



# Merced County Farm News



## CALL TO ACTION: Merced County Releases American Rescue Plan Act Community Survey

**By: Merced County**

**M**ERCED - On March 11, 2021, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) was signed into law, and included \$350 billion in Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) for eligible state and local governments. In accordance with the American Rescue Plan Act, SLFRF funds are

eligible to support the public health response, address negative economic impacts, replace public sector revenue loss (revenue replacement), provide premium pay for essential workers, and make necessary investments in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure. SLFRF funding is being distributed through multiple governmental agencies, resulting in a variety of awards, allocations, and

spending authorities. Merced County was allocated \$53,936,085 and each of the six cities within Merced County received their own allocation of SLFRF funds. Local governments are responsible for the SLFRF allocations, but may also receive funds that were assigned to the State for similar purposes. To ensure an ongoing structurally balanced budget for Merced County,

utilizing these one-time dollars to complete one-time projects is of significant importance. Special consideration is also given to ensure ARPA-SLFRF funded projects will have long-lasting, generational impacts for the benefit of Merced County residents. In accordance with the guidance released from  
*See 'ARPA' Page 7*

## November 2nd is Deadline for submission of maps by the public for consideration at the November 16, 2021 Board of Supervisors public hearing.

**By: Merced County**

### FAQs:

#### What is redistricting?

Redistricting is the regular process of adjusting the lines of voting districts in accordance with population shifts. Every ten years, districts must be redrawn so that each district is substantially equal in population. This process is important in ensuring that each supervisor represents about the same number of constituents. Redistricting is done using U.S. Census data, which is normally released around March 31 but will not

be available to the State until August 2021 because of delays. On October 1, California will release the official population data after completing prisoner adjustments.

All district lines must be reviewed to meet strict requirements for population equality and voting rights protections. With the California Voting Rights Act, more than 500 jurisdictions in California must redistrict in 2021-2022.

In Merced County, the Board of Supervisors is responsible for drawing supervisorial districts based on US Census data and input from Merced

County residents. Our redistricting process must be completed by the end of 2021.

#### Why does redistricting matter to me?

Redistricting determines which neighborhoods and communities are grouped together into a district for purposes of electing a board member. The Board of Supervisors will seek input in selecting the next district map for our supervisorial districts. You have an opportunity to share with the

*See 'Redistricting' Page 7*

### INSIDE:

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**15** New round of SWEEP irrigation and Healthy Soils grants

Address



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

**H**ello fellow Merced County Farm Bureau members. I hope you had a successful and prosperous harvest season this year. Where's the water?!! That's the number one thing on everyone's mind. It looks like we are going to

get some measurable rainfall this weekend, hopefully into next week. The weatherman even made mention of an atmospheric river being possible. I hope this is the case and we get the well overdue rain that we all could use. There are some serious problems that need to be addressed. We need water storage in this state for farms, people, and fish. We have not added to our reservoirs in years; however, the population in this state has skyrocketed. The consensus of people is that farmers use too much water and are not water efficient. This could

not be further from the truth as we all know. Every year we grow more food with less water on less acreage than we have in the past years. Unfortunately, the consumers do not see this and have us out voted in a state enabling a super majority in the Senate, Assembly and Governor's offices. We have passed a water bond but have not started on any major water storage projects. This just scratches the surface of our water problems and we will be living paycheck to paycheck with the possibility of catastrophic shortages in the future.

**M**embership is an area of our organization that we are consistently working day in and out, but never more often than when it comes to the end of our membership year which concludes each October 31. As I write this, we are still feverishly working to make our year end goal. I wanted to take a moment and explain some of the details that come with your membership. For this first exercise, I am going to focus on our regular Agriculture Membership as that makes up much of our roster in any given year. For every payment of \$275 dues that a member sends in, \$155 stays with our county organization. The remainder is kept with the California Farm Bureau and they in turn pay \$4 per member to the American Farm Bureau Federation. Let's start with the tangible benefits that you receive as a member first. These include discounts at hotel chains

of Wyndham, Choice, and Great Wolf Resorts, Ford vehicles, Grainger and Amerigas. Others include A4 Promotions, AirMed and Kelly-Moore and Dunn-Edwards Paints. Locally, we've acquired UnWired Broadband, Ag Safe, PHI Air and Anteris Agronomics. Tangible benefits are always nice as you can see and use immediately. What I believe are the stronger benefits of Farm Bureau are the non-tangible benefits. These are the items we do on a daily, monthly, or yearly basis that you are not always able to see. The calls to supervisors, providing oral comments on your behalf in front of the State Water Board or Air Resources Board and advocating for agriculture at various cities as they move through their progression and updating their general plans. I would be remiss if I didn't mention our educational piece that carries a lot of weight within our

office. Most notable is our FARM2U Day that has morphed into a virtual program due to COVID. Pre-pandemic this program averaged 118 classes throughout the day learning about the agriculture that is in their own backyard. We've also started a reward program for educators teaching ag in their classrooms titled Rooted in Ag. This program awards a selected teacher \$500 dollars to use for their classroom. It's our way of saying thank you for teaching agriculture in your classroom. In years past, we've also hosted workshops tailored to labor and educational trainings focused on Ag Haz Mat. We are also in the process of building more workshops such as these into our calendar for the coming year. Our staff is always looking for other trainings you need so please reach out if there is something we can help you with as you go through your day. We have some exciting things



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

scheduled for 2022 so please stay tuned!

***Thank you for being a member of the  
Merced County Farm Bureau.  
It is with your support that we are able to  
advocate for agiculture!***

**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.



Need  
CE  
Credits?

UCCE Merced  
is offering  
Continuing  
Education Classes!

When:  
October 26 and November 2

Time:  
8am-1pm

Cost:  
\$40/day check or cash only  
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Where:  
2145 Wardrobe Ave, Merced

For more information contact  
Larry Burrow [laburrow@ucanr.edu](mailto:laburrow@ucanr.edu)  
or call UCCE Merced at 209-385-7403

UCCE

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UC Cooperative Extension

# Calendar of Events

- October 26

UCCE Merced CE course (pg. 3)
- October 28

Ag HazMat Training (pg. 6)
- November 2

UCCE Merced CE course (pg. 3)
- November 2

Merced County 4-H Drive-Thru Dinner (pg. 8)
- November 16

YF&R November Meeting - Potluck (pg. 8)
- November 18

Farm Bureau Extension CE course
- December 4-5

CA YF&R Conference (pg. 13)
- December 5-8

CAFB Annual Meeting (pg. 13)
- December 31

Deadline to nominate for Golden Owl Award

Merced County Farm News

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with MCFB

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[info@mercedfarmbureau.org](mailto:info@mercedfarmbureau.org)





# Legislative Update

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provide a safe product for consumers, in addition to minimizing the amount of incorrect test results which can be damaging to farmers, ranchers, and the California agricultural industry.

## Gray Wolf Update

Between September 20 and 26, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) received three separate reports of a gray wolf with a purple collar in northern Ventura County. CDFW staff began site inspections and have confirmed recent wolf tracks in the vicinity. Though CDFW does not have forensic evidence to confirm this at this time, the wolf could be OR-93. The recent reports match the description of OR-93, who was fitted with a purple tracking collar by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs in Oregon in June 2020. The collar was monitored by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW), but it stopped transmitting in April.

Neither CDFW nor ODFW can determine the wolf's current location, but if an opportunity arises, CDFW may attempt to capture and re-collar the wolf to continue tracking its journey. Though historically all of California is wolf habitat, this is the farthest south in California that any gray wolf has been documented since one was captured in San Bernardino County in 1922. OR-93 is a male wolf born in 2019. He dispersed from the White River pack in northern Oregon. When his collar was providing information, he was tracked entering Modoc County on January 30, 2021. After briefly returning to Oregon, he reentered 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. Through April 5 he had traveled at least 935 air miles in California, a minimum average of 16 air miles per day.

In August, CDFW received trail camera video(opens in new tab) from May 15, 2021 showing a collared gray wolf in southwest Kern County that may have been OR-93. The trail camera records wildlife use at a water through on private property. Though the video was from May, the trail camera was not checked until August, when it was provided to CDFW. Gray wolves are listed as endangered pursuant to California's Endangered Species Act (CESA). It is unlawful to harass, harm, pursue, hunt, shoot, wound, kill, trap or capture gray wolves. Anyone who believes they have seen a wolf in California can report it to CDFW online. More information is available on CDFW's wolf page.

