the ability of individuals engaged in production agriculture to utilize

California resources to produce food and fiber in the most profitable, efficient and responsible manner possible, guaranteeing our nation a domestic food supply.

Merced County Farm Bureau supports policies and legislation that promote and protect our Country's number one industry - agriculture for future generations and the security of our nation.



from the
Editor's Notes
Denelle Flake

If you are a member of the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition (ESJWQC), INMP Summary Reports and Farm Evaluations are due March 1st. If you need assistance

completing either of these forms, please call our office at (209) 723-3001 to schedule an appointment with me.

Some ESJWQC members have just received supplemental invoices for the Nitrates Control Program for those of you in areas effected by CV-SALTS. Please be aware that this invoice is separate from your ESJWQC invoice.

This year we received 92 applications total for the various scholarships offered through the Merced County Farm Bureau Scholarship & Education program. Reading through the applications, it is encouraging to see involvement and dedication our Merced County seniors have in the agriculture community. Many applicants are outstanding individuals that have accomplished amazing things, such as completing Merced College courses while in high school to starting their own breeding projects! Our scholarship committee will select recipients by the end of this month and they will be notified soon after.

Prop 19
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some new and welcome benefits for California taxpayers, most notably that it allows certain property owners to transfer their base-year tax assessment to all 58 counties. This allows homeowners who want to downsize, move closer to their children, or relocate for any other reason to keep a lower property tax. Prior to Prop. 19, that benefit was only available within counties or in a handful of counties that accepted base-year transfers. Taxpayers can now also use that transfer provision three times instead of the one-time, geographically limited use in prior law.

Although I favor the base-year transfer provisions, I oppose this new tax increase, which will take hundreds of millions of dollars a year from Californians inheriting their family's biggest asset. But it's now the law, and as a Board of Equalization Member and taxpayer advocate, I will be seeking to identify every area where Prop. 19 is unclear and am committed to working with the legislature, county assessors, tax professionals and taxpayers to ensure effective administration of this new law.

Visit my website at boe.ca.gov/ for more information on Prop. 19 and for examples of how the new law would affect passed-down properties. Please consult a qualified attorney or tax professional for advice on transferring any property.

Calendar of Events

February 16 & 19
CDFA Row & Field Crops Climate Stakeholder Meetings (pg. 2)

February 18
SCFB Sexual Harrassment Training (pg. 10)

February 18
Picking February Sweepstake Gift Recipients (pg. 24)

February 23 & 26
CDFA Tree & Vines Climate Stakeholders Meetings (pg. 2)

Merced County Farm News

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Evaluating paraquat to control weeds in sweetpotato hotbeds



and by hand weeding. Annual grasses can be effectively controlled with postemergence grass herbicides such as fluazifop (Fusilade), sethoxydim (Poast), and clethodim (Select).

Because sweetpotatoes are a niche specialty crop, there are very few registered herbicides available to growers. Pre-emergent herbicides include Devrinol and Valor/Chateau, applied before the crop or weeds emerge. Roundup (glyphosate) can be used postemergence on weeds before crop emergence, usually in the first 7-10 days after bedding. With so few herbicide options, hand weeding remains an important component of hotbed weed management. Additional herbicides would clearly benefit growers.

Enter the USDA IR-4 program, which is designed to facilitate the registration of new pesticides for specialty crops. Registering pesticides is very expensive -- chemical companies will spend more than \$250 million to bring a new product to market. As a result, they initially focus on labeling new products on crops with a lot of acreage, like corn, cotton, rice, wheat, and soybeans. Vegetable crops might be added to the label only after the product has been on the market for several years. In the case of sweetpotatoes, with only about 20,000 acres in the state and 150,000 acres

nationally, no new products would ever be registered without the help of the IR-4 program conducting efficacy and crop safety field trials.

In 2020, I conducted a trial in a commercial hotbed to evaluate the herbicide paraquat (Gramoxone) for post-emergence weed control and impacts on sweetpotato transplants. Paraquat was applied at three different rates and compared to Rely 280, glyphosate, and Suppress. All treatments were applied prior to crop

emergence but post weed emergence. Most emerged weeds were at the cotyledon to 2-leaf stage at the time of application. Herbicides were applied with a CO2 backpack sprayer at 38 psi with a 4-ft boom using two Tee Jet 8002 flat fan nozzles and two 8002 OC nozzles on the ends, calibrated to 26.8 gpa equivalent.

Crop injury was a major focus of this experiment, as there is potential

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

Sweetpotatoes are vegetatively propagated, using plant cuttings from propagation beds, called hotbeds in California. Hotbeds are the nursery area where medium-sized roots are used to produce plants for the production fields. Unless preventative measures are taken, weeds are the main pest problem. Weeds can be managed using different methods, such as fumigating with metam sodium, using herbicides shortly after bedding the roots, using herbicides after weed emergence but before crop emergence,

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Merced County Cooperative Extension agriculture technician Anthony Cantu making the herbicide application to this hotbed last spring. Herbicides were applied one time, before crop emergence.



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Hotbeds

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of leaching of the herbicides through the shallow soil layer covering the roots, affecting the sweetpotato plants. This can sometimes occur with glyphosate when it is used in this

way, even though glyphosate has very minimal risk of leaching since it is held tightly by soil. Rely can remain active in soil for up to a week. At 14 days after treatment, crop emergence was about 5%, and some slight injury could be observed. However, there was no consistent injury from any of the treatments, and no observed crop injury after this date. At transplanting,

there were no significant differences in the number of plants per plot or plant quality at the time of cutting for any of the treatments.

Paraquat herbicide applied prior to crop emergence of sweetpotatoes in the hotbeds effectively controlled emerged broadleaf and grassy weeds for 21 days after application. The most effective rate at this location was 0.5 lbs a.i. per

acre (1.3 pints/A Gramoxone 3SL) which had 97.5% weed control.

Will sweetpotatoes be added to the paraquat label? The data from my location would support registration of the product in hotbeds for this crop. One more year of data collection is planned in 2021. Note: Gramoxone and Rely are not currently registered on sweetpotatoes.

California Farm Bureau Legislative Update

February 05, 2021 -
SPECIAL ELECTION

Governor Gavin Newsom issued a proclamation declaring a special election for the 79th Assembly District of the State of California on June 8, 2021, a seat recently vacated by Dr. Shirley Weber who has selected to serve in former Senator Harris' seat. The primary for the special election will be held on April 6, 2021.

CLIMATE CHANGE

The Department of Food and Agriculture is hosting the first two of six farmer-rancher roundtable meetings, specifically for the dairy and livestock sector to discuss existing on-farm climate smart practices and biodiversity opportunities and challenges. Additional information has been provided by CFBF to County Farm Bureau staff. The meetings are as follows:

- Monday, February 8th from 2-4pm
- Friday, February 12th from 9-11am

Additional meetings for annual and perennial crops will be hosted later in the month. The recommendations that come from these roundtable discussions will inform a report to guide the State's Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy and the next update of the Air Resources Board's Scoping Plan in 2022.

The California Department of Food and Agriculture is seeking public comment on new recommendations for the Alternative Manure Management Program (AMMP). Comments are due now until March 1, 2021 via email to cdfa.oefi_ammpp_tech@cdfa.ca.gov by 5 p.m. CDFA will be hosting a workshop on Tuesday, February 16th from 10am to noon. Registration is available at <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oefi/AMMP/>

CROP PROTECTION

The Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) is holding a webinar on March 17th from 10am to noon

to discuss a proposal to increase registration fees to a level that supports the current and future business functions of the pesticide registration program. This would be in addition, though separate from the mill increases proposed in the Governor's budget.

DAIRY

AB 425 (Devon Mathis, D - Visalia) has been introduced in response to federal milk standards which differ from California's. The current California dairy law sets forth various requirements applicable to producers, handlers, and producer-handlers, including the payment of certain assessments on milk and participating in certain referendum procedures. This bill would remove producer-handlers from operation of the provisions of the dairy law by revising the provisions of the dairy law to delete the definition of, and all references to, producer-handlers. CFBF has contacted the author's office and will have more information about our position in the coming weeks.

POLLINATORS

Assemblymember (Villapudua, D - Stockton) has introduced AB 391, which would provide \$5 million to the Department of Food and Agriculture to provide grants, technical assistance (to UC Cooperative Extension, NRCS and RCDs) to incentivize participation in state and federal conservation programs geared to improve pollinator habitat and forage opportunities. Farm Bureau is in the process of evaluating this proposal.

PUBLIC LANDS

Assemblymember (Robert Rivas, D - Hollister) has introduced AB 434, a bill that would make grazing on public lands more accessible in order to prevent the spread of wildfire. The bill would allow long-term grazing leases (between five and twenty years in duration) on state, county, and municipal lands in order to provide

ranchers enough time to develop infrastructure such as perimeter fencing and water developments at no cost to the state. Long-term leases would help prevent wildfire by having continual managed grazing on these fire-prone areas. AB 434 would also require the Department of General Services, upon the expiration of a grazing lease, to offer a subsequent grazing lease to the current rancher if they have substantially complied with all terms of the expiring grazing lease. This bill is sponsored by the California Cattlemen's Association. CFBF is reviewing the current language and is still in the process of taking a formal position.

WASTE

Friday Review readers may remember that Governor Newsom vetoed legislation last year that would have extended the Treated Waste Wood Program at the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), which detailed some allowances for agricultural wood waste management. In lieu of a program extension, DTSC will be providing a process to apply for Treated Wood Waste Variances and should be open to applications on February 16th. Interested parties can send questions on DTSC's portal at: tw_help@dtsc.ca.gov.

WATER

A measure that would require all California surface waters to be fishable, swimmable, and drinkable by January 1, 2050 was introduced this week. AB 377 (Robert Rivas, D-Hollister) would prohibit the State Water Resources Control Board and regional water quality control boards from authorizing an National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) discharge, waste discharge requirement, or waiver of a waste discharge requirement that causes or contributes to an exceedance of a water quality standard. Furthermore, the measure would prohibit water

boards from authorizing a best management practice permit term authorizing a discharge that causes or contributes to an exceedance of a water quality standard in receiving waters. The bill would prohibit, on or after January 1, 2030, a regional water quality control plan from including a schedule for implementation for achieving a water quality standard that was adopted as of January 1, 2021, and would prohibit a regional water quality control plan from including a schedule for implementation of a water quality standard that is adopted after January 1, 2021, unless specified conditions are met. The bill would prohibit an NPDES permit, waste discharge requirement, or waiver of a waste discharge requirement from being renewed, reissued, or modified to contain effluent limitations or conditions that are less stringent than those in the previous permit, requirement, or waiver. AB 377 provisions are impractical, infeasible, and impossible to achieve. Farm Bureau and a large coalition of agricultural and business organizations are meeting with the author next week to inform him of our strong opposition in detail to the measure.

