

MERCED COUNTY FARM NEWS

WE FARM. YOU EAT.

Planned changes in ag visa program show promise

Courtesy of CFBF

As farmers in California and elsewhere around the country try to cope with chronic employee shortages, the president of the California Farm Bureau Federation said administrative changes to the current H-2A agricultural visa program could be one element of a solution, while Congress continues to work on broader legislation.

The U.S. Department of Labor announced plans to modernize and improve the existing H-2A agricultural visa program, which allows people from certain countries to enter the United States temporarily for on-farm jobs.

“We’re encouraged by the administration’s efforts to improve the H-2A system,” CFBF President Jamie Johansson said. “We continue

to analyze the full proposal, but our initial reading shows that it would streamline certain aspects of the program and expand it to include additional forms of agriculture, such as reforestation work.”

More California farmers have begun using the H-2A program, he said, but added that it has generally not been flexible enough for many of the state’s crops and commodities.

“When we asked Farm Bureau members earlier this year to tell us how they are addressing employee shortages, only 6% of the farmers who responded to our survey said they were using H-2A,” Johansson said. “Changes proposed by the administration may increase that proportion, but farmers also need wider improvement to immigration

laws that can only be addressed through congressional action.”

Farm Bureau and other organizations continue working with members of Congress on solutions that would provide legal status to current farm employees in the U.S. while further enhancing the agricultural visa program to include a portability mechanism.

“Ultimately, immigration laws need to accommodate employees and their immediate family members who are in the country now, plus allow future employees to enter the U.S. and move from farm to farm for employment,” Johansson said. “We will continue to pursue that goal with Congress and the administration. H-2A reform is only one piece of the puzzle.”

Legislative Update

Courtesy of CFBF

July 12, 2019

Legislative Deadline

The Legislature has approached yet another deadline; all bills introduced this year must have passed their assigned policy committees and be moved on to Appropriations Committee or the Floor of the Senate or Assembly by today. Those bills that successfully passed will continue in the legislative process. Those bills that failed passage by this deadline are inactive until the 2020 legislative year begins in February.

The Senate and Assembly are now officially on Summer Recess and will return to their districts. The legislative session will reconvene on August 12th with Appropriations committee hearings and Senate and Assembly Floor Sessions.

Air Quality

SB 210, (Leyva) would create an inspection and maintenance program for heavy-duty diesel vehicles. This bill would essentially create a smog-check program for heavy-duty vehicles and prevent their use if a vehicles malfunction indicator light is illuminated. The Air Resources Board (ARB) is in the process of developing a similar program as part of the State Implementation Plan for San Joaquin Valley PM 2.5. ARB is expected to adopt a heavy duty “smog-check” program regardless of the outcome of SB 210. Farm Bureau is currently opposing SB 210 unless amendments are taken to reduce the impacts the proposed program would have on trucks

ATTENTION BIRD OWNERS

H7N3 low pathogenicity avian influenza detected in Merced County

The following is a letter from the State Veterinarian

Dear Bird Owner:

We are investigating an incidence of H7N3 low pathogenicity avian influenza (LPAI) that was detected in a non-commercial duck layer operation in Merced County, California.

To date, the avian influenza strains detected within the United States, including the H7N3 strain, have not been found to be transmissible to humans. Properly cooked poultry and eggs are safe to eat.

Avian Influenza, commonly

called bird flu, is a disease found in a wide variety of domesticated and wild birds. Cases are classified as either low pathogenicity or high pathogenicity based on the severity of the illness they cause in poultry. However, influenza viruses can genetically change to more (or less) severe types. Once introduced into an area, infection can spread through bird-to-bird contact or through contact with contaminated

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Address



President's Corner

Gino Pedretti III
President

Believe it or not July is already here. So far this summer we have been blessed with good weather. It's nice to not have too many days over 100 degrees. I hope everyone had a good 4th of July celebrating the birthday of our county with family and friends! I know my kids like to watch the fireworks going off and had fun waving their sparklers in the air.

As this issue is hitting your mailbox, we at MCFB have just finished up our 2nd Annual Summer BBQ. I wanted to thank all of our sponsors for the event and the over 100 people who attended. The summer BBQ has become a great fundraiser for us and the board would like to continue to grow this event in future years. Without support from our membership we would not be able to provide the services we do to our members. Again, thank you everyone for supporting MCFB.

There were a few major events which happened during the last month which MCFB had the pleasure of attending. Each one of these events included meeting with a Federal or State official with regards to the issues facing agriculture. The first event was our South Valley Caucus meeting. The SVC is made up of

six county Farm Bureaus working together to have a stronger voice for the valley within CFBF. The Caucus consists of Merced, Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and Kern counties. During our last meeting we had the opportunity to discuss the issues facing the SVC with Bill Lyons, the Agriculture Liaison to Governor Gavin Newsom. The Ag Liaison is a new position which Governor Newsom made to help guide his decisions on the issues facing agriculture. Bill is from his family farm in Modesto. One of the main issues we talked about was water. With the Bay-Delta SED plan Bill has been working hard on trying to come up with voluntary settlement agreements instead of having the state water board just take our water. We also talked about some of the new laws in the works at the state level and what we can do to make them more Ag friendly. One of the main takeaways I had from our conversation is how Ag needs to do a better job of having one voice at the state capital. Bill said there is too many times when too many people in Ag are not on the same page when we are talking to elected officials.

The next event MCFB attended was CFBF AG day at the state capital. The

SEE PRESIDENT ON PAGE 10



Director's Desk

Breanne Ramos
Executive Director

Being a membership-based organization, members want to know where their dollars are spent. We have multiple membership levels but for the sake of this column, I'm going to focus on an Agricultural Membership. Dues are \$275 a year, but we retain only \$170 of that. The remaining \$105 goes to the California Farm Bureau Federation for their continuous work done on your behalf. In other words, 62% of every membership remains in county for the work that we do.

What do we do with those funds? The typical, generalized answer is we attend a lot of meetings, host various workshops/trainings, educate the general public, review legislation/regulations and establish formal comments on those, meet with electeds to provide a voice for agriculture, etc. Below I've focused on some of the finer details and meetings that we have been involved in from January 2019 until now.

Water meetings tend to take the bulk of my time. To date, I have attended over 40

meetings with their focus to talk water in one way or another. Approximately half of those meetings have been tailored to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), but others include the local water district meetings (Central California Irrigation District, San Luis Canal Company and Merced Irrigation District), the East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition and the San Joaquin River Lower Levee District. It is interesting how SGMA has altered everyone in the water world, yet it is some of the most recent legislation to date. Thankfully, I took a large interest in water early on and determined it would be a cornerstone in the issues that I view during our day-to-day activities.

We work heavily with our neighboring farm bureaus and a few years ago joined the South Valley Caucus. This is made up of Madera, Fresno, Tulare, Kings, Kern and Merced counties. We meet not only as managers, but also as officer teams. Thus far, we have come together over 10 times

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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.

Editor's Note

Emily Casner, Project Specialist



teach them about agriculture and how it impacts their lives. Although this is one of the largest and at times tedious events I organize, it is always rewarding at the end of the day to see the excitement on the students faces as they load the bus. This event is not possible without our amazing volunteers that serve as presenters, guide students around the event, and run the buildings and check-ins. If you are interested in participating in FARM2U Day please let us know, we would greatly appreciate your help.

Speaking of Ag in the Classroom programs, the California Ag in the Classroom organization's Literacy for Life Grant will become available in August. This grant supports the integration of agriculture into regular California K-12 classroom instruction. If you would like more information on the grant please visit learnaboutag.org or give our office a call.

Oh my, how is it already July it seems like I was just getting things in order for the MCFB Annual Meeting. As you probably read in Breanne and Gino's columns we have been busy quite busy here in the office with various events & trainings.

