

Notes from the CEO

By John Krist

As we announced May 17 at Farm Bureau's annual meeting, incumbents Melinda Beardsley, David Borchard, Ted Grether and Chris Sayer were all re-elected to new three-year terms during this year's Board of Directors election.

It was a strong field of candidates, with Monica Houweling and Helen McGrath also on the ballot. Monica is an account and product manager at Houweling's Group, a family-owned greenhouse grower with operations in Camarillo, Utah and Canada. Helen is a fifth-generation member of the McGrath farming family, growing citrus and avocados in Somis and the Santa Clara River valley.

Farm Bureau cannot have credible elections unless it has more candidates than seats, and it would be impossible for us

to meet that obligation without the willingness of industry leaders such as Monica and Helen to step forward. We're grateful they agreed to do so, and we look forward to seeing them serve the organization in a leadership capacity in the future.

Staff member departs

After more than three years as the Farm Bureau's water policy specialist, Nancy Broschart is moving on to become water resource manager for the city of Oxnard.

Oxnard's gain is our great loss.

Nancy was our principal liaison with the consultants who work on our irrigated lands program, as well as with the regulatory agency that sets the rules under which it operates. She also worked closely with our many partners in the realm of water-quality regulatory compliance, including local cities, water agencies and county government. She was responsible for managing our administration of the state grant program that so far has funneled about \$400,000 for irrigation system upgrades to local growers, with another \$300,000 or so committed. And she's been the organizer of our comprehensive water-quality educational program and frequenter presenter at

workshops, many of which she has coordinated with partners such as the California Strawberry Commission, UC Cooperative Extension, Ventura County Resource Conservation District and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service.

In short, Nancy's skill, experience and ability to win the trust of the agricultural community greatly increased the capacity of this organization to serve its members' interests. Also, by attending the numerous monthly meetings required to keep us up to speed on the complex world of water-resource management in Ventura County – thereby freeing me from that particular obligation – she significantly improved my quality of life.

The search is under way for her successor. Meanwhile, we wish Nancy all the best. This is a great opportunity for her, and it will be good to have a friend on Oxnard's management team. Through its reliance on groundwater and operation of its Advanced Water Purification Facility, which recycles municipal wastewater, the city is a key player in the water politics of the Oxnard Plain – the heart of Ventura County vegetable and berry production. It won't hurt to have someone on the inside who understands both the agricultural and the municipal-industrial perspectives on groundwater use.

H-2A indictments serve as caution

On May 17, three Southern California men – including two from Santa Paula – were arrested pursuant to a federal grand jury indictment alleging they participated in an immigration fraud scheme that, among other things, charged Mexican farmworkers illegal fees for transportation, room and board. In addition, the indictment alleges that the farmworkers were made to pay fees to obtain their H-2A visas, which is prohibited by federal law.

The defendants include Melquiades Jacinto Lara, 62, Santa Paula, the owner of J&D Harvesting, which contracted workers to farms in Ventura County; and Ricardo Mendoza Oseguera, 39, also of Santa Paula, the owner of Discoteca Mi Pueblito, a music and convenience store in Santa Paula, which redeemed vouchers given to workers for J&D Harvesting after deducting fees from the workers' pay.

California's persistent and worsening labor shortage has driven a significant increase in the number (continued on page 2)

California's persistent and worsening labor shortage has driven a significant increase in the number of agricultural employers using the H-2A visa program to meet peak demands.

What's Inside?

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Reducing storm-water runoff from plastic tunnels

By Oleg Daugovish

State and federal regulations require agricultural landowners to monitor water quality in waterbodies influenced by storm-water and irrigation runoff from their property. It would be nice to have crystal-clear water leaving our fields and feeding streams and rivers teeming with appreciative steelhead trout. But if results of previous monitoring are any indication, we'll have to deal with several pollutants exceeding regulatory benchmarks and find ways to improve in non-compliance areas. Those pollutants include nitrogen, sediment, phosphorus and pesticides, such as chlorpyrifos.

There is a lot of ag land covered in impervious plastic, and runoff from it is channeled and accelerated compared to open fields, especially on slopes. Besides surface runoff, soluble pollutants, such as nitrate, can move into groundwater.

In a project with sites in Ventura and Santa Barbara counties (the latter of which already has an ordinance regulating the environmental impact from hoop structures) we evaluated four treatments in post-row alleys between beds for efficacy and costs. The collaboration included scientists from UC Riverside and Ventura County Resource Conservation District, UC Cooperative Extension farm advisors, help and contributions from Driscoll/Reiter Affiliated Companies and AGQ Labs, and funding from the California Department of Food and Agriculture's Specialty Crop Block Grant.

In replicated post-rows we chose one of four treatment options:

1. Barley planted at a high rate (500-600 pounds/acre) in moist soil after the first rain.
2. Unrolled and pinned weed barrier fabric commonly used in organic systems.
3. Yard-waste mulch applied 2-3 inches thick.
4. Polyacrylamide (PAM) applied before rains. It is a non-toxic polymer that binds soil together and is used on more than 1 million U.S. acres for erosion control in fields (also used in face creams).

