Merced County Farm News

Column: California utility regulators are lapdogs. The fix: make them elected.

By: Thomas Elias, California Focus

There is plenty of reason for Californians to despise the state’s Public Utilities Commission, the five-person appointive body that sets electric, natural gas and some water prices, while controlling other practices of big utility companies like Pacific Gas & Electric, Southern California Edison and San Diego Gas & Electric.

Here’s just one example: After CalFire investigators found PG&E negligence in 2017, 2018 and 2019 caused several of the largest and deadliest wildfires in California history, the PUC rubber-stamped Gov. Gavin Newsom’s plan to dun consumers more than $13 billion for costs of future fires PG&E and its brethren are likely to cause.

Why did this happen? Quite possibly because PG&E has been a major donor to Newsom’s political campaigns almost from the time former San Francisco Mayor Willie Brown started him in big-time politics with an appointment to his city’s board of supervisors.

This has not yet become an issue in the recall drive to oust Newsom, but when candidates to replace the governor get wind of a recent poll, it just might. The survey, sponsored by a group called RecallCPUC found this spring that 64% of Californians want to get rid of the commission.

The group, said termed-out former Democratic Assemblyman Mike Gatto of the San Fernando Valley area in Los Angeles, will likely try to assign most PUC functions to various existing state agencies, all under direct or indirect control by the governor. That is not yet final; an initiative is planned for the fall 2022 ballot.

It’s actually not a bad idea to remove the five present commissioners, who serve staggered six-year terms and are virtually impossible to dislodge once appointed by a governor and confirmed by state legislators.

Merced County Board of Supervisors Kicks Off Redistricting Effort with New Website, Approved Meeting Schedule

By: Merced County

June 7, 2021 MERCED—The Merced County Board of Supervisors officially kicked-off its redistricting process during the April 27 Board meeting by approving a schedule to guide the effort and launching the County’s official redistricting website.

Every 10 years, public agencies must redistrict to determine how current boundaries of their voting districts might be redrawn based on recent Census data. This process will include substantial outreach to Merced County residents to ensure supervisory districts meet strict requirements for population equality and voting rights protections as well as respect for neighborhoods and geographical elements.

“The primary goal when redrawing election districts is to try and draw lines that respect communities and neighborhoods as much as possible,” said Chairman Daron McDaniel.
from the
President's
Corner
Eric Harcksen

Halfway through 2021, June has come and summer has started for most. As I write this, we are 11 days out from the Governor Newsom’s June 15th reopening plan. I hope this will be one step in the right direction in getting our economy back on its feet.

When restrictions are lifted, we will no longer be required to wear masks and social distance. Our businesses will be able to open their doors to 100% without COVID-19 restrictions. There are limitations within the workplace should some employees not be vaccinated, but it continues to feel as though the rules are being changed every hour so this could change as well. Not only will reopening help get those that were displaced by the pandemic, but we can feel as if we are normal again. As we start to return to our normal lives, I hope the confidence returns to those individuals that have been highly guarded.

As kids graduate and move onto summer, many 4-H and FFA students plan to show and sell their animals at the Merced County Fair in Merced. The show is not open to the public but if you drive by June 10-12, you will see the kids prepping their livestock and getting them ready for show. There are well over 500 students preparing for this year’s fair. There are some photos posted on the website to give buyers a glimpse of the kids and the hard work they have put into their projects. The livestock shows will be held on Thursday and Friday and the livestock sale will begin on Saturday, June 12th at 8:30am. Unfortunately, the sale will not be open to the public, but I encourage you to go to the Merced Fair website to find the link to support our local young farmers and ranchers.

Have a great June and enjoy family and friends as we move closer to the opening of California!!

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hings have started to heat up in Merced County. We are hopeful for a successful season; however, it is challenging as ever due to lack of a decent surface water supply. Even if we had a full water supply throughout the county, you would also face continual challenges to ag burning, COVID regulations, etc. Not to mention all the other issues involving water.

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), adopted by Governor Brown late in his final term, is now seeing moving from the Department of Water Resources (DWR). They have released their first assessment of four Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSP). Two of these have been approved while the other two have been deemed as failing to meet criteria. The Santa Cruz Mid-County Basin and the 180/400 Foot Aquifer Subbasin of Salinas Valley have satisfied the DWR’s plans while the Paso Robles Area Subbasin and the Cuyama Valley Basin have been issued “consultation initiation letters.” According to a brief rundown of DWR’s findings by Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck LLP, the “GSPs were deemed incomplete for deficiencies in their definitions of sustainable management criteria (SMC), including minimum thresholds and undesirable results...” At the time of writing this column, it is still unknown when the GSPs for our area will be reviewed.

In addition to the unknowns of what water will ultimately look like in the future, we carry the complications of finding ourselves in another drought. We hope that we can capture some rain this winter, however if we experience what we did a few years ago, we are sure to be in a bumpy ride yet again. I was able to make it to Lake McClure this past weekend and it is not at the capacity it was this time last year.

As for our office, you may have heard from Denelle or Alexxis as they work on East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition compliance. I know paperwork and reporting of your practices is not part of the allure of farming, but it is something that we have to ensure these days. Our team within our office and those in the other Farm Bureaus of Stanislaus and Madera counties have done a great job with the tasks that have been laid out in front of them. If you have yet to reply to a call or email from them, please do. We are only trying to ensure your documents are filed correctly.

Happy to also announce that we are back on the training circuit. I write this a day in advance of our workshop with Fluetsh and Busby Insurance and Nationwide. If you could not make those, please check out our flyer for our workshops slated for Tuesday, June 22 and Wednesday, June 23.

We understand that the dates may be hard to attend due to the crops in our county, however it has been the earliest that we have been able to hold events of this sort. Look for more in the coming months.

Until then, stay safe and sane. Fingers crossed; we are almost to the finish line!

from the
Director's Desk
Breanne Vandenberg

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of the Merced County Board of Supervisors. “That is why we really hope residents get involved with the County’s redistricting efforts. We rely on local knowledge of geographic elements as well as social or economic characteristics of our neighborhoods so we can properly and fairly place them.”

The County began initial education efforts in April and May by hosting virtual Town Halls in each district to offer an overview of the redistricting process and encourage residents to get involved.

Residents will have another opportunity to get involved with the County’s redistricting efforts by attending the first Board of Supervisors public hearing on June 8 at 1:30 p.m.

Residents will be able to attend in-person or watch virtually by visiting the County’s Facebook page (www.facebook.com/MercedCounty) or www.countyofmerced.com/AgendaCenter during the broadcast.

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.

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Redistricting
continued from page 2

The first public hearing will focus on educating residents on the process and discussing how to be part of the effort. The meeting will conclude with opportunities for the Board of Supervisors and the public to ask questions.

Residents can also learn more about the County’s redistricting efforts, find out how to get involved, and access a number of educational resources at www.DrawMercedCounty.org. On the Draw Merced County website, residents can learn about opportunities to participate in the process through four public hearings plus an information session on map-drawing tools. Residents will also find a tentative schedule of hearings and workshops as dates are determined, so please check the website for details.

Soon, residents will also be able to use online map-drawing tools to submit their own suggestions for redivided County districts and offer feedback on previously-drawn maps.

For more information on Merced County’s redistricting process or to sign up for updates and information, visit www.DrawMercedCounty.org.

Calendar of Events

June 22-23
Heat Illness & Sexual Harassment (pg. 24)

July 4
Happy 4th of July!

July 5
MCFB office closed in recognition of Independence Day
Celebrate June Dairy Month at Hilmar Cheese Company Visitor Center

By: Denise Skidmore, Director, Education & Public Relations at Hilmar Cheese

HILMAR, CA. June 1, 2021. Hilmar Cheese Company Visitor Center is open for guests to come inside, just in time for June Dairy Month. Open Monday-Friday from 7 am – 6 pm families can experience the fun!

Celebrate Dairy month by shopping through the selection of Hilmar cheeses and Squeakers and a variety of cheeses from California, the United States and the world. Cool off with a scoop or two of ice cream made with Real California Milk or a smoothie made with Hilmar Ingredients whey protein.