I am excited to begin organizing the MCFB annual FARM2U Day coming up on Thursday, October 10. This event brings together over 2,000 local third grade students to

Calendar of Events

August

21: The California High-Speed Rail Authority Open House
Los Banos Community Center
645 7th Street
Los Banos, CA 93635

October

10: FARM2U DAY

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Climate-Smart Agriculture

Caddie Bergren, *Climate-Smart Specialist*

What is climate-smart agriculture, and why should we care about it?

Climate-smart agriculture focuses on reducing the risks that agricultural production faces due to a changing climate, underscores agriculture's role in helping solve climate change, and focuses on the importance of increasing production and incomes.

California's agriculture industry is at extreme risk to the impacts of climate change. Warming temperatures throughout the state are resulting in a decrease in chill hours, increased water demand by crops, and increase in various pests. Projections for the next 30

years show changing precipitation patterns, an increase in extreme weather events like drought and heat waves, and earlier snowmelt which can mean floods and lower year-round water availability. This all sounds very doom and gloom, but there are ways we can adapt our agriculture systems to be resilient to many of these changes. By implementing certain practices, especially focusing on increasing soil health, farmers and ranchers can not only protect their yields and production, but also help sequester carbon and be part of the solution to slowing down climate change.

So how do we do that?

The California Department of Food and Agriculture currently administers three grant programs to help farmers and ranchers adopt some of these climate-smart practices:

- The State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEEP) encourages farmers to upgrade their irrigation systems to decrease both water consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. You can apply for a grant up to \$100,000, and examples of eligible practices include installing drip systems, pump replacement from diesel to electric, variable frequency drives, and soil moisture sensors.

- The Healthy Soils Program (HSP) encompasses a wide variety of practices to improve the health of your soils, which makes them more resilient to climate change effects. Grants can be a max of \$75,000 for a three-year project, and include practices such as compost application, cover cropping, mulching, hedgerows, and rangeland management.

- The Alternative Manure Management Program (AMMP) is open to all livestock operations to help decrease methane emissions. These grants go up to \$750,000 for

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Governor Newsom Recognizes Contribution of Dairy Farm Families to California Communities and Economy with Proclamation of June as "Real California Milk Month"

Courtesy of The California Milk Advisory Board

TRACY, Calif., June 20, 2019 – In celebration of June Dairy Month and the contribution of the state's more than 1,200 family dairy farms to the communities and economy of California, Governor Gavin Newsom has proclaimed June as "Real California Milk Month". This regional distinction is in addition to the annual National Dairy Month celebration that recognizes the range of dairy products and the farmers who produce the milk that helps

feed the nation and, increasingly, the world.

In the proclamation, Governor Newsom states, "The leadership of our dairy farmers has made the state one of the world's great dairy-producing regions. California is number one in fluid milk production at nearly 40 billion pounds, accounting for a fifth of the nation's milk supply and approximately 32 percent of the nation's dairy exports."

He added, "California would not be the same without our dairy farms. I urge Californians to show their support for dairy products crafted in our Golden State."

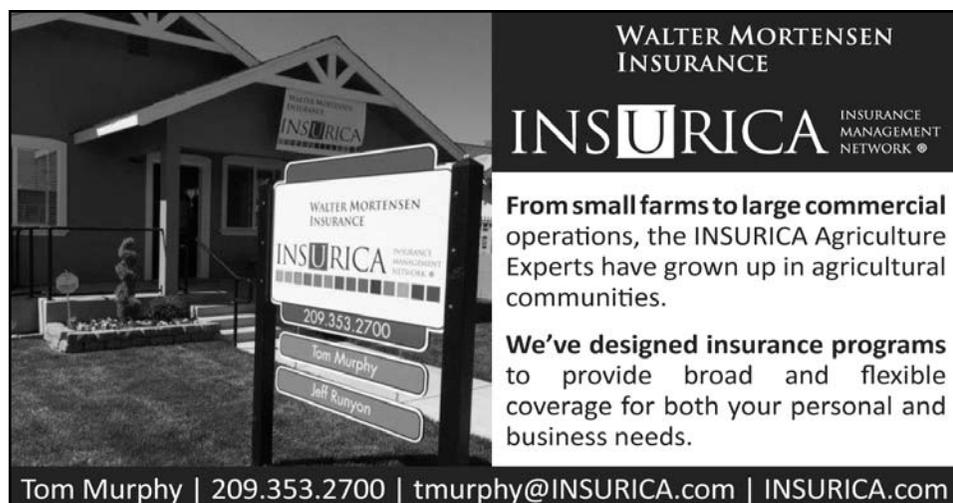
Ninety-nine percent of California dairy farms are family-owned. California produces more fluid milk, butter, ice cream, nonfat dry milk and whey protein concentrate than any other state. The state is the second-largest producer of cheese and yogurt. Dairy products made with California milk can be identified by the Real California Milk seal, which certifies that the products are made exclusively with milk produced on California dairy farms.

"Dairy families are an essential part of local California communities, producing a sustainable, healthy product that can't be duplicated," said John Talbot, CEO of the California Milk Advisory Board (CMAB). "As the state's leading

agricultural commodity, the industry adds approximately \$20 billion to the local economy each year and is responsible for 32 percent of U.S. dairy exports and 180,000 jobs that are dependent upon dairy production and processing."

Dairy producers are dedicated to creating access to healthy foods. It is part of the legacy of the dairy industry, which provides education about healthy eating and the five food groups to teachers, children and families through Dairy Council of California and support for initiatives like the Great American Milk Drive, a partnership with Feeding America to provide families in need access to fresh fluid milk, one of the most requested but least donated food bank items.

Information about dairy farm families and the foods behind the Real California Milk seal is available at RealCaliforniaMilk.com.



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Fair Season

Danette Toso, *Executive Director, Mariposa County Farm Bureau*



many months, and their efforts are just about to pay off. Agricultural youth programs are about much more than winning ribbons and earning money. With the help of involved parents, and adult volunteers, these kids learn from hands on experiences and are taught invaluable life lessons.

Education and information are the key to sparking agriculture interest in children even before elementary school. Agriculture in the Classroom is

an amazing program that does just that. The California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to educating youth throughout California about the impor-

With our student's elation at the end of the school year, comes the time that all 4-H and FFA members await with excited anticipation, county fair season! These young agricultural enthusiasts have been hard at work with their projects for

tance of agriculture in their daily lives. Their mission is to increase awareness and understanding of agriculture among California's educators and students. Their vision is an appreciation of agriculture by all.

The variety of projects in 4-H and FFA is very widespread to say the least. From the barn to the garden, to the home, there is a project that any child can immerse themselves in and excel. Children learn to keep record books, prepare budgets, monitor time spent with their projects, build relationships, learn responsibility, and in the end, compete at their local fairs.

The Mariposa County Fair has been providing family fun to the people of Mariposa and other surrounding communities since 1939. The fair's agricultural events, displays, demonstrations, entertain-

ment, carnival, midway and more provide old-fashioned family fun. Every year people flock to the fair on Labor Day weekend to enjoy the beautiful, laid-back, mountain atmosphere and support the 4-H & FFA members. This year the fair will run from August 30th through September 2nd. Please join us in supporting our up and coming farmers and ranchers at this year's fair.

Please consider contributing to one of our youth programs, either as a volunteer or a financial supporter. 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 and the Mariposa community stronger than ever, one member at a time.

Hilmar FFA Tractor Pull

Courtesy of Hilmar FFA

19th Annual Hilmar Tractor Pull
Sponsored by:
Hilmar Agriculture Department & Hilmar FFA
Saturday, July 27, 2019

3 Sleds!!!



6:30 PM
HHS Football Stadium

More Than 20 Modifieds & Smokers!!!