## Commodities

AB 535 (Aguiar-Curry, D-Winters) was signed into law earlier this week. This measure would require a container of olive oil produced, processed, sold, offered for sale, given away, or possessed in California that includes "California" in any form on its principal display panel and contains olive oil derived from olives grown outside California to disclose the minimum percentage of olive oil in the container derived from olives grown in California. The original text of this bill caused concern for local producers; however, an amendment in July struck the term "containing." This amendment addressed concerns from stakeholders, including several County Farm Bureaus. CA Farm Bureau helped to facilitate a removing counties' opposition and relaying their neutral position on the bill.

## Taxation

SB 539 (Hertzberg, D-Van Nuys), a Proposition 19 clean-up bill, has been signed by Governor Newsom. Members may recall that six months ago Farm Bureau was successful in amending the legislation to include significant clarifications to help further protect family farms from new, significant property tax increases upon transfer of ownership. While these clarifications and amendments were absolutely vital to limiting property tax burdens on agriculture, Proposition 19 implementation will likely remain an ongoing challenge for all Californians. Farm Bureau members are encouraged to revisit discussions with their appropriate estate planning professionals given the legislative changes made by SB 539. We are appreciative to Senator

Hertzberg and Senator Dahle, as well as Assemblyman James Gallagher for their willingness to address a very complex taxation issue and for their commitment to supporting California agriculture.

## Transportation

SB 287 (Grove, R-Bakersfield), a bill that would provide greater clarity and flexibility related to the licensing requirements for towing horse and stock trailers, has been signed by Governor Newsom. Essentially, SB 287 will resolve an ongoing issue between California Highway Patrol (CHP) and those towing horse and stock trailers for recreational purposes, as opposed to trailering in the conduct of agricultural operations or education. While this may seem like a mundane detail to some, the real-life consequence was that recreational ag purposes (towing a horse trailer for the purposes of horseback riding) would require a commercial Class A license in California under some circumstances, whereas towing for agricultural related purposes required only a basic Class C licensure. The result was that many Farm Bureau

members had been cited by CHP for licensure violations over a gross technicality that was largely unenforced for many years. Farm Bureau was proud to have been an early supporter of the legislation and is deeply appreciative to Senator Grove for continuing her pursuit of this legislative fix.

## Water

A measure that provides liability protection for landowners who voluntarily provide land for stream restoration was signed by the Governor this week. The stated purpose of AB 315 (Mark Stone, D-Santa Cruz) is to indemnify and hold harmless a landowner who voluntarily allows land to be used for a project to restore fish and wildlife habitat. Farm Bureau believes the measure offers limited protections to landowners and those did not position on the bill. The Governor sent the following signing message to the State Assembly:

"I am signing Assembly Bill 315 related to indemnity and limited liability protections to real property

See 'Legislative Update' Page 13



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# **ATTENTION**

**Farmers and Farm Employees  
who need to renew their DL-267 Endorsement  
or acquire their initial endorsement.**



The Agricultural Hazardous Materials Transportation Program is being offered by the Farm Bureau and Nationwide Insurance. This class is for persons 21 years or older and have a current California Class C drivers license.

Due to new requirements, once a person completes the course, they must:

- Submit completed training record along with a completed CHP application
- Await paperwork return from CHP
- Pay any applicable DMV fees
- With returned CHP paperwork apply for DL-267 certificate from the DMV

**October 28, 2021**  
**9:00 AM – 11:00 AM English**  
**1:00 PM – 3:00 PM Spanish**

**Merced County Farm Bureau  
Conference Room  
646 South Highway 59  
Merced, CA 95341**

**\$25.00 for Farm Bureau Members**  
**\$45.00 for Non Members**

**TO REGISTER: Please call the MCFB Office at (209) 723-3001  
or email [info@mercedfarmbureau.org](mailto:info@mercedfarmbureau.org)**

**NOTE: Instructor will be via webinar, but attendance at the above site is  
required for testing purposes.**  
**Please pay by cash, check or credit card in advance.**

# ARPA

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the U.S. Department of Treasury, Merced County conducted an analysis to understand the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on Merced County’s state and local revenues and to identify revenue loss. Upon review of SLFRF guidance, Merced County’s revenue loss is projected to exceed its SLFRF allocation. On August 10, 2021, a revenue replacement focused ARPA SLFRF funding framework containing various expenditure categories was presented to the Board of Supervisors. Through this framework, the Board of Supervisors has prioritized services for the homeless, COVID-19 support, improvements to community facilities, water infrastructure and flood control, road improvements, and public safety. The County reviewed community outreach feedback which was obtained

in 2020 in addition to years of direct feedback regarding the need to invest in county veterans’ halls, community halls, parks, and libraries, to begin identifying projects to be funded in the Fiscal Year 2021-22 Final Budget. Additionally, unreimbursed expenditures were identified as part of the County’s direct response to the pandemic and multiple capital projects were stalled due to economic and supply chain uncertainties. Examples of such ARPA-SLFRF projects that have been approved for funding include:

- Veterans and Community Hall improvements in various unincorporated communities
- Library improvements throughout Merced County
- Park infrastructure including irrigation systems, landscaping, and sidewalks
- Spring Fairgrounds water and infrastructure in Los Banos
- Black Rascal Creek Flood Control project benefiting Merced and the

Beachwood-Franklin community

On August 31, 2021, Merced County published its 2021 ARPA-SLFRF Recovery Plan which outlined existing and planned community engagement efforts. Merced County has developed a Community Survey to solicit feedback directly from its residents and to complement the existing feedback received by the Board of Supervisors. Information gathered from the survey will help to inform the Board of Supervisors as they consider how to use the ARPA-SLFRF funding to provide long-lasting benefits to local residents. Members of the public may submit survey responses through January 31, 2022.

**Survey (English):** <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ARPA-EN>

**Survey (Spanish):** <https://es.surveymonkey.com/r/ARPA-SP>

**Survey (Hmong):** <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ARPA-HM>

“Merced County is pleased to release the American Rescue Plan Act Community Survey,” said Chairman

Daron McDaniel of the Merced County Board of Supervisors. “The one-time funding provided by the American Rescue Plan Act gives Merced County the opportunity to make infrastructure investments throughout the county that will have multigenerational impacts. The Board of Supervisors places high value on community input and looks forward to hearing directly from the residents of Merced County.”

Merced County will be meeting with local Municipal Advisory Councils throughout our communities to provide information and solicit participant feedback with on-site translation services available. The County will also be conducting an online Virtual Community Workshop with translation available. Additionally, a Public Hearing is anticipated to be scheduled to provide results of the community outreach. For a schedule of ARPA-SLFRF community events and additional information, please visit <http://www.countyofmerced.com/3713/American-Rescue-Plan-Act>

# Redistricting

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Board of Supervisors how you think district boundaries should be drawn to best represent your community. To find out more about how the process works, contact [Redistricting@CountyofMerced.com](mailto:Redistricting@CountyofMerced.com).

**What do the existing supervisorial districts look like?**

You can find a map of the County’s current supervisorial districts at <https://www.countyofmerced.com/249/2010-Supervisorial-District-Information>

What criteria will our Board of Supervisors use when drawing district lines?

1. Federal Laws
  - Equal Population (based on total population of residents as determined by the most recent Federal decennial Census and adjusted by the State to reassign incarcerated persons to the last known place of residence)
  - Federal Voting Rights Act
  - No Racial Gerrymandering
2. California Criteria for Cities (to the extent practicable and in the following order of priority)
  - Geographically contiguous (areas that meet only at the points of adjoining corners

are not contiguous. Areas that are separated by water and not connected by a bridge, tunnel, or ferry service are not contiguous.

- Undivided neighborhoods and “communities of interest” (Socio-economic geographic areas that should be kept together for purposes of its effective and fair representation)
- Easily identifiable boundaries
- Compact (Do not bypass one group of people to get to a more distant group of people)
- Prohibited: “Shall not favor or discriminate against a political party.”

3. Other Traditional Redistricting Principles

- Minimize voters shifted to different election years
- Respect voters’ choices / continuity in office
- Future population growth
- Preserving the core of existing districts

How will Merced County notify the public about redistricting?

Merced County will reach out to local media to publicize the redistricting process. Also, we will make a good faith effort to notify community groups of various kinds about the redistricting process. Persons who require accommodation for any audio, visual or other disability or Spanish

or Hmong interpretation in order to review redistricting materials or to participate in a public hearing per the American Disabilities Act (ADA), may obtain assistance by requesting such accommodation in writing in advance. Merced County will notify the public about redistricting hearings, post maps online before adoption, and create a dedicated web page for all relevant information about the redistricting process. Please continue checking this website for more information and resources.