The new menu features the most delicious grilled cheese sandwiches in the valley made with the best cheese. The August & Lander Grilled Cheese uses four of Hilmar’s most popular cheeses, Vintage Cheddar, Mild Cheddar, Monterey Jack and Pepper Jack on Texas toast with caramelized onions and garlic aioli. The Zesty Tomato Grilled cheese features Hilmar Mozzarella with sun dried tomato & basil pesto, fresh tomato, garlic Parmesan butter on sourdough bread. The new Bacon Me Crazy with Hilmar Monterey Jack, thick cut bacon, bourbon bacon bits, bacon jam, sriracha on ciabatta is very popular.

The popular 11 am ice cream making tour will start mid-June. Fun for all ages, the ice cream making tour will be $3 per person and reservations are recommended to guarantee a spot as group size is limited. Follow Hilmar Cheese Company on social media to stay up-to-date with how to sign-up. Groups of 10 people or more who would like to book a private tour can e-mail tours@hilmarcheese.com for more information.

Hilmar Cheese Company Visitor Center will remain closed on the weekends. Call 209.656.1196 with any questions.
California Farm Bureau Legislative Update

June 4, 2021 - Agricultural Employment

The following bills of potential interest to agricultural employers passed prior to the June 4 house of origin deadline:

AB 73 (Robert Rivas, D-Salinas) would allow agricultural employers to access a state-operated essential workers’ respirator stockpile originally created by legislation in 2020. AB 73 passed the Assembly 78-8 on June 1. Farm Bureau supported a previous version if amended and is reviewing the Assembly-passed version.

AB 364 (Freddie Rodriguez, D-Pomona) imposes duplicative registration, bonding and other regulatory requirements on farm labor contractors who employ H-2A temporary visa workers by designating them as foreign labor contractors for the ostensible purpose of addressing human and labor trafficking. AB 364 passed the Assembly on a 53-19 vote on June 2. Farm Bureau opposes.

SB 338 (Lena Gonzalez, D-Long Beach) expands possible joint liability for various employment and workplace safety violations committed by port drayage motor carriers (motor carriers who move freight into or out of port facilities from off-site terminals) on shippers, increasing shipping costs for agricultural exports and possibly compounding already serious port congestion. SB 338 passed the Senate on a 29-9 vote on June 1. Farm Bureau opposes.

SB 355 (Dave Cortese, D-San Jose) severely restricts employers’ ability to control workers’ compensation costs by reducing the timeframe for investigation of claims from 90 to 45 days, giving an employer inadequate time to determine if a claimed injury is legitimate or work-related. SB 355 passed the Senate by a 29-10 vote on June 1. Farm Bureau opposes.

Three Farm Bureau-opposed bills related to agricultural employment were placed in the Assembly inactive file, making them two-year bills:

AB 654 (Eloise Gomez-Reyes, D-Los Angeles) which would have required California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to make names and locations of workplaces where COVID-19 outbreaks (three or more cases) have occurred, exposing employers to needless public attention when their employee contract COVID-19 in the non-work interactions failed Assembly passage prior to the house-of-origin deadline. Farm Bureau opposed.

AB 995 (Lorena Gonzalez, D-San Diego), expands the paid sick leave mandate created by AB 1522 (2015) from 3 days or 30 hours to five days or 40 hours of paid sick leave available by the employee’s 200th calendar day of employment and requires employers to permit carry-over of up to 48 hours or 6 days of paid sick leave. Farm Bureau opposes.

AB 1192 (Ash Kalra, D-San Jose) creates a massive new employment-related metrics-reporting regimen, creating a body of data about wages, working conditions, benefits and virtually any other measurable aspect of employment that will be furnished to the Department of Industrial Relations and published on its website for the purpose of “naming and shaming” employers and exposing them to litigation. Farm Bureau opposed.

Animal Health & Welfare

AB 888 (Marc Levine, D-Marin), a Farm Bureau sponsored bill that would allow for the mobile slaughter of goat, sheep and swine to occur on private ranches for individual customers, has passed out of the Assembly and into the Senate. The bill now awaits policy committee assignment in the second house.

AB 1103 (Dahle, R-Bieber), a bill which would create an “Ag Pass” to allow farmers, ranchers and eligible employees to access private property for the protection of livestock and commodities during a wildfire, has passed in the Assembly and awaits further action in the Senate. Farm Bureau is in support of AB 1103.

Gray Wolf Update:

New wolf activity has been reported in Northern California. A yearling heifer was found dead on a Sierra Valley ranch after trial camera footage recorded what appeared to be 3 large wolves in the area. It was later confirmed that the heifer was in fact killed by a wolf or wolves. In response, the Department of Fish and Wildlife is setting up more surveillance in the area in order to track these previously unknown wolves. OR-103, a male wolf born in 2019 or 2020, entered northeastern Siskiyou County on May 4, 2021. His movements are being monitored by the department as he travels through the greater Shasta area. OR-103 was collared by ODFW in Deschutes County, Oregon. OR-93, a male yearling, entered Modoc County on January 30, 2021. After briefly returning to Oregon, OR-93 re-entered Modoc County on February 4. On February 24, he entered Alpine County after passing through portions of Lassen, Plumas, Sierra, Nevada, Placer, El Dorado, Amador, and Calaveras counties. On February 25, he entered Mono County. In mid-March, he was in western Tuolumne County. By late March, he was in Fresno County, and then entered San Benito County after crossing Highway 99 and Interstate 5. He was in Monterey County on April 1 and his last collar transmission was from San Luis Obispo County on April 5. His status is unknown. Through April 5, OR-93 had traveled at least 935 air miles in California.

Biodiversity

The California Natural Resources Agency (CNRA) is hosting a topical workshop on June 8th from 3-6pm regarding opportunities to address climate change. The workshop will feature a presentation of recommendations from an advisory panel and an opportunity for the public to share their perspectives and insights on the topic. It will explore how the Pathways to 30x30 and Natural and Working Lands Climate Smart Strategy can best deliver on the state’s goal to achieve carbon neutrality and build climate resilience. You can register and find more information on the workshop here.

Budget

As we approach the state’s constitutional Budget deadline of June 15, AB 995 (Rob Rivas, D-Salinas), AB 1103 (Dahle, R-Bieber), AB 888 (Marc Levine, D-Marin), AB 1522 (2015) and AB 1524 (2015) are all linked to the budget process. AB 995 would expand the paid sick leave mandate created by AB 1522 (2015) from 3 days or 30 hours to five days or 40 hours of paid sick leave available by the employee’s 200th calendar day of employment. AB 1103 would allow farmers, ranchers and eligible employees to access private property for the protection of livestock and commodities during a wildfire. AB 888 would allow for the mobile slaughter of goat, sheep and swine to occur on private ranches for individual customers. AB 1522 (2015) and AB 1524 (2015) would create a new “Ag Pass” to allow farmers, ranchers and eligible employees to access private property for the protection of livestock and commodities during a wildfire.

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15th, several County Farm Bureau’s asked for assistance in modifying the state’s Small Business COVID-19 Relief Grant Program. Under the current eligibility requirements, certain non-profit entities are eligible for up to $25,000 in grants; however, despite recent federal efforts to include 501(c)(5) non-profits in the most recent COVID-19 stimulus package, California has not conformed. As such, California 501(c)(5) non-profits are still in-eligible to receive grants via the Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz) – Small Business COVID-19 Relief Grant Program. To harmonize the state’s program with current federal guidelines would ensure parity of the relief dollars and benefit non-profits who have aided California farmers, ranchers, farmworkers and rural communities during the COVID-19 pandemic and has further facilitated that vaccinations to some of our most at-risk communities. Farm Bureau has delivered our request to Governor Newsom, the Senate and Assembly Budget Committees, CDEA Secretary Karen Ross and the Director of GO-Biz, DeeDee Myers. A similar request has been made via a coalition of Central Valley legislators.