Each was evaluated against untreated (bare ground) post-rows.

Here is what we found out:

- When runoff water was evaluated for

soluble nitrogen, we did not consistently see reductions in ammonium and nitrate in the fabric or PAM treatments compared to untreated soil. During several rain events, barley and mulch reduced concentrations of nitrate 20 to 77 percent, and during light rains did not have any runoff, unlike the other treatments. This suggests that both concentration and total volume of runoff with dissolved nitrogen can be reduced with barley and mulch.

- When we looked at soil moisture and nitrate levels, both barley and mulch had significantly higher moisture in soil under them and 70 to 80 percent less nitrate compared to other treatments. They act somewhat like sponges - intercepting water movement out of the tunnel and down towards groundwater.

- Phosphorus is mostly adsorbed to soil, so when we reduced soil movement 24 to 85 percent with all treatments, we saw similar reductions in phosphorus compared to untreated rows.

- We also looked at how well treatments reduce the amount of sediment, and the results were dramatic: Compared to bare soil, we collected 75 to 97 percent less sediment from all treated post-rows. This can be valuable with regards to pesticides that only move with soil particles - we can keep them in place instead of moving with runoff - and reduce erosion, especially on slopes.

All treatments came with some costs of materials and application, but there were other benefits to consider. Fabric was the most expensive (about \$462/acre), but it can be reused and provided near-perfect weed control, which can otherwise cost \$200-\$300/acre, especially in organic systems. Barley (about \$225/acre) provided good weed control after seeding, through competition and by preventing wind-dispersed weed seed from reaching wet soil to germinate. The straw and stubble (after mowing) allowed for a second flush of weeds but were controlled with the next mowing. Mulch can be free, but the spreading costs can reach \$300-\$350/acre; however, when mulch remained 3 inches thick it also controlled annual weeds (but not raspberry shoots). PAM was the cheapest (\$150-\$200/acre) but did not affect weed growth.

We will be doing outreach events and learning how we can improve the system. When finished, we plan on developing bilingual guidelines for runoff management in plasticulture systems that can help growers select options that fit their needs. In the meantime, both the RCD and UCCE staff in Ventura will be glad to discuss this and offer insights.

— Oleg Daugovish is a UC Cooperative Extension farm advisor in Ventura, specializing in strawberries and vegetable crops. Contact him at odaugovish@ucanr.edu.

Notes from the CEO

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of agricultural employers using the H-2A visa program to meet peak demands. The program is cumbersome, and guest workers are more expensive than domestic laborers, but the program fills a need and remains an important tool for growers who can afford to take advantage of it.

Regardless of the outcome of the trial, the indictments and arrests unfortunately lend credence to criticism of the H-2A program by labor activists, who regard it as ripe for abuse and exploitation. Most employers play by the rules, but it only takes a few bad actors to give the entire industry a black eye and jeopardize access to this necessary program.

The arrests should serve as a caution to agricultural employers. The rules surrounding the H-2A program are complex, and everything having to do with federal immigration policy is under intense scrutiny at the moment. If you hire H-2A crews yourself, make sure you have a clear understanding of your obligations. And if you rely on a farm labor contractor to provide guest workers for your operation, pay close attention and make sure your FLC is scrupulously observing all the rules.

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

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Farmers caught in trade-war crossfire

By James Villeneuve

Coming from the cold of Canada to live in Southern California, one of the great simple pleasures is my weekly visit to the farmer's market. The produce truly is some of the best in the world. And while I never thought I'd get to know "my farmer," after a few seasons, I know exactly whose stalls to visit – and if I miss a week, they notice.

This quaint little scene plays out all the time, of course – and on a major scale, through the Port of Hueneme, as my fellow Canadians purchase millions of pounds of strawberries, as well as tomatoes, lemons, oranges, avocados, celery, and other Ventura County specialties.

Across the board, Canada buys more than \$4 billion in ag products from California, making it the Golden State's top customer. (If you want to focus on trade balances, California enjoys a nearly \$2 billion ag trade surplus with Canada. Nationally, it's almost perfectly balanced – slightly favoring the U.S.)

But I'm beginning to wonder whether – unlike my farmer's market – people recognize this customer relationship.

It's no secret that NAFTA negotiations have gotten tense. Now, on top of that, the U.S. has started a trade war with its closest business partner, putting huge tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum under the flimsy argument of "national security" (ask yourself if you've ever felt threatened by Canada).

What does that have to do with farmers?

Canada is being forced to respond in kind to these tariffs. And as U.S. policymakers could have predicted, California's ag products may be caught in the crossfire.

The Canadian government has prepared a list of U.S. exports being targeted for tariffs of their own. The list includes strawberry jam and orange juice – products grown in Ventura County and sometimes even processed here.

This could be just the beginning. Given the current approach in Washington, there is the risk of a wider trade war or even the U.S.' withdrawal from NAFTA.