WILDLIFE

SB 252 (Scott Wiener, D - San Francisco) which was introduced last week is a bill that would change the designation of bears, or species *Ursus americanus*, to a non-game mammal. Since its introduction on January 25, the author has decided to pull the bill from consideration. Wiener claimed that higher priority issues, such as the current COVID-19 pandemic, will be his focus moving forward in this legislative session. CFBF had concerns with the bill as it would have eliminated bear tags throughout the state and made hunting bears illegal. CFBF will continue to monitor the issue and make membership aware of any future legislative efforts regarding this topic.

Tracing Agricultural History in the Archives



UCCE Merced Archives in the UC Merced Library

Emily Lin, UC Merced Library

The University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) Records for Merced County span well over one hundred boxes of documents and photographs and have a physical footprint of about 70 linear feet in the UC Merced Library. That's several ranges of library shelves, and yes, they are stored in our "archives vault." That's one of the differences between a library collection, where anyone can pick up a book from a shelf, and an archive, where a researcher typically schedules an appointment and identifies specific boxes to look at ahead of time. So how do you know what you can find in the archives? And why would someone want to access the archives?

For starters, yes, you can always contact the UC Merced Library (library@ucmerced.edu) to learn more about our collections and discuss a research question you may have. The library even offers a 24/7 chat reference service as part of the larger network of UC Libraries. Let's say you are a fourth- or fifth-generation Merced farmer and you're wondering if there is any information about your family farm in the archives. While there may not be a direct path to answering that question, knowing what the archives contain can direct you to where to look.

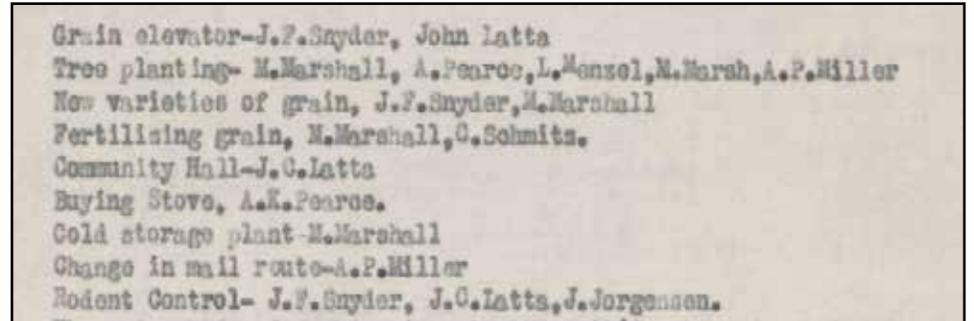
The Merced County Cooperative Extension records, along with other UCCE county records archived at UC Merced Library, have what is called a "finding aid" published in the Online Archive of California (oac.cdlib.org).

This online guide provides information about the scope and background of the collection as well as an outline of how it is organized. Since these are the organizational records for the county Cooperative Extension office, they reflect the work and activities of that organization.

As a general principle, archivists take care to respect the original order of files based on the theory that the original organization may reflect relationships and context that are important to retain. In other words, when we receive a collection, we do not simply begin to organize materials alphabetically, by chronology, or by subject. Whether they are the personal files of an individual or the files from an organization, we take into account their grouping and sequence. In an organization, for example, records may be created and organized by department or by key functions. These groupings can help a researcher understand the structure and development of that business or organization. Sometimes, however, materials end up boxed or stored away without much thought to organization. Imagine if someone dumped all of their photos randomly into a box. If later the box is given to an archive, it will be up to the archivist to try to make sense of the contents and arrange them in such a way that is useful to a researcher.

The Merced UCCE records contain administrative files of annual, monthly and weekly reports from 1917-1974, and trial reports from roughly that time period. They also contain the files of individual farm advisors, some of whom inherited or subsumed the files of previous advisors into their files. For the most part, these farm advisor files are organized by specialization or research topics—for example, fruit trials, pomology, soil—keeping their original groupings. Additionally, there were files that were not associated with a particular advisor, but are grouped by subject or format, such as crops, livestock, 4-H, and audiovisual materials.

Uncovering information about a particular farm would take digging: if you knew specific activities such as participation in a project or crop trial, you could hone in on records by time period or crop. The historic narrative reports often mention the activities



The 1921 narrative report of the county agent lists members of the Cottonwood center and their projects.

of specific members of the Farm Bureau, and especially in the early years it is interesting to note those who had a prominent role. So, what are some other reasons for accessing the archives? Perhaps you have an interest in a particular crop and the varieties that were tried in the region or the growing practices or treatments used. A researcher could also trace the historical development of a particular industry in the county, such as dairy, through the reports and research

documented in these records.

The 1921 narrative report of the county agent is an example of one reason why archives can offer interesting and valuable information. While the earliest volumes of the Merced County Farm Bureau Monthly are available online, the published information does not disclose the political struggles and organizational challenges faced in those early years, which county agent J.F. Grass so frankly writes about in his report.

"Three school fights, two church fights, and the differences existing at Delhi has caused a splitting up to some extent of these centers, some of these getting down to personal quarrels. It is therefore surprising that under all these things the unity of the Merced County Farm Bureau is as strong as it is."

Primary source documents in an archive can offer a different perspective on a subject, and often a more direct or personal point of view from what's available in the public record.

Now digitized, however, these historical perspectives are available for anyone curious or interested in seeing the fuller picture.

For more information: cara.ucmerced.edu

FARM BUREAU MONTHLY

Farm Home Department Notes

El Nido—The meeting held at the home of Mrs. Mitchell was well attended and an enjoyable time reported by all those present. Hats were made, remodeled, and trimmed. It was decided to continue the work on the clothing project. A dyeing demonstration was planned for the next meeting. The project leaders who attended the class in Merced held a follow-up meeting where hat construction was studied and sample brims and crowns made.

Fruitland—Fruitland F. H. D. started off the year's work with a good meeting held at Mrs. Peters. Hats were the seasonal topic discussed and worked on. Some left with completed new hats, others started theirs and planned to finish at home. A second meeting with the project leaders was planned. The present program of work on garment making and nutrition studies is to be continued at the next meeting. The new officers are Mrs. L. P. Arnold, chairman; Mrs. W. J. Grady, vice-chairman, and Mrs. M. B. Doust, secretary.

Stevenson—The regular meeting took up hats and pattern alterations. They decided to study hat construction at their next meeting and plan the year's work at that time. Mrs. Carrie Clark has been selected as chairman, with Mrs. F. Hossli as vice-chairman, and Mrs. Marcie Clarke secretary.

Des Palms—A large and enthusiastic gathering worked on hats, and flower making at the regular meeting in the Odd Fellow Hall. A meeting to complete hats started and to work on construction work. A dress form demonstration was planned. The regular meeting day was changed to the 3rd Tuesday of each month. Mrs. Chas. Townsend was selected as chairman, Mrs. L. J. Dussell, vice-chairman and Mrs. F. A. McConnell, secretary.

Merced Colony—Hats, flowers, fruits and feather fancies were worked on at the regular meeting with Mrs. Ridge. No plans for the year's work could be made at present because of the unsettled status of the Farm Bureau members in that district. Hat construction work with samples of the different ways of making brims and crowns will be taken up at the next meeting, at which time the future of the department will be decided.

Le Grand—Hats, again, were the subject at the meeting held with Mrs. Southward and several were made. The next meeting will work on dress trimming and decoration and dress accessories, as collars, cuffs and vests.

Planada—The meeting at Mrs. Halght's made and planned hats. The plans for the year were discussed but no decision reached. Next meeting will take up hat construction, line and color for individuals, and also make a definite program of work.

Cottonwood—The work on garment making started by making samples of the different kinds of seams, with discussion of their application and use, bound and worked buttonholes and plackets; also the different kinds of patches and darts used in mending were made. The next meeting will continue the same line of work with garment finishes, hems, set in pockets, belting and fasteners, with some work on choice of color in the costume.

Delhi—Hats were the subject of the day and much work planned, due primarily to the active work done by the project leaders in holding meetings on hat construction before the meeting with the Home Demonstration Agent. Delhi plans on starting a hot school lunch in connection with a child health and feeding project. When this is in good running order, they plan on studying home furnishings.

(Continued on Page Nine.)

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March 15 Last Day to Complete Enrollment for 2021 Agriculture Risk Coverage, Price Loss Coverage Programs

By: **USDA**

WASHINGTON, Feb. 9, 2021 – Agricultural producers who have not yet enrolled in the Agriculture Risk Coverage (ARC) or Price Loss Coverage (PLC) programs for 2021 must do so by March 15. Producers who have not yet signed a 2021 enrollment contract or who want to make an election change should contact their local USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA) office to make an appointment. Program enrollment for 2021 is required in order to participate in the programs, but elections for the 2021 crop year are optional and otherwise remain the same as elections made for 2020.

“FSA offices have multiple programs competing for the time and attention of our staff. Because of the importance and complexities of the ARC and PLC programs, and to ensure we meet your program delivery expectations, please do not wait to start the enrollment process,” said FSA Acting Administrator Steve Peterson. “I cannot emphasize enough the need to begin the program election and enrollment process now. This process can be completed when applying for other FSA programs as well.”

ARC and PLC provide income support to farmers from substantial drops in crop prices or revenues and are vital economic safety nets for most American farms.

Although 1,033,310 contracts have been completed to date, this represents less than 59% of the more than 1.7 million contracts anticipated by the Agency. By enrolling soon, producers can beat the rush as the deadline nears.

Producers who do not complete enrollment by close of business local time on Monday, March 15 will not be enrolled in ARC or PLC for the 2021 crop year and will be ineligible to receive a payment should one trigger for an eligible crop.

ARC and PLC contracts can be emailed, faxed or physically signed and mailed back to FSA. Producers with level 2 authentication access can electronically sign contracts. Service Center staff can also work with producers to sign and securely transmit contracts electronically

through two commercially available tools: Box and OneSpan. You can learn more about these solutions at farmers.gov/mydocs. Producers may also make arrangements to drop off signed contracts at the FSA county office. Please call ahead for local mailing or drop off information and options for submitting signed contracts electronically.

Producers are eligible to enroll farms with base acres for the following commodities: barley, canola, large and small chickpeas, corn, crambe, flaxseed, grain sorghum, lentils, mustard seed, oats, peanuts, dry peas, rapeseed, long grain rice, medium- and short-grain rice, safflower seed, seed cotton, sesame, soybeans, sunflower seed and wheat.

Yield Data and Web-Based Decision Tools Available

FSA recently updated the annual and benchmark yields for ARC/PLC program years 2019, 2020 and 2021. This data is useful to producers in choosing to participate in either ARC or PLC.

