

## Notes from the CEO

By John Krist

Farm Bureau will host an open house next month so members can meet and welcome Ed Williams, who took office as Ventura County agricultural commissioner on Aug. 1.

The event will be from 5 to 7 p.m. on Thursday, Sept. 27, at the Farm Bureau office, 5156 McGrath St., Ventura. Light refreshments will be provided. No RSVP is necessary.

Ed was most recently the deputy director in charge of pest exclusion and produce quality for the Los Angeles County Department of Agriculture Commissioner/Weights and Measures. Before that, he spent 30 years with the California Department of Food and Agriculture,

where he held various positions including director of the Division of Measurement Standards, liaison between CDFA and all county agricultural commissioners and sealers in California, senior agricultural biologist, manager of the County High Risk Pest Exclusion Program, and manager of the Certified Farmers Market Inspection Program.

I served on the candidate interview panel (other members included staff in the County Executive Office and Santa Barbara County Agricultural Commissioner Cathy Fisher), which interviewed six finalists for the job on July 2. We unanimously recommended that the county hire Ed.

The inclusion of input from the agricultural industry this time stood in marked contrast to the hiring process the county used in 2008, the last time it recruited a new ag commissioner. Although we argued strongly that year that the industry should be involved in the process, we were unsuccessful. The candidate screening that culminated in the hiring of Henry Gonzales, who left earlier this year to become the Monterey County agricultural commissioner, was conducted behind closed

doors with no participants outside county government.

Like other members of this year's interview panel, I was most impressed by Ed's experience managing complex programs and teams, his involvement in programs particularly relevant to Ventura County, the network of statewide contact he developed as CDFA's liaison with county ag commissioners, and his familiarity with many of the issues that are unique to areas with a complex ag-urban interface. I look forward to working with him in support of the industry.

### New water program director hits the ground running

In the previous issue of this newsletter, I reported that Farm Bureau's water policy specialist, Nancy Brochart, was moving on to become water resource manager for the city of Oxnard. I'm pleased to announce in this issue that we've hired an extremely well-qualified successor.

Jodi Switzer started work here on July 30 as water program director. We were fortunate to have several strong candidates for this post, but Jodi's recent experience in groundwater regulation helped her to stand out from the pack.

An environmental studies graduate of UC Santa Barbara, Jodi most recently served as a water resources compliance specialist for the Ventura County Watershed Protection District, where she developed programs to implement Fox Canyon Groundwater Management Agency regulations. She also conducted analyses mandated by the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.

Before that, she served as environmental compliance manager for the UC Santa Barbara campus for five years, guiding university leadership through a host of regulatory issues. Previously, she was a staff scientist at PW Environmental in Santa Paula, where she focused on Irrigated Lands Regulatory Programs, using geographic information systems to create watershed databases for clients.

All of these skills and experiences make her a perfect fit for our organization. As water program director, Jodi will be our principal liaison with the consultants who

### Open House

Meet Ed Williams

New County Ag Commissioner

Thursday, September 27, 5-7 pm

Farm Bureau Office

5156 McGrath Street

### What's Inside?

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# Soil Nitrate Quick Test can guide fertilization

By Andre Biscaro

The challenges associated with nitrogen (N) management are mostly related to the significant fluctuations of soil N in a crop season. Whereas all other essential plant nutrients (except for sulfur) present slight changes in the soil over a season, N can go from excessively high to deficient levels in a matter of weeks. These oscillations occur due to a combination of factors, including but not limited to: fertilization rates that differ from actual crop N uptake, irrigation inefficiency, uneven rainfall pattern, soil organic matter content, soil texture, and numerous biological and chemical processes.

Among these, understanding crop N uptake rate (pounds of N/acre/day), how that rate changes throughout the season, and making sure that irrigation amounts don't often exceed the soil water holding capacity, can have the highest impact on improving N use efficiency. If fertilization rates significantly differ from crop uptake, over time soil N will either vanish and result in drastic yield losses, or it will keep increasing to excessively high levels, which can lead to groundwater contamination and possibly crop quality issues. The key is to apply the right fertilizer rate at the right time.

The Soil Nitrate Quick Test (SNQT) is an important ally for improving N management, as it provides a good estimate of how much N is in the soil, allowing for adjustments to the fertilization rates before and during the crop season. This inexpensive test (approximately \$1 per sample) can determine soil nitrate status in a matter of 1 to 4 hours, depending on the soil texture. The quick turnaround gives more flexibility in decision making without having to wait for laboratory results. Being inexpensive also allows for testing multiple fields regularly. A field with excessive amounts of soil N could have the fertilization reduced or postponed, while a field with low levels could have the fertilization increased accordingly.