Climate Change
AB 284 (Robert Rivas, D-Hollister) would require the Air Resources Board to establish a 2045 climate goal and interim milestones for greenhouse gas reduction and carbon sequestration on natural and working lands. These goals would be included in the 2023 update of the scoping plan. The Air Resources Board would also be responsible to identify practices, potential barriers, and develop recommendations for technical assistance. Under the bill, the Air Resources Board would develop standard methods to track emissions reductions, sequestration rates and additional benefits over time by January 1, 2024. Farm Bureau has an oppose position on the bill but is in active discussions with the author’s office. The bill passed the Assembly with several no votes and abstentions and will now be sent to the Senate. AB 1395 (Al Muratsuchi, D-Torrance) would require the State to achieve carbon neutrality by 2045 and maintain net negative greenhouse emissions thereafter. Farm Bureau is a member of a coalition opposing this bill because it would omit the opportunity for carbon removal through sequestration efforts on natural and working lands contrary to the State’s actions to incentivize scaling up these practices. The bill is also unclear about how emissions reductions to this extent are expected to be achieved—by operation specific, industry sectors or statewide. The bill passed the Assembly floor by one vote and will now be transmitted to the Senate.

Commodities
AB 719 (Asm. Agriculture Committee), a bill which would update various portions of the California Apiary Protection Act, recently passed the Assembly. These changes include increasing the membership on the Apiary Board, allowing the Department to revise the definition of “pest” related to the beekeeping industry, allow for training of county inspectors with certain curriculum and amend some of the notice required for apiary inspections. The bill is sponsored by the California State Beekeepers Association.

Two bills by Assemblymember Eduardo Garcia (D-Coachella), AB 710 and AB 778, have passed the Assembly and will now be heard in the Senate. AB 710 would prohibit a retailer from selling an agricultural product produced in the state or outside of the state specified California health and environmental protection and labor laws required in California. The bill would only apply to the following ten commodities: fresh or value-added fresh apples; asparagus; bell peppers; blueberries; dates; honeydew melons; lemons; nectarines; olives; and table grapes. Farm Bureau has no position on this bill. AB 778 would replace the 5% purchase preference in state law for California agricultural products on state contracting bids with a mandate that all state institutions buy California-grown or raised ag products, with few exceptions. The bill is supported by Farm Bureau.

Two hemp bills, SB 235 (Benjamin Allen, D-Hollywood) and AB 45 (Aguiru-Curry, D-Winters), have been followed by Farm Bureau staff. SB 235 has been sent to the inactive file, whereas it’s mirrored and companion measure, AB 45, passed the Assembly and will now be heard in the Senate. Due to recent amendments regarding incorporating a measurement of uncertainty, Farm Bureau has removed its opposition to AB 45.

Land Use
AB 350 (Carlos Villapudua, D-Stockton) was recently amended pursuant to a request from Farm Bureau. The bill would create a program at the Department of Food and Agriculture to provide technical assistance to landholders in critically over drafted groundwater basins to design and implement on-farm conservation plans for agricultural lands at risk of falling. The bill passed the Assembly and will now be referred to the Senate.

Natural Resources
One of the last remaining bond measures, SB 45 (Anthony Portantino, D-San Gabriel), was referred to the inactive file by the author. This bill would have enacted the Wildfire Prevention, Safe Drinking Water, Drought Preparation, and Flood Protection Bond Act of 2022. If approved by the voters, it would authorize the issuance of bonds in the amount of $5,595,000,000 pursuant to the State General Obligation Bond Law to finance projects for a wildfire prevention, safe drinking water, drought preparation, and flood protection program. This means it was not heard on the Senate floor and is inactive for the remainder of this year. This bill and others may be heard next year in 2022 and in the interim, Farm Bureau will continue to discuss specifics with the author’s staff.

Nutrition
AB 1009 (Richard Bloom, D-Santa Monica) recently passed the Assembly and will be referred to the Senate. This bill would establish the Farm to School Food Hub Program at the Department of Food and Agriculture.

This program would incentivize the creation and permanency of farm to school hubs founded by nonprofits, create an advisory committee to guide the program function and make funds contingent upon funding by the Legislature.

Packaging
Farm Bureau strongly opposed AB 1371 (Laura Friedman, D-Berkeley), a bill which would have prohibited the use of all single use plastic packaging materials in California. This packaging would include plastic film around fresh and raw products, bags used for cut and prepared products, and secondary and tertiary plastic packaging used to wrap pallets and for other purposes in transportation and packing. The bill failed passage on the Assembly Floor by five votes. Farm Bureau staff expresses appreciation to those Counties activated to contact state elected representatives on the measure.

Pollinators
AB 391 (Carlos Villapudua, D-Stockton) would create a Pollinator Fund at the Department of Food and Agriculture to fund partnerships to encourage farmers to provide pollinator forage and habitat on their properties. The bill previously appropriated $5 million General Fund for this purpose, but in Appropriations, the funding was removed. Farm Bureau will continue to support this bill as it moves to the Senate.

Taxation
A Farm Bureau supported bill, SB 240 (Susan Eggman, D-Stockton), was referred to the inactive file. This bill would have extended the authorization for the Food Donation tax credits January 1, 2027. This tax credit can be used for farmers donating agricultural products for 15% of the wholesale value. This measure may be heard again in 2022.

SB 539 (Hertzberg, D-Van Nuys), a Proposition 19 clean-up bill, passed in the Senate. After nearly six months of conversations with the Senator and his staff, Farm Bureau was successful in amending the legislation to include significant clarifications to help protect family farms. Proposition 19 implementation will continue via the legislature and California Board of Equalization throughout the year and Farm Bureau will continue to navigate those discussions to benefit our membership. Farm Bureau has modified its position on the legislation to support.

Transportation
SB-287 (Grove, R-Bakersfield), a bill that would provide greater clarity and flexibility related to the licensing requirement for towing horse and stock trailers, has passed the state Senate and awaits a vote further action in the Assembly. Farm Bureau is in support of SB 287.

Utility
Assemblymember Lorena Gonzalez’s (D-San Diego) entry into the debate on net energy metering with AB 1139 was met with extensive opposition, failing passage on the Assembly Floor. The vote was 27 ayes,
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27 noes and 25 not voting. Prior to the vote on June 2, 2021, the author had made significant amendments to the bill, including confirming that non-residential customers whose tariffs included connected load charges and demand charges could remain on their existing tariffs for 20 years from the time they first took service. The amendments were responsive to CAFB’s concerns and allowed us to revise our position from opposed to neutral. These and other amendments were not sufficient to stem the significant opposition from solar proponents and the bill was granted reconsideration and moved to the inactive file. Stakeholders will now turn their focus to the pending CPUC proceeding that is considering all of the issues and more that are addressed in the bill.

Senator Josh Becker’s (D-San Mateo) SB 345 was held in Senate Appropriations Committee and will become a 2-year bill. It would require that the California Public Utility Commission (CPUC) develop a common definition of “nonenergy benefits” in all distributed energy resource programs, which, in many circumstances could be contrary to the core purpose of the CPUC to determine appropriate rates and ensure reliable utility services. Although the bill was amended in the Policy Committee, it expanded the circumstances in which nonenergy benefits would apply.

Wildfire

AB-1431 (Frazier, D-Fairfield), a bill which would codify various objectives and goals established in California’s Forest Carbon Plan (2018) and would bring greater accountability to fuel treatments and vegetation management activities conducted within the state, has passed in the Assembly and awaits further action by the state Senate. Farm Bureau is in support of AB 1431.

UC Merced Library and Merced County 4-H Wrap-up Inaugural StoryMapping Project

By: Emily Lin, UC Merced Library

Last month, UC Merced Library and Merced County 4-H concluded an inaugural StoryMapping Project for students in grades 9-12. Designed to encourage participants to discover the value of historical archives, the project introduced young people to UC Merced’s University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) archive (https://calisphere.org/institution/238/collections/). Comprised of nearly 10,000 documents, booklets, letters, and photographs from the past 100+ years, the archive covers the range of research produced by UCCE and features documents about dairy, almonds, livestock, crop trials, youth development, nutrition, family consumer sciences, and much more.

Over the course of twelve weeks, participants formed questions based on their findings in the archive and learned how to conduct research using primary and secondary source materials. Project meetings also focused on ways students would apply their research results in the form of presentations. To do this, ArcGIS and StoryMap experts trained students on how to use these digital tools for creating and visually presenting maps and historical narratives. This process encouraged participants to exhibit digitized archival materials alongside their observations and analysis.