**How can I get involved?**

The Board of Supervisors will be holding hearings to receive public input on where district lines should be drawn. Check the Schedule page for the most updated dates but please note the schedule is subject to change. At the hearings and workshops, we want you to:

- Share your story
- Define your neighborhood or community of interest
- Explain why redistricting is relevant to your community
- Get the tools you need to draw a map of one district or of all 5 districts
- Share your opinions of the draft maps
- Talk to your neighbors and local organizations

Public opportunity to speak will be

heard following the reading of the public hearing. In order that interested parties have an opportunity to speak, any person addressing the Board will be limited to a maximum of three (3) minutes.

In Person: Please raise your hand when requested and you will be directed to the podium.

Voicemail: Please call 209-726-2755. All voicemails directed to the public hearing will be accepted up to and during the public hearing. The Board of Supervisors will take a brief pause during the public hearing for persons using voicemails. Voicemails will be limited to three minutes in length and will be played during the meeting, as time allows.

In an effort to assist the Clerk in identifying the public hearing agenda item relating to your public comment please identify the subject matter in your voicemail. If you wish to do so, please identify yourself in your voicemail. Phone numbers will not be made part of the record of the meeting. Email: Emails directed to the public hearing will be accepted up to and during the public hearing. Emails will not be read during the meeting, but will be delivered to the Board of Supervisors. Please send email public comments to the Clerk of the Board at [SpecialMeetingComments@](mailto:SpecialMeetingComments@)

*See 'Redistricting' Page 8*



# Redistricting

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CountyOfMerced.com. These comments will be made part of the record. In an effort to assist the Clerk in identifying the public hearing agenda item relating to your public comment please indicate in the Subject Line, the subject matter. If you wish to do so, please identify yourself in the email. Email addresses will not be made part of the record of the meeting. You can also submit public comments, including suggested draft maps, by emailing: Redistricting@CountyofMerced.com.

## What do the acronyms and categories mean on the demographic sheets?

These are standard categories included in the Census. Not all of the categories are relevant for creating district maps.

- Acronyms include:
- NH: Non-Hispanic
  - VAP: Voting age population
  - CVAP: Citizen Voting Age Population
  - CVRA: California Voting Rights Act
  - NDC: National Demographics Corporation (the firm hired by the County to create the maps)

## Do I have to submit a completed map?

No, but you can draw boundaries for just the district where you'd like your neighborhood to be or any part of the County. It is helpful if you submit written commentary with your map describing why the particular neighborhood or area should be kept together in a single district.

## Can I submit more than one map?

Yes! After you submit your map, the demographic consultants will generate

the population and other demographic details for your proposed maps. Once submitted, maps are considered public records. The County will post all legally-compliant submitted maps on the Draft Maps page.

## Where can I learn more about redistricting?

There are a number of online publications and guides to redistricting. You can start with this one from MALDEF and the NAACP, or this (long) one from the Brennan Center, this one from the League of Women Voters, or this FAQ from the California Independent Redistricting Commission.

## How will redistricting impact the 2022 Primary Election?

The current redistricting timeline and adoption of new supervisorial district maps will affect the 2022 Primary Election process for Merced County Supervisorial Candidates. The original June 7, 2022 Primary Election time frame was as follows:

Petition in Lieu Period: December 16, 2021 – February 9, 2022 (5:00pm) The Petition in Lieu period is required to begin 28 days after the new County supervisorial district maps are approved. The final map is scheduled to be approved December 7th, 2021. Therefore, the Petition in Lieu period will be pushed into January 2022. During the Petition in Lieu period, candidates may obtain forms from the Merced County Registrar of Voters and submit petitions containing signatures of registered voters to cover all or any portions of the non-refundable filing fee. Since the time period has been shortened, the number of required signatures will be reduced proportionally. The new time frame is as follows: Petition in Lieu Period: January 4, 2022 – February 9, 2022 (5:00pm)

*Editor's Note: Merced County Farm Bureau staff is available to provide assistance and answer questions regarding the redistricting process.*



MERCED COUNTY  
YF&R MEETING

# Thanksgiving Potluck

November 16, 2021  
Merced County Farm Bureau Office  
5:30 pm

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MAIN DISH TO BE PROVIDED  
PLEASE RSVP WITH YOUR  
SIDE DISH OR DESSERT TO  
[MERCEDCOYFR@MERCEDFARMBUREAU.ORG](mailto:MERCEDCOYFR@MERCEDFARMBUREAU.ORG)  
OR 209-723-3001

Guest speaker to be announced  
in coming weeks



## Merced County 4-H

# Drive-Thru Dinner



**\$45 Family Dinner**  
(serves 4)

**Includes:** Chicken, Beans, Salad, Rolls, and Dessert

**Pick up sites:** Merced 4-H Office, DES Hall, Los Banos (enter on H St.) & Hilmar High parking lot

Purchase tickets from your local 4-H member, leader, or contact the Merced 4-H office!

P: (209) 385-7418  
2145 Wardrobe Ave  
Merced

**Virtual Auction: 11/1-11/5**

[Virtual Auction Link](https://www.32auctions.com/20214HAuction)  
(<https://www.32auctions.com/20214HAuction>)

Auction Items Pick Up: 11/6, 9am-12pm @ Merced 4-H Office

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# History of UC Cooperative Extension in Modoc County now online

By: **Rebecca Gourevitch, UC Merced Library**

This summer, the California Agricultural Resources Archive (CARA) team published historic records from the UC Cooperative Extension office in Modoc County online. Modoc County is the northeastern-most area of California and shares a border with both Oregon and Nevada. The documents we recently digitized date from 1929 to 1953 and consist of annual reports created by farm advisors and home demonstration agents.

These annual reports offer an unparalleled look into the day-to-day operations of UC Cooperative Extension work. Readers will find information about the partnership between UCCE and the Farm Bureau to ensure that all county residents had access to Extension activities and assistance. Using standardized guidelines to fill out yearly statistics, county agents recorded data regarding the number of meetings and demonstrations held and the topics covered during these gatherings. For example, the 1929 report, the earliest available, documents the formation of six farm centers and initial demonstrations to improve feeding rations for livestock. Modoc County farm advisor John C. Hayes indicates that for the year 1935, there were 1,002 farm or home visits to conduct Extension work throughout the county. According to that year's statistical report, forty-two days were dedicated to the 4-H summer camp. Youth development programs organized under the helm of 4-H are mentioned throughout the statistical and narrative annual reports and reveal the ways in which UC Cooperative Extension outreached to rural youth. Crop trials and livestock demonstrations are some of the many other subjects recorded in these statistical reports.

The annual narrative reports provide information that is more descriptive. Instructions to county agents ask that “every statement should be clear-cut, concise, forceful and, where possible, reenforced [sic] with ample data from the statistical summary,” and that they “where practicable illustrate with photographs,

maps, diagrams, blueprints, or copies of charts and other forms used.” The narrative summaries written by UCCE Modoc County personnel contain many of these features. The 1935 narrative report documents the organization of the South Fork Irrigation District for the purpose of storing flood water and supplemental irrigation to ranches in the area. One page of the 1935 report displays two photographs: one portrays a beef ranch, a primary agricultural activity in the region, and the other shows 4-H member Erma Ash with her livestock participating in a baby beef project.

The 1938 narrative report details the results of demonstration planting of forage varieties as well as some of the diseases affecting rangeland livestock. In a 1944 annual narrative report, home demonstration agent Gladys E. Hedlund details various meetings organized that year on the usage of household kitchen equipment. In ten Modoc County communities, seventy-seven women attended these gatherings with the aim of improving rural home life. In one meeting, handling of electric refrigerators was discussed. Demonstrations included the “weekly defrosting and cleaning, covering food in a refrigerator, checking door seal, (and) correct placing in room”—all important reminders for families using these relatively new technologies.

