

Notes from the CEO

By John Krist

As announced at Farm Bureau's May 15 annual business meeting, incumbent directors Jason Cole, Ed McFadden and Danny Pereira have been re-elected to new three-year terms by the organization's membership. Joining them will be newcomer Helen McGrath, who also was on last year's ballot.

Helen is a fifth-generation member of the McGrath farming family. She was born and raised in Ventura County, and returned with her husband six years ago to support her family farming business when her father, Tom McGrath, was battling cancer. They grow citrus and avocados in Somis and the Santa Clara River valley. In addition to working with her family, she has been working in the agriculture sector for almost 10 years, supporting organizations such as Community Alliance for Family Farmers, Ag Innovations, CalCAN, and more. Helen is a member of Class 43 of the California Ag Leadership Program.

We're excited to have Helen join our leadership team. And we thank Bobby Jones of Bob Jones Ranch, and Jason Vis of Lloyd-Butler Ranches and Mutual Water Co., for agreeing to be candidates on this year's ballot. Competitive elections are an essential element of our organizational strategy for maintaining a committed, involved and diverse Board of Directors. Executing that strategy would be impossible without the willingness of members like them to step forward and seek a leadership role.

Jason, Ed, Danny and Helen will commence their new terms in September.

Farm worker program launches

Ventura County's Farmworker Resource Program opened for business on July 1, operating primarily out of the Community Service Center at 1400 Vanguard St. in Oxnard. There are also satellite offices in Santa Paula and Fillmore.

The county has hired two employees to staff the program. Israel Vasquez is the program coordinator, and Fatima

Peña is the program assistant. Both are trilingual, speaking English, Spanish and a Mixteco dialect. Talia Barrera is the program's administrative manager, reassigned from other responsibilities in the county's Human Services Agency to provide support for Israel and Fatima. Her appointment represents an in-kind contribution by county government, in addition to the \$200,000 earmarked for the program three years ago by the Board of Supervisors.

Israel and Fatima will be responsible for referring farm workers with workplace questions or issues to the appropriate local, state or federal agency. They'll also mediate workplace conflicts between employees and employers or supervisors. Participation in this program will be entirely voluntary, and the county employees will have no regulatory or investigative authority.

Israel is an Oxnard native who attended Oxnard College and Ventura College before transferring to Washington State University to study agricultural biotechnology. In 2011, he was hired by the Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner's Office, where he developed the county's first Mixteco field worker safety training program. Besides interacting closely with the area's agricultural employers, he served as a liaison between the indigenous community and the regulatory agency.

Fatima is a native of Oaxaca, Mexico, who immigrated to Ventura County and worked in the strawberry, mushroom, and raspberry industries. She later worked with the Mixteco/Indigena Community Organizing Project (MICOP) as Mixteco interpreter within the Human Services Agency, and was in charge of a MICOP program developed in collaboration with the Bureau of Field Enforcement and the National Employment Law Project to help farmworkers with employment issues.

The Farmworker Resource Program's launch marks the culmination of a long, fraught process that began in July 2016. That month, under pressure by labor advocacy groups – which alleged widespread mistreatment of farm employees and demanded county adoption of a controversial "Farmworker Bill of Rights" as the remedy – the Board of Supervisors convened a fact-finding workshop. During that session, it became clear that there was little if any factual evidence to support the advocacy groups' claims, and that state and federal regulatory agencies provided a wide (continued on page 2)

Farm Bureau was skeptical about the need for [a Farmworker Resource Program], but we are comfortable with the final product of the committee's difficult work. ... We believe the voluntary mediation service could help employers avoid litigation ... by resolving problems before they escalate.

What's Inside?

- Extension's shot-hole borer training
- Are you underinsured?
- Member Benefits: Tickets & Discounts

Cooperative Extension's online training about shot-hole borers

By Sabrina Drill

Invasive shot hole borers (ISHB) are a pest and disease complex potentially affecting over 200 tree species, but posing a strong risk to box elders, sycamores, and other riparian and urban trees, as well as being a nuisance pest for avocado. The beetles have also been shown to attack a wide variety of common and less common ornamental species. (For a complete host list, visit https://ucanr.edu/sites/pshb/overview/SHB_Reproductive_Hosts/.)