On May 12th, 4-H Ambassador Melanie P. presented her StoryMap to local stakeholders, family, and community members. Titled DHIA Records: A Brief History and what Melanie was able to compare them to contemporary DHIA records, including documents she used when purchasing her own heifers. The project serves as an excellent example of the ways in which archival materials not only represent the past, but inform our present. We thank Melanie and our other participants, teachers, and facilitators for their amazing work!

Check out Melanie’s StoryMap here: https://arcg.is/SCyiL

California Farmland Trust Welcomes Adriana Toste As New Hire

By: CFT

ELK GROVE, CA – May 26, 2021 – California Farmland Trust (CFT) is pleased to announce the addition of Adriana Toste to the CFT team. Toste will serve as the communications associate.

Toste is a recent graduate of Oklahoma State University (OSU), where she earned a bachelor’s degree in agricultural communications and was involved in the OSU Dairy Science Club, Sigma Alpha Professional Sorority, and the OSU Dairy Judging Team. Prior to attending OSU, Toste attended Modesto Junior College and graduated with associate degrees in agricultural business, agricultural sales, and agriculture science.

Toste’s role will be focused in producing CFT’s digital and social media campaigns, writing and design content, event planning and video and photography efforts. Toste will also support CFT’s external messaging tactics and mission.

“We are thrilled to have Adriana join the California Farmland Trust team,” shared Charlotte Mitchell, executive director. “Her background gives her context for why our mission is important, while her experience and education have provided her the opportunities to develop skills in educating, marketing and advocating for agriculture.”

A native of Gustine, Calif., Toste grew up on her family’s commercial dairy operation, where she developed a passion for agriculture and farming. Her active involvement in 4-H and FFA throughout her upbringing piqued her interest in the communications field and led her to pursue a career as an agricultural communicator.

“I am so honored to have the opportunity to share the message of the California Farmland Trust and help California farmers preserve their land for generations to come,” said Toste. “It is extremely rewarding to be able to serve in an organization where my mission and values align, and I’m excited to assist in their communications messaging, outreach, and education.”
US on track to fall short of Biden's July 4 vaccine goal to get 70% of adults partially vaccinated

By: Harry Enten, CNN Wire

WASHINGTON -- The United States is in danger of not meeting President Joe Biden's July 4 vaccination goal. Biden wants at least 70% of all adults (i.e. those aged 18 and above) to receive at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by that date.

An examination of the latest stats and polling reveals that if we continue on the current trajectory, we will not reach Biden's goal.

The latest Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data reveals that the vaccination rate is really slowing down. As of the CDC's June 3 report, 63% of adults had received their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. That was up slightly from 62% from the report a week prior (May 27).

An additional 1% of adults a week completing their first dose is the lowest since the CDC started tracking this statistic in mid-February.

On May 27 and before, the 7-day rolling average for new adults getting a first shot never dropped below 1.5%.

The slippage in new adults getting the vaccine isn't shocking, but it is a bit surprising. While fewer new people were getting vaccinated after hitting a vaccination rate peak in mid-April, the slide seemed to come to an end in mid-May.

The 7-day rolling average of new adults getting vaccinated stayed pretty consistent in the 13 days between May 14 and May 27. This was right around the time that the CDC announced that vaccinated people didn't need to wear masks in most situations. That announcement led to a spike in interest for people searching for where to get a vaccine and apparently in getting a dose of the vaccine itself.

The problem is that the uptick looks to have been temporary, and it has occurred when we're well short of Biden's 70% target.

Simply put, the current weekly rate of vaccination will not get us to 70% by July 4. With just a month to go until July 4, the current vaccination rate will put the US at somewhere between 67% and 68% of the adult population with at least one dose by Independence Day.

To reach 70% by July 4, we'll need a reversal of the current downward trend. We need to be averaging around 1.6% of the population getting their first dose each week from now until July 4. This is significantly higher than the vaccination rate this week.

Such a swing up is not impossible. Having 1.6% taking their first dose a week is actually pretty much what we had from May 14 to May 27. This is less than an additional 0.1 points more of the population needing to get a first dose a day than the rate that occurred during the week ending with the June 3 report.

The issue is that we really haven't seen the vaccination rate pick up since when they become readily available in April. We've only seen declines pause.

The fact is, we're running out of people who have indicated that they want the vaccine as soon as possible. The latest Kaiser Family Foundation poll from late May found that 66% of Americans either had received a first COVID-19 vaccine dose or wanted one as soon as possible. This 66% is near the same percentage as where the current vaccination rate trendline indicates we'll end up by July 4.

The percentage of people who have either gotten their first dose or would get one as soon as possible in Kaiser's late April to late May poll barely jumped from 64% to 66%. It turns out that the latest campaigns to get people vaccinated (e.g. relaxing mask mandates for those vaccinated) don't seem to have had much of an effect in the long run. Mainly, they got people who were going to get vaccinations to get them sooner.

To reach Biden's 70% goal, it's clear that some people will have to be convinced to get the vaccine in the next month. There is 4% (enough to just get the US 70% when added to the previously mentioned 66%) who either have a vaccine appointment scheduled or plan to get their first dose in the next three months.

The key over the next month will be for these unvaccinated people to have a sense of urgency to receive their first dose.

MCFB Sweepstakes
May Winners

Lisa Baker
Green Mountain Grill from Cal Farm & Home

Necola Adams
San Joaquin Coffee Company Basket
Merced County Farm Bureau Heritage Members

Platinum Heritage Members

- Yosemite Farm Credit
- Kellogg’s Supply
- PG&E
- Nationwide
- Shannon Pump Co.
- Live Oak Farms
- Agri-Irrigation, LLC

Gold Heritage Members

- Grimbleby Coleman CPAs
- Holt Ag Solutions
- Minturn Nut Company
- Turlock Irrigation District
- Valley Pacific Petroleum Services Inc.

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Hiring in the United States picked up in May yet was slowed again by the struggles of many companies to find enough workers to keep up with the economy’s swift recovery from the pandemic recession.

U.S. employers added 559,000 jobs last month, the Labor Department said Friday, an improvement from April’s sluggish increase of 278,000. Yet the gain fell well short of employers’ need for labor. The unemployment rate fell to 5.8% from 6.1%.

The speed of the rebound, fueled by substantial federal aid and rising vaccinations, has created a disconnect between businesses and the unemployed: While companies are rushing to add workers immediately, many of the unemployed are still holding back. Some of the jobless are likely seeking better positions than they had before the pandemic triggered widespread layoffs. Or they still lack affordable child care.

Others still worry about contracting COVID-19 or have decided to retire early. And a temporary $300-a-week federal unemployment benefit, on top of regular state jobless aid, has likely led many unemployed Americans to take time to consider their options.

That mismatch between employers and job seekers resulted in the sharp slowdown in hiring in April, when businesses added far fewer jobs than economists had forecast and many fewer than had been hired in March.

The disconnect eased somewhat in May. But economists say it will likely persist until early fall, when schools reopen, COVID-19 fades further and federal unemployment benefits end.

“There is a gap between the economy and labor market,” said Nela Richardson, chief economist at the payroll processing firm ADP. May’s job gains, she said, are “more lackluster than one would expect given the strong state of economic growth.”

The May jobs report offered a number of signs that companies are trying harder to find workers. They’re offering more money, for one thing. Average hourly pay jumped for a second straight month, especially in the leisure and hospitality industry, which includes restaurants, bars, hotels and amusement parks. Hourly wages for all workers in that industry, except managers, were 6.4% higher in May compared with pre-pandemic levels — a substantial gain.

And the number of unemployed who say their jobs are permanently lost declined in May by the most in five months. That’s an encouraging sign that companies are going beyond just recalling workers they had laid off in the pandemic.

Yet many of those jobs are still low-paying and not appealing to many Americans — people like Marcellus Rowe, who has been unemployed since he lost his $16-an-hour job at the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Agency in November 2019.

Rowe, 29, says the only jobs he sees being advertised for someone like him pay scarcely more than $9 or $10 for work in restaurants and small shops. That isn’t enough to cover his $1,000 monthly rent.