Most of the negative rhetoric around

NAFTA focuses on imports, but NAFTA has enabled U.S. ag exports to Canada and Mexico to quadruple over the last 22 years. It's a stunning figure that bears repeating—400 percent growth.

But without free trade, fresh vegetables will revert back to a tariff rate of 9.5 percent. Preserved produce will get hit with a 17 percent tariff. And frozen vegetables? Up to 19 percent. You know how exporting works – those tariffs will cause Canadian and Mexican buyers to look elsewhere. Farmers already being squeezed by drought and other pressures can ill afford to lose access to these international markets and steady customers.

There are the knock-on effects of a tit-for-tat trade war or the end of NAFTA to consider, too. In Thousand Oaks and Oxnard and across the county are employers who sell their products to Canada – everything from car audio parts to swimming pool plastics. Without NAFTA, these companies would face new costs in doing what they do best. As margins tighten, that puts pressure on their payrolls, putting local jobs – and spending money – at risk.

This brings me back to that scene at the farmer's market. How many local customers do my farmers stand to lose without NAFTA?

More to the point, if you know who your customers are – and given Canada's taste for Ventura County produce, there's a good chance it's your neighbors to the north – this is the moment to defend your interests and preserve your ability to sell to them freely. Farm groups from across the country are speaking out to their Congress members to influence trade negotiations and prevent policymakers from inflicting unnecessary harm.

No one wins in a trade war. For more than 20 years, Canada, the U.S. and Mexico have benefited from free trade, especially in agriculture. Instead of walking away from that, let's keep a good thing growing.

— James Villeneuve is the Consul General of Canada in Los Angeles.

Member Benefits

TICKETS & DISCOUNTS

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 12/25/2018.

Cinemark Century & Rave Theatres — All Cinemark, Century & Rave locations. Platinum Super Saver 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. Physical tickets only.

Knott's Berry Farm — Buena Park; 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+) \$80 (save \$43). Child (3-12 yrs) \$75 (save \$42). For sale thru 7/1/18. All visits must be by 12/31/18. *Waterpark requires same-day admission to Legoland & is open Mar-Oct 2018. Adult (13 yrs+) \$89.50 (save \$33.50 + 2nd day free); Child (3-12 yrs) \$85.50 (save \$31.50 + 2nd Day Free). Fun Express members receive 15% off on Legoland Hotel! Visit Legoland.com/FunExpress to book a Legoland vacation!

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). "BOGO Birthday Special" during your Birthday month. Valid thru 12/30/18.

Regal Entertainment Group — All Edwards and Regal locations. Premiere Unrestricted Ticket, valid ANY showtime, \$9.25. (Surcharge for IMAX, RPX, 3-D films & 4DX films, premium or Luxury Seating locations or select theaters). Ultimate Movie Pack-2 Premiere Unrestricted Ticket & \$10 Gift Card \$28.50. No expiration dates on physical tickets. Physical tickets only.

San Diego Safari Park — Escondido; Adult (12 yrs+) \$45.50 (save \$8.50); Child (3-11 yrs) \$37.50 (save \$6.50). Valid thru 11/22/18. E-Tickets Only. Includes Africa Tram, Cheetah Run & all regularly scheduled shows & exhibits.

San Diego Sea World — San Diego; **Single Day Tickets:** Adult (10 yrs+) \$66.50 (save \$23.49); Child (3-9 yrs) \$66.50 (save \$18.49). **2nd Day Free Ticket:** Adult or Child \$75.95 (save \$14; \$9); Valid thru 12/25/18 \$75.95. **Weekday 1 Visit (excludes Sat & Sun):** Adult or Child \$56.95 (save \$33; \$28) Valid thru 6/30/18. **Fun Cards** Adult (10yrs+) \$84.95 (save \$5.04); Child (3-9 yrs) \$79.95 (save \$5.04). Valid thru 12/31/18. Must purchase Fun Card by 9/28/18. E-Tickets Only.

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

See's Candies — One Pound Candy Gift Certificate & gift envelope \$17.45 (save \$2.45). No Expiration Date. Physical Tickets Only.

Six Flags Magic Mountain — Valencia; General Admission (3yrs+) \$54.95 (save \$30.04). Valid 1 operating day thru 9/9/18.

Universal Studios Hollywood — Universal City; E-tickets only. 2018 Season Pass (3yrs+) \$119 (save \$30). Unlimited visits thru 12/13/18. Come any date for your first visit by 12/13/18. All revisits expire 12/13/18. Blackout dates apply after 1st visit. To view blackout dates, visit www.universalPassMember.com/2018P For additional ticket discounts visit ushth.com/FunEx.

FARM BUREAU OF VENTURA COUNTY

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We represent the broad and dynamic interests of the agricultural industry through our diverse membership. We serve members by delivering services, promoting policies, developing coalitions, and fostering community action that will ensure the long-term success of agriculture in Ventura County.

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FARM BUREAU OF VENTURA COUNTY

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