For added assistance with ARC and PLC decisions, USDA partnered with the University of Illinois and Texas A&M University to offer web-based decision tools to assist producers in making informed, educated decisions using crop data specific to their respective farming operations. Tools include:

- Gardner-farmdoc Payment Calculator, the University of Illinois tool that offers farmers the ability to run payment estimate modeling for their farms and counties for ARC-County and PLC.
- ARC and PLC Decision Tool, the Texas A&M tool that allow producers to analyze payment yield updates and expected payments for 2019 and 2020. Producers who have used the tool in the past should see their username and much of their farm data will already be available in the system.

Crop Insurance Considerations

Producers are reminded that enrolling in ARC or PLC programs can impact eligibility for some crop insurance products. Producers who

elect and enroll in PLC also have the option of purchasing Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO) through their Approved Insurance Provider. Producers of covered commodities who elect ARC are ineligible for SCO on their planted acres.

Unlike SCO, RMA’s Enhanced Coverage Option (ECO) is unaffected by participating in ARC for the same crop, on the same acres. You may elect ECO regardless of your farm program election.

Upland cotton farmers who choose to enroll seed cotton base acres in ARC or PLC are ineligible for the stacked income protection plan (STAX) on their planted cotton acres.

More Information

For more information on ARC and PLC including web-based decision

tools, visit farmers.gov/arc-plc.

All USDA Service Centers are open for business, including those that restrict in-person visits or require appointments. All Service Center visitors wishing to conduct business with NRCS, Farm Service Agency, or any other Service Center agency should call ahead and schedule an appointment. Service Centers that are open for appointments will pre-screen visitors based on health concerns or recent travel, and visitors must adhere to social distancing guidelines. Visitors are also required to wear a face covering during their appointment. Our program delivery staff will continue to work with our producers by phone, email, and using online tools. More information can be found at farmers.gov/coronavirus.



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Attorney General

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deadly police shootings of unarmed civilians. It's one reason civil rights advocates are pressuring Newsom to appoint an attorney general who will take a more active role in rooting out police misconduct — something Becerra largely declined to do.

"I really would like a robust Department of Justice taking the lead on this issue to hold police accountable," said Kate Chatfield, senior legal analyst at The Appeal, which advocates for progressive changes to the criminal justice system.

The attorney general is also the state's top cop, and traditionally comes to the job with a law enforcement background. So Newsom is also facing pressure from prosecutors and police — though they are more discreet about it.

"At such a critical time, with so many issues facing law enforcement and our communities, above all else we need an Attorney General with public safety experience who can bring groups together to find solutions," Eric Nunez, president of California Police Chiefs Association, said in a statement to CalMatters.

Newsom has been very guarded about his process for picking the next attorney general, and did not answer a reporter's question about what qualities he seeks. With a potential recall looming, it's likely the governor wants a strong ally in the office — not a political climber who might take a stab at challenging him in a future election. But he also probably wants a good politician who can successfully win re-election in 2022.

And then there's the question of how far left Newsom wants to go. Will he pick a progressive attorney general who helps him shore up his liberal base? Or a more moderate Democrat who keeps him in good standing with law enforcement?

Newsom has said he won't announce his pick until after the U.S. Senate confirms Becerra as secretary of Health and Human Services. A confirmation hearing date has not been announced.

Here's a look at top contenders to be Newsom's state attorney general choice, and a caveat: There's a chance that his ultimate pick is not listed here. An appointment like this is a secretive process with no requirements for the kinds of public disclosures that take

place in an election. The last time California went through this exercise — in 2016, when then-Gov. Jerry Brown replaced then-attorney general Kamala Harris after she was elected to the U.S. Senate — the selection of Becerra came as a complete surprise.

Rob Bonta

Current job: Assembly member representing Oakland and Alameda
Selling points: Bonta and Newsom have been allies in making some changes to the criminal justice system. Both pushed for a legal marijuana marketplace (approved by voters in 2016) and an end to the use of cash bail (overturned by voters in 2020). They also worked together to phase out California's use of private prisons, something Newsom called for in his 2019 inaugural speech that Bonta wrote up as a bill that the governor signed into law.

Bonta has won endorsements from prominent civil rights advocates, including Black Lives Matter co-founder Alicia Garza and attorney/CNN personality Van Jones. Numerous ethnic advocacy groups are asking Newsom to recognize California's growing Asian-American population by tapping him. His Filipino heritage would make him a historic pick.

Liabilities:

He's among the Assembly's most liberal Democrats, and is often at odds with law enforcement. Choosing him might damage Newsom's relationship with police.

Ethics attorneys have questioned Bonta's pattern of raising money for groups that employ his wife. A CalMatters investigation found that he helped his wife's nonprofits raise more than \$560,000, largely by soliciting donations from companies that lobby the Legislature. He also asked interest groups to donate to a foundation he created, which in turn loaned \$25,000 to his wife's employer. The arrangement is legal but controversial. Said former chair of California's political watchdog agency Ann Ravel: "I think it is highly inappropriate and should be illegal."

Darrell Steinberg

Current job: Sacramento Mayor
Selling points: Steinberg has substantial experience as a political leader in periods of upheaval. During six years as leader of the state Senate, Steinberg helped broker a bipartisan deal to fix the state's massive budget deficit and craft a plan to reduce the prison

population after a federal court ruled prison crowding unconstitutional. He led the historic effort to suspend three fellow Democratic senators indicted on criminal charges. As mayor, he's been in the middle of the debate over how to improve policing since 2018, when Sacramento officers killed an unarmed Black man in his grandparents' backyard, sparking massive protests. Steinberg eventually introduced reforms, creating an inspector general to investigate police shootings and a new system for routing non-criminal 911 calls to social workers instead of police.

He and the governor are friends: Steinberg endorsed Newsom early in his gubernatorial campaign; Newsom appointed him to lead a panel pursuing strategies to reduce homelessness.

Liabilities:

Local activists have criticized Steinberg for not doing enough to hold police accountable or provide shelter for homeless people. Police complain he hasn't given them enough say in his reforms.

During his final year as Senate leader, three staff members lost their jobs after the Sacramento Bee revealed a pattern of nepotism among administrators and security personnel. The FBI raided the Capitol and two senators were sent to prison for corruption, while a third was convicted of perjury. Steinberg was not implicated in his colleagues' crimes, but he was the face of a troubled institution.

Adam Schiff

Current job: Member of Congress

representing Los Angeles; chair of the House Intelligence Committee
Selling points:

Schiff developed a national profile for his leading role in the first impeachment of President Donald Trump, earning him accolades as an up and coming Democrat (and multiple nicknames from the Twitter-obsessed president). Being a Trump antagonist gives him a sheen of political stardom and could play well with California voters.

His robust campaign warchest could demonstrate that he's prepared to run for statewide office. His close relationship with House Speaker Nancy Pelosi — The New York Times called him one of her "most trusted confidants" — could help him build trust with Newsom, as the governor and Pelosi have family connections that go back generations. Axios reported that Pelosi has given Schiff her approval to seek the state appointment.

As a moderate Democrat and a former federal prosecutor, Schiff would likely be welcomed by law enforcement.

Liabilities:

His tough-on-crime record makes him unpopular with progressives — and out of step with Newsom's more liberal criminal justice record. As a state lawmaker in the late 1990s, Schiff wrote legislation permitting longer prison sentences and allowing 14-year-olds accused of rape or murder to be tried as adults without input from a

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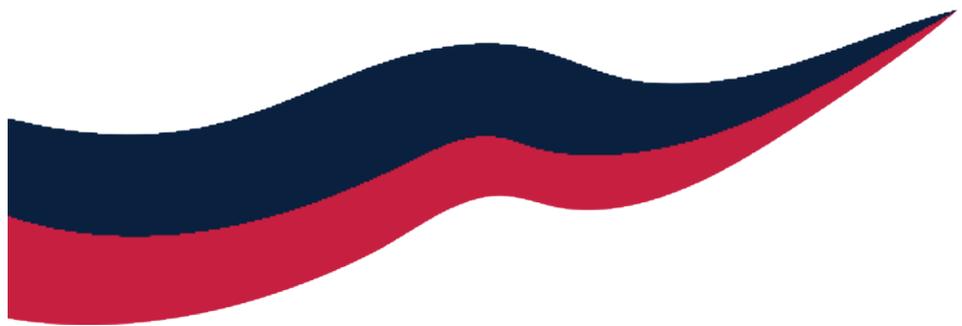
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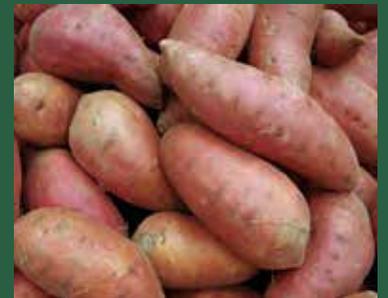
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judge. In Congress, he voted for the Patriot Act that widened police power to surveil Americans, and to expand the federal death penalty. Newsom issued an executive order to halt executions in California.

Diana Becton

Current job: Contra Costa County district attorney

Selling points:

As part of a cadre of progressive prosecutors who advocate reduced sentences, ending cash bail and prohibiting the trying of juveniles as adults, Becton aligns with many of Newsom's positions and would likely please his liberal base. After George Soros and other liberal donors poured millions into a handful of California district attorney races in 2018, she was the only winner of the bunch. Among her swift changes: requiring her office make a public report on every fatal police shooting.

The Legislature's Black caucus has endorsed her for attorney general, calling her "the transformative candidate for these turbulent times." The women's caucus also recommended her.

Liabilities:

Attorneys in Becton's office have openly accused her of political retaliation and criticized her leadership style, contributing to what the Bay Area News Group described as an exodus of at least a dozen employees. In one case, prosecutors chastised her plea deal that freed a man from death row without adequately testing two rape kits. Office conflicts boiled over at a public hearing over her reprimand of a deputy district attorney.

Amid the pandemic restrictions prohibiting parties that bring multiple households together, Becton hosted a backyard wedding in August with about 30 guests, the San Francisco Chronicle reported.

Jeff Rosen

Current job: Santa Clara County District Attorney

Selling points:

A career prosecutor who has led one of the state's largest district attorney's offices for the last decade, Rosen has the resume of a traditional attorney general. He heads an office of more than 600 people tasked with prosecuting crime in Silicon Valley, including the high-profile rape trial of

Stanford student Brock Turner.

Last year, Rosen announced changes meant to bring more racial equity to his county's criminal justice system. He said he would stop seeking the death penalty and work to end the use of cash bail in California — putting his stances in line with Newsom's. The policy changes earned him cautious praise from criminal justice reform advocates.

Yet Rosen still has support from the more conservative side of his profession. The California District Attorneys Association praised Rosen's "surpassing legal acumen and unassailable integrity," in a letter to Newsom that CalMatters obtained. A spokesman for the association said Rosen was one of several attorneys the group recommended, and that it wouldn't release their names out of deference to the governor's difficult decision.