“I’m going to continue to look for suitable work,” Rowe said. “I know it’s going to come eventually. What I cannot do is settle for an unsuitable job that pays low wages.”

He’s been getting by on unemployment benefits, boosted by the $300-a-week federal supplement. But Georgia is eliminating the federal benefit on June 26. Nearly half the states — all led by Republican governors — will cut off the extra aid starting this month. Many businesses have blamed the federal benefit for discouraging some of the jobless from taking work.

“It’s really going to be a hardship,” Rowe said, noting that he’s already dropped cable television service to save money.

Labor Secretary Marty Walsh said Friday that the complaints from businesses about the federal jobless aid is “a distraction” and noted that the number of people applying for unemployment aid is falling steadily.

Eric Winograd, an economist at AllianceBernstein, an investment management firm, said there are still about 7 million people not searching for work — and so aren’t counted as unemployed — but who say in government surveys that they want a job. That’s about 50% higher than before the pandemic.

“That is compelling evidence that there is a large pool of workers who will return to work when they feel that it is safe or when they are able to sort out child care,” Winograd said.

For now, many large chains, including Amazon, Walmart, Costco, and Chipotle, have raised starting pay to try to attract more applicants. And the average work week remained elevated last week, which suggests that businesses, struggling to hire, are working their current staffs for longer hours.

Some smaller companies have also boosted pay and taken other steps to fill jobs, but are still looking for more workers. National Church Residences, a provider of senior living centers based in Columbus, Ohio, with 340 locations around the country, steadily raised its minimum wage to $14.50 an hour over several years before the pandemic.

Danielle Willis, director of human resources at the company, said those increases have helped attract staff. The company also provides health care and a 5% matching payment into a retirement plan for its full-time employees, including nurse aides, property managers and maintenance workers. Yet the 2,700-person company still has 300 positions open nationwide.

Nationally last month, the bulk of the job growth was at hotels, restaurant and bars, which gained 220,000 positions. Retailers lost jobs for a second straight month.

And despite a hot housing market,
Horseweed. What makes it such a successful weed?

Horseweed (Conyza canadensis) is an annual herb native to California and most other parts in North America. Even though it has been around for a long time, effective control can be challenging to achieve. Since I have noticed horseweed thriving while driving around these past weeks, I thought it would be a good opportunity to talk about some of the factors that make horseweed such a successful weed, as well as some of its weaknesses.

1) Where is horseweed most found in CA?
   It seems to prefer lesser-disturbed soil environments as it is commonly found in perennial tree and vine cropping systems such as orchards and vineyards, as well as some non-crop areas such as field margins, roadsides, and irrigation or ditch banks.

2) Why is horseweed becoming more widespread throughout the Central Valley?
   Many factors are likely responsible but the two primary ones in my opinion are due to its biological characteristics, as well as due to the widespread issues with herbicide resistance.

3) Why should we understand the biology of our target weeds?
   Being able to properly identify your target weeds and understanding their biology is key for a successful integrated weed management program. Weed biology not only informs us which types of weed control methods are more likely to be successful, but also the best timings and frequency that they should be adopted.

4) Which biological characteristics makes horseweed such a successful weed?
   The main biological strengths of horseweed include its multiple and prolonged germination periods, prolific seed production, and great potential for long-distance seed dispersal. Horseweed has two main germination and emergence patterns in the Central Valley, which are mid to late-fall and late-winter / early-spring. However, year-round germination has also been observed if conditions are favorable. Additionally, research has shown that horseweed is a prolific seed producer (approximately 200,000 seeds per plant!) Those seeds have a feather-like structure, called pappus (similar to dandelion seeds), that adds in wind dispersal, allowing them to travel very long distances. As a matter of fact, researchers from Cornell University sampled the lower atmosphere for horseweed seeds, using radio-controlled airplanes, and they were able to report seed dispersal of over 300 miles away!

5) What are some of its biological weaknesses?
   While many of its biological strengths are associates to its seed characteristics, many of its weaknesses are also related to its seeds. For example, horseweed seeds do not stay viable in the soil seed bank for too long (approximately 3 years); thus, controlling plants before they produce new seeds is very effective and key for long-term management. Additionally, its seeds require light to trigger germination (seedling emergence is primarily from the soil surface); thus, horseweed is very sensitive to any management practices that result in seed burial (e.g. cultivation or tillage) or low light penetration into the soil surface (e.g. cover crops or dense canopy).

6) What are its growth stages throughout the year in the Central Valley?
   Fall emerging horseweed plants can overwinter as a rosette and then bolt (elongation of main stem) in the spring (usually in late April or late May). These overwinter plants can be very difficult to control in the spring. Flowering of both fall and spring-emerged plants normally starts in July.

7) When is the best time to try to control it?
   I believe the best horseweed management strategy consist of the use of multiple effective weed control tactics, employed throughout its both main emergence periods (Fall to early spring). Postemergence management tactics should be employed when seedlings are small (prior to the 14-leaf stage). This is the period (seedling to the rosette stage) when they are the most sensitive to control measures. As horseweed begins to bolt and grow upright, effective control, particularly with herbicides, gets very difficult and expensive.

8) Are there any issues with herbicide resistance horseweed populations in CA?
   Glyphosate resistant horseweed was first discovered in Delaware in 2000. Since then, it has also been confirmed in 25 states in the United States, as well as in other 13 countries worldwide (Brazil, China, Spain, Czech Republic, Canada, Poland, Italy, Portugal, Greece, Japan, Hungary, South Korea, and France). In CA, glyphosate-resistant horseweed was first confirmed in 2005, and a more recent study done in 2014 identified populations across a wide geographical range in the state with multiple resistance, where plants were resistant to glyphosate and paraquat.

9) Collaborative work.
   Please help me help you by sharing what you think are the most significant problems facing agronomic cropping systems in Merced, San Joaquin, and Stanislaus counties. You can contact me at the Merced County office at (209) 385-7403, or via email at jdias@ucanr.edu.
Golden Valley FFA Students Earn California’s Top State Awards

By: Alison Heupel, Golden Valley FFA Chapter Reporter

For the fifth consecutive year, Golden Valley FFA has multiple State Champion winners which was announced at the California State FFA Leadership Conference.

Spencer Stephens, a 2020 Golden Valley High School graduate was named the California State Star in Ag Placement, one of highest honors an FFA member in California can receive. The Star in Ag Placement award highlights the top FFA project in which a student works for another business. Spencer works for the family business, SS Blue, a Diesel Exhaust Fluid blending company in Merced. In addition, Spencer was named a National Proficiency Winner in October in the Environmental Science and Natural Resources category for his FFA project.

With Spencer's Star in Ag Placement Award announcement, he was awarded a scholarship to help assist him in his future educational endeavors at Fresno State. Spencer is the son of Trevor and Nicole Stephens. This was the third year in a row for a Golden Valley FFA student to earn one the State’s top award as Josh Heupel was the 2019 winner, while Peter Bliss and Irelyn Bese both won Star Awards in 2020.

Peter Bliss, a 2020 graduate from Golden Valley High School was named the State Proficiency Winner in Diversified Crop Production in which Peter farms and operates over 350 acres in El Nido area. Peter was a National Proficiency Winner in Fiber/Oil Crop Production in 2020. Peter is the son of Michael and Jeannie Bliss.

Kamille Dean, a Junior at Golden Valley High School was named the State Proficiency Winner in Goat Production. Kamille, along with her family, raise Boer goats and sheep in Merced. In addition, Kamille has been an extremely active member of the Golden Valley FFA in which she is currently serving as the Chapter Vice President, and is a member of the Livestock Judging Team. Kamille is the daughter of Derrek and Eva Dean.

Since 2017, Golden Valley FFA has had 9 California FFA Proficiency Winners, and 4 Star Award Winners, both tops in California during the period of time.

To learn more about the Golden Valley FFA program and stay up to date with upcoming events, visit us at www.goldenvalleyffa.org.