The annual statistical and narrative reports offer a clear account of Cooperative Extension work in Modoc County and a taste of life in the region during the first half of the twentieth century. To see the collection on Calisphere, visit:



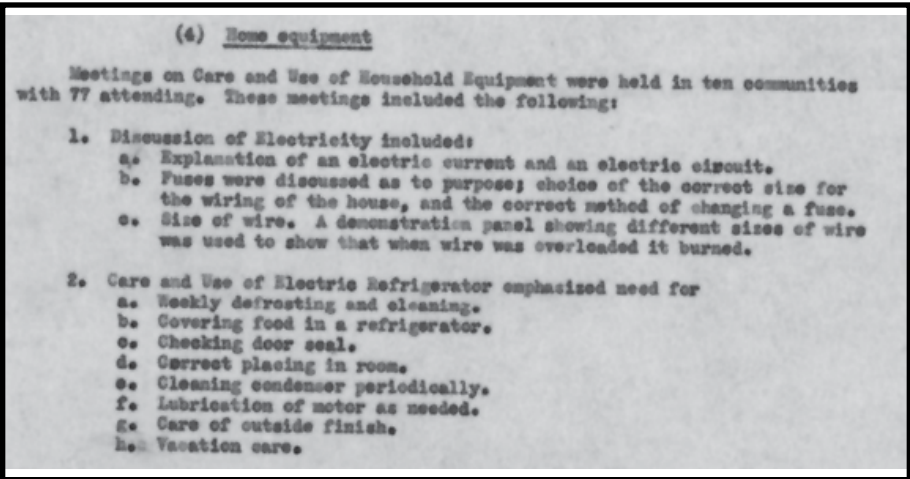
Up next for the Modoc County, UC Cooperative Extension Records: we are processing, preserving, and digitizing audiovisual material

found in the collection. Photographs, negatives, slide transparencies, reel-to-reel audio tapes and other formats

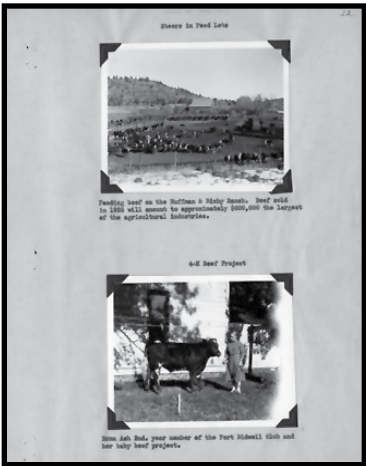
that each require special attention and care will become available online. Stay tuned for future updates.



Annual report of John C. Hays, county agent, Modoc County, 1929  
Modoc County, UC Cooperative Extension Records  
UC Merced, UC Cooperative Extension Archive



Annual narrative report of Gladys E. Hedlund, home demonstration agent, Modoc County, 1944  
Modoc County, UC Cooperative Extension Records  
UC Merced, UC Cooperative Extension Archive



Annual report of John C. Hays, county agent, Modoc County, 1935  
Modoc County, UC Cooperative Extension Records  
UC Merced, UC Cooperative Extension Archive

| Page 64  |                 |                   |                  |
|--|-----------------|-------------------|------------------|
|  | Ext. Agents (a) | County Agents (b) | County Total (c) |
| 22a. District meetings   | XXXXXX          | XXXX              | 8                |
| 22b. Community Committee meetings  | XXXXXX          | XXXX              | 8                |
| 22c. Other meetings  | XXXXXX          | XXXX              | 8                |
| 22d. County Project Committee meetings   | XXXXXX          | XXXX              | 8                |
| (NOTE: 22a will equal total of 22b, 22c, 22d, plus any "other meetings" of an extension nature participated in but not previously reported.) |                 |                   |                  |
| 22e. Total of all extension meetings attended by extension Agents (Total of 22a, 22b, 22c, 22d)  | XXXXXX          | XXXX              | 8                |
| 22f. Total of all extension meetings held (Total of 22a, 22b, 22c, 22d)  | XXXXXX          | XXXX              | 8                |
| 22g. Other meetings (not extension) attended   | XXXXXX          | XXXX              | 8                |
| 22h. Grand Total of all meetings (Total of 22f and 22g)  | XXXXXX          | XXXX              | 8                |
| 22i. County Club Council meetings (NOTE: 22i is included in 22f)   | XXXXXX          | XXXX              | 8                |
| 22j. Days devoted to 4-H summer camps (NOTE: 22j is included in 22f)   | XXXXXX          | XXXX              | 8                |
| 22k. Days devoted to 4-H club work   | XXXXXX          | XXXX              | 8                |
| County Total should equal sum of preceding two columns, minus duplications.  |                 |                   |                  |

Combined annual report of county extension workers, 1938  
Modoc County, UC Cooperative Extension Records  
UC Merced, UC Cooperative Extension Archive



# Pumpkin and Roasted Sweet Potato Gnocchi



This Pumpkin & Roasted Sweet Potato Gnocchi combines roasted sweet potatoes & pumpkin puree to

create delicious pillowy gnocchi.

**Course:** Dinner

**Cuisine:** American, Italian

**Prep Time:** 45 minutes

**Cook Time:** 45 minutes

**Servings:** 4 people

**Author:** Meg van der Kruik, California Grown

## Ingredients

### Pumpkin and Roasted Sweet Potato Gnocchi

- 2 1/2 cups roasted sweet potato puree
- 1/2 cup pumpkin puree
- 1 egg whisked
- 1 teaspoon coarse kosher salt
- 1 1/2 cups gluten-free all-purpose flour or regular all-purpose flour, plus more for working with dough

### To Serve

- 2 tablespoons garlic confit oil or plain olive oil
- batch cooked Pumpkin and Roasted Sweet Potato Gnocchi
- 1/2 tablespoon sliced sage leaves
- 1/2 tablespoon fresh rosemary chopped small
- 2 cloves garlic confit smashed
- 1/4 cup heavy cream
- freshly grated Romano or Parmesan cheese to taste

## Instructions

### To make and form the gnocchi

1. In a large mixing bowl combine the pumpkin, sweet potato, and egg. Stir to combine.
2. In another bowl whisk the salt and the flour together. Pour this mixture over the egg mixture and fold the ingredients together until completely combined. Do not stir! You do not want to overwork the dough. Just keep folding and the dough will come together, work with your hands if desired.
3. Once the dough has come together transfer to a well-floured surface and divide into 4 equal portions about the size of a softball. Cover with damp paper towel until used.
4. Working quickly, roll each ball of dough into a long thin rope about 1-inch thick. Use a damp paper towel placed over the ropes of dough to keep them from drying out while you work through the remaining pieces of dough.
5. Cut down the length of each rope, dividing it into 1-inch pieces.
6. To create the classic gnocchi shape, slide the gnocchi over the tines of a fork creating indentations, or use a Cavapatti paddle or something similar – see our blog post.

### To cook the gnocchi

1. Line a sheet pan with paper towels and set it aside. Bring a large pot of water to a boil. Working in batches, drop the gnocchi into the boiling water. When it floats it has cooked all the way through, about 2-3 minutes. Once floating, remove the gnocchi with a slotted spoon to the prepared sheet pan.
2. Working in batches if necessary, crisp the gnocchi. Heat the garlic confit infused oil in a large nonstick skillet. Once shimmering, add the gnocchi, herbs, and mashed garlic confit to the pan. Cook, stirring frequently until the gnocchi is golden brown, about 6 minutes.
3. Serve immediately in bowls with a drizzle of heavy cream and a sprinkling of cheese if desired.

# La Niña is coming. What does that mean for California's rainy season?

By: Amy Graff, SFGATE

The Climate Prediction Center, an arm of the National Weather Service, announced Thursday that La Niña conditions have developed and are expected to extend through winter, influencing weather worldwide.

In a drought-plagued California that's desperate for a champagne-popping forecast loaded with rain, this news begs the question, what does this mean for the winter?

Meteorologists agree, especially amid a changing climate, that there's no clear answer to this question and a number of scenarios could unfold, ranging from a dry to a wet winter.

"When people mention La Niña, the first word that should come to mind is variability," said Michael Anderson, the state climatologist with the California Department of Water Resources.

La Niña, the cousin of El Niño, is a natural ocean-atmospheric phenomenon marked by cooling of equatorial waters in the eastern and central Pacific Ocean. The same conditions developed last year, and the prediction center said it's not unusual to have two consecutive La Niña winters; this is called a "double-dip." This La Niña is expected to last through early spring 2022.

While meteorologists in the past associated the atmospheric conditions with a drier than normal winter in Southern and Central California, and wetter conditions in far Northern California and the Pacific Northwest, more recent trends suggest this happens only sometimes. Weak La Niña conditions were present in the 2016-2017 winter in which California saw well above average precipitation regionwide, while during a weak La Niña in 2017-2018, there was below normal rain and snowfall.

"We're seeing a lot of things that haven't happened a lot in history," Anderson said. "As we get into a warming world, these different influences are having a greater

influence than they had had. The old patterns that used to be associated with La Niña are getting modulated, they're getting tweaked by these processes that are stronger."