Liabilities:

Before turning against the death penalty, Rosen actively campaigned for it in 2012, when Californians voted to retain it. Nor was that the only time he's been at odds with progressives. In 2018, he challenged a law that prohibits charging juveniles under 16 as adults, a change activists had pushed for. After the Turner case, Rosen opposed recalling the judge who issued a light sentence — a stance outraged voters rejected by tossing the judge.

Goodwin Liu

Current job: Associate justice of the California Supreme Court

Selling points:

Liu gained national prominence a decade ago when Republicans in the U.S. Senate blocked his nomination to the federal court, dealing then-President Obama his first major defeat in judicial nominations. Gov. Jerry Brown then appointed him to the California Supreme Court, where he has cemented his reputation as a liberal jurist, writing decisions that favor workers over employers, and becoming what UC Berkeley law school dean Erwin Chemerinsky called "the court's leading voice on criminal justice reform."

He's endorsed by labor leaders, legal scholars and some criminal justice reform advocates, including a former prison inmate who met Liu when the judge took his staff to visit San Quentin.

Liabilities:

It's unusual for a high-level judge to move on to an elected office like

attorney general, so the potential for Liu to be successful in politics is unknown. Although his supporters have framed his lack of political experience as an asset, he would likely begin his tenure as attorney general without the political infrastructure to help him win reelection next year.

Anna Caballero

Current job: State senator representing a rural region including Salinas and Merced

Selling points:

Caballero has strong relationships with law enforcement, experience leading a state agency and a background providing legal services to needy Californians. In 2019, she played a role in negotiating the state's landmark law limiting police use of deadly force — by carrying an alternative bill that police unions backed. It didn't make the changes that civil

rights advocates sought but served as a tool that helped forge compromise between the two sides, which Newsom wanted. In the end, he signed both her bill to require conflict de-escalation training for officers, and the other bill that limited the circumstances when police can shoot. She spoke openly about her fear, as a Latina mother, that her teenage son could be harmed by police, telling CalMatters that she told him: "They're going to see you as a Mexican kid."

California has never had a Latina attorney general, and Newsom likes making history.

Liabilities:

Caballero represents a rural swing district and may be more conservative than most Democratic voters statewide. By plucking her out of the state Senate, Newsom would force a special election that Republicans could have a shot of winning.



2021 Training Calendar Spring Webinar Series

Stay in the know!

Sexual Harassment Prevention : February 18th

- Spanish Class: 9-10am
- English Class: 1015-1115am
- Price: Farm Bureau Member \$25 / Non-member \$45
- Call to register: 209-522-7278, zoom-link will be sent out week of the class
- Audience: Employee

Heat Illness Prevention : April 15th

- Spanish Class: 9-10am
- English Class: 1015-1115am
- Price: Farm Bureau Member \$25 / Non-member \$45
- Call to register: 209-522-7278, zoom-link will be sent out week of the class
- Audience: Employee

New Employee Orientation Requirements : May 12th

- English: 9-10am
- Price: Farm Bureau Member \$25 / Non-member \$45
- Call to register: 209-522-7278, zoom-link will be sent out week of the class
- Audience: Owner/HR

Farm Equipment Safety : June 10th

- Spanish Class: 9-10am
- English Class: 1015-1115am
- Price: Farm Bureau Member \$25 / Non-member \$45
- Call to register: 209-522-7278, zoom-link will be sent out week of the class
- Audience: Employee

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Who should be accountable for Employment Department mess?

By: Dan Walters, CalMatters

Feb. 8, 2021 - It may be difficult to believe, but there is a state law, the State Leadership Accountability Act, that commands state agency heads to personally ensure that their programs are performing honestly and effectively.

Its stated rationale is that “prevention and early detection of fraud and errors in program administration are vital to public confidence and the appropriate and efficient use of public resources.”

It’s difficult to believe because California’s government is afflicted with managerial messes for which no one is held personally accountable, such as the truly horrendous meltdown of the Employment Development Department.

EDD was inundated with applications for state and federal unemployment insurance benefits early last year when Gov. Gavin Newsom shut down much of the economy to battle COVID-19.

As claims processing bogged down, the department waived many anti-

fraud validation procedures and just shoveled money out the door. That led to at least \$11 billion in fraudulent payments and an official rebuke from the U.S. Department of Labor about California’s laxity.

In reaction to fraud, EDD began holding up or even canceling benefit payments. Meanwhile, the feds told the state to revisit cases that lacked the required verification and claw back any excess payments.

Thus, while fraudsters made out like bandits — literally — hundreds of thousands or even millions of legitimate claims have been stalled, sometimes for months.

Two recent reports by state Auditor Elaine Howle laid out EDD’s miscues on claims processing and fraud. Howle also noted that her office had catalogued EDD’s structural shortcomings in a 2011 report that was largely ignored.

The question about who should be held responsible for this bureaucratic Chernobyl hung over a legislative hearing last week.

During their questioning of Howle and EDD leaders, including

newly installed director Rita Saenz, legislators gingerly probed for answers, but Saenz and her underlings were clearly reluctant to specify who screwed up.

Only Assemblyman Jim Patterson, a Fresno Republican, and Assemblywoman Wendy Carrillo, a Democrat from Los Angeles, appeared interested in seeking personal accountability.

Instead, the legislators were more inclined to recite horror stories of their unemployed constituents mistreated by EDD.

“It’s the difference between eating and starving,” Sen. John Laird, a Santa Cruz Democrat, declared. “The people of California are pissed off and so are we,” Assemblyman Mike Gipson, a Democrat from Carson, added.

One Howle audit, without naming her, put the onus for one of the worst decisions on Julie Su, who headed the state labor agency and thus oversaw EDD.

Su directed EDD to drop the verification standards to speed up claims processing. That opened the door to fraud and generated the rebuke

from the U.S. Department of Labor that may require some legitimate recipients to repay benefits if their eligibility cannot be retroactively established.

Will Su face accountability? Not in California since President Joe Biden has nominated Su for the No. 2 position in the Department of Labor. She may, however, face some rough questioning during Senate confirmation hearings about her role in the massive fraud.

What about Sharon Hilliard, who was EDD’s director during the meltdown?

After 37 years with EDD, Hilliard suddenly retired at the end of the year — whether voluntarily or otherwise is uncertain. “Sharon is a dedicated public servant and we owe her our gratitude for leading the department through the pandemic,” Newsom said.

Newsom bears some responsibility since he was governor when the debacle occurred, but former Gov. Jerry Brown, who ignored the 2011 audit of EDD’s shortcomings, should also be included on an accountability list, if there is one.

Congressman wants to RENEW the WIIN Act

By: Tim Hearden, Western Farm Press

Feb. 9, 2021 - Water agencies in the San Joaquin Valley are lining up behind a bill in Congress that would extend certain provisions of the 2016 Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act meant to aid water deliveries to valley farmers.

The bill by Rep. David Valadao, R-Calif., would extend a requirement for consultation of coordinated operations of the federal Central Valley Project and California’s State Water Project. It would also keep in place the authorization of money for water storage projects approved by the Secretary of the Interior.

The leaders of agencies including Westlands Water District, Friant Water Authority and the San Luis and Delta-Mendota Water Authority issued statements backing a 10-year extension

of the WIIN Act’s operations and storage provisions, which are slated to sunset in December 2021.

“The WIIN Act was the most consequential water legislation for California in decades,” said Jason Phillips, the Friant Water Authority’s chief executive officer. “Among other positive results, it increased water user engagement on CVP operations and authorized hundreds of millions of dollars in water infrastructure funding, some of which Friant Water Authority was grateful to access for our project to repair the Friant-Kern Canal.”

An extension of these provisions to 2031 would allow more time for the U.S. Department of the Interior to evaluate water storage projects now under review, said Paul Cook, general manager of the Irvine Ranch Water District in Southern California.

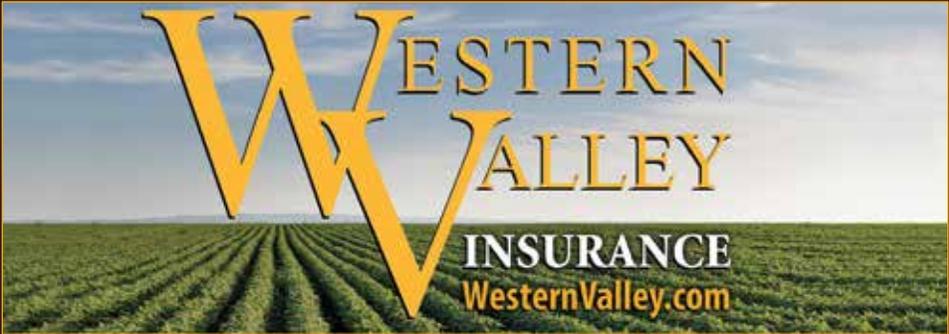
Valadao’s bill – the Responsible, No-Cost Extension of Western Water

Infrastructure Improvements (RENEW WIIN) Act – is his first since he was narrowly returned to Congress by voters in November after a two-year absence. It is supported by the entire Republican delegation.

“As a dairy farmer and a lifelong resident of the Central Valley, I know

first-hand just how important water is to farmers and families in California,” Valadao said. “I promised my constituents that I would fight to bring more water to the valley.”

The new legislation will provide “access to safe, clean and reliable water for our communities,” he said.



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Atwater FFA Students Qualify for Regional Speaking Finals

By: **Liliana Boesch, Atwater FFA Chapter Reporter**

The Atwater High School FFA joined over 180 FFA speaking contestants, representing fifteen



Atwater High School agriculture student and FFA member Gabriela Morena placed 2nd overall at the Merced-Mariposa FFA Sectional Public Speaking Finals in the Job Interview contest and will move onto the regional finals in the coming months.

high school agriculture programs throughout Merced and Mariposa counties at the annual Merced-Mariposa FFA Public Speaking Sectional Finals held virtually on January 23rd. The top four individual finalists in each speaking contest advance to the regional prelims in February. Atwater FFA had two of the twenty sectional finalists advancing to the regional prelims later this year.

Atwater High School agriculture students Simarjot Gandhoke, Gabriella Lucas, America Lara, and Gabriela Moreno competed in the Job Interview contest. Gabriela Moreno placed 2nd, qualifying her for regional finals. Simarjot Gandhoke made it to the final round, and placed 10th overall. The Job Interview contest involves students completing a cover letter, resume, job application, and panel interview. This event emphasizes developing, practicing, and demonstrating skills needed when seeking employment.

Atwater High School agriculture program senior Nandani Patel placed 4th overall in Prepared Public Speaking, qualifying her for the regional prelims. Student speeches covered topics that included gene editing, Colony Collapse Disorder, and nanotechnology within the agriculture industry. The contest for all participants involves a 6-8 minute speech on an agriculture related topic/issue, a written manuscript which is scored, and a question and answer period between the contestant and judges following the speech. Hunter Boyenga and Celeste Chargoy also competed in the sectional finals.