Cost: \$10.00
Children 6 and Under Free

The annual Tractor Pull is put on by the Hilmar High School Agriculture Department, Hilmar FFA, and the Hilmar-Stevinson Ag Boosters. The money raised is used to support leadership activities within the FFA as well as purchasing equipment and supplies for the Power Mechanics program within the Ag Department. This year's show promises to be the

best. We are bringing in 3 sleds which will keep the show moving along, and over 20 modified tractor's, pro-stock tractors, and diesel smokers have committed to pull this year. A full concession will be available to satisfy any appetite.

Contact the Hilmar High School Agriculture Department for more information (209) 667-8366.







To: Dennis Anderson, Dole International
From: Kristin Cushman, Blue Strike Environmental
Date: June 14, 2019
Re: FW3 2018-19: Food Waste Prevention and Rescue Grant Program

Greetings,

Blue Strike Environmental, in partnership with the Merced County Food Bank and UC Merced, is pleased to announce the approval of a \$500,000 grant award through CalRecycle's Food Waste Prevention and Rescue program. The primary goal of this grant is to increase the amount of food rescued in Merced County by 55% and more than double the number of Merced County Food Bank distribution sites.

According to the California Food Policy Advocates 2014 census, 52% of families in Merced County are food insecure. Outreach and education associated with this grant will cross many audience segments with the ultimate goal of impacting food insecure communities, and developing 20 more distribution sites will extend the outreach to more families.

This program will build on the success of the Bobcat Eats Food Waste and Prevention Program, a joint partnership between the Merced County Food Bank and UC Merced, which captured excess food destined for the landfill from grocery stores and restaurants. In 2018, 20 grocery stores and restaurants participated in the program, and 15 new Food Bank distribution points were established. Overall, 718,854 pounds of food was rescued, which is enough to serve 589,045 meals.

UC Merced will manage the education, outreach and training for this project, to support the Food Bank expansion of community partnerships to reach more families. Merced County Food Bank will dedicate staff to handling the increase in food as well as provide a framework for health and safety requirements.

Warm Regards,



Kristin Cushman, CEO
Blue Strike Environmental

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agricultural operations depend upon. While Senator Leyva has taken some amendments to address Farm Bureau's concerns there are remaining amendments necessary to ensure that low-use trucks and trucks licensed and registered as Special Equipment can comply without jeopardizing their compliance. SB 210 passed out of the Assembly Natural Resources Committee this week with a vote of 8-3; and it now goes to the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

The Carl Moyer Program would allow for truck trade-ups under a bill being carried by Senator Cathleen Galgiani, SB 216. The bill originally would have allowed fleets that are using Carl Moyer funds to replace relatively new trucks to trade those newer trucks with fleets that have older heavy-duty vehicles. Instead of scrapping the newer trucks, those would be provided to another owner with older vehicles and the older vehicle would be scrapped. This is similar to the tractor trade-up program that is available in the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District. Farm Bureau was supporting SB 216, however the Assembly Natural Resources Committee requested amendments to limit the bill's applicability only to fleets which are replacing their trucks with Zero Emission Electric, Hybrid, or low-NOx vehicles. Farm Bureau will assess its position once the amendments are in print. SB 216 passed out of the Assembly Natural Resources Committee with a vote of 8-3 and out of the Assembly Judiciary Committee with a vote of 8-2. The bill will now go to the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

The California Air Resources Board is hosting a number of upcoming trainings for fleets subject to CARB regulations. These trainings are to help people subject to CARB rules understand the regulations and the methods of compliance. CARB is offering the following trainings, Diesel Truck Rule, Compliance Overview (training includes Truck Rule, Off-Road, and Portable Equipment), In-Use Off-Road Rule

(off-road equipment used exclusively in agriculture and forestry operations are not subject to the Off-Road Rule), Large-Spark Ignition Fleet Regulation (fork lifts), and Transport Refrigeration Units. A full list of trainings can be found online.

SB 1, (Atkins) would require state environmental and labor agencies to review changes to federal law and regulation and consider adopting state regulations that would ensure no labor or environmental protections are lost due to federal modifications. The law gives specific authority to the California Air Resources Board, State Water Resources Control Board, Fish and Game Commission, Department of Fish and Wildlife, Occupational Safety and Health Standards Board, and Department of Industrial Relations. The bill also gives individuals the authority to sue to enforce the federal standards as they were in place in January 2017.

Farm Bureau is particularly concerned about the impacts that SB 1 would have on the management of California's water system. The bill would shift the burdens of compliance with endangered species protections more heavily on state water contractors and is likely to dramatically impact the implementation of the voluntary settlement agreements.

SB 1 was heard by the two Assembly policy committees this week, the Assembly Natural Resources and Judiciary Committees. The bill passed out of the Natural Resources Committee with a vote of 8-3 and out of the Assembly Judiciary Committee with a vote of 8-2. The bill will now go to the Assembly Appropriations Committee. Farm Bureau opposes SB 1, and despite recent amendments that addressed some concerns, no amendments have been made to the Endangered Species Act section of the bill that would address Farm Bureau's concerns.

Labor/Housing

AB 1783, (Robert Rivas, D-Salinas), prohibits the use of state funds to develop housing for H-2A farm employees and offers a

streamlined, ministerial permit process for the development of farm employee housing but only if the landholder cedes control to a third party qualified affordable housing organization. Farm Bureau opposes this bill as a discriminatory prohibition of state funds for a particular subset of farm employees and as an unusable incentive that is not accessible to farm employers. The bill was heard in Senate Governance and Finance Committee and passed but will now move on to the Senate Appropriations Committee. Farm Bureau will remain in strong opposition.

Rural Crime

SB 224, (Shannon Grove, R-Bakersfield), would impose a new criminal charge for agricultural equipment theft and specify that any fines/penalties collected from such crimes will be deposited within the associated rural crime prevention program that represents the area in which the crime was committed. This bill is strongly supported by Farm Bureau and has passed the Legislature; SB 224 is awaiting signature or veto by Governor Newsom.

Water

A measure that would establish the Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund passed out of the Senate 38-1 this week and is now enrolled and reached the Governor's desk for his signature. As previously reported, SB 200, (Bill Monning, D-Carmel) would establish the fund to help water systems provide an adequate and affordable supply of safe drinking water. Farm Bureau supports.

A measure that would provide grant funding for repairs on the Friant-Kern Canal is in the Assembly Appropriations Committee. It was reported last week that SB 559, (Melissa Hurtado, D-Sanger) will move to a floor vote by the full Assembly, however it must first get out of Assembly Appropriations. Farm Bureau supports the measure.

Wildfire

AB 1054, (Chris Holden, D - Pasadena; Autumn Burke, D -

Inglewood; Chad Mayes, R - Yucca Valley) sped through the Legislative process to solidify a framework for the 2019 wildfire season and to forestall further downgrades of the investment rating for San Diego Gas and Electric Company and Southern California Edison Company. Investment downgrades have an indirect cost on rates due to higher costs of borrowing for capital improvementstoutilityinfrastructure. As an urgency measure, the bill will go into effect immediately.

The legislation is a culmination of the analysis, research and recommendations of the Governor's Strike Team and the SB 901 Wildfire Commission. Considering the broad range of concepts reflected in earlier recommendations, the legislation is likely the best that could have been expected under the circumstances for wildfire victims and the electric ratepayers. AB 1054 is not the panacea, and further modifications will be required in the coming months and years to address insurance, forest and vegetation management reforms, local development planning and building code modifications. The bi-partisan votes in the Senate (31-7) and the Assembly (63-10) reflect that sentiment and is why CFBF determined it would not oppose. 1054 represents a chapter in a continuing wildfire narrative that remains the focus point for the legislature and administration.

The first version of the bill was available on June 27, 2019, which CFBF submitted comments on to address transparency and procedural issues at the CPUC. The wide-ranging bill includes numerous provisions related to addressing wildfires caused by electric utility infrastructure, creating new processes for prevention of the wildfires and for recovery of costs associated with them. It was joined with AB 111, a budget trailer bill to complete the package.