The tiny beetles burrow into the trunks and branches of trees, and create galleries where they cultivate a fungus that utilizes the tree's own circulatory system, harming and in some cases killing the tree. We know the beetle can reproduce in over 60 species of trees, and they have devastated natural riparian areas, though we are beginning to see recovery of some infestations. Currently, the most effective management method is to remove

infested wood, sometimes entire trees, and chip what is removed to smaller than 1 inch.

ISHB are now firmly established in Ventura County, with finds throughout the Santa Clara River Valley, in traps from South Mountain to Toland Park in Santa Paula, and several infested box elder and sycamores in Meiners Oaks and Ojai. It appears not to have crossed into the county in the south, but there are still active infestations in western Los Angeles County.

Personnel from the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources Division, California Department of Food and Agriculture, the Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner's Office, and the U.S. Forest Service have taken lead roles in developing a statewide ISHB action plan for the California Invasive Species Advisory Committee, with an initial investment of \$5 million to work on controlling the pest. Plan elements include research in the ecology and control of the

pest, including work to develop biocontrol; an early detection and surveillance program; addressing green waste and other pathways of spread; and outreach and education.

In terms of education and outreach, an area where U.C. Cooperative Extension in Ventura, Los Angeles, Orange, and San Diego counties have led, we're excited to announce the release of a new online training course. Available through our website, www.pshb.org, the course is actually served by the extension online learning platform (and users will need to create a free account).

The course consists of four chapters, including history and impacts, biology, symptoms and look-alike pests, and monitoring and management. While it can't fully replace field training, it can be a good way to familiarize new agency staff with the issues.

— Sabrina Drill is natural resources advisor for the University of California Cooperative Extension in Ventura. Contact her at sldrill@ucanr.edu.

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range of support services for workers seeking help enforcing their legal rights. It also became clear, however, that navigating the bureaucratic maze is confusing and difficult.

In response, the Board of Supervisors voted in June 2017 to establish a Farmworker Resource Program (FRP), and to allocate up to \$200,000 in the 2017-2018 budget to fund it. The BOS also directed that the responsibility for designing the program and overseeing its implementation be given to an eight-member advisory committee, with four members selected by Farm Bureau and the other four by MICOP.

Farm Bureau nominated Yissel Barajas of Reiter Affiliated Companies; Ellen Brokaw, Brokaw Ranch Co.; Dave Murray, Andrew and Williamson; and Danny Pereira, Rio Farms and now president of FBVC. The other members of the Committee, nominated by MICOP, are Jessica Arciniega, with the Agricultural Labor Relations Board; Natalie Ospina, with California Rural Legal Assistance; Juvenal Solano, MICOP; and Lucas Zucker, CAUSE. Ellen and Lucas were chosen as co-chairs.

The committee began meeting in Sep-

tember 2017, and worked steadily for nearly a year. Their final recommendations were adopted by the Board of Supervisors in October 2018, which triggered a lengthy search for job candidates with the necessary set of skills and background to staff the program. Israel and Fatima were chosen from a large field of applicants. The committee will remain in place to provide program oversight as they began their work, and the 2017-2018 funding has been carried over to the current fiscal year.

As I have written before, Farm Bureau was skeptical about the need for such a program, but we are comfortable with the final product of the committee's difficult work. We will be watching closely as implementation proceeds, but we believe the voluntary mediation service could help employers avoid litigation, or lengthy and costly investigation by state or federal regulators, by resolving problems before they escalate. It's also in the industry's best interest to ensure its workers feel valued, respected, and that they understand their rights and responsibilities. If the program accomplishes that, it will be a win for everyone.

