

Notes from the CEO

By John Krist

Feb. 1 marked my 10th anniversary as chief executive officer of Farm Bureau of Ventura County, a statement that astonishes me even as I type the words. The experience reminds me of that classic saying about being the parent of young children: The days are long, but the years are short.

... Without someone who meets [the] qualifications [of the agricultural commissioner] overseeing its operations, the office may find itself legally unable to conduct critical inspections and other activities.

One of the first challenges the organization faced after I came on board was the search for a new county agricultural commissioner. Earl McPhail had announced his retirement shortly before I was hired, and about a month after I started I drafted a letter to the Board of Supervisors highlighting the background and qualities Farm Bureau believed were important

in his successor.

Here is a passage from that letter:

It is difficult to overstate the importance of the agricultural commissioner to the local farming and ranching community. The duties of that office, particularly with respect to the enforcement of chemical-use regulations and the detection and exclusion of crop pests, have a direct bearing on day-to-day activities in local fields, orchards and packinghouses. The agricultural commissioner also plays a critical role in the mediation of potential conflict between growers and their urban neighbors. This is of tremendous importance in an area such as ours, where so many neighborhoods, schools and other sensitive uses are directly adjacent to productive cropland.

We therefore regard it as imperative that the next Ventura County agricultural commissioner have a strong background in pesticide regulation, and that he or she be intimately familiar with the unique enforcement challenges posed by an expansive ag-urban interface. Few if any regions in California display the same pattern of land use as Ventura County, where decades of careful planning have resulted in a complex mosaic of rural and urban areas. While this process has helped maintain a vibrant agricultural industry in a part of the state that has mostly lost its farmland to development, it also has virtually guar-

anteed frequent conflict over the noise, dust, odors and other side-effects of traditional agricultural practices. Such conflicts will only grow more frequent in coming years as the county's population continues to increase.

As a flashpoint of conflict between growers and urban residents, nothing is more potent than chemical use. The next Ventura County agricultural commissioner, like the current occupant of that office, will be required to implement state regulations regarding the application of pesticides and herbicides in an environment of intense public scrutiny. To be effective under such conditions, it is critical that the commissioner command the respect of growers and the general public alike, and that he or she possess superior public communication skills.

A decade later, the county is again searching for a new agricultural commissioner. On Feb. 8, Henry Gonzales notified Michael Powers, the county executive officer, that he was resigning to become the Monterey County agricultural commissioner.

Unlike Earl, Henry will be departing long before his successor will be chosen, presenting the county and the agricultural community a bit of a dilemma: No one currently employed in his office meets the licensing requirements to serve as commissioner, and without someone who meets those qualifications overseeing its operations, the office may find itself legally unable to conduct critical inspections and other activities. As of this writing, no process had been established yet for addressing that short-term issue or the longer-term objective of hiring a permanent replacement.

It may have been 10 years, but the challenges that will confront the next commissioner when he or she is hired will for the most part be the same ones outlined in my letter from March 2008. And as we did a decade ago, Farm Bureau will support members of the ag commissioner staff – particularly Chief Deputy Korinne Bell – as they carry out the important work of the department during the transition. And we will seek to participate in whatever way we can in the county's candidate search and interview process.

Field supervisor training program graduates first class

On Feb. 15, the first cohort of farm employees to complete the Agriculture Supervisor Leadership *(continued on page 2)*

What's Inside?

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Avocado trees provide clues about fire damage

By Ben Faber

The recent fire burned a lot of trees, wild trees, citrus trees and the poor avocado trees smack up against the action where the flames were burning the worst. It's not fully clear how many trees are affected. In many cases it was whole orchards, in others the burned trees were on the margins of the orchard and, oddly, in some cases it was 126 or 5 or 29 trees near the middle of the orchard while the edge of the orchard was only singed. Random, apparently.

