

Notes from the CEO

By John Krist

For the past two months, the news has been dominated by California's deepening drought. The state is now in the third consecutive year of below-average rainfall and snowpack, and the effects are being felt everywhere.

In recent weeks, for example, managers of the State Water Project (SWP) and the Central Valley Project (CVP) – the two

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gargantuan storage and delivery systems responsible for moving water from the northern half of the state to the cities and farms of the southern half – have announced that most contractors can expect no water at all from them this year. Absent a “March Miracle” that dumps prodigious amounts of precipitation on the state this spring – as happened in 1993 to break what was then a six-year drought – thousands of acres in the Central Valley will lie fallow this year and communities from the

Oregon border to the Tehachapis will be forced to mandate steep reductions in domestic consumption.

Ventura County has been insulated from the most dire effects of the drought, which is unprecedented in the state's modern history for the paltry amount of precipitation that's been recorded. Although roughly three-quarters of the Ventura County's urban population depends for some or all of its water on imports from the SWP, Southern California water agencies have done a good job storing surplus in wet years and achieving dramatic gains in conservation and efficiency. This is enabling communities in our region to call for voluntary reductions this year to stretch supplies, rather than mandating cutbacks to avoid running dry altogether.

Ventura County also is fortunate to have relatively abundant groundwater resources. This is a crucial irrigation supply for nearly every farm in the county, and in years when free water does not fall from the sky it is pretty much the only source.

Unfortunately, the intensity of the drought – coupled with long-term trends in water use and regulatory constraints on surface diversions and recharge activities – is putting severe strain on some key local groundwater

supplies. In recent weeks, the drumbeat of bad news has intensified, and traditional stakeholder alliances have begun to fray.

On Feb. 12, the United Water Conservation District Board considered pressing ahead unilaterally with a safe-yield study of the Santa Paula Basin, which provides water to a number of mutual water companies, the city of Ventura, and individual agricultural users from Santa Paula to Saticoy along the Santa Clara River.

Groundwater elevations appear to have been declining in the basin since the mid-1990s, even though all pumpers are abiding by the allocations established under an adjudication settlement hammered out in 1996 to protect the basin from depletion and to fairly apportion the supply among competing users. Should new data indicate that the safe yield was calculated incorrectly, pumpers may see reductions in their allocations to bring extractions and recharge into balance.

The Santa Paula Basin Pumpers Association and the city of Ventura asked the United board to delay a decision on the yield study and to couple it with a separate study to identify methods of augmenting the supply. The UWCD board was poised on Feb. 12 to reject that request, but agreed at the last minute to postpone the decision a month. The pumpers argue that they are close to reaching agreement on the scope of a yield and augmentation study, but UWCD directors were harsh in their criticism of the group – particularly the city of Ventura – for allegedly dragging the process out unnecessarily over the past several years.

A fair amount of the anger expressed during the hearing probably had nothing to do with the Santa Paula Basin but a lot to do with other actions by the city of Ventura, which had only a few days earlier filed a brief in the appeal of a court ruling on a lawsuit the city filed against UWCD in 2011.

That litigation sought to overturn UWCD's rate structure, alleging that it illegally forces urban groundwater users to subsidize agricultural users by charging urban pumpers three times as much as ag pumpers. A judge ruled that although the differential was not illegal on its face, UWCD had failed to demonstrate a factual foundation for the rates based on the differential cost of service, and ordered it to refund the city nearly \$1 million.

Ventura's appellate brief not only repeats the allegation of illegal subsidy – which UWCD and Farm Bureau regard as unfounded – but seeks to dismantle by legal means the technical and scientific foundation for United's

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What's Inside?

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Polyphagous shot hole borer continues to spread

By Sabrina Drill

As discussed in previous issues of this newsletter (June 2013), a new pest/fungal complex is attacking a wide variety of host trees in Southern California, from avocado to common residential and street trees, native oaks and sycamores, and spreading rapidly.