Anderson noted that some of the factors also impacting weather include the Madden-Julian oscillation, which sends ripples of energy out across the atmosphere and can either help storms form or dampen them out. He said the increasing temperatures in the polar regions and the warming of the Arctic Ocean are also at play, impacting the jet stream that steers weather systems and transfers heat and moisture around the globe.

As state water managers assess the state's dire water resources amid shrinking reservoirs and rivers, Anderson is watching the situation closely — and will especially be looking at any atmospheric ridges of high pressure that develop in the Pacific Ocean in a La Niña year is. The high pressure is an atmospheric response to the tropical conditions categorized as La Niña and while the circulation can happen on its own, it's a more common in La Niña winters, Anderson explained.

"What California's weather will be this winter depends on where that high pressure sets up," he added.

If the high pressure develops in the eastern Pacific, it diverts storms approaching the West Coast away from California and pushes them into the Pacific Northwest and Alaska.

In a second scenario, high pressure builds northwest of Hawaii near the International Date Line, allowing cold systems to drop down from the Gulf of Alaska into California. "Those storms tend to be snowier systems, and we like those because they build up the snowpack," said Anderson.

Finally, high pressure can also build northwest of Hawaii and then migrate toward the Aleutian Islands.

"The jet stream then cuts under the high pressure system and brings storms under the high instead of over,"



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# Local Corporate Gifts



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

As you may have heard in the news, holiday shopping may be a challenge due to the chip shortage, limited inventories, longer shipping times and labor shortages. This is the year to buy local.

The Hilmar Cheese Company Visitor Center announced an easy corporate gift option for employees, clients, and customers. Bulk order discounts are available with the purchase of any variety of gifts of 50 or more.

The gift boxes feature one-pound blocks of Hilmar cheese and local Central Valley products. The gifts range from \$24.95-\$64.95.

Gift boxes are available for easy in-store pick-up, delivery or can be

individually shipped.

“We coordinate in-store pick-up and will load the gifts into your vehicle. Gifts of 25 or more (any variety) can be delivered to one specific location on a date and time convenient for you. For example, we can deliver gifts the morning of your employee party. A flat delivery fee to one location within a 25 mile radius of Hilmar Cheese Company will be applied to your order,” said Kody Stevens, tour & communication specialist focusing on gift customer experience for the Visitor Center. “We can also ship individual boxes to anywhere in the U.S. for a specialized rate, just allow extra time this year.”

To place bulk orders or request custom box or baskets, e-mail [hccorders@hilmarcheese.com](mailto:hccorders@hilmarcheese.com) or call 209.656.1167.


The Visitor Center is open and guests can shop Monday - Friday 7 am – 6 pm. The Hilmar Cheese Company Visitor Center is located at 9001 Lander Ave. in Hilmar, CA.

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## Legislative Update

continued from page 5

owners who voluntarily allow stream restoration projects on their property. This bill aligns with the California Natural Resources Agency's Cutting the Green Tape initiative and could increase the pace and scale of habitat restoration in California. However, I have concerns related to the bill's indemnification provisions raised by the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW). The final version of the bill provides DFW some flexibility in determining if larger projects could be indemnified, but concerns remain that the Department would be required to take on an uncertain amount of civil liability that would expose the Department to a risk of high costs with uncertain timing and no identified funding source. There are also technical issues with the claims process created by this bill that need to be addressed. I encourage the author and stakeholders working with my Administration to address these concerns in a bill next session."

This week the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and Friant Water Authority announced the selection of a construction contractor to begin

work on the Friant-Kern Canal Middle Reach Capacity Correction Project. Brosamer & Wall/Tutor Perini Joint Venture, based in Walnut Creek, was awarded a \$177 million contract to perform the construction aspects of the first phase of work to repair the Friant-Kern Canal along a portion of the 33-mile stretch. This portion of the canal has lost more than half of its capacity due to subsidence. The total project is estimated to cost around \$500 million and will eventually restore water delivery to over one million acres of farmland and 250,000 residents in California's eastern San Joaquin Valley.

### Wildlife

AB 614  
authored by  
Assembly-

member Cecilia Aguiar-Curry (D – Winters) is a bill that would allow the Nesting Bird Habitat Incentive Program to authorize direct payments to landowners in order to encourage cultivation of upland cover crops, cereal grains, grasses, forbs, or pollinator plants to provide

waterfowl and other game bird nesting habitat cover encouraging the use of agricultural lands for wildlife habitat. AB 614 was signed into law by the governor earlier this week. CAFB joined a coalition with other stakeholders to support this measure through the legislative process.



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# Back In Action

**By: Gabriella Buttici; 2021-22  
Merced FFA Chapter Reporter**

I am pleased to bring good news back to our chapter! Our officer team and FFA members had a month full of connections, giving back, and growing as individuals. At the beginning of the month, our officers COLC, Chapter Officer Leadership Conference, at Merced College. Being able to come together in person reconnected chapters in our section. Fayth Bautista, our chapter historian, commented that "it was fun meeting new people from different chapters and

learning more about our positions." On Saturday, September 11th, a few of our members volunteered to serve at the Merced River Ag Boosters Dinner. We took our officer team and six other members of our chapter who were more than happy and eager to help. "It was honestly really fun. I enjoyed working hard, the connections and moments I made with my classmates, and the overall joys of helping others," says an active member, Leilani De La Cruz. A week later, our chapter successfully held our tri-tip dinner! We sold over 600 tickets and had many students and community members volunteer their time to make

it possible. Thank you to those who helped where needed and those who bought tickets to support our chapter!

Coming into the year strong, the officers held their very first in-person meeting in over a year! After introducing the officers and the business portion of the meeting, our chapter announced that it would be implementing a new movement called FFA supports the sports. We are proud of the diversity of our members and can not wait to celebrate their accomplishments as athletes as well. Following the meeting, the members tried their luck at carnival games. Some other highlights were "pie the

president," Kona Ice, and a petting zoo where Ralph, our Flemish Giant rabbit, is always a crowd favorite.

On September 30th, our advisors took twelve freshmen to attend the Greenhand Leadership Conference at the Merced County Fairgrounds. An attending member, Preslee Hunter, says, "The Greenhand Conference helped me become more comfortable with talking in front of people I don't know very well." We are so glad to give these freshmen this experience to "Breakthrough" their comfort zones and get involved. Here's to looking forward to what October brings in the Merced Chapter!

## FFA Members Earn Public Speaking Honors

**By: Shayleigh Miller, Atwater FFA  
Chapter Reporter**

Forty Atwater High School 9th grade FFA members along with the Atwater FFA Chapter Officer team recently competed in the annual Merced-Mariposa Sectional FFA Sectional Opening and Closing Ceremonies Contest at Gustine High School. Over three hundred FFA members from Buhach Colony, Delhi, Dos Palos, El Capitan, Golden Valley, Gustine, Hilmar, Le Grand, Livingston, Los Banos, Mariposa, Merced, and Pacheco High Schools competed in this public speaking event.

The Atwater FFA had nine novice officer teams and one advanced officer team. An officer team is composed of a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, reporter, and sentinel. Official FFA ceremonies build pride, identity, and tradition among FFA members and chapters. All meetings are opened and closed using ceremonies written for those purposes. The Opening and Closing Ceremonies Contest has students recite the responsibilities and duties of their respective offices. Each team was scored and evaluated by a team of judges in areas that included memorization, delivery, posture, poise, uniform, and team behavior. The contest was also an opportunity for students to meet other FFA members from the other schools in the Merced-

Mariposa Section.