California State Star in Ag Business Winner, Spencer Stephens with Ag Advisor, Cody Jacobsen.
El Capitan FFA Has a Successful Weekend at State Leadership Conference

By: Makayla Ward, El Capitan FFA Chapter Reporter

El Capitan FFA will be heading to the National FFA Finals with 5 students who have won a State Championship title, announced at the State FFA Leadership Conference on May 15th. These students have spent hours, days, and months working hard to achieve this goal, and with the combined help of their agriculture advisors, El Capitan FFA now has 2 state proficiency winners Spencer Wolf, and Adrian Hurtado, and a State Championship Marketing Plan team which consists of Makayla Ward, Nikolas Williams, and Autumn Miller. Our Marketing Plan team and proficiency winners will be competing at the national level in October. Students will receive a trip to Indianapolis for the National FFA Convention and CDE Finals, and will then travel to Washington DC after completion of the conference.

Spencer Wolf earned his state title in the area of Forage Production. Spencer owns his own business where he grows and sells hay. Adrian Hurtado received his title through Ag Mechanics and Repair and Maintenance Entrepreneurship that he received through owning his own repair shop. El Capitan FFA Advisor, Mr. Faria said, “Adrian’s project is repairing and flipping small gas engines along with basic service and maintenance. Adrian’s project grew from the El Capitan Engines classes and he created it to be the top engine repair project in the state of California.”

Five Career/Leadership Development Event teams from El

Adrian Hurtado, State Proficiency Winner, Ag Mech Repair/Maint Ent

Capitan FFA competed at the state finals level. The Agriculture Welding team consisted of Hunter Gibson, Thomas Franklin, Oswaldo Vazquez, Nathan Helms. These students placed 5th at state finals. Their advisor, Mr. Fishman said, “The Welding CDE is a contest that El Capitan had never competed in before and we ended up placing 5th in the state! A big congratulations to our students for all of their hard work this season.” The Floriculture Team consisted of four team members, Annika Cook, Natalie VanPelt, Samantha Wade, Julianna Contreras. These students placed 11th at the state finals. This contest required the judging of floral designs, cut flowers, and potted plants. Team members also had to identify 75 cut flowers, potted plants, and floral tools, and create three floral designs. The Veterinary Science Team consisted of Jade Velasquez, Anissa Walker, Marisa Ortiz, and Hailey Rodriguez. Their advisor Ms. Vindel said, “I had four amazing students compete this year in the Vet Science CDE Program. Overall, they had a great season and worked very hard! I am excited to see how this team grows and improves next year!” The Small engines team did not disappoint with placing

3rd in the state thanks to students, Miguel Vazquez, Jorja Ooka, Philip Miller, and Gabe Alaniz-Gonzalez. Individually Philip Miller placed 7th in the state and Gabe Alaniz-Gonzalez placed 2nd. Mr. Faria said “Gabrial Alaniz was 2nd in the state of California in Small Gas engines. Small engines contest deals with identification, theory exam, problem solving, technical skills, and troubleshooting. Gabriel also earned the Master Service Technician certification through Briggs and Stratton, the highest certification one can earn as a small engine mechanic.”

Lastly, the Marketing Plan team took home a State Championship title for the El Capitan FFA chapter! This contest required students to help a local agriculture business learn how to better market a product to increase profits. These students worked extremely hard with long practices for months, after school, before school, on zoom, and on weekends! They are ready and excited to take on Nationals in October. Their advisor Mrs. Davenport would like to say, “These students put in an immense amount of work and will now be the first in El Capitan history to compete at the National Level. They also helped a local agriculture business learn how to increase their profits, which was very rewarding to be a part of.”

The agriculture advisors at ECHS are extremely proud of these students for taking on new competitions this year and dedicating themselves to the El Capitan FFA Chapter and FFA Organization. They are excited to see all that these students accomplish with the skills they have developed and learned. FFA members would also like to say thank you to their advisors who see the potential in all of their students and stand right by their side in helping to accomplish goals and finding the opportunities to do so. For more information about the El Capitan FFA Chapter, please visit www.elcapitanffa.org, and follow on social media.

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Gustine FFA Hosts 83rd Annual FFA Banquet

By: Garret Gomes, Gustine FFA Chapter Reporter

For over 80 years Gustine FFA has looked forward to the annual FFA banquet. This year we were able to hold the 83rd Banquet at the Gustine High School auditorium on May 25th. During the banquet students from Gustine FFA were awarded and recognized for their accomplishments over the past year. Seniors were given their stoles for being a part of the FFA for four years, scholarships were awarded, and the newly elected Gustine FFA officers were installed.

The Star Greenhand award, which is presented to an outstanding first-year member, was awarded to Grant Hazan and Mikayla Silveira. The Star Chapter award, which is awarded to a distinguished sophomore, was presented to Garret Gomes and Austin Bell.

The Honorary degree was awarded to Mr. Billy Barnes. This award is presented to an adult who has gone out of their way to ensure the success of our chapter. Mr. Barnes worked with multiple students from Gustine FFA by supplying market hogs for years. He ensured that Gustine FFA students were provided Great market hogs at a fair price. Mr. Barnes Sadly passed away this year due to a long battle with cancer.

The Workhorse Award is an award that is presented to an FFA member that has worked hard over their past four years in FFA. This individual was very helpful with any task needed for FFA events and activities within the ag department. He would always ask how he could help. This year's recipient was senior, Clayton Alamo.

The top freshman point award is granted to the most involved freshman. This year Grant Hazan, Mikayla Silveira, and Blake Codorniz were awarded the trip to the National Convention in Indianapolis next year.

Scholarships were awarded, including Merced County Farm Bureau, Ag Boosters Scholarship, VSI Scholarship, and Yosemite Farm Credit all being awarded to senior Lalanie Brace. Megan Souza was awarded the Arnold and Angie Souza memorial scholarship as well.

The newly elected officers were installed. Your 2021-2022 Gustine FFA officers include:

President: Daniel Gomes
Vice President: Savanna Barcellos
Secretary: Christina Moitozo
Treasurer: Austin Bell
Reporter: Garret Gomes
Sentinel: Tyler Borba
Historian: Janai Navarro

“It's an honor to be able to serve our chapter again. I am excited to work alongside every one of our members,” returning President Daniel Gomes said.

We would like to congratulate Gustine FFA for all of their accomplishments over the past year; we can’t wait to see what's in store for our members!

Atwater FFA Milk Quality & Dairy Foods Team Wins State Championship

By: Atwater FFA

Atwater FFA will be heading back to Indianapolis, Indiana for the 2021 National FFA Finals as the Milk Quality and Dairy Foods team won the 2021 FFA state championship through the state’s virtual state finals contests held for all agriculture related Career Development Events (CDE’s) April through May. The Atwater FFA Milk Quality and Dairy Foods team comprised of Nandani Patel (1st overall in the state), Elisabeth Garner (3rd overall in the state), Emma Garcia (5th overall in the state), and Simarjot Gandhoke placed first overall and will be representing the Atwater/Winton community, Merced County, and the state of California at the National FFA Finals in Indianapolis, Indiana in late October. Atwater FFA competed in seven individual agriculture Career Development Events (CDE’s) and Leadership Development Events (LDE’s) overall. “When you combine great kids and dedicated teachers with the tremendous support of one’s school, district, community, and local agriculture industry, you get positive results and tremendous success as demonstrated at the state finals competitions,” said FFA advisor Dave Gossman.

The Milk Quality and Dairy Foods contest involved various online and virtual dairy industry exams, problem solving exams, milk scoring and cheese scoring tests, and a team presentation based on a sample dairy analysis of monthly regulatory tests conducted within the milk and dairy industry.

Atwater FFA's Farm Business Management team placed 2nd overall in the state. The contest involves students learning business skills and the application of economic principles to agricultural businesses. By competing, participants demonstrate their ability to analyze agricultural business management information, apply economic principles and concepts of business management, evaluate business management decisions and work together cooperatively as a team.

Atwater FFA's Vegetable Crop team placed 7th overall in the state and was comprised of Alexis Martinez, Supreet Gandhok, Klatthia Cruz Hernandez, and Gurkirath Gandhokhj. The purpose of the Vegetable Crop Judging Contest is to create interest and promote understanding in the vegetable crop industry by providing opportunities for recognition through the demonstration of skills and proficiencies. It is the intention of the contest to provide a venue for students to explore career opportunities, skills and proficiencies in the vegetable crop industry. The emphasis of this contest is to promote critical thinking, evaluation, oral and identification skills.