Polyphagous shot hole borer (PSHB; *Euwallacea* sp.) was first identified in 2003 in Whittier Narrows, an undeveloped riparian area in Los Angeles County. The PSHB is morphologically identical to the tea shot hole borer, *E. fornicatus*, but a genetic analysis confirmed that this is a new species of ambrosia beetle. PSHB has been found to carry several symbiotic fungi, including new fungal species *Fusarium euwallacea*, and an undescribed *Graphium* species.

This pest complex was officially first linked to tree injury and mortality in a residential avocado in 2012, but it was the likely cause of the 2010 loss of an entire block of box elder in Long Beach. Since 2010, the pest complex, also referred to as Fusarium die-back, has spread throughout Los Angeles County and into Orange and San Bernardino counties. It has caused injury and mortality of hundreds of ornamental trees in the urban areas, impacting roadways, public and private botanical gardens, parks, and private residences. In 2012, the pest complex was detected on the Angeles National Forest, injuring and killing several native tree species. In November 2013, the pest complex was confirmed in samples from Riverside and San Diego Counties.

PSHB/Fusarium dieback is somewhat unique in that it has the potential to be a serious pest in agricultural (avocado and ornamental horticulture), urban forestry and wildland contexts. In December 2013, Englemann Oak (*Quercus engelmannii*) was confirmed as the 25th known reproductive host. Other native species affected by the pest complex include coast live oak (*Q. agrifolia*), valley oak, (*Q. lobata*), California sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*), big leaf maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), red willow (*Salix laevigata*), box elder (*Acer negundo*), and white alder (*Alnus rhombifolia*). Important ornamental species affected include English oak (*Q. robur*), Japanese maple (*A. palmatum*), goldenrain (*Koelreuteria paniculata*), olive (*Olea europaea*), persimmon (*Diospyros* sp.), silk tree (*Albizia julibrissin*), American sweet gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), and coral tree (*Erythrina corallodendron*).

In addition, castor bean (*Ricinus communis*), an invasive species, is also a preferred host, and may act as a vector between infestations, and between residential areas and wildlands. The pest complex is beginning to cause serious concern among public resource managers, municipal tree care agencies, consulting arborists, botanical gardens, and homeowners groups, as well as commercial avocado producers. A team of researchers at the University of California, Riverside, is assessing the ecology and potential for integrated pest management of the exotic pest complex, but at this time, the only recommendation is to attempt to quarantine infested trees and removed wood.

To determine if your trees are affected by this pest:

- Look for a single entry/exit hole surrounded by wet discoloration of the outer bark.
- Scrape off the bark layer around the infested area to look for brown discolored necrosis caused by the fungus.
- Follow the gallery to look for the beetle (may or may not be present).
- Sterilize tools to prevent to spread of the disease with either 25 percent household

bleach, Lysol cleaning solution, or 70 percent ethyl alcohol.

- Look for other hosts (castor bean, sycamore, maple, coast live oak, goldenrain, liquidambar) showing symptoms of the beetle/disease.

To protect your trees, avoid movement of infested firewood and chipping material out of infested areas. Preliminary research has shown that for some host species, chipping to smaller than 2 inches may be effective, but data collection and analysis on this, as well as the use of insecticides and fungicides to treat or prevent infection, are ongoing. If you suspect that you have found this beetle or seen symptoms of the Fusarium dieback on your tree please contact the Ventura Cooperative Extension office, or your pest control advisor or qualified arborist. You are also encouraged to contact Akif Eskalen either by phone at (951) 827-3499 or by email at akif.eskalen@ucr.edu. For more information visit <http://ucanr.edu/sites/socaloakpests/>.

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

Take care when working near a tractor PTO

By Mike Klimenko

Most farmers and ranchers know of someone who has been hurt by a power takeoff. Like many farm machines, the PTO can be a useful tool, but it is also a potentially lethal one. Used correctly, it can power your augers, mowers, choppers, and other implements. Used in the wrong way, it can cause serious injury or death.