The results and student participants from Atwater High School were: Advanced Officer Team (Gold) – President, Allison Garner; Vice President, Hannah Slate; Secretary, Kendall Borba; Treasurer, Caden Hultgren; Reporter, Shayleigh Miller; and Sentinel, Katrina Andujar; Atwater Team "1" (Gold) Liliana Aquino, Abigail Rogers, Jasmine Flores, Sophia Tacheira, Sebastian Torres- Guillen, Allison Brewer; Atwater Team "2" (Bronze) Carson Borba, Edward Howe, Bryce Hernandez, Noah Escamilla, Carlos Lopez, Adrian Duarte; Atwater Team "3" (Bronze) Sarah Conn, Clayton Esau, Aidah Macias, Sebastian Parra, Sebastian Torres- Guillen, Brian Salcedo; Atwater Team "4" (Silver) Liliana Aquino, Alexis Mesa, Briana Duran- Robles, Delicia Perez, Aurora Lozada, Paola Aguirre Martinez; Atwater Team "5" (Gold) Sara Conn, Karissa Hukill, Jose Valera Avila, Eden Perez, Alessandra Cardenas, Daniel Arroyo; Atwater Team "6" (Gold) Gizselle Avila, Edward Howe, Kaydence Armando, Lillian Fields, Hailey Herforth, Conner Riggle; Atwater Team "7" (Gold) Sarah Conn, Matthew Burroughs, Irving Duran Salazar, Jarrett Jimenez, Maritza Ramirez Alvarado, Sergio Ruelas; Atwater Team "8" (Gold) Jocelyne Renteria, Hailey Machado, Bianca Leal, Jasmine Ambriz, Brooke Guenther, Violet Renteria; Atwater

Team "9" (Gold) Ailani Torres, Clayton Esau, Ixchel Flores-Robles, Natalie Alvarado, Michelle Molina, Elber Salazar.

Students who were recognized with "Outstanding Officer" awards included Alessandra Cardenas, Allison Brewer, Karissa Hukill, Edward Howe, Kaydence Armando, Natalie Alvarado, Ixchel Flores-Robles, Ailani Torres, and Sara Conn.

"I've never had to compete in a public speaking competition like the Opening and Closing Ceremonies" said Atwater FFA member Kaydence Armando. "I was really nervous, but it ended up being a lot of fun and an

experience that I will never forget."

"The students were nervous and anxious prior to the contest, however they really showed their courage and enthusiasm at the event," said FFA Advisor Shelby Fishman.

"It was a tremendous opportunity and experience for the students as public speaking and communication is recognized as an important and valuable skill in one's education and future career."

For more information on the Atwater High School Agriculture Department and Atwater FFA, please log on the website [www.AtwaterFFA.org](http://www.AtwaterFFA.org).



**Atwater FFA Opening and Closing: Atwater High School students gathered at Gustine High School to participate in the Opening and Closing Ceremonies Competition.**



La Niña

continued from page 11

Anderson explained. "These storms are warmer as their origins are closer

to the tropics. If those systems tap into atmospheric rivers, it tends to be very wet with a chance of flooding for California."  
In this situation, California could see above-normal precipitation, but Anderson said he believes this

scenarios is less likely.  
What scenario does he think is more likely?  
"Right now all the outlooks are suggesting we'll end up on the dry side of average because the models tend to put the high-pressure somewhere

between the Date Line and North America, which aren't good outcomes for California precipitation."  
That said, Anderson is hoping that rain in the forecast next week in California will bring a promising start to the season.

New round of SWEEP irrigation and Healthy Soils grants

By: **Caddie Bergren, Cooperative Extension**

After a one-year hiatus, CDFA has finally announced that the State Water Enhancement and Efficiency Program (SWEEP) and the Healthy Soils Program will be opening for new applications this fall and winter. Each program received a record \$50 million in funding this year, and they are open for all California farmers and ranchers to apply.  
The SWEEP program provides up to \$200,000 in grant funds to improve irrigation efficiency and on-farm

energy use. Common projects include well pump retrofits or replacements, variable frequency drives, solar panels, conversion to drip or microsprinklers, and weather stations or soil moisture monitors. To complete the application, you will need a recent pump efficiency test, gather your last 12 months of energy records, and quotes from vendors.  
The Healthy Soils Program is a three-year grant that provides up to \$100,000 to improve soil health and sequester carbon. There are about 25 eligible practices, most of which must be implemented for three years in a row.

Practices include:

- Cropland practices such as cover crops, mulching, nutrient management, hedgerows, no- or reduced-till
- Compost application to either annual crops, vineyards, orchards or rangeland. Compost can be purchased or produced on-farm.
- Whole-orchard recycling to chip and re-incorporate old orchard trees instead of burning
- Rangeland plantings and prescribed

grazing to increase health and production of rangelands  
This year, both program applications will be available on a first come, first served basis. If you are interested in these grants, now is the time to start working on your application. Free technical assistance is available to apply: contact Caddie Bergren at [cmbergren@ucanr.edu](mailto:cmbergren@ucanr.edu) or by calling the Cooperative Extension office at (209) 385-7403.

Gustine FFA Takes Part in The Annual Greenhand Conference

By: **Garret Gomes, Gustine FFA Chapter Reporter**

Each year the Gustine FFA takes part in the annual Greenhand Conference hosted by California State FFA. This conference is designed to allow freshmen in our area to meet new people, learn more about FFA, and play games while learning valuable leadership skills. This is the first FFA event that freshmen can participate in, and helps to set the stage for their involvement over the next 4 years.  
This year the Gustine FFA Chapter had 18 students attend the conference,

which was hosted at the Merced Fairgrounds.  
The Greenhand Conference is always something FFA students will remember, as this big step in their FFA career leads to their first degree in this organization.  
Gustine FFA freshman, Gisselle Caballero, stated "My favorite part was learning leadership skills to take back to GHS. Meeting new people and learning chants was also very fun! The people were energetic, which made the event fun and not boring."  
The Gustine FFA Chapter would like to thank everyone who helped make this event possible.

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# Q&A: How California's new ban on gas-powered leaf blowers, lawn mowers and other outdoor equipment affects you

By: Paul Rogers, The Mercury News

**B**uying a new gasoline-powered leaf blower, lawn mower, string trimmer, chain saw or other outdoor gardening tool in California that runs on fossil fuels may soon be a thing of the past.

Gov. Gavin Newsom last week signed a first-in-the-nation law to require new small-engine equipment used in landscaping to emit zero pollution — meaning battery-operated or plug-in models only — by as early as Jan. 1, 2024.

The new law is getting a lot of attention. Here are the facts:

**Q:** Don't some cities already ban gas-powered leaf blowers? They can be noisy.

**A:** Yes. Belvedere, Berkeley, Beverly Hills, Carmel, Claremont, Indian Wells, Los Altos, Los Gatos, Malibu, Mill Valley, Mountain View, Newport Beach, Oakland, Ojai, Palo Alto, Piedmont, Santa Barbara, Solana Beach, Sunnyvale, Tiburon and West Hollywood are among the cities in California that have banned or restricted noise levels of gasoline-powered leaf blowers.

**Q:** So what's this new law?

**A:** Newsom signed Assembly Bill 1346, written by Assemblyman Marc Berman, D-Palo Alto. It requires the California Air Resources Board, an agency in Sacramento that regulates air pollution, to adopt statewide rules by July 1, 2022 that "prohibit engine exhaust and evaporative emissions" from "new small off-road engines" in a manner that is "cost-effective and technologically feasible."

**Q:** What kinds of tools will that include?

**A:** The state air board defines "small off-road engines" as combustion engines with less than 25 gross horsepower, including those found in lawn mowers, string trimmers, chain saws, golf carts, generators and pumps.

**Q:** Does that mean I have to get rid of my lawn mower or weed whacker?

**A:** No. The law only applies to sales of new equipment. But you won't be able to buy new gasoline-powered garden tools in California after it takes

effect.

**Q:** When does it take effect?

**A:** On Jan. 1, 2024, or as soon as the air board "determines is feasible, whichever is later." In other words, the earliest the rules would take effect is about 26 months from now.

**Q:** This sounds kind of like nanny state stuff. Do these things really pollute that much?

**A:** According to scientists at the air board, yes. The state began regulating emissions from small off-road engines in 1990. But the rules haven't been updated in years, even as standards for cars, oil refineries and other sources of smog have tightened.

Using the best-selling gasoline-powered leaf blower for 1 hour now emits the same amount of air pollution (nitrogen oxides and reactive organic gases, which form smog) as driving a 2017 Toyota Camry 1,100 miles, according to the air board. That's like driving from the Bay Area to Denver. Using a gasoline lawn mower for 1 hour emits the same amount of air pollution as driving a car 300 miles, or about as far as a road trip from Los Angeles to Las Vegas.

**Q:** But are there really that many?

**A:** Yes. There are 16.7 million small engines in California, compared with 13.7 million passenger cars.

In fact, this year, total emissions from small engines have now surpassed the total emissions from all the passenger cars in California, at about 150 tons per day for each source, the air board reports.

**Q:** What about landscaping companies?

**A:** This law also applies to them. And many aren't happy. The National Association of Lawn Professionals opposed the bill, saying that although there are plenty of electric garden tools for sale to homeowners in places like Home Depot, Lowe's and other stores, there aren't nearly as many heavy-duty commercial models available. They note that batteries need regular recharging, and the equipment often costs more than gas-powered alternatives.