And "burned" is a relative term. Trees burned to a greater or lesser degree. Some, the canopies were turned to brown head-dresses with green fruit. Some, the canopies were completely torched with blackened fruit falling onto the ground, and the leaf mulch gone along with the irrigation lines. If it was just heat stress that caused the canopies to turn brown, the trees have a good chance of coming back. It's the trunks that are the key to survival – and future productivity.

The trunks transmit sugar from a healthy canopy to the roots, and the roots send water and mineral nutrients to the canopy. Uptake of water and nutrients for the most part is passive, driven by transpiration from the sun acting on the leaves in the canopy. This movement just needs a leaf in the sun and the xylem pores in the trunk wood. The sugar needs to move through the green tissue, the cambium just below the bark. This is living tissue and when it is damaged, sugar won't move from leaves to the roots. It also won't send hormones down the stem to com-

municate with the roots or the buds that are in the tree. If buds in the canopy are intact after the fire, they will push out and leaves will start growing. It will look like the tree is growing and recovering after the fire.

In fact, because the hormonal control is disrupted, a lot of buds may break and new growth can show up all along branches and the trunk where there had been no green growth before. This might go on until the tree runs out of stored starches and then the new growth collapses, especially when hot weather and Santa Anas come along. New growth might push out again after that, attempting to regrow. The tree might do that in fits and starts. Or it can push out and do fine if the damage isn't severe.

The avocado is unusual among commercial fruit trees. It has latent buds buried deeply in the trunk, where only the worst fire damage can get at them. They can take a while to push after they have been freed of hormonal control from the canopy buds. But they can take their time and it's not clear where they will push. You can get a sense of where they won't push, though. If there's a lot of white spots of sugar exudate, boils or eruptions where sap has broken through the trunk bark, it's quite likely that a lot of those buried buds have been damaged.

If the trunk is damaged enough, it might not push out new growth at all in the canopy or on the trunk, but unleash a mess of suckers from the base of the tree where the soil has protected the buds from fire damage. There will be beautiful new tree growth from the rootstock, which at some point can

be grafted to a new productive variety of fruit. If left ungrafted it will just be whatever tree that was used as the seedling or clonal rootstock for the preferred Hass, Lamb Hass, Pinkerton or other scion that had been previously planted. If the roots were healthy before the fire, they should be good to be field grafted to a new scion.

If the trees were unproductive, in a windy area that produced scarred fruit, in a cold area that froze, or if there wasn't adequate water for the planting, then maybe it's time to rethink whether avocados should be in that spot at all.

The trunks are in various states of damage. Some are perfectly fine with no apparent damage. Others are charred, barely recognizable as avocado trunks. They could be any burned fire log. Most of the trunks are in some state between totally burned and unburned. It will take some time to see how much vigor is there and whether they will be productive trees again.

— Ben Faber is a farm advisor in the University of California Cooperative Extension office in Ventura, specializing in soils, water, avocados and minor subtropicals. Contact him at bafaber@ucanr.edu.

Notes from the CEO

Continued from front page

Development Program at Ventura College were recognized for their achievement with a completion ceremony and reception.

The course, which began Nov. 6, was intended to provide 46 hours of instruction spread over 10 weeks (although some meetings were canceled when the Thomas Fire prompted the college to shut down). It was designed to provide front-line field supervisors the skills to understand and effectively communicate with employees of different personalities, languages and backgrounds, along with effective administration of procedures and rules.

Thirty-five employees, representing 21 employers, completed the course. They are:

Alejandro Arce, Total Labor Force
Arnulfo Sanchez, San Miguel Produce
Clemente Hilario, Reiter Affiliated Companies
Edgar Ramos, Crooked Creek Ranch
Eduardo Arevalo, BrightView Tree Company
Eliseo Gutierrez, Boskovich Farms Inc.
Fabian Cruz, Southland Sod Farms

(continued on page 3)

White sap exudate indicating dead cambium just below bark.