I had a chance to sit down for a discussion with Israel, Fatima and Talia before the program opened for business, and it quickly became clear that they understand the sensi-

tive position the FRP occupies – potentially facing pressure from activists to adopt investigative and enforcement tactics, suspicion from the agricultural industry about the motivation behind the program itself, and unrealistic expectations from workers regarding the mediation process. All three displayed a realistic view of the program's purpose and are alert to the pitfalls that may lie ahead.

From his years with the Agricultural Commissioner's office, Israel has a solid understanding of the needs and challenges facing agricultural employers; from her time in the fields, Fatima has first-hand knowledge about working conditions and the sometimes contentious relationships among front-line workers, supervisors and employers. Those complementary backgrounds should position them well to provide service to the industry as a whole – employers and employees alike.

Check those power lines

Earlier this year, Cal Fire (continued on page 3)



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Are you underinsured? Ask your agent

The following information is provided by Nationwide.

Insuring to the accurate value of your home, buildings, equipment and inventory is an important consideration when reviewing your insurance coverage needs. Here's why: If you have a major loss and your property is not properly valued, your claim reimbursement could fall short of your expectations and put you in a bind. In the event of a major loss, this might even create a serious financial shortfall.

Studies show that a large percentage of homes and farm buildings in the United States are underinsured. So we recommend discussing this with your insurance agent to

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investigators concluded that the deadliest of California's 2017 wildfires was caused by privately owned electrical equipment powering a pool and pump station near a residence in the Wine Country town of Calistoga. The ensuing Tubbs Fire, which ignited Oct. 8, killed 22 people and destroyed more than 5,600 structures, many of them in Santa Rosa.

With the 2019 fire season nearly upon us, that investigative determination offers an important lesson for owners of farm and ranch property with aging electrical systems: Utility-owned equipment has been found responsible for most of California's recent devastating fires, but under the right conditions, private systems can also serve as the trigger.

Prudent farm and ranch owners already prepare for fire season by clearing brush to create defensible space, preparing property maps for firefighters, developing fire-response plans, training workers on emergency procedures, and other precautions (a detailed checklist is available at <http://vcreadyssetgo.org>). Based on the Cal Fire Tubbs report, a thorough safety inspection of private electrical infrastructure – and prompt repairs of any deficiencies – probably should join that list.

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

ensure you're keeping your property values up-to-date.

Request a consultation

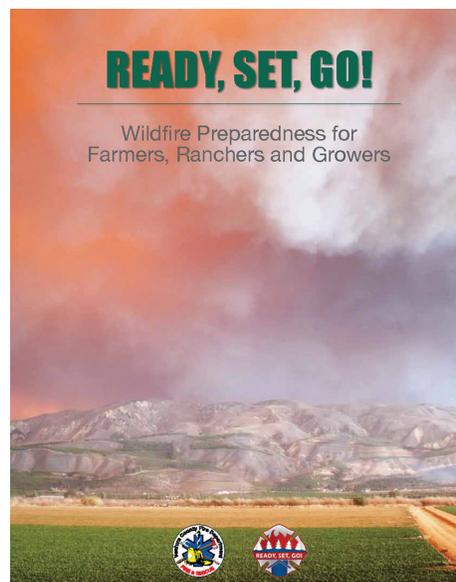
If your insurance agent has not been to your farm or ranch in a year or more, ask for an in-person visit to verify your values. Current values are determined by a number of factors, including the cost of construction in your specific region.

You'll want to be sure your values are based on current information as well as forecasts. If you've acquired new equipment or land, or expanded your operation, this is a good time to make sure everything is covered.

Consider automatic adjustments

Ask your agent if he or she offers a policy that automatically adjusts for changing values. The AgriChoice® farm insurance policy offered by Nationwide includes a provision known as automatic construction cost. This means that, at each renewal, your home valuation is automatically adjusted to reflect current building costs in your ZIP code.

Nationwide has been protecting agriculture for more than 100 years, including commercial agribusinesses. For more information contact your local Nationwide agent or visit nationwide.com/business/agribusiness.