The University of California Cooperative Extension staff in Ventura and Monterey counties have conducted doz-

ens of field trials showing that using the quick test can reliably identify fields in which N application can be reduced or postponed. Considering the increasing scrutiny and regulatory pressure from the Regional Water Quality Control Board to protect water quality, the SNQT is an important tool for aiding growers, farm managers and consultants to improve N use efficiency without compromising yields.

Successful use of the SNQT requires training in soil sampling, test performing and results interpretation. The following is a quick description of how the test is performed, from collecting soil samples to interpreting results:

Collect a composite soil sample representative of the entire field at the depth of the active root zone. Homogenize the sample in a bucket and sieve a portion. Fill a 50ml centrifuge tube with 30ml of 0.01M calcium chloride solution and add the sieved soil until the total volume is 40ml. Shake vigorously until the soil is dissolved, and refrigerate until the

solution at top is clear. Dip a nitrate test strip into the clear solution to identify the nitrate content in ppm based on the coulometric scale provided with the strip. Divide that number by a factor to correct for soil texture and moisture content. If the sample was collected in the top 12" and the result indicates 20 ppm of nitrate-N, then that field has approximately 70-80 pounds N/acre available for crop use in the top foot of soil.

This simple description is intended to demonstrate how practical and straightforward the SNQT test is. For complete details on how to perform the test, obtain materials and interpret results, please email or call me: [asbiscaro@ucanr.edu](mailto:asbiscaro@ucanr.edu), 805-645-1465. If there is enough interest, a workshop on using the SNQT will be organized in a few months.

— Andre Biscaro is irrigation and water resources advisor for the University of California Cooperative Extension in Ventura. Contact him at (805) 645-1465 or [asbiscaro@ucdavis.edu](mailto:asbiscaro@ucdavis.edu).

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## Notes from the CEO

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work on our irrigated lands program, as well as with the regulatory agency that sets the rules under which it operates. She will work closely with our many partners in the realm of water-quality regulatory compliance, including local cities, water agencies and county government.

She also is 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 will be the organizer of our comprehensive water-quality educational program, which involves coordination 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 her first month on the job, Jodi has already made the rounds of the many

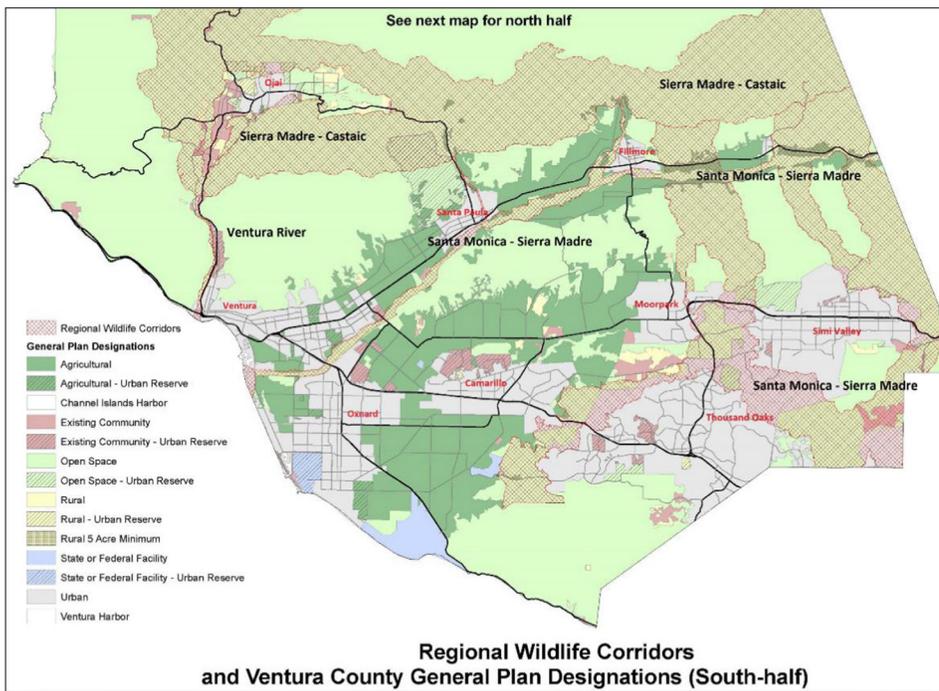
water-related groups and organizations in the county, and she's made herself at home in our operation. We're happy and fortunate to have her on board. She can be reached at (805) 289-0155 or [jodi@farmbureauvc.com](mailto:jodi@farmbureauvc.com).