"We support a responsible transition to this equipment when the equipment is ready," said Andrew

Bray, vice president of the association. "Currently, the equipment has performance issues, cost issues and infrastructure issues."

The organization has announced it will continue to lobby the Air Resources Board to push for more flexibility as it writes the rules.

Lawmakers included \$30 million in the state budget this year to provide financial incentives to commercial landscaping companies, but the industry association says that's not enough.

**Q:** Who supported the law?

**A:** The American Lung Association, Sierra Club, Audubon California, Bay Area Air Quality Management District, Natural Resources Defense Council, Physicians for Social Responsibility and the cities of Albany, Glendale,

Mountain View, Palo Alto, San Jose and South Pasadena, among others. Supporters say the rules also will reduce the risk of asthma and other health problems in landscape workers.

**Q:** Did it pass unanimously?

**A:** No, Republicans, and some Democrats were opposed. It passed by a vote of 21-9 in the state Senate and 47-22 in the state Assembly.

The air board already had begun a process to write new rules, and the law now sets a deadline. Also Newsom signed an executive order last year calling for these engines to be phased out. It was the same landmark order that prohibited the sale of gasoline-burning cars in California after 2035 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

*See 'Gas-powered' Page 18*



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## Gas-powered continued from page 17

Q: What about generators? Are sales of new gas-powered generators really going to be banned?

A: They are included in the bill, but the air board has said it likely won't pass a prohibition on new sales until 2028 because alternatives, like battery models that charge from solar panels, or fuel cell generators, are not as far along yet as electric garden tools.

Q: Can I buy gasoline-powered equipment from other states after the new rules kick in?

A: Yes. But California often passes pollution laws first, and then other states, and eventually the federal government, copy those rules. And with

climate change worsening droughts, wildfires and other problems, the trend in the U.S., Europe and other areas is toward electrifying everything, and generating more power from solar, wind and other renewable energy sources.

# Calif., Federal water officials ask judge to OK water restrictions amid pressure to rollback Trump plan

By: Alex Tavlian, The San Joaquin Valley Sun

Amid the fallout of California's worst water year in its history, the state will find its two primary water arteries under the management of a temporary, plan tendered to a Federal judge on Thursday, throwing out 2019 environmental rules that boosted water supplies to the Central Valley and Southern California.

The plan, which comes amid a cacophony of lawsuits waged both by the Newsom administration and environmental interest groups, was prepared by representatives of the California Department of Water Resources, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, National Marine Fisheries Service, and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

From a legal standpoint, the so-called "interim operations plan" attempts to halt the pending suits to allow the Biden administration to begin — and hopefully complete — a new set of environmental rules, known as

biological opinions, governing water supplies via the Central Valley Project.

The Trump administration tendered a set of biological opinions in 2019 governing the Central Valley Project, which are the subject of the suits and the sudden, Biden-led bureaucratic rewriting effort.

The newly-drafted plan would be come operational and supersede the 2019 biological opinions for upon a court order.

If ordered, the interim plan for water deliveries through the Federally-operated water system would run through Sept. 30, 2022, the conclusion of the water calendar year.

Among a litany of state and Federal initiatives to be undertaken during the 2022 water year, the interim plan prioritizes water deliveries for municipal and industrial water users on the basis of meeting minimum health and safety requirements.

These water supplies ensure municipalities have sufficient water for residents. However, the validity of health and safety water calculations has come into question recently.

After health-and-safety supplies,

Central Valley Project supplies from Shasta Dam are prioritized next for Winter Run Chinook Salmon, then senior water contractors and wildland refuge water users (as prescribed in the Central Valley Project Improvement Act), and then any other uses.

Valley-based opponents to the interim plan say that that it revives failed policies from the Federal government's 2008-2009 biological opinions, including calendar-based rules for pumping water into the San Joaquin Valley rather than continuing flexible, real-time pumping operations under the 2019 opinions.

Opponents also argue that the plan was not sufficiently vetted to be successful at meeting key short-term environmental goals, such as preserving fish species within the Delta or on its feeder rivers.

They add that Federal agencies failed to undergo environmental review as required by the National Environmental Policy Act, a key requirement for virtually all environmental regulatory changes.

Meanwhile, litigating environmental groups argue that the plan fails to go

far enough.

In its response to the interim operations plan in a court filing, the Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermans Association argued that the plan failed to reinstitute regulations on the amount of water exports from the Delta to the Valley and Southern California.

In a letter on Friday to state and Federal water officials, a trio of California Democratic lawmakers decried the introduction of the plan to the court.

"Amid ongoing extreme drought conditions facing California and across the West, a court-ordered water management plan for a single water year, which has not been subject to adequate scientific or public review, is the worst possible outcome," the letter from Reps. Jim Costa (D-Fresno), Josh Harder (D-Turlock), and John Garamendi (D-Walnut Grove) reads.

"The drought has had equally devastating impacts on protected fisheries in the Central Valley, which the interim water operations plan would not fix but, instead, undercut any continued voluntary habitat restoration efforts for protected species."

# Coming soon, a surprise billing law may have unintended effects on health care

By: Julie Appleby, Valley Public Radio

Patients are months away from not having to worry about most surprise medical bills — those extra costs that can amount to hundreds or thousands of dollars when people are unknowingly treated by an out-of-network doctor or hospital.

The No Surprises Act — which

takes effect Jan. 1 — generally forbids insurers from dropping such bills on patients and, instead, requires health care providers and insurers to work out a deal between themselves.

Some observers have speculated that the law will have the unintended consequence of shifting costs and leading to higher insurance premiums.

Many policy experts told KHN that,

in fact, the opposite may happen: It may slightly slow premium growth.

The reason, said Katie Keith, a research faculty member at the Center on Health Insurance Reforms at Georgetown University, is that a new rule released Sept. 30 by the Biden administration appears to "put a thumb on the scale" to discourage settlements at amounts higher than most insurers

generally pay for in-network care.

That rule, which provides more details on the way such out of network disputes will be settled under the No Surprises Act, drew immediate opposition from hospital and physician groups. The American Medical Association called it "an undeserved

See 'Health Care' Page 19



## Health Care

continued from page 18

gift to the insurance industry," while the American College of Radiology said it "does not reflect real-world payment rates" and warned that relying on it so heavily "will cause large imaging cuts and reduce patient access to care."

Such tough talk echoes comments made while Congress was hammering out the law.

Here's how the law will work and how it might affect insurance premiums and the health care industry.

**Sending unsettled bills to arbitration**

The No Surprises Act takes aim at a common practice: large, unexpected "balance bills" being sent to insured patients for services such as emergency treatment at out-of-network hospitals or via air ambulance companies. Some patients get bills even after using in-network facilities because they receive care from a doctor there who has not signed on with an insurer's network.

Patients were caught in the middle and liable for the difference in what their insurer paid toward the bill and the often-exorbitant charges they received from the provider.

Once the law takes effect next year, patients will pay only what they would have if their care had been performed in network, leaving any balance to be settled between insurers and the out-of-network medical providers. The law also gives insurers and providers 30 days to sort out discrepancies.

After that, unsettled bills can enter "baseball-style" arbitration in which both sides put forth their best offer and an arbitrator picks one, with the loser paying the arbitration cost, which the rule sets for next year as \$200 to \$500.

Uninsured patients who are billed more than \$400 over an upfront estimate of the cost of their care may also bring cases to arbitration for a \$25 administrative fee.

Businesses, like government services companies or those that review coverage disputes, can start applying now for certification as arbitrators. The new rule estimates that about 50 will be selected by the three agencies overseeing the program (the departments of Health and Human Services, Labor and Treasury) after showing "expertise in arbitration, health care claims experience, managed care, billing and coding, and health care law."

The rule also spells out that either

party can object to a chosen arbitrator, and the one that is selected cannot be associated with an insurer or medical provider.

**Driving prices to the middle**

But here's how all this could end up affecting insurance premiums. In the process of arbitration, a decision must be made about which price to pick.

The new rule specifies that the arbitrator generally should pick the amount closest to the median in-network rate negotiated by insurers for that type of care. Other factors, such as the experience of the provider, the type of hospital or the complexity of the treatment, can be considered in some circumstances, but not given equal weight.

By contrast, some of the more than a dozen state laws taking aim at surprise bills allow arbitrators to consider higher rates, such as billed charges set by hospitals or doctors, rather than negotiated rates, which potentially drive up spending.