The version of the bill released on July 5 was approved and includes

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the following:

Wildfire Fund: To pay eligible claims arising from a wildfire caused by ignition from utility infrastructure. It will be funded through ratepayer and utility shareholder dollars, initially believed to a combined amount of about \$21 billion. Utility inputs are based on their size and past performance. The utility shareholders must reimburse the fund for costs where it was found not to have acted reasonably, but the reimbursement amount is capped.

Ratepayer Contribution to the Fund: The Department of Water Resources charge currently included in utility bills would continue after the anticipated expiration in 2022. It's approximately ½ cents per kWh on most rate schedules. Compared to other scenarios the approach at least does not increase rates above what exists now.

Utility Recovery of Costs from Ratepayers: Changes the procedures for recovery by changing the proof the utility must put forward to recover wildfire related costs. If the utility has a valid safety certification, it is assumed the utility was reasonable and can recover the costs. The change aligns California's procedures with those at the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

PG&E's ability to participate in the Wildfire Fund is conditioned on a variety of benchmarks related to their Plan of Reorganization in Bankruptcy, including importantly settlement of claims with wildfire victims.

Does not allow the utilities to earn a rate of return on the first \$5 billion

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people, feed, water, or equipment. It is important that you are aware of the signs of avian influenza and the methods you can use to reduce the risk of your birds becoming infected.

Your birds depend on you to keep them healthy. If you observe signs of illness or increased mortality, please call the Sick Bird Hotline 866-922-2473.

spent to improve grid to better withstand wildfires.

Creates Three New Entities:

o California Catastrophe Response Council, which will oversee the existing Earthquake Authority and the new Wildfire Fund Administrator. This is where administration of the Wildfire Fund will be housed.

oThe Office of Energy Infrastructure Safety, which will be located in the Natural Resources Agency beginning in July 2021, which will serve as the successor to the Wildfire Safety Division to be initially established at the PUC to advise and make recommendations related to wildfire safety.

oThe Wildfire Safety Board Advisory Board to advise and make recommendations related to wildfire safety to the Wildfire Safety Division, including recommendations to both the regulated utilities and the municipal and local utilities.

As with any major piece of legislation that affects so many different areas, careful oversight as the elements are implemented will be required.

AB 1516, (Laura Friedman, D – Glendale) passed the Senate Energy, Utilities and Communications Committee on July 10 on a 12 – 0 vote. The bill makes various changes to improve defensible space requirements, electrical transmission or distribution line vegetation clearance requirements within high fire risk areas, and CAL FIRE's local government technical assistance requirements with the intent to improve the fire safety of California communities

For more information, please visit:

<https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/go/avianinfluenza> https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/AHFSS/Animal_Health/Avian_Health_Program.html

Sincerely,

Dr. Annette Jones
State Veterinarian
California Department of Food and Agriculture

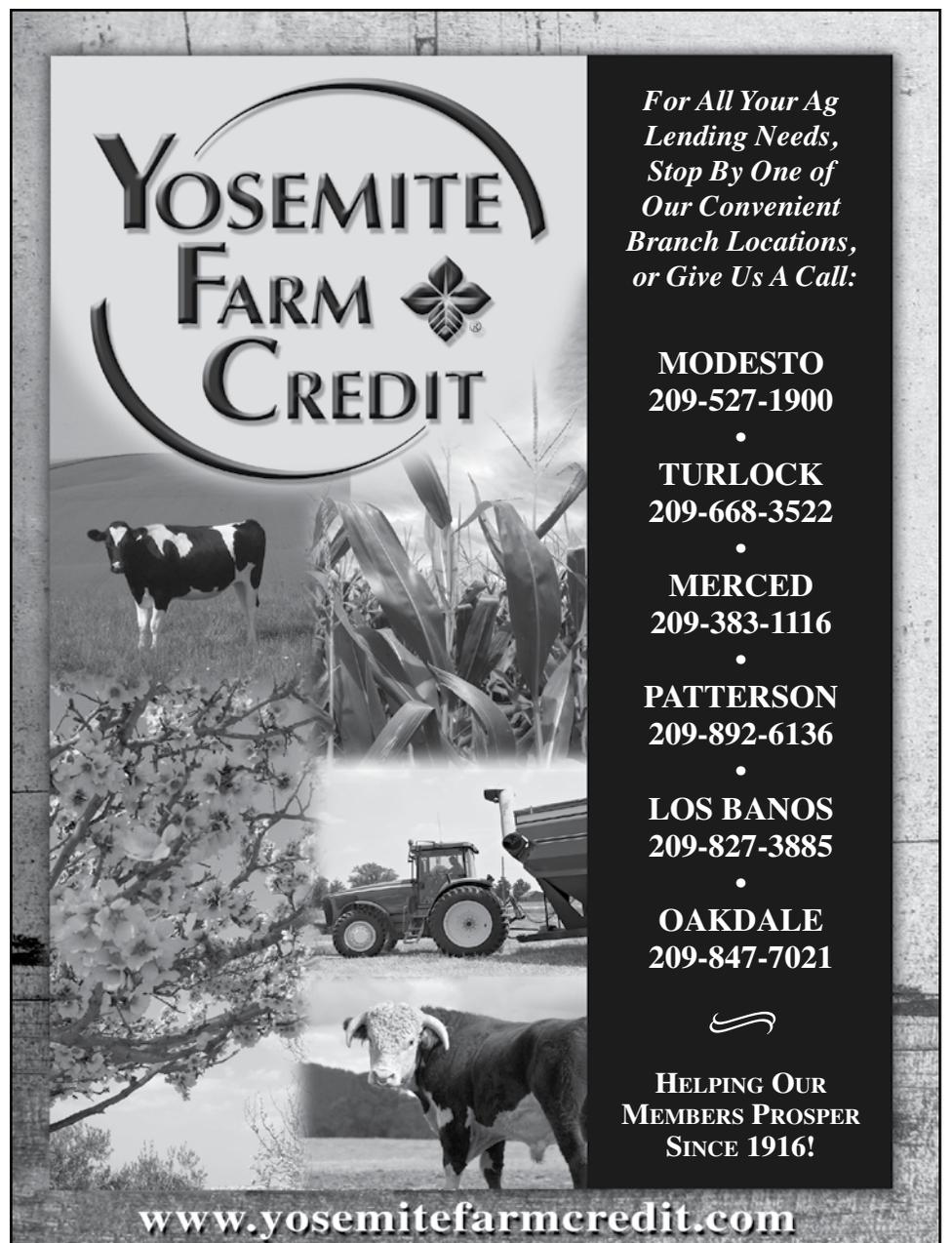
by reducing fire risk. Language originally in the bill restricted planting of vegetation near electrical distribution and transmission lines that could come within 10 feet of any line at any time which could have impacted orchards embedded within high fire threat areas, even though orchards are recognized as not posing fire risks. In response to CFBF concerns and others' the bill was amended to establish a process for the development of a guidebook to develop guidelines about planting around the lines, which will include consideration of orchards. With those changes CFBF is neutral on the bill. It will be heard in the Senate Appropriations Committee next.

Wildlife

The sale of fur would be prohibited in California if AB 44, (Friedman) is signed into law. The bill exempts the sale of leather, cowhides, deerskin, sheepskin, and goatskin but it would ban the sale of rabbit fur. The ban

would also prohibit the recreational trapping of animals for the sale of their fur. AB 44 was heard by the Senate Judiciary Committee this week and it passed with a vote of 7-1. It will next be heard by the Senate Appropriations Committee. Farm Bureau is opposed to AB 44 due to the prohibition on rabbit fur sales and the ban on recreational trapping.