Atwater High School agriculture students Gurkirath Gandhok, Julia Callahan, Daniel Lopez and Hayley Hultgren competed in the Extemporaneous Speaking contest. Contestants are presented with a choice of three questions related to agricultural current events and, in 30 minutes, prepare a seven-minute speech answering the selected question. Students may consult articles and evidence they gather prior to the contest, but may not use the Internet during preparation. Topics range from local-specific issues to national-world concerns relating to agriculture.

Atwater High School agriculture program students Shayleigh Miller, Katrina Andujar, Teela Armenta

and Sonia Valdez competed in the Impromptu speaking contest. The impromptu speech is given without any preparation, any notes or other additional materials; it is a spontaneous reaction to an agriculture-related topic at hand which may introduce an interesting turn to the discussion.

Atwater High School agriculture freshman student Jacqueline Velazquez participated in the FFA Creed. This event is designed to recognize outstanding FFA members for their ability to present the FFA Creed from memory and answer questions on the meaning and purpose of the FFA Creed. The event is just one way FFA members can develop their ability to communicate in a powerful, organized and professional manner. Members boost their self-confidence and earn recognition.

“Being a good communicator is one of the foundations of success towards personal and career development,” says Atwater FFA Advisor Kim Mesa. “Our agriculture program is very proud of our students’ efforts, participation, courage, and enthusiasm in this event, even with it going virtual this year!”

For more information on the Atwater High School Agriculture Department and Atwater FFA, please log on the website www.AtwaterFFA.org.

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Gustine FFA Members Compete in Sectional Super Saturday

By: **Austin Bell, Gustine FFA Chapter Reporter**

On Saturday, January 23rd, Gustine FFA competed at the sectional Super Saturday. The contests that Gustine FFA competed in are the FFA Creed, Impromptu, Extemporaneous, and Job Interview speaking competitions. Due to Covid-19, all of these contents were held virtually. The FFA Creed is a staple of the organization, and in the contest students are required to

memorize the creed, and answer 3 questions about its meaning and origin. Mikayla Silveira, Blake Codorniz, and Grant Hazan are the freshmen that competed in the contest. All 3 students made it to the final round. Grant Hazan got 1st place, and Mikayla Silveira placed 6th and Blake Codorniz was 10th. Austin Bell was the only student from Gustine FFA to participate in the Impromptu speaking competition, where he won first place. The students

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Golden Valley FFA Finds Sectional Success

By: Alison Heupel, Golden Valley FFA Chapter Reporter

Golden Valley FFA started 2021 on high note as 16 members competed in the Merced/Mariposa Sectional Super Saturday speaking events on January 23rd, 2021. Although all speakers competed virtually and not in person, members had an extremely successful outing in which multiple students advanced to the Central Region speaking competition in March and April.

Freshman students competed in the Creed Public speaking competition in which all 4 students advanced onto the final round, all earning top honors. Trevor Hath was 2nd overall, Alexia Sanchez was 7th overall, Ryan Hath was 9th overall, and Koen Heupel was 11th overall respectively. Trevor Hath will be advancing on to the Regional competition in April.

In the Impromptu Public speaking

competition, 2 students earned top honors in which Jena Higginbotham was 10th overall, and Mackenzie Spielman was 11th overall. In the Impromptu competition, students select a question, and also a keyword or quote, and then give two, 2 minute presentations to the judges.

Haylee Heffner earned high honors in the Job Interview competition in which the Senior placed 6th overall in the highly competitive contest. Students in the Job Interview competition prepare a resume and cover letter, and go through an interview.

Additionally, Cameron Ivy and Hailee Cameron earned high placings in the Extemporaneous Public speaking contest in which Ivy was 2nd overall, and Hailee Cameron was 6th overall respectively. Cameron Ivy will be moving on to the Regional Competition in March.

In total, Golden Valley FFA had

16 students compete in the Sectional Public Speaking Competitions, the most in the entire section. Students were able to practice with their coaches over Zoom in order to prepare for the events.

Golden Valley FFA is home to 805 members with 6 Agriculture Teachers. Teachers include Vikki Dompe,

Cody Jacobsen, Rebecca Mendonza, Karl Montague, Madison Zittel, and John Olson. To learn more about the Golden Valley FFA and Agriculture Department, visit their social media pages on Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter. Additionally, more information can be found on their website at www.goldenvalleyffa.com.

Gustine FFA continued from page 12

that competed in Job Interview are Savanna Barcellos, Christina Moitozo, Garret Gomes, and Lalanie Brace. Savanna Barcellos placed 5th in this competition, and Garret Gomes was 8th. The students that competed in the Extemporaneous speaking contest are Tyler Borba and Joseph Lopes. It was an extremely successful day for

Gustine FFA and we are extremely proud of our members. Christina Moitozo said, "It was an exciting day filled with achievements." All of the participants would like to thank the Gustine FFA ag teachers, and anyone else that played a role in the success of our chapter. Congratulations to everyone who participated, and good luck to Grant Hazan, and Austin Bell who will be moving on to the regional competition.



Gustine FFA Sectional Super Saturday Contestants

Livingston FFA has a Super Time at Super Saturday!

By: Jenna Bates, Livingston FFA Chapter Reporter

Seventeen Livingston FFA members participated in the Virtual Sectional Super Saturday Competition on January 23rd. They competed in Leadership Development Events including Creed, Prepared Public Speaking, Impromptu, Job Interview, and Extemporaneous. The goal of Leadership Development Events challenge members to develop critical thinking skills and effective decision-making skills,

See 'Livingston FFA' Page 14



Livingston FFA Super Saturday Contestants



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High-Speed Rail Authority Issues Revised Draft Business Plan – Presents Proposal for Project Advancement

By: California High-Speed Rail Authority

Feb. 9, 2021 - Sacramento, Calif. – As part of the state’s commitment to deliver a sustainable, reliable, and accessible transportation system, the California High-Speed Rail Authority (Authority) today issued its Revised Draft 2020 Business Plan for public review and comment. The plan presents a path forward for completing construction in the Central Valley and highlights continued progress to get high-speed trains running in California as soon as possible, and despite the notable impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic.

“At a time when job growth is needed most, California high-speed rail is putting thousands to work in good paying labor jobs in the Central Valley and making tremendous progress on construction of the nation’s first high-speed rail,” said Governor Gavin Newsom. “Our goal is to get fast, electrified trains up and running in the Central Valley as soon as possible while leveraging other sources of funding to advance important, clean rail and transit work statewide. We’re confident that our federal partners in the Biden administration share our vision for electrified rail – we look forward to working with them to get it done.”

The plan affirms the policy recommendation to the Authority’s Board of Directors to develop a clean, electrified Merced-Fresno-Bakersfield high-speed rail interim service line in California’s Central Valley, while continuing to advance environmental reviews and current investments in local and regional infrastructure projects in Northern and Southern California.

Like other transit systems around the state, the Authority has and still is experiencing dynamic and unpredictable conditions due to COVID-19 that affect every aspect of daily work. The plan lays out these challenges in detail and how the Authority has overcome and is working to mitigate for ongoing

impacts to move the program forward. The revised plan outlines the following priorities:

- Complete the 119-mile Central Valley construction segment and lay track pursuant to our federal funding grant agreements with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA);
- Expand the 119-mile Central Valley segment to 171 miles of operable electrified high-speed rail connecting Merced-Fresno-Bakersfield, three of the fastest growing areas in California;
- Commence testing of electrified high-speed trains by 2026-2027 and put those trains in service by the end of the decade;
- Environmentally clear all segments of the Phase 1 system between San Francisco and Los Angeles/Anaheim;
- Advance construction on the “bookend” projects we have committed funding to in Los Angeles and the Bay Area—projects valued at more than \$3 billion;
- Pursue additional funding opportunities to prospectively “close the gaps” and expand electrified high-speed rail service to the Bay Area and Los Angeles/Anaheim as soon as possible.

The Administration has communicated with the federal government on the need for flexibility on the ARRA grant agreement timelines and emphasized the importance of settling existing litigation to restore nearly a billion dollars in grant funding de-obligated by the Trump Administration.

“America has a chance to lead the world once more through innovation in infrastructure—connecting our communities, creating good jobs, addressing climate change and ensuring equity,” said Acting Federal Railroad Administrator Amit Bose. “Passenger rail development, including world-class high-speed rail, can and must be a part of our strategy to accomplish these goals. As in many other arenas, California has taken the lead nationally to advance high-

speed rail, starting an economically transformative project in the Central Valley and assuming the challenges that come with that leadership. The U.S. Department of Transportation looks forward to partnering with California as it leads the way to build back better.”

“Historically, during times of economic uncertainty, it’s labor jobs and investment in transportation that spur economic growth. We’re fortunate to be in a position where we’re creating a clean and fast mobility option in California and putting California men and women to work to get it done,” said Authority CEO Brian Kelly. “Through hard work, we’ve seen significant progress over the past two years, and we intend to keep that going.”

High-speed rail averages 1,100 construction workers a day at 35 construction sites in the Central Valley. Nearly 77 percent of these workers come from eight counties in the Central Valley, with workers from 43 different California counties participating overall. To date, 55% of total high-speed rail program expenditures occurred in disadvantaged communities throughout California.

The final 2020 Business Plan was scheduled to be issued to the

California Legislature last December. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Administration and the Authority worked with legislative leadership to extend the adoption of the Business Plan. Final submission to the Legislature is expected in April 2021.

With the release of today’s draft business plan, the Authority is now seeking input as part of a 30-day public comment period that closes March 12, 2021. The Authority is providing the following options for submitting comments:

Online comment form through the Revised Draft 2020 Business Plan website at: https://hsr.ca.gov/about/business_plans/business_plan_2020_comment_form.aspx

- By email at: DraftBP2020@hsr.ca.gov
- U.S. mail to the Authority:
- California High-Speed Rail Authority
- Attn: Draft 2020 Business Plan
- 770 L Street, Suite 620 MS-1
- Sacramento, CA 95814
- Voicemail comment at: (916) 384-9516

The Revised Draft 2020 Business Plan, required by Assembly Bill 528 (Lowenthal, Chapter 237, Statutes of 2013), can be found online www.hsr.ca.gov.

Livingston FFA continued from page 13

foster teamwork and promote communication while recognizing the value of ethical competition and individual achievement. Our members dedicated several hours a week for several months preparing for this contest. At 5:30pm that evening, the Merced-Mariposa Sectional Officers hosted a virtual award ceremony to recognize the top competitors. Just from Livingston FFA, eight students received awards; for Creed, Gauge Silva placed 12th, for Impromptu, Allison Franzese placed 9th, Gabriel Aguilar placed 5th, and Christopher

Bettencourt placed 4th, for Job Interview, John Martinez placed 9th, and for Prepared, Jenna Bates placed 6th, Reena Grewal placed 2nd, and Lauryn Franzese placed 1st. All the students that placed in the top 4 will be competing in the Regional Competition in March. We are extremely proud of all our students’ hard work and dedication to their LDEs. We give great congratulations to those individuals who placed at the top of their respected contest. From these events, students gained leadership skills, as well as communication and public speaking skills. Again, we say congratulations to all competitors and terrific jobs to our placing members.