Atwater FFA's Gabriela Moreno went from the local, sectional, and...
Atwater FFA
continued from page 14

The Atwater FFA Parliamentary Procedure team qualified for the state finals through their regional qualification rounds and was comprised of Simarjot Handhoke, Klarithsa Cruz Hernandez, Celeste Chargoy, Joshaua Mederios, Allison Garner, Daniel Lopez, Nandani Patel, and Elizabeth Ayala Lopez. Parliamentary procedure is a set of rules, ethics, and customs governing meetings of clubs, organizations, legislative bodies, and other deliberative assemblies. FFA students throughout California participate in various parliamentary procedure contests where students demonstrate their public speaking, understanding, and implementation of skills.

The Atwater FFA Best Informed Greenhand team placed in the middle of the pack in a very popular and crowded field. The team comprised of Alden Hansard, Alexa Bracamontes, Ella Boyenga, and Jacqueline Velasquez. The contest involved a 100+ question multiple choice, true/false, matching, and fill-in-the-blank test pertaining to FFA history, the FFA Constitution, FFA By-Laws and other aspects pertaining to the FFA organization.

The Atwater FFA Agricultural mechanics team placed in the top 1/3 of the state with a team comprised of Thomas Garner, Moira Conway, Everett Hill, and Vincent Gonzalez. Individuals demonstrate a mastery of shop-related, “hands-on” applications within agriculture mechanic areas in addition to effective communication skills, superior problem-solving techniques and an understanding of modern technology.

There are over 89,000 high school agriculture students in California representing over 375 high school agriculture programs, and the success of the Atwater FFA agriculture program can be attributed to the investment with our students, and we see a positive return on everyone's participation.

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

Utility
continued from page 1

For this agency has spent most of the last century in the pocket of the utilities it is supposed to regulate. Time and again, the commissioners favor the companies over their customers, leaving California electric rates the highest in the contiguous 48 states.

No one knows for sure where the PUC’s powers would migrate under the nascent ballot measure, but if, as now seems likely, it would put most PUC functions under control of the governor, things could be even more political and campaign donation-driven than they are now.

A better solution – and there’s still time to get this into the initiative – would make the commission elective.

Similar things have been done, most recently with the state insurance commissioner, who until the late 1980s was under the governor’s purview.

Back in 1988, California’s car and property insurance rates were highest in the nation. Then a consumer group called the Foundation for Taxpayer and Consumer Rights (now called Consumer Watchdog) and its leader Harvey Rosenfield ran an initiative that made the insurance commissioner an elected officer.

Since then, California insurance rates have risen slower than those in any other state, saving customers more than $100 billion over 32 years.

It’s now high time to regulate utility companies as firmly as insurance firms and make utility commissioners responsible to the public and the voters they were supposed to serve all along.

No industry has been cozier with those regulating it than utilities, which regularly get large rate increases, deserved or not. Debacles like the massive wildfires, the Southern California Edison blunder that caused the closure of the San Onofre Nuclear Generating Station and the deadly 2010 San Bruno gas pipeline explosion never dent these companies’ ever-rising rates and guaranteed income.

Newsom promised during his 2018 campaign that he would “not be timid about this or anything else. (Then-Gov.) Jerry Brown said reform is overrated. I say it’s underrated.”

Then Newsom proceeded in the opposite direction, appointing one PUC member after another to behave like utility lapdogs.

All this leads to the reality that Californians are ready to see the PUC taken down a peg or three from its current exalted, almost untouchable position.

The best way to do this is to make the powerful agency political – that is, subject to the will of the voters. It could be done as soon as the fall of next year.

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When is the Newsom recall election? Maybe sooner than you think

By: Laurel Rosenhall, CalMatters

Californiaians will almost certainly vote this year whether to throw Gov. Gavin Newsom out of office. But when?

There’s surprisingly little certainty about the date of an election that has the potential to unseat the leadership of the world’s fifth largest economy and disrupt the lock Democrats have had on the state Capitol for the last 11 years.

The range of probable dates is shaping up as a Tuesday between mid-September and early November — with signs pointing to the likelihood of an election sooner rather than later.

One reason for the confusion is because the procedure leading up to a recall election involves a few steps that could take as much as three months or as little as a few days, depending on how the officials involved decide to roll things out.

“Those processes that are remaining now are totally in the hands of Democrats. If they want to truncate it, they can truncate it. And in my estimation they should,” said Garry South, a Democratic political consultant who managed campaigns for Gray Davis, the only California governor to be recalled.

“Let’s get this thing over with.”

Senate Elections Committee chairperson Steve Glazer suggested the election should be held as soon as August because Newsom is doing well in the polls as the state rebounds from the COVID-19 pandemic. But it seems more likely that officials would wait until after Labor Day, when summertime distractions settle down. And recent activity at the Capitol indicates that the election will probably be called earlier than the traditional first Tuesday in November.

State finance officials and lawmakers who control the budget have already begun figuring out how much it will cost counties to conduct the election — a step they could drag into August if they wanted. Last week, the Department of Finance received cost estimates from election officials in almost all of California’s 58 counties.

And Sen. Nancy Skinner, the Berkeley Democrat who leads the Senate’s budget committee, told reporters that she may not need the full 30 days the law gives her panel to review recall election costs because “we already know” the price tag.

County election officials said last month that putting on the recall election will cost them about $400 million, five times more than what Newsom had estimated. Similar to last November, all registered voters will receive mail ballots and counties can also offer drop-off and in-person voting.

If lawmakers include the funding for counties in the budget they’ll pass by June 15 — which seems likely, since they’ve received the cost estimate and have a massive surplus — it could be a major indication that the election will probably be in September instead of later in the fall.

But if the funding is not included in the budget, it means lawmakers and Newsom’s finance officials could spend more of the summer analyzing the costs, thus delaying a vote. The recall law gives them lots of leeway — finance officials and the Legislature each get as long as 30 days for this phase of the process.

Democratic lawmakers added more steps to California’s recall process in 2017 as they unsuccessfully tried

See ‘Recall’ Page 18

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Recall
continued from page 17

to fend off the recall of Democratic state Sen. Josh Newman of Fullerton. In addition to adding two months for the fiscal analyses, they also added six weeks for voters who signed the recall petition to remove their signatures if they want, a period that in Newsom’s case ends Tuesday.

“A lot of lag was put in,” said Joshua Spivak, a fellow at the Hugh L. Carey Institute for Government Reform at Wagner College in New York who lives in the Bay Area and writes the Recall Elections Blog.

“It's this change in the law that has given some uncertainty to the proceedings.”

Newsom has answered questions about when he’d like the election to be held by saying it’s not his decision, and he’ll work hard to defeat the recall by focusing on getting Californians vaccinated and rebooting the economy. While he’s been touting a return to “business as usual” when the state reopens on June 15, Newsom said Friday that he will not lift the official state of emergency on that date. The state of emergency on that date. The Friday that he will not lift the official

reopens on June 15, Newsom said

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state of emergency on that date. The

emergency status allows the state to

waive certain rules and expedite federal

funding even as businesses more fully

reopen.

“This disease has not been extinguished,” Newsom said after drawing the first winners in his vaccine lottery. “It’s not taking the summer

months off.”

His opponents who are campaigning for the recall jumped on that comment, saying it will add fuel to their movement, which began as a conservative critique of Newsom’s liberal policies but evolved to encompass voters frustrated with his pandemic-induced restrictions.

“That seals the coffin,” Anne Dunsmore, a recall campaign manager, said of Newsom’s decision to hold onto his emergency powers. “People don’t feel that he understands the pain they’ve been through.”

Dunsmore said an election later in the fall is slightly better for recall supporters because it gives more time for candidates to jump in the race, which could attract more voters. It also allows more opportunity for Newsom to anger voters by his response to potential disasters — think wildfire, drought and power shut-offs — or his own gaffes, like the French Laundry dinner party that sparked support for the recall.

“The timing is more of an issue for him than it is for us,” Dunsmore said.