Farmers and ranchers will continue to have liability protection if they accidentally take a species listed under the California Endangered Species Act if SB 62, (Dodd) passes. Farm Bureau is sponsoring SB 62 to ensure that the accidental take provision of the California Endangered Species Act remains in place. Accidental take provides liability protection for farmers and ranchers who take a listed species in a manner that is unintended or unforeseen. SB 62 passed off of the Assembly Floor on consent this week. It now goes to the Governor.



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Farm Labor Contractors – Essential and Risky

What Every Grower Needs to Know

Amy Wolfe, President and CEO, AgSafe

As harvest gets underway for some and is in full swing for others, the issue around having sufficient labor persists. The challenge drives many growers to use a farm labor contractor (FLC) as a means for ensuring there are enough people to get the job done. Often times, though, growers use FLCs believing that in doing so, there is a firewall of protection between them and the liability of having workers. Nothing could be further from the truth in California. It is critical that growers not only understand the risks inherent in working with a FLC but also how to vet a contractor to ensure the best possible working relationship.

The Farm Labor Contractor Risk

In 2015, California modified the Labor Code, Section 2810.3 to more fully define joint employment liability specific to worker safety and wage and hour-related issues. The change impacted all employers, not just those in agriculture, and applies when the contracting company (for our purposes, the grower), uses six or more employees from the contractor. If fewer than 20 employees are working between both businesses, there is an exemption from these provisions. However, during the peaks in season when the need for bodies exist, this allowance is rarely of any help.

The regulation holds the grower equitably responsible with the FLC for ensuring workers are protected

from possible injury and illness, and that all the conditions of employment, including but certainly not limited to stipulated wages, a workplace free from harassment and discrimination, and paid sick leave and health insurance are provided. As such, the grower must take steps to ensure that the FLC they work with is in compliance with all the applicable employment laws and that they demonstrate a good faith effort to stay informed of the FLCs business practices in these areas.

It is important to note that there are also two federal regulations relating to joint employment liability. The Code of Federal Regulation, Section 29, 791.2 says this type of liability exists where the employee has two (or more) technically separate but related or associated employers. The Code of Federal Regulation, Section 29, 500.20(h)(5) defines joint employment as when one employer provides labor to another employer and the workers are economically dependent on both employers. In most instances in agriculture, the grower/FLC relationship constitutes joint employment under one, if not both of these definitions.

The U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division enforces the regulations specific to joint employment liability and, along with the California Department of Industrial Relations, Division of

Labor Standards Enforcement, will hold a grower liable for the failings of his or her farm labor contractor.

As a result, a grower's risk has grown because both the U.S. Department of Labor and the California Division of Labor Standards Enforcement can cite the business for the same violation by the farm labor contractor. This is an instance of two-for-the-price-of-one and not in the good way. With so much at stake, it is critical that growers take the time to vet their FLC annually as well as request evidence of compliance throughout the course of the season.

Vetting Your Farm Labor Contractor

Prior to the start of the season when a grower will need the services of a FLC, it is important to request evidence of compliance with the litany of employment laws impacting the contractor, as well as those that fall under the auspices of joint employment liability. If the contractor is not able to provide written evidence of compliance, that is the sign that the grower may need to consider finding a new farm labor contractor. At minimum, the FLC should be providing the following documentation:

- Copy of his/her State of California FLC License
- Copy of his/her Federal FLC

SEE AGSAFE ON PAGE 14

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Gustine FFA Tractor Pull

Nick Alamo, *Gustine FFA Chapter Reporter*

On the 3rd of July, the Gustine FFA program held their 35th annual truck and tractor pulls at the Gustine High School Stadium. This event is the longest running high school tractor pulls in the country. This was all made possible by the planning throughout the past few months by the agriculture teachers and the Gustine FFA chapter officers with the support of the AG boosters and the sponsorships of local business. The pulls were a huge success and the program thanks everyone for attending and sponsoring. The FFA officers were able to raise money through sponsorships and ticket sales at the event. All the money from this event goes to FFA trips

such as National Convention in Indianapolis, leadership conferences for all grade levels and competitions throughout the year. Events like this give the Gustine FFA program an opportunity to send a group to Indiana to experience the joys of the FFA on a national level. Aubrie Hazan, the Gustine FFA's Chapter Vice President, was selected to be a National Delegate. During the national convention, she and the other 474 delegates from all around the nation are tasked with voting on a new national team. This delegacy is a huge opportunity to make a lasting impact on the FFA organization, Gustine FFA is proud to have one of our members



Nick Alamo, Aubrie Hazan, Amanda Oliveira, Megan Azevedo, Madison Woods, Stacy Oliveira, and Patrick Broderick

participate in this election process. thank the community for joining and supporting the tractor pull to help to continue to give students opportunities in the FFA. Congratulations to Aubrie for being selected. On behalf of the Gustine FFA Chapter we would like to

Central Valley Community Bank Names New Regional Executive Vice President, Market Executives

Courtesy of Central Valley Community Bank

FRESNO, CALIFORNIA... July 16, 2019...James M. Ford, President and Chief Executive Officer of Central Valley Community Bank (Bank) and Central Valley Community Bancorp, announced the promotion of Blaine Lauhon to Executive Vice President, Market Executive to manage the Bank's Northern region; and welcomes Ken Ramos, Executive Vice President, Market Executive to oversee the Southern region.

The decision to expand the Bank's leadership team with two Executive Vice President, Market Executives is part of the reorganization plans announced earlier in 2019 to combine the commercial and community banking divisions under one leader, James Kim, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, to create a single dynamic client service and revenue structure that supports the growing footprint and strategic

vision for the Company's future.

Under this new structure, Lauhon will manage the northern region encompassing Greater Sacramento, Stanislaus and San Joaquin counties, while Ramos will oversee the Bank's southern region which includes Merced, Madera, Fresno, and Tulare counties.

Respectively, they will be responsible

for leading strategic company-wide initiatives; guiding the success of their teams with a specific focus on the mission and core values of the Company, including client relations, deposit and lending growth; and new relationship development.

"Central Valley Community Bank turns 40 in January 2020. We are



Blaine Lauhon Executive Vice President, Market Executive



Ken Ramos Executive Vice President Market Executive

proud of our history, successful growth, and our continued emphasis on client and community service," said Ford. "We welcome Blaine and Ken to our seasoned executive management team. Their tremendous experience and regional leadership will allow us to increase the unique brand of service our clients have

become accustomed to, as well as drive market expansion opening opportunities for existing team member growth and the recruitment of new professional bankers to join our Company."

Lauhon, a veteran Sacramento banker joined Central Valley

SEE CVCB ON PAGE 15

PRESIDENT FROM PAGE 2

event was held to celebrate CFBF 100th anniversary. Bre, Emily and myself drove up to Sacramento to represent the MCFB booth. Around 30 Ag groups set up booths on the steps of the state capital to showcase all of the different products we produce. The purpose of the event was to showcase commodities from each participating county to State Legislators and their staff. We were able to meet face to face with them and provide information on Agriculture in Merced. We gave out figs donated by J. Marchini Farms, Squeekers donated by Hilmar Cheese Company, almonds donated by Blue Diamond Growers and homemade sweet potato cookies Bre personally made. I need to thank Bre and Emily for all of their hard work they put into this event.

At the federal level, Merced county was happy to host USDA Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue at

the Los Banos Fairgrounds. This townhall meeting was put on by Congressman Costa. The other participants in the townhall were Congressmen Harder, Cox and LaMalfa. One of the main topics of the townhall was the new USMCA trade agreement. This is the new version of the North America Free Trade agreement. This agreement should help put Ag on a more level playing field with regards to our trading partners in Mexico and Canada. Some other issues that were brought up to Secretary Perdue were the over supply of milk in the US, water supply and immigration. This is the 2nd time I have heard Secretary Perdue talk in a townhall setting and I find it quite refreshing on how honest he is about the issues. He seems to be a no-nonsense person who will tell you how he feels instead of what you want to hear.