One recent study, for example, found that in New Jersey — which has different arbitration rules than what is being set up for the federal program — cases were settled at a median of 5.7 times higher than in-network rates for the same services.

Unlike New Jersey, the federal government is specifically barring consideration of the highest amounts — the billed charges — and the lowest payment amounts, including those from Medicaid and Medicare programs.

"This seems likely to reduce premiums in addition to protecting patients from surprise bills," said Loren Adler, associate director of the University of Southern California-Brookings Schaeffer Initiative for Health Policy, who co-authored the New Jersey study.

Still, the law's impact on premiums is open to debate. Keith doubts they will change either way, although Adler thinks the slowdown in premium growth would be small.

Even the rule says "there is uncertainty around how premiums will be ultimately affected" with much depending on how often disputed bills go to arbitration.

It cited a Congressional Budget Office estimate that provisions in the No Surprises Act could reduce premium growth by 0.5% to 1% in most years, but also noted an estimate from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services that premiums could slightly increase. Neither study isolated the effect of the arbitration guidelines from the rest of the statute.

Adler noted that relying heavily on the median in-network price likely means lower payments compared with other measures but, still, "by definition a median is what half of what doctors get paid, so this could, in theory, raise that for the other half."

**Pushing providers to join insurance networks**

What's likely, health policy experts said, is that the new law will prompt more providers to join insurer networks.

Some physicians — most often, emergency room doctors, anesthesiologists and radiologists — have avoided signing contracts with insurers. Instead, they typically have set charges above the level of insurers' reimbursement and have sent surprise bills to patients for the difference.

The rule undercuts the incentive to use this business model.

It makes it "pretty clear" that hospitals, physicians, air ambulances and other medical professionals "should not count on staying out of network and then trying to use the federal process to capture higher reimbursement," said Keith.

Some medical societies and

advocacy groups predicted the law could have the opposite effect.

Insurers will use the disputes to "drive down payment to the point that it is no longer feasible for many providers to take that, or any insurance," warned Katie Keysor, senior director of economic policy for the American College of Radiology, in an emailed statement.

Adler said that argument doesn't fly when looking across the experience of states with similar laws. (Those state rules don't apply to many types of job-based health insurance, but the federal rule will.)

"Every single surprise billing debate has done the opposite and pushed more people into the network," he said.

Whether a group signs a contract with an insurer may matter less going forward, he said.

Once the law takes effect, "it's completely irrelevant whether an emergency room doctor is in network or not," he said. "For all intents and purposes, that doctor is in network. The patient will pay the in-network cost sharing and there is a price the provider has to accept, and the insurer has to pay."

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# A Silver Lining



from the  
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Danette Toso

I don't need to tell you how painfully difficult it's become to be a farmer or rancher in California. It seems at every turn we are controlled, taxed, ruled, and regulated to the brink of extinction. It's as if we're being forced to swim upstream, under water against a roaring rampant river current.

With this extreme drought we've been living through (which seem

likes forever,) the chance of wildfires in Mariposa County is at a historical high. There have been many discussions, brainstorming sessions and some great ideas coming from farmers and ranchers from all over the state regarding fire issues. California has finally produced not one, but two big wins in the fight against wildfires.

Governor Gavin Newsom recently signed into law, two California Cattlemen's Association sponsored bills. Governor Newsom signed Senate Bills 332 (Dodd), which incentivizes the use of prescribed burns by diminishing prescribed fire burn bosses' land owners' exposure to liability. The Governor also signed Assembly Bill 1103 (Dahle), which creates a statewide structure for county "Livestock Pass" programs to allow livestock producers access to their ranches during wildfires and other emergencies. Both bills passed through both houses of the Legislature unanimously.

According to the California Cattlemen's Association, under existing law, when CAL FIRE responds to a prescribed fire that becomes uncontrolled or escapes containment lines (which is statistically rare), the agency can seek 'cost recovery' from the prescribed burner for the agency's

fire-suppression costs. SB 332 will immunize prescribed fire practitioners against this cost recovery unless the practitioner acts in a grossly negligent manner. The second bill, AB 1103 facilitates county adoption of "Livestock Pass" programs which grant livestock producers ranch access during wildfires and other emergencies to safely care for and evacuate livestock. AB 1103 requires CAL FIRE to establish a statewide training program for Livestock Pass holders, codifies a requirement that law enforcement and emergency responders grant ranch access to Livestock Pass holders and

establishes certain minimum standards for administration of the programs, facilitating and streamlining adoption of county Livestock Pass programs throughout the state.

It's about time we were thrown a bone, support from Sacramento has been a long time coming. Let's continue this momentum by encouraging 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.




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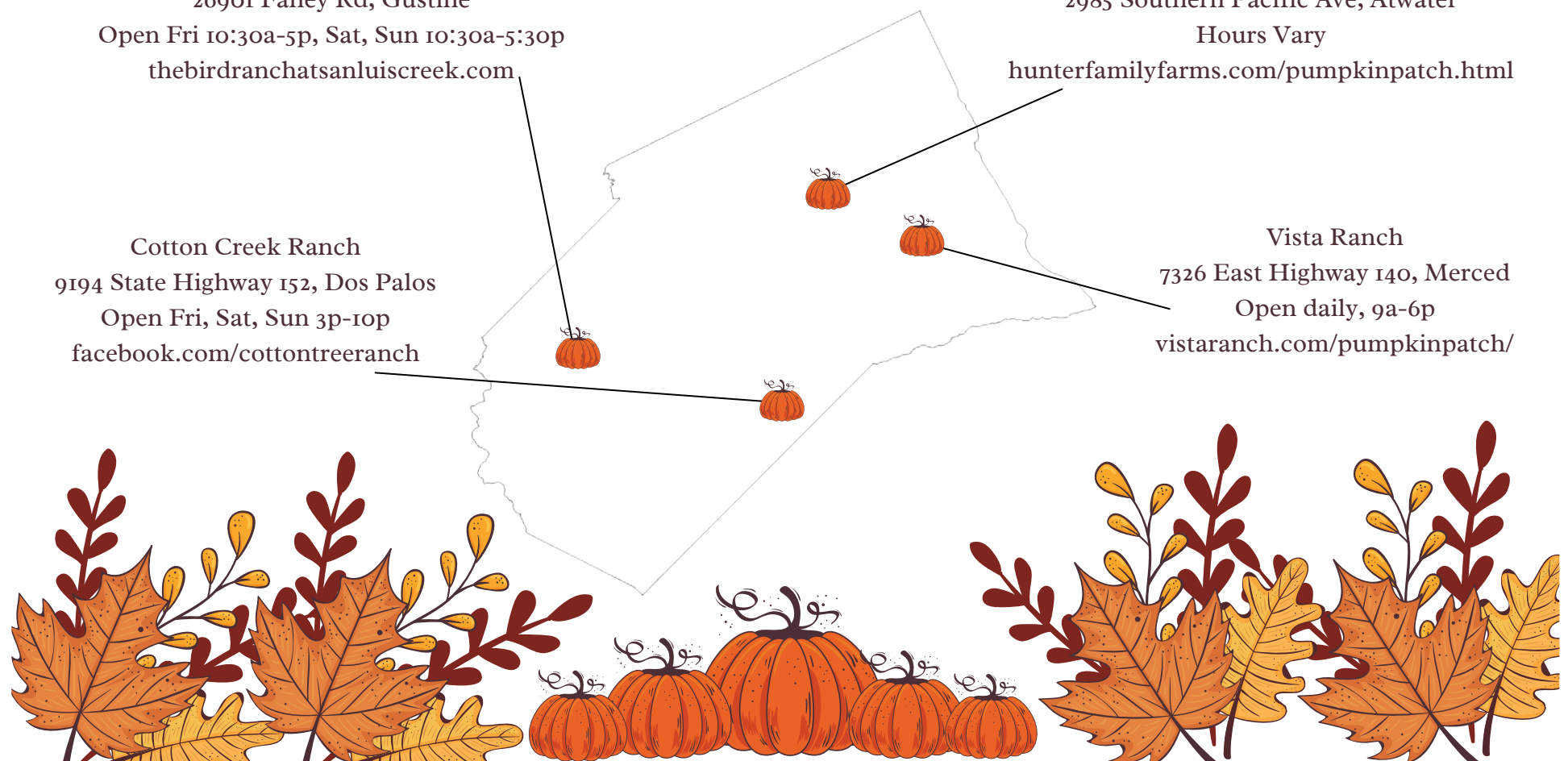
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