UC's Humiston: Extension's budget woes 'frustrating'

By: Todd Fitchette, Western Farm Press

The annual battle to adequately fund University of California Cooperative Extension programs continues to frustrate Glenda Humiston, vice president of the UC Agriculture and Natural Resources Division.

As the annual rate of inflation continues to eat at the flat budget allocations from the state, Humiston struggles to find the revenue necessary to serve farmers and others who benefit from Extension programs.

"It's just so frustrating," she said. "Cooperative Extension is miraculous. If you really think about it, for the money we receive and the return on investment that this state has seen with new crops, new varieties, and economic development in all sorts of sectors – yet the state can't come up with money to adequately fund us."

Humiston was appointed VP of UCANR in mid-2015 after serving

more than 25 years in public policy development and program implementation. That included serving as deputy undersecretary for natural resources and environment at the USDA in the Clinton Administration.

Nothing like Extension

She says she took the position because of her experience with Cooperative Extension in previous positions, and a need she saw to vastly improve public funding of its various programs.

"Frankly, there is nothing else out there like the Cooperative Extension model," Humiston said. "That's part of the reason I took the job. I'd been working with Cooperative Extension for over 30 years in previous positions. In those positions I needed Cooperative Extension to be there and to have access to them."

In each of the last several years UCANR has lost about \$5 million in funding through inflation and mandated expenditures on top of flat allocations by the State of California.

To attempt to mitigate this, Humiston has forged partnerships with commodity groups and other agricultural associations to help fund the necessary research farmers have come to rely upon from their Land Grant institutions. She continues to work on new projects that could co-fund needed farm advisor positions across the state.

One of these positions seeks to pair livestock producers and landowners in the state to effectively reduce flammable vegetation, an issue that all Californians have suffered through as poor wildland management has led to massive conflagrations leading to loss of life and billions of dollars in economic losses.

Educating legislators, regents

Humiston is also trying to educate legislators and UC regents – none of the 19 current members on the Board

of Regents are actively involved in agriculture – on the merits of the agricultural research provided by the 158 advisors and 120 crop and commodity specialists currently working for UCANR. This is down from 202 specialists and 326 advisors in 1990.

Federal Capacity Funds and California's General Fund are the main sources that fund the current crop of advisors and specialists. This continues to force Extension agents to apply for competitive grants and seek outside funding from commodity groups and other sources to continue their research efforts. Among these efforts are projects aimed at reducing or eliminating the use of dangerous pesticides, controlling insects known to kill crops and reduce marketable yields, and breeding commodities that can withstand climate change and drought.

Protect Yourself: Avoid COVID-19 Vaccine Scams

As vaccine distribution begins, here are signs of potential scams that you should be aware of:

- You will not have to pay an out-of-pocket cost for the vaccine.
- You cannot pay to put your name on a waiting list or to get early access to the vaccine.
- No one from a legitimate source will call you to ask for your social security number, credit card number, or bank account information to sign-up for the vaccine.



Protect yourself from scams. Do not give your personal information to an unknown source.

For more information, call the Public Health Information line at (209) 381-1180 or visit www.vaccinatemercedcounty.com



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Updates

FELS Webinar

"A Shot in the Arm: Cal/OSHA and Employment Law Issues Related to the COVID-19 Vaccine:" FELS presents this webinar with by Eric J. Conn and Fern Fleischer-Daves of Conn Maciel Carey's National OSHA Practice. You can read more here. You can register here.

COVID-19 News

Cal/OSHA Issues COVID-19-Related Citations: On February 4, the agency issued multiple COVID-19-related Injury and Illness Prevention plan, Respiratory Protection plan and other regulatory violations to 13 employers, most of which were state government agencies or health care systems. The largest proposed penalty was levied against San Quentin State Prison for \$421,800.

CDPH Issues Revised Vaccine Guidelines: On February 4, the California Department of Public Health issued revised guidelines for priorities for recipients of the COVID-19 vaccination. Under the new guidelines, all "tiers" of persons in Phase 1A (healthcare workers and related personnel, generally) remain the first priority. The order of priority in Phase 1B has been revised somewhat to place access to vaccines for persons 65 years and older ahead of a few specifically identified "sector populations:" Education and childcare, Emergency Services, and Food and Agriculture.

Federal OSHA Issues COVID-19 Guidelines, Begins Work on a Federal Reg: On January 29, the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration issued guidance for employers to better identify workplace hazards that could lead to COVID-19 workplace exposures. The guidance was issued in response to President Biden's January 21 Executive Order directing OSHA to issue updated COVID-19 guidelines.

Fauchi Endorses Double-Masking: CDC infectious diseases expert Dr. Anthony Fauci on January 25 endorsed the practice of "double-masking," saying it "likely does" help protect against recently-emerging mutant strains of COVID-19. No regulatory agency has recommended or required it yet.

You can read more at COVID-19 News & Resources for Farm Employers at FELS' website.

2021 Reminders

2021 FELS Employment Notices Book & Poster Sets: FELS Employment Notices Books and Laminated Poster sets will available for order on January 1, 2021. The 2021 edition of the books and posters feature extensive revisions to official notices agricultural employers are required to post.

Poster Books and Sets are available for \$150 for the book, or \$150 for the five-poster set. Volume discounts and discounts for FELS Newsletters subscribers are also available. You can find more information here.

Minimum Wage & Ag Overtime Changes effective 1/1/21: Minimum wages and overtime requirements for agricultural employers are changing again on January 1, 2020, and the changes are different for small employers (25 or fewer employees) and large employers (26 or more employees).

You can find more information at this resource on California Farm Bureau's website.

Form 300A and Data Uploading Requirements: Cal/OSHA requires covered all employers to post their Form 300A injury and illness summary information from the previous year between February 1 and April 30 if the employer had at least 11 employees at any time in the prior year.

In addition, agricultural employers must electronically submit Form 300A data for calendar year 2020 between January 2, 2021 and March 2, 2021 to the federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Injury Tracking Application if the employer employed more than 20 employees at any time in the prior year, as required by a Cal/OSHA rule adopted in December 2019. You can read more here.

Questions? Comments? Please call us at 800-753-9073 or email us at info@fels.net.

New Timeline of Deadliest California Wildfire Could Guide Lifesaving Research and Action

By: **Jonathon Griffin, NIST**

On a brisk November morning in 2018, a fire sparked in a remote stretch of canyon in Butte County, California, a region nestled against the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada mountains. Fueled by a sea of tinder created by drought, and propelled by powerful gusts, the flames grew and traveled rapidly. In less than 24 hours, the fire had swept through the town of Paradise and other communities, leaving a charred ruin in its wake.

The Camp Fire was the costliest disaster worldwide in 2018 and, having caused 85 deaths and destroyed more than 18,000 buildings, it became both the deadliest and most destructive wildfire in California's history, two records the fire still holds today.

What made the Camp Fire so devastating? And what lessons can we learn to prevent another disaster of this scale? Researchers at the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) have begun to answer these questions by investigating the conditions leading up to the fire and meticulously reconstructing the sequence of events describing the first 24 hours of its progression. A new report containing the timeline identifies areas where more research is needed to improve life safety and reduce structural losses. It also offers a detailed look at how a large and deadly fire advances — information that will become increasingly valuable as fire seasons continue to intensify.

“The information we collected on the timeline is extremely powerful by itself, not only for Paradise but for other similar communities, to help them understand what they may encounter and better prepare, whether it is at a community or at the first responder level,” said NIST fire protection engineer Alexander Maranghides, who led the timeline reconstruction.

To piece together the puzzle of the Camp Fire, the team carried out discussions with 157 first responders, local officials and utilities personnel who were present during the fire. The team documented sightings of fire or smoke and efforts to fight the fire or evacuate, as well as insights into community preparedness and weather

conditions.

The researchers sought to back up observations made during the fire with additional data sources before adding new puzzle pieces to the timeline. With the help of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE), Paradise Police Department and others, the team gained access to and reviewed large data sets, including radio logs, 911 calls, dashboard and body camera recordings, and drone and satellite images. They also looked to images in social and news media to corroborate the sightings of discussion participants.

By the end of the painstaking process, the authors of the report incorporated more than 2,200 observations into the timeline, which is broken up into 15 separate segments to capture concurrent events throughout different sections of Butte County.

A Landscape Ripe for Disaster

The team's investigation revealed several conditions throughout Butte County that, taken together, created favorable conditions for an inferno. On the day the fire broke out, wind gusts were powerful, blowing up to about 48 kilometers (30 miles) per hour, and were almost exclusively pointed southwest, toward Paradise and the smaller communities of Magalia and Concow. The 200 days of drought preceding the fire had also transformed much of the region's lush terrain into combustible ground.

And perhaps counterintuitively, Maranghides said, the relatively large distance between the fire's origin and the edge of Paradise (about 11 kilometers, or 7 miles) contributed to the massive, 3.2-kilometer (2-mile)-long fire front that crashed into the town.

“If a fire starts far away, upwind, then it has time to develop and expand. By the time it hits the community it is so large and so powerful that it could wipe everything out,” Maranghides said. “But if it ignites closer, the fire can be so much smaller. It takes a much smaller bite out of the community, and people may have a fighting chance.”

The report indicates that town officials in Butte County went to great lengths to prepare for fires, having cleared vegetative fuels near

critical infrastructure and bolstered emergency communications in the weeks and months prior. However, dense vegetation had still accumulated throughout Paradise — a factor enhanced by the nearly 100 years the town had gone without experiencing a wildfire.

The researchers learned that, although Paradise made resources available for residents to remove trees, many did not take the city up on its offer. One participant in the reconstruction noted that residents were often attracted to the lifestyle of “living in the forest” provided by the town.

With a gamut of unfavorable conditions at play, a spark in the wilderness quickly became a raging inferno.

Breaking Down the Camp Fire's Assault

The fire's siege on Paradise, which ultimately destroyed 85% of the town's buildings, began before its front line reached the city limits. Showers of burning debris were carried by the wind ahead of the main fire into town, where the embers ignited buildings and vegetation, riddling the town with dozens of smaller fires that ate up precious firefighting resources.

Propelling the Camp Fire's structure-destroying spree were fires that spread within and between plots of land, or parcels, rather than from the fire front. Sources such as burning sheds, plants, vehicles and neighboring houses caused many buildings to catch fire, either through direct contact with flames or embers generated in parcels.

Paradise's defenses quickly fell once the fire front reached town. The incident commander leading the emergency response recognized the fire's speed and intensity and ordered his personnel to abandon all firefighting efforts just 45 minutes after the fire arrived. “Save lives, keep evacuation moving,” the incident commander said over the radio.