MCFB Executive Director, Breanne Ramos and MCFB President Gino Pedretti III serving Ag commodities to representatives and staff.

To round out the month, our board member Dave Barosso was able to attend a luncheon with Vice President Mike Pence this last week. The major part of the talk was about getting the USMCA passed to help improve trade. There seems to be a major focus of the Trump administration to helping improve Ag in his trade deals.

When I talk to people who don't understand Ag in California, I try to explain to them we are asked to pay the highest wages while producing the safest food in the most

environmentally friendly way. I feel these are all things we need to be doing in Ag; however, the consumer needs to understand there is a high cost to this. If this is what the consumer wants it from the agriculture industry in California, then they are going to have to pay more for their food.

When we are involved in meetings like these, we need to help people understand California Agriculture wants to be on a level playing field. Hopefully, the new trade agreements the Trump Administration is working on will do just that!



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Courtesy of CFBF- Farm Bureau leaders pose following the USMCA event: Darrell Cordova, Stanislaus County Farm Bureau president; Dave Barroso, Merced County Farm Bureau board member; Corinne Madison, CFBF staff; Christina Beckstead, Madera County Farm Bureau executive director; Shaun Crook, CFBF 2nd vice president; Shannon Douglass, CFBF 1st vice president; Josh Rolph, CFBF staff; Jenny Holtermann, CFBF District 5 director; Lisa Humphreys, Glenn County Farm Bureau manager; Nick Davis, Madera County Farm Bureau president; Hilary Graves, San Luis Obispo County Farm Bureau treasurer. — in Lemoore, California.

More than 150,000 pounds of trout stocked in Lake McClure to help population after historic drought

As part of its long-term environmental stewardship efforts, Merced Irrigation District is undertaking actions to restore the Lake McClure trout population that was severely impacted during the recent multi-year statewide drought.

This last week Lake McClure was stocked with more than 150,000 pounds of rainbow and brook trout as a crucial and immediate step to recovery. Lake McClure was stocked in the past but fresh plants have not occurred until MID's recent action.

Prior to the drought, among the worst in the modern era, Lake McClure had been a premiere trout

fishing destination. The Lake had both a natural fishery and a stocking program. Although the reservoir recovered after the drought, the trout population has yet to reestablish itself to abundant pre-drought conditions.

"This stocking is an absolutely superb step in restoring Lake McClure's fishery, supports MID in meeting numerous objectives and restores an incredible opportunity for fishing on Lake McClure," said MID General Manager John Sweigard.

Over the years, MID has consistently advocated for the health and scientific management of fishery

populations on the Merced River and within Lake McClure. This includes advocating and supporting efforts to restore natural riverine habitat for salmon-rearing after it was altered by historic mining on the Merced River. The trout stocking will also help MID in supporting recreation and trout management at Lake McClure as part of its relicensing process through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

The trout stocked in Lake McClure included thousands of pounds of trophy-sized fish reaching up to 18 pounds. More than 6,000 trout were

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CLIMATE FROM PAGE 4

practices such as converting from flush to scrape, compost-bedded pack barns, solid separation, and pasture-based management.

Some of these programs have been around since 2014, but haven't been widely accessible to growers. In response, this year CDFA decided to partner with UC Cooperative Extension and hire 10 climate-smart specialists throughout the state to provide technical assistance for these grant programs and practices, at no cost to the farmer.

I was just hired to be the specialist for Merced and surrounding counties, so if you would like to learn more about these programs or would like help applying, please reach out! The next grant cycle has not yet opened, but now is a good time to explore your options if you are considering applying, as each grant requires quotes and other materials ahead of time. To learn more, you can go to: <http://ciwr.ucanr.edu/Programs/ClimateSmartAg> or contact me directly at cmbergren@ucanr.edu or (209) 385-7403.

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Golden Valley FFA Celebrates Record Breaking Year

Madison Kroeker, *Golden Valley FFA Reporter*

The past several months has been exceptionally successful for the Golden Valley FFA program with multiple State Championships to celebrate.

In April, our program had a very busy, yet rewarding month. Our Ag Sales team capped off their undefeated year by winning the State Championship at Cosumnes River College. Josh Heupel was named the High Individual Overall, Alyssa Humphreys was 2nd Overall, Alison Bylsma was 3rd Overall, and Shelby Stillman was 8th Overall respectively. This was the second year for these 4 students in competing in the Ag Sales contest and their goal all along was to win a State Championship.

Two weeks later, our Farm

Power Team captured another State Championship at Fresno State, the 2nd in 3 years coach Scott Heupel earned. Peter Bliss was named High Individual Overall, Teddy Ragsdale was 4th Overall, and Cameron Ivy was 15th Overall. This was the first year all 3 students had competed in the Farm Power contest, but their hard work and dedication to being successful was shown with their overall success

At the end of April, Golden Valley FFA had 32 students attend the California State FFA Leadership Conference in Anaheim, in which many of the students were State Finalists for various awards. Golden Valley FFA was well represented on the stage throughout the week for their successes. Josh Heupel was named the State Champion in



Golden Valley FFA State Award Winners: L to R: Mr. Jacobsen (Advisor), Shelby Stillman (Scholarship Winner), Josh Heupel (State Star Farmer, Job Interview State Champion, Proficiency Winner), Alyssa Humphreys (Reserve State Champion Extemporaneous Winner), Alison Bylsma (Proficiency Finalist), Elise Guerra (Proficiency Finalist), Irelyn Bese (Proficiency Finalist).

the Job Interview Competition, an event in which the student applies and interviews for a mock job. Josh went through multiple interviews and rounds to capture the State Title. During the same time, Alyssa Humphreys was competing in the Extemporaneous Public Speaking Contest. Extemporaneous Public speaking is an extremely difficult contest in which the contestants select a random topic and have 30 minutes to prepare a 4-6 minute speech. Following their speech, students are asked questions from the judges. Alyssa Humphreys was named the Reserve State Champion in this speaking competition.

Additionally during the week, Josh Heupel interviewed for the State Star Farmer Award. The State Star Farmer Award is the top award an FFA member can receive in the State of California. The Star Farmer award highlights the top FFA project overall in which there is an application, as well as an interview with the State FFA Officers. Through all of the application and interviews, Josh Heupel was named the State Champion Star Farmer Overall. This award comes with a \$10,000

scholarship and multiple awards. Heupel's FFA projects include building and fabricating Agricultural Mechanics projects for Heupel Bros. Farms. Additionally, he farms 80 acres of Chandler Walnuts in the Le Grand area.

Continuing on with the successful week in Anaheim, Golden Valley FFA had the most State Finalists in Proficiency areas in the State of California. Irelyn Bese was named one of the top 3 Agricultural Sales Placement SAE Projects, Elise Guerra was a State Finalist in Equine Production, Alison Bylsma was a State Finalist in Vegetable Production, and Josh Heupel was a State Finalist in Fruit Production, as well as the State Champion Winner in Agricultural Mechanics Fabrication. Heupel's application will now be scored at the National level which if he is a National Finalist, will interview in Indianapolis, Indiana in October.

To round out our historic year, our Livestock Judging Team earned the Reserve State Champion honors at their State Finals at Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo. Nathaniel Drennen

SEE RECORD ON PAGE 17



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Merced FFA Takes a Trip to Bass Lake

Roxy Foroutan, Merced FFA

Those that work hard deserve to be recognised for their contributions; at least that's what we think. To show our thanks and appreciation, Merced FFA decided to provide an opportunity for the 20 most active members of our chapter to spend four days and three nights camping amongst the trees and the breezes of Bass Lake. Every year the chapter officers plan a reward trip for the most involved members of the Chapter and this year the officers decided on the camping trip. One of the advisors, Mr. Mua shared "that the involvement in Chapter Activities was high this year and he thinks that it had a lot to do with students vying for a spot on the four day camping adventure."