Opinions vary on whether holding the election sooner is better for Newsom — or even if the date of the recall matters much. There’s not really a playbook since only two governors in modern American history have faced a recall — Davis, who was booted from office in 2003, and Wisconsin’s former Republican Gov. Scott Walker, who defeated a recall in 2012.

Spivak believes that Newsom would benefit if the election is held later, arguing that sufficient time to raise campaign funds helped Walker win. Newsom is already outraising recall supporters, who raised and spent most of their cash to collect signatures, and he seems poised to dominate the money race.

“The longer he has, the more he can put that money to use and overwhelm the opposition,” Spivak said. “The air war hasn’t started and when it does, he might have a big advantage.”

Also, holding the election in early November could help Newsom by driving turnout, since voters are accustomed to voting then. On the other hand, Spivak said, holding it at an unusual date could help Newsom win more support by emphasizing that it’s an irregular election and an extra cost to taxpayers.

South says that Newsom would be better off if the election were sooner — before he faces the intense period of signing and vetoing bills from Sept. 11 to Oct. 11. His decisions could anger some voters. And an election scheduled soon after could cause more scrutiny of whether it is influencing how Newsom evaluates bills involving a range of powerful interests.

“That was a huge mess for us in 2003,” South said, because Davis faced an election.

“Watching him go over those bills with his reading glasses on, the whole room hung heavy with the specter of the recall.”

Ultimately, South said, it prompted Davis to sign legislation he’d previously vetoed, and veto some bills he otherwise wouldn’t. For instance, just before the recall, Davis signed a bill to give driver’s licenses to undocumented immigrants — something he had vetoed twice before, South said. The vetoes had cost Davis the endorsement of the Legislature’s powerful Latino Caucus in an earlier election, and he didn’t want to risk that again during the recall.

“Even if Newsom looked at all those thousand bills and vetoed and signed them all in good faith — he will be accused by both the right and the left of playing politics,” South said.


The decision on the election date falls to Lt. Gov. Eleni Kounalakis, a Democrat and Newsom ally. The recall law says she must call the election for between 60 and 80 days after Secretary of State Shirley Weber — who was appointed by Newsom — certifies that enough people have signed the recall petition to trigger an election, which follows the Legislature’s cost analysis.

“Frankly, it will probably be somewhere in the middle,” Kounalakis said in an interview. “It is my job to set this date within that narrow window, in a way that serves the public interest, and that is what I will do.”

One thing Kounalakis said she won’t do? Follow in the footsteps of Cruz Bustamante, who held her position when Davis was recalled and decided to run right after calling the election.

“I’m absolutely not going to put my name on the recall ballot,” she said.

from the
Mariposa
CFB
Danette Toso

A Love Hate Relationship

"Technological progress has merely provided us with more efficient means for going backwards.”

— Aldous Huxley

I’m not sure if Alexander Gram Bell would be proud or appalled with the progress that’s been made over the last few years in communications. Mr. Bell brought us all closer together with his marvelous invention and the telephone has rapidly morphed into a phone, camera, computer, television, and mini movie theater. Most of us have one in our hand most of the day, every day and we can’t imagine what we did without our cell phones.

With the many positives of technology, come a plethora of negatives. Recently, the world of agriculture has endured the wrath of a cyber security attack. Recently, JBS, the world’s largest meat producer, shut down its nine U.S.-based beef plants while responding to an “organized cybersecurity attack.” The attack on Sunday, May 30th affected its computers systems in North America and Australia. It will be very interesting to see if this attack was implemented by the same group of criminals that recently hacked and shut down the Colonial Pipeline. Our lives get quite difficult without food and fuel to say the least.

In my humble opinion, America needs to beef up our technological security system and not cave-in to the cyber criminals. When our food and fuel are compromised, what do we do? I, for one am lucky, I’ve got beef in the freezer, generators to keep it stable, and a garden of vegetables in my yard. I don’t think that many of our urban dwellers even think about such simple means of sustainability.

Hang on to your hats, things are getting very real in our “land of the free!” I hope you will join me, 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.
Almond Hulls: A Valuable, yet Highly Variable, Byproduct Feedstuff


Field weight at almond harvest is 23% nuts, 14% shells, 13 debris and 50% hulls. Shells are often used for bedding material. Hulls are an excellent byproduct feedstuff that are fed to lactating dairy cows because of their high sugar content. However, because the hulling process cannot remove all of the sticks and shells from the nutritious hull fraction, almond hulls are highly variable in nutrient and energy composition.

The aim of our research was to determine the chemical composition of almond hulls and the impact of total debris (sticks and shells) contamination on the chemical composition (quality) of almond hulls. There is surprisingly little information on the composition of almond hulls. The information that is available has not identified the contribution and impact of total debris on feeding value of commercial almond hulls.

What did we find for variety? Commercial Nonpareil hulls had a lower proportion of total debris compared with Commercial Pollinator hulls which impacted the chemical composition. Nonpareil hulls were higher in sugar and lower in fiber and lignin than Pollinator hulls. Because of the lower debris content, Nonpareil hulls are higher in nutritional quality than Pollinator hulls. For both varieties of hulls, the ranges in chemical composition were large indicating that there was large variation in chemical composition.

For full details of our findings on the chemical composition of almond hulls, view the publication here: https://www.appliedanimalscience.org/article/S2590-2865(20)30149-X/fulltext

Take Home Message: Commercial almond hulls can be an excellent byproduct feedstuff for lactating dairy cows because of their highly digestible sugar content. Commercial almond hulls also contribute fiber to the diet of which a portion is digested by the rumen microbes to provide energy to the dairy cows. The hulls also add a physical aspect to support rumen contractions and chewing. Nonpareil hulls are higher in feeding value than Pollinator hulls. Purchased almond hulls are often a blend of Nonpareil and Pollinator hulls; this blending of hull varieties contributes to the high variability in chemical composition that is found with delivered almond hulls.

Much more research needs to be done to better describe the feeding value of almond hulls that will allow for feeding higher amounts of hulls to lactating dairy cows and reduce the large variation that exists in quality delivered to a dairy farm. In the meantime, testing the chemical composition of almond hulls is important to ensure diets are formulated with accurate information, and that you’re not paying premium price for an inferior product.

What did we find for debris? Hulls are highly variable in nutrient and the nutritious hull fraction, almond hulls are often a blend of Nonpareil and Pollinator hulls. Purchased almond hulls are higher in nutritional quality than Pollinator hulls. For both varieties of hulls, the ranges in chemical composition were large indicating that there was large variation in chemical composition.

Tomato Growers Asked to Assist with Fusarium Wilt Research

By: Brian German, AgNet West

Tomato growers are being asked to assist with ongoing research looking at the interaction between root-knot nematodes and fusarium wilt. Researchers have hypothesized that applications of nematicides in fields with fusarium wilt can help address both issues. Managing Director of the California Tomato Research Institute (CTRI), Zach Bagley said they are looking for growers dealing with both root-knot nematode and fusarium wilt.

“If you suspect this to be the case in your field, but you’re not sure, that’s okay. Give us a call and we can take samples, confirm it, provide those sample reports back to you as the grower or PCA,” Bagley noted. “Then if it is the case, that there’s both of those pests and diseases present in your field, the study this will benefit started this year is looking at the interactive effect of these two pests to overall plant health and yield.”

This particular research project is one of several ongoing studies being funded by CTRI. Tomato growers are encouraged to reach out and participate in the research to provide a more comprehensive picture of the issue. “We’ve got about six field trials in several different locations out for this year. We expect that the study will likely continue into the next year,” said Bagley.

Damage from root-knot nematodes can generally predispose tomato plants to fusarium wilt infection. Bagley explained that anecdotally they know there are fields out there addressing both issues. The assumption is that nematicides can have a positive impact on instances of fusarium wilt. The research project looks to test that hypothesis.

“We’ve found through several years of trialing of new and different nematicides with the farm advisors out of the Shafter Research Station in Bakersfield that these nematicides really do a good job,” said Bagley. “This is one way as fusarium wilt expands its range that we want to make sure that we are recognizing we can help to control it by also taking care of the nematode issue in fields.”

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