Although the focus of emergency response narrowed on saving lives, evacuation efforts were stifled by burnovers — life-threatening events in which residents or first responders are overrun by flames, cutting them off from escape routes. Across Paradise and Concow there were 19 burnovers

at least, some of which involved downed power lines or flaming vegetation that blocked off roads, causing gridlock and putting lives in danger.

In the past, recorded burnovers were sparse, with reports attributing few or none to most fires. Hardly any have been scrutinized as heavily as the Camp Fire, however, which could partially explain the event's high number of documented burnovers. Another critical contributor was likely Paradise's heavily wooded nature, Maranghides said.

The abundance of burnovers during the Camp Fire may not be an isolated event, but part of a larger trend, particularly for communities where vegetative fuels have built up over many years.

“The significant activity we've experienced in the last few years may indicate that burnovers are becoming more frequent than they used to be,” said CAL FIRE chief Steven Hawks, a co-author of the report. “My sense is that because fires are burning so fast now, there is more potential for people to become trapped.”

Toward Fire-Safe Communities

With this report, NIST has shone light on the many aspects of the Camp Fire's multipronged attack. Research into these threats could fill critical knowledge gaps, paving the way for science-based codes, standards and practices that could help communities outsmart fires.

What's urgently needed, the authors write, are methods of capturing the severity of burnovers and a better understanding of how they occur in the first place. Studies in this area could make way for guidelines on reducing their likelihood and protecting evacuation routes.

As for buildings, there are already two known options for increasing their chances of surviving a wildfire. The first is to make sure combustible items within a parcel (plants, sheds, etc.) are not too close to a structure, and the second is to increase the fire resistance of a structure's materials. But striking a cost-effective balance between the two is difficult with the limited information on how various

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Wildfire

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fuel sources threaten buildings.

“We need to improve our understanding at the parcel level because it's the parcel-level exposures that drive the building's survivability,” Maranghides said. “You cannot just look at the building in absence of what's around it.”

Once researchers can put numbers to the behavior of embers and combustibles in parcels, it may become more clear what a particular building needs in terms of spacing and hardening to hold up to a wildfire.

City officials could use the report's

timeline for emergency planning as well. By having a detailed description of events such as burnovers in front of them, members of city councils or public works departments in wildfire-prone regions could evaluate their own emergency plans and potentially identify vulnerabilities.

There is currently no standard method of comparing the wildfire hazards of communities. So, although the researchers could draw individual similarities between Paradise and other communities in Northern California, they were unsure how the town compared as a whole. The team aimed to bridge this gap by developing a framework in the form of a document encouraging city officials

to record specific information on fuels, population, emergency notifications and other aspects of the community.

If adopted and employed statewide in California and in other wildfire-prone areas, the framework, which appears in the report, could reveal areas most at risk and worthy of attention and resources, Maranghides said.

In the hands of first responders, the new report could become valuable training material. Using data on how quickly and intensely the fire grew, commanders could build tabletop exercises to practice deploying firefighting resources to counter its spread and save lives.

An event on the scale of the Camp Fire makes it clear that action is needed

at all levels to protect communities from wildfires, Hawks said. And that need is perhaps more urgent now than ever.

“Going forward, there's no reason to believe that fire activity and severity is going to lessen anytime soon,” Hawks said. “We're never going to get rid of wildfires, natural or human-caused. But we can learn how to live with and work together to mitigate them.”

The full report is now available, along with several maps portraying the fire spread. The timeline of fire progression will form the basis for subsequent reports on evacuation and emergency response during the Camp Fire that the NIST team plans to publish in the coming months.

Merced County supervisors say state COVID plan neglects San Joaquin Valley counties

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

Feb. 9, 2021 - The Merced County Board of Supervisor's update on Tuesday about the status of the COVID-19 included a discussion on the topic of equity — and whether the county is getting its fair share of vaccines from the state.

Local public health and elected officials alike aired simmering frustrations about the availability of vaccines in Merced County two weeks ago during the last COVID-19 update. Comments made on Tuesday showed little has changed.

The state's vaccine rollout, county officials said, is not only flawed but has particularly neglected San Joaquin Valley counties like Merced due the vaccine allocation plan.

That plan has led to Merced County receiving the third lowest number of vaccine doses per capita in the state, county officials said. Meanwhile, the county's COVID-19 deaths per capita are among the highest in California.

For this dichotomy to exist means that the state's vaccine allocation formula is “broken,” Dr. Kristynn Sullivan, Merced County Public Health supervising epidemiologist and operations chief, said on Tuesday.

“There's not an excuse for why in that two months (since vaccine

distribution began) the algorithm hasn't been assessed,” Sullivan said.

Since Dec. 17, about 13,450 vaccine doses have been received for Merced County's roughly 278,000 residents, according County Public Health numbers.

County Supervisor Scott Silveira said that for all the state's emphasis on the COVID-19 response being equitable, the term has thus far only been a buzzword.

Silveira urged residents to join with county leadership in continuing to appeal to the state for a fairer share of vaccines.

While county leadership chafes at the state's handling of doses, local officials praised the COVID-19 vaccination clinic which debuted at the Merced College gym Tuesday.

The new clinic is the first of five slated to open in the coming weeks, said Assistant County Executive Officer David Mirrione.

The roughly 2,500 Pfizer vaccines slated to be provided are supplemental to doses coming out of the county's supply, meaning the vaccines serve as a vital addition to the state's allocation.

As more doses become available to combat COVID-19 locally, Supervisor Rodrigo Espinoza called on the county to ensure that its own vaccine distribution is equitable before criticizing the state.

Merced County must be deliberate

in establishing vaccination centers accessibly throughout the county for all residents, he said.

Espinoza clarified that he doesn't believe the county is at this point being inequitable, but that leadership must be mindful going forward.

Public Health has heard similar comments and concerns from both residents and health providers about dispersing vaccines equitably, said County Public Health Director Dr. Rebecca Nanyonjo-Kemp.

“We're inching toward that, I think we can move a little quicker,” Nanyonjo-Kemp said.

LATEST COVID-19 NUMBERS, AND WHAT THAT MEANS FOR SCHOOLS

Although still reeling from a winter COVID-19 case spike, the state of the virus has begun to improve in Merced County. Active cases have decreased by about 43% since County Public Health's COVID-19 update two weeks ago.

As of Monday, Merced County has counted 27,424 cases and 367 associated deaths since the pandemic's start, according to County Public Health. Active cases tally 1,849.

“We're headed in the right direction,” Sullivan said. “We've really come down a lot since Christmas...but that's still way too high.”

Until cases further improve, many

school districts will remain closed.

But county officials on Tuesday underscored that the decision to reopen is up to individual school districts.

County Public Health advises districts, but does not make the call to close or reopen schools. “That is not what is happening, just to be very direct,” said County Executive Officer Jim Brown.

When more schools were open during fall, districts ran into staffing shortages when personnel had to frequently quarantine due to COVID-19 exposure via community transmission — more so than transmission at schools, Sullivan said.

That underscored the importance of low case rates in the community overall in order for schools to return to in person, she said.

While it is impossible to predict the future of the pandemic, Sullivan said current trends hint that case rates may improve by March.

Also concerning to County Public Health officials are recent COVID-19 death demographics. Fatalities among residents age 64 or older have increased by 18% during the past 14 days, County Public Health data showed.

“Just in the past week, maybe last five or six days, we're starting to see a lot of people who are in their 30s to early 40s who are experiencing sudden deaths, which is a large concern for us here,” Nanyonjo-Kemp said.

Vaccination clinic begins at Merced College. Active COVID cases fall, but concerns remain

By: Shawn Jansen, The Merced Sun-Star

Feb. 9, 2021 - The first of a three-day mass COVID-19 vaccination clinic kicked off at Merced College on Tuesday — aiming to administer close to 2,500 Pfizer vaccines in the school's gymnasium.

Dignity Health, UC Merced, University of California Health and Merced County worked together to make the clinic happen on short notice.

"It's really become this joint effort of all these entities coming together to support this community," said Jill Cunningham, associate vice president of external relations for Merced College.

"It's really an incredible thing to see, but it came about quickly and we've been able to I think make this seamless and pretty turnkey, and it's our hope that we can continue to do these types of clinics throughout the summer and to get this county vaccinated and up and running."

First responders from Merced County — including paramedics, EMTs and nurses — helped out at the clinic. Student's from the college's nursing program also contributed their efforts.

Appointment times for all three days filled up in a matter of minutes over the weekend, after the clinic was announced Friday.

"People want it," said Merced County Supervisor Daron McDaniel. "It's just been a matter of us acquiring it. We don't have to convince people to get the vaccine. The problem is getting the vaccine so we can give it to these folks."

Merced County Board of Supervisors and public health officials on Tuesday again voiced their displeasure over the level of vaccines coming into Merced County from the state. They say San Joaquin Valley counties like Merced are far from getting their fair share of vaccines.

Merced County has the third lowest number of vaccine doses per capita in the state, county officials said. Meanwhile, the county's COVID-19 deaths per capita are among the highest in California.

"I was sort of under the assumption

of what's the problem, what's the hold up? Why aren't we getting vaccines? Now that I've been working with the county and closely," Cunningham said.

"I understand there's a lot of people working really hard to get us vaccines and get vaccines brought into this community and it hasn't been easy."

The doses being administered at Merced College this week were made available through Dignity Health and UC Health. But they don't count toward the allocated vaccines given to Merced County from the state.

"Merced County has to shake some trees to get its fruit," McDaniel said. "We have to shake every tree in the state to get our fruit."

Cunningham said Merced College hopes to hold more vaccination clinics throughout the summer if possible.

NEW CASES DECREASE, BUT DATA STILL CONCERNING

Following a statewide trend, Merced County has been seeing an encouraging downturn in some aspects of the virus.

For example, active cases have decreased by about 43% since County Public Health's COVID-19 update two weeks ago. Still, fatalities among residents age 64 or older have increased by 18% during the past 14 days, County Public Health data showed.

On Tuesday, Merced County Department of Public Health reported no new COVID-19 related deaths. The total of deaths remained at 367 since the start of the pandemic.

There were 85 new cases reported on Tuesday, bringing the total number of cases to 27,509 residents who have been infected with the virus since the start of the pandemic.

There are currently 1,766 Merced County residents estimated to be actively infected — a drop of 83 cases since Monday.

The number of residents hospitalized in Merced County due to the virus is 37 — a decrease of two cases since Monday — with 17 people in the ICU.

According to the state, Merced County hospitals had four ICU beds remaining as of Monday.

Merced County currently has a positivity rate of 9.8%, meaning the level of people among those who've

been tested who had a positive result. That's a decrease from 11% a week ago.