It is safe to say that each and everyday of this camping trip was an experience of its own. From the moment we left everyone was excited to be able to spend the next couple of days up in the mountains with bad cell reception and a smile on their faces. By the time we arrived, it was already nice and warm, perfect for a swim in the lake. We spent practically every day that we were there

jumping off of rocks into the lake, playing with the frisbee, and fishing. The great thing about it was that we got to make memories with our friends before we all headed our different directions for summer. But I would have to say, some of the most memorable parts of this trip happened around the campfire. Between the conversations and the intense Uno games we played, there were times when we hoped that time would stand still.

We were very lucky to have such a successful trip. Everyone was able to take a break from their harsh realities and just enjoy nature and spending time with friends. For the seniors, this was the last event that they had with Merced FFA, and so we made it a trip that we would not forget. When we asked the recently graduated past FFA President, Jared Crossman about what is favorite part of the camping trip was and he stated that "swimming on the beach with his friends" was a highlight of the trip. He went on to include "that in the moment it did not seem that impactful but looking back on the trip and that being one of the last



memories he would have with the Merced FFA Chapter that it was the perfect way to conclude his time in Merced FFA." On behalf of all the students, we want to thank the Merced FFA teachers for

making this trip possible for us. Even though this wasn't exactly the way they wanted to spend a week of their summer, we are so grateful to them for allowing us to embark on this adventure.

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AGSAFE FROM PAGE 8

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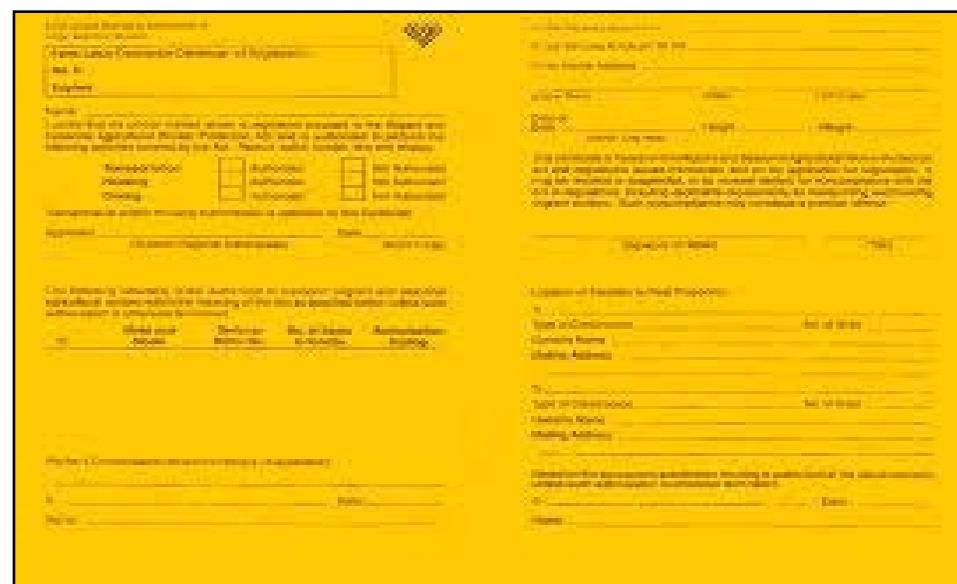
other compensation terms and conditions provided to the crew that will be contracted

- Copy of a paystub, with confidential information removed

If, after review of these elements and determining compliance, moving forward working with the contractor makes sense it is also important to check in on the FLC and his or her crews periodically throughout the season. Onsite, you should be looking for the following, which demonstrates actionable compliance related to the paperwork initially reviewed:

- First aid kits with each crew
- Sufficient water and shade for the number of workers present
- Clean, usable portable toilets
- An emergency action plan, including a map of how to safely evacuate the property, easily accessible for workers
- Required postings, including Pesticide Safety Information Sheet A-8 and A-9

Should something appear amiss during a field visit, it is critical to communicate what was deficient



FLC Registration Card (Source: US Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division)

with the farm labor contractor and determine the immediate corrective action plan. It is also important that follow-up occur to ensure changes are made. Failing to do so more simply codifies the definitive liability, as defined under California regulations, for the grower based on the lack of compliance by the FLC.

Keep in mind that both the list of items to review prior to engaging a contractor and the list of elements to evaluate in the field are not exhaustive. For a complete, robust list, contact AgSafe at safeinfo@agsafe.org or 209-526-4400. That being said, these provide an excellent place for growers to start the critical and important task of further protecting

their business by more thoughtfully considering who to engage when trying to tackle the ever-present labor problem.

For more information about how to fully vet a farm labor contractor or any worker safety, human resources, labor relations, pesticide safety or food safety issues, please visit www.agsafe.org, call (209) 526-4400 or email safeinfo@agsafe.org. AgSafe is a 501c3 nonprofit providing training, education, outreach and tools in the areas of safety, labor relations, food safety and human resources for the food and farming industries. Since 1991, AgSafe has educated over 85,000 employers, supervisors, and workers about these critical issues.



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MID FROM PAGE 11

planted that were over four pounds and more than 20 inches in length. More than 1,500 were planted weighing at least 8 pounds and measuring up to 30 inches.

The average trophy trout size is about 10 pounds and 2 feet in length.

As part of the trout plant, six fish were tagged and will each be worth a significant cash prize to be announced in the coming days.

“We encourage anyone and everyone to visit Lake McClure,” said MID Parks and Recreation Director Brooke Gutierrez.

“Come on out, stay at our campgrounds, and see if you can bring in these tagged trout and a trophy-sized fish.”

Gutierrez also encouraged anglers to stop by the kiosks and have photos of their catch taken.

MID expects to develop a long-term partnership with Calaveras Trout Farm, located on the Merced River downstream of the reservoir, to ensure the long-term health of the trout populations in MID’s lakes and recreation areas. MID will monitor angler success and look to maintain an excellent fishery into the future.

CVCB FROM PAGE 9

Community Bank in October of 2017 as Senior Vice President, Senior Credit Officer. He is a highly respected team member and is deeply rooted in Greater Sacramento. With over three decades of financial bank leadership, and commercial and agribusiness lending expertise. He holds educational degrees from Dartmouth College Graduate School of Credit and Financial Management, University of Colorado Graduate School of Banking, and a B.S. in Agricultural Business from California State University, Chico. Lauhon's professional and community service affiliations include the Small Business Development Corporation, Risk Management Associates, Boy Scouts of America and Kiwanis International. Ramos, a seasoned banker joins Central Valley Community Bank

with nearly two decades of bank leadership, agribusiness and commercial banking experience, most recently with a major commercial bank as the Business Banking President overseeing the Central Valley region, which includes the counties he will manage in his new role. He received his B.S. in Agricultural Business, Finance from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, and is a Banking and Finance Program Graduate from Pacific Coast Banking School. Ramos is well-known for his community service as well as his notable stewardship in banking. He currently serves on the boards for Fresno State Ag One Foundation, Downtown Fresno Partnership, Valley Children's Hospital Foundation, ABA National Agricultural Committee, and the CBA California Lending Committee.

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723-2021
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559-665-1313 (CHOWCHILLA)
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Celebrate July National Ice Cream Month

Courtesy of Hilmar Chesse Compnay

On July 9, 1984 President Regan signed a joint resolution into public law proclaiming July as "National Ice Cream Month." According to the International Dairy Foods Association, vanilla, chocolate and cookies and cream are America's favorite flavors.