## Wildlife corridor project moving forward

For more than a year, the Ventura County Planning Division has been working on an ordinance to protect wildlife movement corridors and habitat from fragmentation or encroachment. It would do so by imposing new restrictions on construction, fencing, lighting, native vegetation removal and other activities in mapped "wildlife movement corridors," which generally provide linkages between big chunks of natural area — from the Santa Monica Mountains to the Santa Susana Mountains, for example, and from the Santa Susanas to the Sierra Madre Mountains and Los Padres National Forest.

In many cases, the corridors include land that is actively farmed or used for

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## Notes from the CEO

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livestock grazing, meaning the new restrictions could have significant impacts on routine and necessary practices and projects. Many activities that currently are exempt from county review or subject only to ministerial actions would have to be reviewed for wildlife compatibility, a significant intrusion of county authority into mundane decisions about security lighting and fencing, among other things.

Most of the county's farms and ranches will not be affected. But several thousand acres of agricultural land lie in the path of those corridors. To find out if your property is among them, visit the county website at <https://vcma.org/habitat-connectivity-and-wildlife-movement-corridors>. In addition to maps, copies of the draft ordinance and other documents, the page has instructions for searching the county database by assessor's parcel number to determine whether a particular property is within a mapped corridor.

There have been three stakeholder meetings since last summer to solicit input, and those were attended by a wide

array of regulatory agency representatives, environmental groups, agricultural and business associations, and individual landowners. In response to their comments, the original staff proposals have been modified to lessen the potential burden, but what remains still represents a dramatic expansion of the county's regulatory oversight of private activities on private land.

The next step in the project will be a public hearing before the County Planning Commission, tentatively scheduled for Sept. 20. Farm Bureau encourages every property owner affected by the proposed ordinance to attend. Check the county website periodically for a final date and time.

— *John Krist is chief executive officer of the Farm Bureau of Ventura County. Contact him at [john@farmbureauvc.com](mailto:john@farmbureauvc.com).*

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## 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; E-Tickets Only: One Day Ticket. Adult (12 yrs+) \$18.95 (save \$11); Child (3-11 yrs) \$10.95 (save \$7). Valid thru 9/30/18. — Physical Tickets Only: 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+) \$43 (save \$39). Valid 9/4/18 thru 1/6/19. **Knott's Scary Farm** — Buena Park; Opens at 7 pm. Valid ONE night. Guaranteed Admission! E-Tickets only. Call Shea for pricing (805) 289-0155. **Knott's Soak City** — Buena Park; Valid 1 Day of the season. \$36.50. (save \$13.50).

**Legoland California Resort** — Carlsbad; E-tickets Only. **Legoland 2Day Resort Hopper** Adult (13 yrs+) \$80 (save \$75). Child (3-12 yrs) \$75 (save \$72). 2Day Resort Hopper includes 2 visits to Legoland including seasonal waterpark & Sea Life Aquarium. All visits must occur by 12/31/18. Waterpark requires same-day admission to Legoland & is open 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). "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, \$9.75. (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+) \$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) Physical Tickets Only. **2nd Day Free Ticket:** Adult/Child \$67 (save \$22.99; \$17.99) E-tickets only; Valid thru 12/25/18. **Weekday 1 Visit** (excludes Sat & Sun): Adult/Child \$52.95 (save \$37; \$32) Valid thru 9/28/18. E-Tickets Only. **Buy Adult 1Day, Get Child 1Day Free** \$88 (save \$86.98) Valid thru 10/31/18. E-tickets Only. **2018 Fun Card** Adult \$84.95 (save \$5.04); Child (3-9 yrs) \$79.95 (save \$5.04) Unlimited visits thru 12/30/18. Must purchase by 9/28/18. Fun Cards E-ticket 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.

**Six Flags Hurricane Harbor**—Valencia; Valid 1 Day of the 2018 season. E-tickets only. \$29.95 (save \$13.04).

**Universal Studios Halloween Horror Nights**—Universal City; E-tickets only. Guaranteed Admission. Save on Select Halloween Horror Nights. Fall 2018. See [www.funex.com](http://www.funex.com) for link to discount pricing, dates & details.

**Universal Studios Hollywood** — Universal City; E-tickets only. 2018 Season Pass (3yrs+) \$119 (save \$30). Unlimited visits valid 9 months from 1st visit. Come any date for your first visit by 1/31/19. To view blackout dates, visit [www.universalpassmember.com/2018N](http://www.universalpassmember.com/2018N).

# 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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