The Ventura County Fire Department has developed wildfire preparedness guidelines for farms and ranchers, which can be downloaded at vcreadyssetgo.org.

Member Benefits

TICKETS & DISCOUNTS

Farm Bureau members qualify for savings on admission to many of Southern California's most popular theme parks and other attractions. To place an order or request a complete list of discounts, you may call our office at 805-289-0155 or send an email to Cheri@farmbureauvc.com. Please have your membership number available.

Aquarium of the Pacific — Long Beach; One Day Ticket. Adult (12 yrs+) \$25.95 (save \$9); Child (3-11 yrs) \$22.95 (save \$2). Valid thru 12/31/19.

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.

Dinner Detective Murder Mystery — Ventura County/Thousand Oaks; Adult (13 yrs+) Dinner & Show \$58.95. Save up to \$12.50 with tax/gratuity. No expiration date. E-Tickets only.

Knott's Berry Farm — Buena Park; General One Day Admission (3 yrs+) \$49.50 (save \$34.50). Valid thru 1/5/20. One Day Admission (3 yrs+) \$46.95 (save \$37.05) Mon-Thurs Only. Valid thru 1/5/20.

Knott's Soak City — Buena Park; Opens 5/18/19. Valid 1 day of the 2019 season. 1 Day Admission (3yrs+) \$38.50 Save \$14.50.

Legoland California Resort — Carlsbad; Valid thru 12/31/19. E Tickets Only. **Resort Hopper** — Includes 1 Day at Legoland, including Seasonal Waterpark* and Sea Life Aquarium, and Free 2nd Day. \$79.95 (3 Yrs+) Save \$46.05. Both visits must occur by 12/31/19. Water Park requires same-day admission to Legoland & is open seasonally between March & October. 1-Day Admission (3 yrs+) \$74.95 (save \$25.05).

Medieval Times Dinner and Tournament — Buena Park; Reservations Required. Dinner and Show. Adult \$45.75 (save \$22 w/tax). Child (12 yrs & under) \$34.50 (save \$7.20 w/tax). "BOGO Birthday Special" during your Birthday month. Valid thru 12/30/19.

Pacific Park — Santa Monica Pier; 1-Day Unlimited Ride Wristband Voucher \$22.95 (save \$10 per person over 7 years). Valid thru 12/31/19.

Regal Entertainment Group — All Edwards and Regal locations. Premiere Unrestricted Ticket, valid ANY showtime, \$9.75. (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 \$29.50. No expiration dates on physical tickets. Physical tickets only.

San Diego Safari Park — Escondido; Adult (12 yrs+) \$47.00 (save \$9); Child (3-11 yrs) \$39.00 (save \$7). Valid thru 10/24/19. E-Tickets Only.

San Diego Sea World — San Diego; E-Tickets Only. **Single Day Tickets:** Adult (10 yrs+) \$66.40 (save \$25.59); Child (3-9 yrs) \$66.40 (save \$20.59). 2018-19 **Fun Card:** Adult \$84.50 (save \$7.49) or Child \$79.85 (save \$7.14) Unlimited visits thru 12/31/19. E-Tickets Only.

San Diego Zoo — San Diego; E-ticket 1. Day Pass Adult (12 yrs+) \$47 (save \$9); 1 Day Pass Child (3-11 yrs) \$39 (save \$7). Valid thru 10/24/19. E-Tickets Only.

See's Candies — One Pound Candy Gift Certificate & gift envelope \$18.50 (save \$2.50). No Expiration Date. Physical Tickets Only.

Six Flags Hurricane Harbor -Valencia – 2019 Season – 1-Day Admission (3yrs+) \$29.95 (Save \$14.04)

Six Flags Magic Mountain — Valencia; General Admission (3yrs+) \$56.95 (save \$33.04). Valid 1 operating day thru 9/15/19.

Universal Studios Hollywood — Universal City; E-tickets only. Season Pass (3yrs+) \$124 (save \$35). Unlimited visits thru 12/31/19. Come any date for your first visit. View blackout dates apply after 1st visit.

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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