Notes from the CEO *Continued from page 2*

Felix Lopez Vega, Westland Floral Company Carpinteria, Inc.
Gregorio Garcia-Sotelo, Southern Farmland Cultivation, Inc.
Humberto Trigueros, Villa Park Orchards Association
Ivan Perez, Westland Floral Company Carpinteria, Inc.
Javier Cortez Ambriz, Amigos Fuerza, Inc.
Jesus Padilla, Padilla Farms, Inc.
Jose Gutierrez Martinez, Brokaw Nursery, LLC
Jose Guzman, Brokaw Ranch Co.
Jose Hernandez, Reiter Brothers Inc.
Jose Salazar, BrightView Tree Company
Jose Ornelas, Brokaw Ranch Co.
Jose Quirino, Beardsley & Son, Inc.
Juan Carlos Gonzales, Brokaw Nursery, LLC
Lucia Ortega, Padilla Farms, Inc.
Lupe Orozco, Limoneira Company
Maria Santos, Beardsley & Son, Inc.
Miguel Sanchez, Boskovich Farms Inc.
Octavio Carranza, NB Farms, Inc.
Osvaldo Toledo, BrightView Tree Company
Procoro Sanchez, San Miguel Produce
Rafael Urbina, Laguna Farms
Raul Coronado, Crisalida Berry Farms
Raul Flores, Southland Sod Farms Operations, Inc.
Ricardo Berumen, Limoneira Company
Said Valenzuela, Brokaw Ranch Co.
Saul Aguilar, Southern Farmland Cultivation, Inc.
Silvestre Garcia Ramirez, Magaña Labor Services, Inc.
Silvia Padilla, Padilla Farms, Inc.

Farm Bureau supported the program and served as its fiscal agent because we regard it as a promising method for addressing a common problem in the agricultural workplace — conflicts between field supervisors and the employees they oversee. All too often, such conflicts can escalate, generating formal complaints and inviting legal and regulatory action. Better training should enable supervisors to avoid such problems in the first place, or to recognize and address them before they get out of hand.

The program oversight committee consisted of Dave Murray, Andrew & Wil-

liamson Fresh Produce; Yissel Barajas, Reiter Affiliated Companies; Ellen Brokaw, Brokaw Ranch Co; Juvenal Solano, MICOP; Gaye Theresa Johnson, CAUSE; Dan Kumpf, Dean of Sciences, Ventura College; and Annika Forester, the facilitator and organizational learning consultant who taught the course. They'll be sitting down in coming weeks to evaluate the inaugural term, and will decide how to move forward with future course offerings.

Spray Safe deadline approaching

Time is running out to register for the 2018 Spray Safe event, which will be at the Ventura County Fairgrounds from 8:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Tuesday, March 20. This year's keynote speaker will be Brian Leahy, director of the California Department of Pesticide Regulation. As in the past, the event will feature several other speakers, and four circuit stations through which attendees will rotate to learn about spray-rig calibration, regulatory compliance, drift prevention and best management practices to protect water quality.

The event is free — including lunch cooked up by Marshall's Bodacious BBQ — but advance registration is required. Download the registration form at bit.ly/Spray-Safe2018, fill it out and return it by email to spraysafe@farmbureauvc.com or fax it to (805) 987-3874.

We are also still in need of sponsorships to defray the significant cost of the event. Call us at (805) 289-0155 to charge a contribution to your credit card, or mail a check, made out to Farm Bureau of Ventura County, to 5156 McGrath St., Ventura, 93003. Please note on the check that it is for Spray Safe 2018.

— John Krist is chief executive officer of the Farm Bureau of Ventura County. Contact him at john@farmbureauvc.com.

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Farm Bureau members qualify for discounts on admission to many of Southern California's most popular theme parks and other attractions. To take advantage of any of these special offers, drop by the Farm Bureau office at 5156 McGrath St. in Ventura. You can also place an order and pay by phone, and have the tickets mailed to you. For more information, contact Farm Bureau at (805) 289-0155. Have your membership number handy. We accept Visa and MasterCard.