What exactly is ice cream? The U.S. Code of Federal Regulations clearly defines what can be called ice cream from cow's or goat's milk. Ice cream is a frozen blend

of a sweetened cream mixture and air, with added flavorings. A wide variety of ingredients are allowed in ice cream, but the minimum amounts of milk fat, milk solids (protein, lactose and minerals), and air are defined. The finished product must contain at least 10% milk fat and at least 20% total milk solids according to Cornell University's milkfact.info

Where is the best ice cream in Merced County? It is the ice cream

YOU make at Hilmar Cheese Company Visitor Center summer ice cream making (and eating) tour. The tour is offered daily at 11 am through August 31. Everyone makes and eats their own ice cream sample. Allow about 45 minutes. Cost is \$3 per participant.

Do you like toppings on your ice cream? Nuts are the favorite topping in the United States. Celebrate National Ice Cream Month with free toppings with the purchase of a

cup or cone at the visitor center ice cream counter.

It takes about one and half gallons of whole milk to make a gallon of ice cream, so be sure to thank a dairy farmer for the delicious treat!



RECORD FROM PAGE 12

was 3rd High Individual Overall, Katherine Horal was 8th Overall, Irelyn Bese was 10th Overall, and Kilee Gillard was 30th Overall.

For the first time in many years, Golden Valley FFA will be sending two teams to the National FFA

Judging Finals in Indianapolis, Indiana in October. Both our Agricultural Sales and Livestock Judging Teams will be competing and we are exceptionally excited and proud of both teams. Currently, both teams are soliciting donations

to help fund their trip back East. If you may possibly be interested in helping sponsor these teams, please contact Mr. Jacobsen at cjacobsen@muhsd.org or Mrs. Mendonza at rmendonza@muhsd.org.

Our year was a record breaking one

and we look forward to continuing the success of Golden Valley High School by making the County of Merced proud. If you would like to stay up to date on various activities our program is involved with, please visit our Facebook or Instagram pages.

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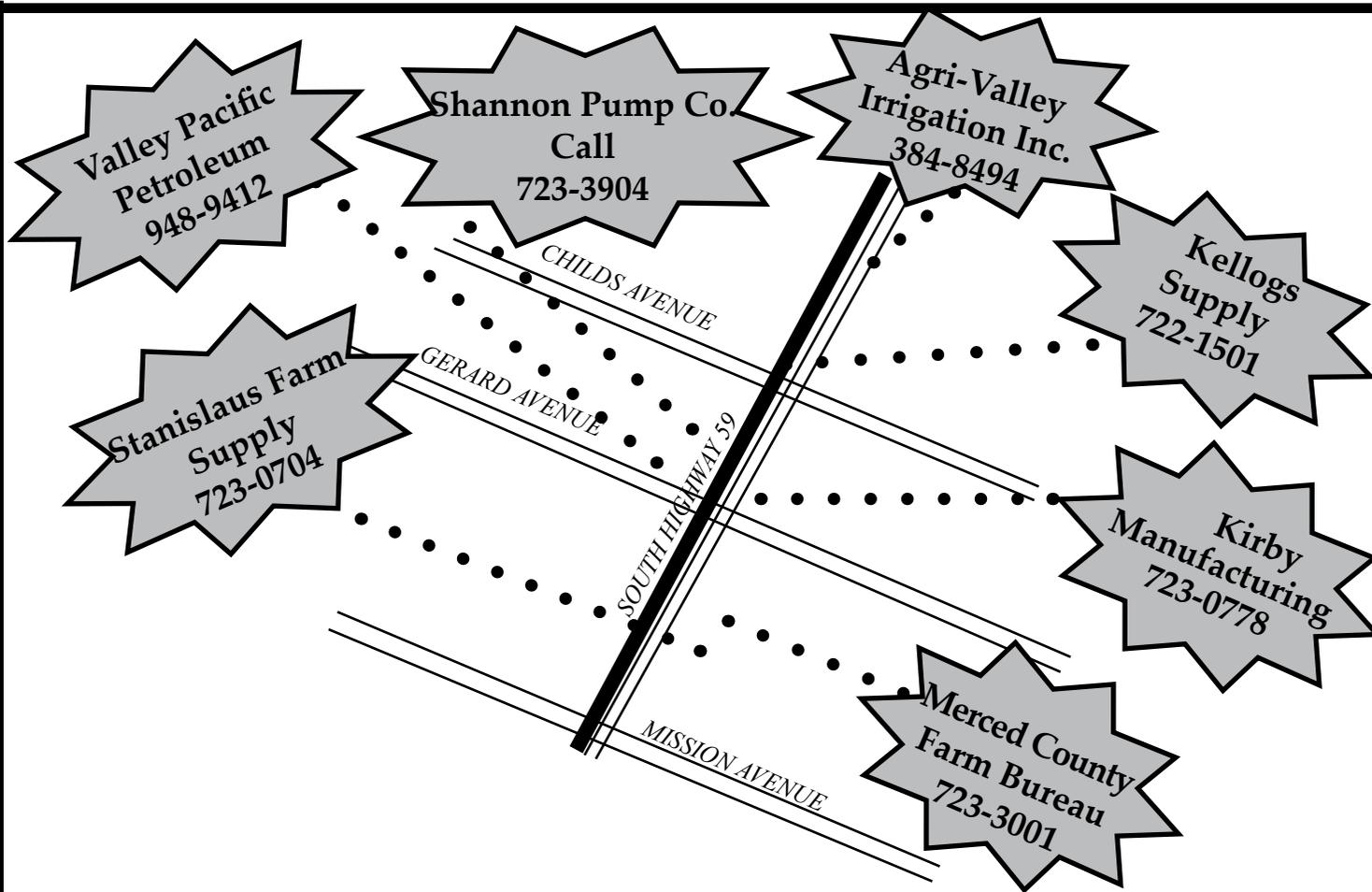
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DIRECTOR FROM PAGE 2

for various issues, however this number excludes anytime we've come together on a joint letter of support or opposition. We've had bumps along the way, however what we've gained from this partnership is much more. We're able to bounce ideas off of one another and pull our resources together when there is an issue impacting our members. Examples of this include: lending our voices to issues facing our sheep industry involving wages and sheepherders; signing a joint letter of opposition to AB 1783 (Rivas) which allows for farmers to build farmworker housing with less red tape, however growers have to turn the keys over to a third party organization such as United Farm Workers to run the facility; and signing a joint letter of support for AB 1274 (Arambula) which would codify the San Joaquin Valley Partnership into law with the goal of the Partnership to offer opportunities for business, government and education institutions to review policies/regulations and make recommendations to ensure economic development occurs in the San Joaquin Valley.

We've also attended several meetings with elected officials, bureaucrats and governmental employees. Although the state is still working on funding their dream of the high-speed rail, we've met with them five times since January. In fact, members on the westside should mark August 21st on their calendars. The California High Speed Rail Authority (CHSRA) will be hosting an open house in Los Banos and you can find more information on page 3 of the Farm News. For those of you thinking how can they continue without knowing their funding mechanism, let me remind

you that the state is mandated to have completed their Environmental Impact Reports (EIR) completed by 2022 for the entire state. They hope to have the Merced-San Jose EIR out soon and we remain watchful of this. We plan to have comments not only on the oral record at the upcoming meeting, but plan to have comments for the written record on the EIR. Last month we submitted comments on the WYE section both on our own and in conjunction with our partners that filed a lawsuit against CHSRA a few years ago.

During the year we've also attended several public meetings and or met with various groups looking to expand their projects. These have included the City of Merced's North Merced Annexation and individuals looking to build a soccer complex within an agricultural zone. It is our job to tell the story of agriculture and with each of these meetings we keep the best interest of agriculture in mind.

The above is a very short snapshot of what we've accomplished since January 2019. There are more meetings, comment letters and events that are not mentioned above. What I want to express is that our work is done with each of your operations in mind. If there's an issue that you have questions about or want us to focus on more, call the office! We take direction from our members and we enjoy hearing from you.

On one final note, thank you to all our sponsors and attendees who participated in our 2nd Annual Summer BBQ. We would not be able to put on our events without your help and support. Until next month!

Thank you

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