AROUND THE VALLEY

Tuesday's coronavirus updates from counties in the central San Joaquin Valley included:

- Fresno County: 246 new cases, 91,430 to date; Four additional deaths, 1,258 to date.
- Stanislaus County: 230 new cases, 48,094 to date. Seven additional deaths, 874 to date.
- Kings County: 45 new cases, 21,342 to date; two additional deaths, 199 to date. Nearly 7,100 of the cases in Kings County, and 17 deaths, have been among inmates at state prisons in Avenal and Corcoran.
- Madera County: 25 new cases, 14,857 to date; five new deaths, 189 to date.
- Mariposa County: No new cases, 380 to date; no additional deaths, five to date.
- Tulare County: 249 new cases, 46,382 to date; 10 additional deaths, 661 to date.

Low-Dust Nut Harvester Replacement Program

By: San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District

The harvesting of almonds and walnuts includes three processes: shaking, sweeping (and drying), and picking up the nuts in a harvester that separates the almonds from dirt and debris—sometimes creating a large dust plume. The District has been working closely with representatives from the agricultural community to evaluate new harvesting equipment and practices that can effectively reduce dust from harvest activities. This includes working with the Almond Board of California to evaluate new low-dust technology nut harvesters.

Based on the significant dust emission reductions that low-dust harvesting equipment can provide, the District is offering funding for the

replacement of older, conventional harvesters or sweepers with new, low-dust technology equipment. This incentive funding can also be packaged with our Tractor Replacement funding to upgrade your tractor used to pull harvesting equipment.

Basic information regarding the program is detailed below.

STANDARD OPTION

- Equipment must be operated anywhere within the SJVAPCD boundaries.
- Incentive amounts have been established at 50% of eligible equipment costs, up to a maximum incentive of \$150,000 per unit.
- Funding limited to a maximum of five pieces of equipment per applicant.

Editor's Note: Information specific to City of Shafter omitted.





Merced County Business Member Directory

Businesses Supporting the Farm Bureau

To be included in the directory, join Merced County Farm Bureau as a business member by calling 723-3001.

REPAIRS & SERVICES

AC King..... 722-3552
 Atwater Radiator & Muffler, Inc. 358-2638
 Car Plus..... 722-3552
 Freitas Auto Wreckers 722-7086

CONSTRUCTION CONTRACTORS

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

LANDSCAPE

Bergman Landscape 669-9138

FARM EQUIPMENT

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

REAL ESTATE

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

GROUPS & ORGANIZATIONS

Blue Diamond Growers..... (559) 474-2996
 California Sweet Potato Growers..... 394-7935
 California Women for Agriculture 723-5878
 Central CA Irrigation District..... 826-1421
 Cortez Growers Association..... 632-3118
 Dos Palos Co-op Gin..... 387-4151
 Farmers Rice Cooperative (916) 923-5100
 Gustine Drainage District 854-6782
 Hilltop Ranch Inc. 874-1875
 Livingston Farmers Assoc..... 394-7941
 Merced Boosters 761-0815
 Merced Irrigation District..... 722-5761
 Turlock Irrigation District..... 883-8205
 Merced College Ag Division 384-6250

FARM SERVICES

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

Chipponeri Electric..... 634-4616
 Chozen Few Ranches..... 585-8633
 Dutch Door Dairy..... 648-2166
 Farm Management Inc. 667-1011
 Guerrero Farm Labor 492-0408
 Horizon Farms, Inc. 383-5225
 J & F Fertilizer..... 854-6325
 La Follette Enterprises, Inc. 632-1385
 Machado Feed Company..... 658-5943
 Marciel & Co 777-0911
 Mid Valley Ag Service 394-7981
 Modern Dairy..... 722-7452
 Modesto Dairy Supply..... 669-6200
 Silva & Sons Custom Spreading..... 667-2566
 Silva's Hay Source 777-7440
 The Pollination Connection..... (877) 970-BEES (2337)

FOOD PROCESSING

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

HARVESTING & HAULING

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

IRRIGATION, WELLS, & SEPTIC

Allison Sierra, Inc. 966-4082
 Agri-Valley Irrigation 384-8494
 Dickey's Pump Service 394-3112
 Frasier Irrigation Company 387-4202
 Irrigation Design & Construction, LLC..... 387-4500
 Precision Aqua..... 756-2025
 Quality Well Drillers..... 357-0675
 Rain for Rent/Westside Pump(559) 693-4315
 Robal Inc..... 826-4540
 Shannon Pump Company 723-3904

INSECT & WEED CONTROL

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

FARM SUPPLIES

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

FUEL SERVICES

W.H. Breshears, Inc..... 522-7291
 Western States Petroleum Assoc. (661) 321-0884
 Valley Pacific Petroleum..... 948-9412
 Van De Pol Petroleum 667-0236

INSURANCE

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

FINANCIAL SERVICES

Alice B. Contreras CPA 722-6778
 American Ag Credit 384-1050/826-0320
 Farmers & Merchants Bank 626-4100
 Grimbleby Coleman CPAs 527-4220
 Trans County Title Company 383-4660
 Yosemite Farm Credit 383-1116

SOLAR

Coldwell Solar 259-9260

MISCELLANEOUS

Amarants Propane Service 358-2257
 Berliner Cohen LLP 385-0700
 California Farmland Trust (916) 544-2712
 EAC Engineering Inc. 664-1067
 The Hat Source..... 357-3424
 Merced County Fair..... 722-1506
 P. B. Iyer, M.D..... 854-1120
 Queen Anne's Garden Nursery..... 358-3875
 Santa Fe Pet Hospital 383-5050
 SS Blue 722-2583
 Unwired Broadband (559) 336-4157

Mono Winds



from the
Mariposa CFB

Danette Toso

I've got to admit, I scoffed a bit at the Winter Storm Warning for high winds January 18th as I enjoyed a beautiful day with not a flicker of a leaf on a tree. Well, little did I know that just a few hours later, Mariposa County residents were in for a ride straight out of the Wizard of Oz

movie!

When we receive these extreme weather warnings, we all know the emergency preparedness plans, jump into action, and try to follow through as diligently as possible. "Batten Down the Hatches!" I was ready for a power outage with all of the normal supplies: water, food, generators, flashlights, candles, etc., and tried to sleep that night. Little did I know what was in store for our already disaster plagued county!

That evening, let's just say that I expected to see a house flying through the air with Dorothy and Toto in residence. This wild storm brought with it, the dreaded Mono Winds. This phenomenon occurs when certain weather patterns of low and high pressure develop. The winds that pick up in this area of Northern California, encompassing the foothills (which is where Tony and I live), to the high country of the Sierra Nevada are called mono winds. These winds were gusting up to 100 miles per hour in the high country, downing at least 15 giant sequoias in Yosemite and many houses were severely damaged throughout the county. P G & E had the monumental task of repairing lines

and poles and restoring power to the county. The community of Mariposa had 52 downed poles and Oakhurst in Madera County had 247, according to the utility company.

The county board of supervisors recently voted in favor of a proclamation, declaring a local emergency and requesting state and federal funds to assist with the recovery work. An estimated \$200 million in damages is expected to be reported when all is said and done. The ball is now in Gavin Newsom's court to grant the funding, to be continued.....

With the snowballing effect that these natural disasters cause in our county, your support is greatly needed. The Mariposa County Farm Bureau Board of Directors is currently planning fundraising events and information will be coming out soon. As always, I encourage farmers, ranchers and conservators to invite friends, neighbors and family members to join the collective voice of the Farm Bureau. Together, we can make our organization stronger than ever, one member at a time. God bless you and God bless America!

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Mariposa County Business Member Directory

Businesses Supporting the Farm Bureau

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

AGRICULTURAL SUPPLIES

- Gallaway Feed and Supply.....374-3331
- Mariposa Feed & Supply.....966-3326
- Bootjack Equipment Rental & Feed.966-3545

ASSOCIATIONS

- 35-A District Agriculture Assn.....966-2432
- Mariposa Chamber of Commerce....966-2456
- Mariposa County Farm Advisor966-2417
- Mariposa County Farm Bureau742-5875

CONSTRUCTION

- Bucks Construction.....878-3702
- Tobey Guenthart Construction374-3334

FINANCIAL SERVICES

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

HARDWARE STORES

- Coast Hardware.....966-2527
- Foster Ace Hardware966-2692

MEDICAL

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

MISCELLANEOUS

- Allison Sierra Inc966-4082
- Happy Burger Diner966-2719
- Mariposa Friends of the Fairgrounds Foundation.....742-4680
- Hugh A. Yamshon Ranch
- Mariposa Gun Works742-5444
- Miners Roadhouse 14966-2444
- Pony Expresso966-5053

REAL ESTATE

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

SERVICES

- Chases Foothill Petroleum.....966-3314
- Edward Lien & Toso Ag Appraisers...634-9484
- Palmer Tractor374-3470
- Ranch Fence, Inc.....966-5914
- Valley Pacific Petroleum.....948-9412
- Yosemite Glass & Window Inc.966-3292

WINERIES

- Mount Bullion Vineyard.....377-8450
- Rauch Ranch Vineyard & Winery742-7162

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Are you interested in running an ad in the Farm News? Call Denelle at 723-3001 for prices and publication schedule.

► Merced Farm & Industrial Businesses on Highway 59



Please patronize these members business for your farm, home and industrial needs!

Stanislaus Farm Supply	723-0704	Valley Pacific Petroleum.....	948-9412
Merced County Farm Bureau	723-3001	Shannon Pump Co.	723-3904
Agri-Valley Irrigation Co.....	384-8494	Kellogg's Supply	722-1501
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MCFB Sweepstakes



Each month MCFB will pick
two individuals to receive a gift.

This is a token of our appreciation of you!

Thank you to all those that donated to our 2020 Annual Meeting,
allowing us to use those funds & give back to our community!

Don't have to pay to play, but you are welcome to donate.

Gifts

January

- Quarterly flowers from your local FFA*
- Case International toy tractors and equipment*

February

- \$50 certificate for winner and three friends (\$200 total) for use towards a styling session at Helen & Louise
- Mix Bakery cake

March

- Jacobsen Ranch lamb basket
- 2-hour pack trip with Aspen Meadows Pack Station

April

- Catered meal by Dominic Barroso Catering for 10 people
- Vintage Soaps basket

May

- Green Mountain grill
- San Joaquin Coffee Company basket

June

- MCFB Yeti Cooler Pack
- Basket of Blaker Brewing and Vista Ranch

July

- Half a hog (cut and wrapped) raised by Atwater FFA
- Wolfsen's gift basket

August

- Red Wing boots
- Burroughs gift basket

September

- Hand crafted duck call by Stuart McCullough
- Merced Fruit Barn basket

October

- Maui Jim or Ray Ban glasses
- Buchanan Hollow gift basket

November

- New Holland peddle tractor
- Christmas Tree from Minturn Ranch in Hilmar

December

- Mainzer gift certificate
- Los Banos Abattoir gift basket

2020 Annual Meeting Sponsors

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Woods Transplant Service Inc

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Merced Irrigation District
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M-Mig Construction
Pacific Southwest Irrigation
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