Aquarium of the Pacific — Long Beach; One Day Ticket. Adult (12 yrs+) \$20.95 (save \$9); Child (3-11 yrs) \$15.95 (save \$2). Valid thru 12/31/18. Closed 4/13-4/15 & 12/25/2018.

Cinemark Century & Rave Theatres — All Cinemark, Century & Rave locations; Platinum Super Ticket. Valid any regular movie anytime. Regular price up to \$12, you pay \$9.25 (save \$2.75). Additional premiums may apply for specially priced films and/or events priced higher than normal box office. No expiration on physical tickets only.

Knott's Berry Farm — Buena Park; Valid 3/17/18-9/3/18. General One Day Admission (3 yrs+) \$44.95 (save \$34.05). Valid thru 9/3/18.

Legoland California Resort — Carlsbad; E-tickets Only. Adult (13 yrs+) + 2nd Day Free \$83.95 (save \$15.05). Child (3-12 yrs) + 2nd Day Free \$78.95 (save \$14.05). 2nd Day Free use within 90 days of 1st visit, no later than 12/31/18.

Resort Hopper — Includes 1 Day at Legoland Including Seasonal Waterpark and Sea Life Aquarium, and Free 2nd Day. Adult (13 yrs+) \$89.50 (save \$33.50). Child (3-12 yrs) \$85.50 (save \$31.50). All visits must occur by 12/31/18. *Waterpark requires same-day admission to Legoland & is open seasonally between Mar-Oct 2018.

Medieval Times Dinner and Tournament — Buena Park; Reservations Required. Dinner and Show. Adult \$44.65 (save \$22 w/tax). Child (12 yrs & under) \$34.40 (save \$7.25 w/tax). Ask about our "BOGO Birthday Special" during your Birthday month. Valid thru 12/30/18.

Regal Entertainment Group — All Edwards, Regal, and UA locations. Premiere Unrestricted Ticket, valid ANY showtime, \$9.25 (Surcharge for IMAX, RPX, 3-D films & 4DX films, premiere or luxury seating locations or select theaters.). No expiration dates on physical tickets.

San Diego Safari Park — Escondido; Adult (12 yrs+) \$45.50 (save \$8.50); Child (3 to 11 yrs) \$37.50 (save \$6.50). Valid thru 11/22/18.

San Diego Sea World — San Diego; Adult (10 yrs+) Single Day Ticket \$66.50 (save \$23.49). Child (3-9 yrs) Single Day Ticket \$66.50 (save \$18.49). Fun Cards Adult (10yrs+) \$84.95 (save \$5.04) Child (3-9 yrs) \$79.95 (save \$5.04). Valid thru 12/31/18. Fun Card excludes 5/28/18. Must purchase Fun Card by 5/31/18.

San Diego Zoo — San Diego; E-ticket Adult (12 yrs+) 1 Day Pass \$45.50 (save \$8.50); Child (3 to 11 yrs) 1 Day Pass \$37.50 (save \$6.50). Both Adult & Child 1 Day Pass includes Guided Bus Tour, Kangaroo Bus & Skyfari Aerial Tram. Valid thru 11/22/18.

See's Candies — Valid at any See's Candy Shop in the U.S. One Pound Candy Gift Certificate & attractive gift envelope \$17.45 (save \$2.45). No Expiration Date.

Six Flags Magic Mountain — Valencia; General Admission (3yrs+) \$54.95 (save \$30.04). Valid thru 9/9/18.

Universal Studios Hollywood — Universal City; E-tickets only. 2018 Season Pass (3yrs+) \$109.00 (save \$40.). Come any date for your first visit by 12/13/18. All revisits expire 12/13/18. Blackout dates apply after 1st visit. www.universalPassMember.com/2019P

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