The National Safety Council estimates that PTOs account for 6 percent of tractor-related fatalities on the farm. In seven out of 10 of those incidents the victim is the tractor operator, and in the majority of cases the shield was either missing or damaged. Entanglement most frequently takes place at the PTO coupling, either at the tractor or implement connection.

If your workplace uses any PTO-driven machinery, we recommend that you follow these recommendations and share them with others:

- Always disengage the PTO and turn off the equipment before leaving the operator's seat or approaching a driveline. If the PTO is engaged and the equipment ignition is left

on during maintenance, inspection or other tasks, a serious entanglement hazard exists.

- Instruct all workers and visitors who might come near an operating PTO unit about the entanglement hazard.
- Instruct all children and untrained adolescents never to approach, operate or perform maintenance on PTO-driven machinery.
- Loose-fitting clothing or jewelry should not be worn near operating equipment or machinery.
- Equipment operators should tie back or otherwise secure loose hair and should understand that even short or tied-back hair could get entangled in moving equipment.
- Identify PTO-driven equipment components (such as drivelines, drive chains or gears) on all machinery.
- Maintain machine guarding according to the manufacturer's most current specifications and OSHA regulations.
- Examine PTO-driven machinery for U-shaped tunnel guards and replace them with retrofit guards recommended by the manufacturer or dealer.
- Check periodically (continued on page 3)

Notes from the CEO

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overall strategy for conserving the groundwater resources of western Ventura County. Little wonder that UWCD's board members were a bit testy on Feb. 12.

On the Oxnard Plain, groundwater conditions are even more alarming. Falling groundwater levels – a consequence of long-term overdraft, exacerbated by the drought – makes it likely that wells supplying the Pumping Trough Pipeline will cease to function by late summer or early fall. That will take the PTP system offline and leave growers on about 4,600 prime acres with little or no water for the remainder of the growing season.

The decline in aquifer storage also prompted the Fox Canyon Groundwater management Agency to ask county staff to develop an emergency ordinance to address the issue. As this newsletter was going to the printer, it was unclear what action the GMA board would take (it was to discuss the proposals at its Feb. 26 meeting). But the measures proposed by the draft ordinance would instruct

all groundwater pumpers in the Fox Canyon system to reduce their extractions or face stiff financial penalties.

The proposed reductions would be 20 percent (compared to 2013 use) for municipal and industrial pumpers, as well as for agricultural users with access to imported state water, and 10 percent for all other agricultural pumpers.

The challenge for growers already using highly efficient irrigations systems is that their crops will simply die if they don't receive adequate water – they can't just cut back and hope the plants won't notice, or will simply grow more slowly and/or produce smaller yields. Faced with already narrow profit margins, and a potentially dramatic increase in water costs if they apply the irrigation water required to meet the crop's needs, some growers may find themselves doing the unthinkable: leaving some of the most expensive and productive farmland in the nation fallow until the drought breaks.

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

Groundwater crisis to be focus of water symposium

State Water Resources Control Board chairwoman Felicia Marcus will be the keynote speaker on April 24 during the 24th Annual Water Symposium hosted by the Association of Water Agencies of Ventura County. This year's symposium, titled "Overtapped Oasis," focuses on the looming crisis threatening local groundwater supplies.

The event will be from 7 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Tractor PTO

(cont'd from page 2)

with manufacturers, dealers, and University of California Cooperative Extension farm advisors for updated information about retrofit guards for PTOs.

- Wait until both the driveline and the machinery have completely stopped moving before performing maintenance or adjustments.

- Follow the manufacturer's instructions whenever maintenance or adjustments are performed on PTO-driven machinery.

— *Mike Klimenko is Farm Bureau group manager for State Compensation Insurance Fund. Contact him at mnklimenko@scif.com.*

at Courtyard by Marriott, 600 East Esplanade Drive, Oxnard. The symposium will include a vendor exposition and lunch. Tickets will go on sale soon at www.awavc.org. For more information, contact AWA at awa@awavc.org.

Attendees will learn about how local groundwater basins work, how they are managed and regulated, and what other regions have done to address the problems facing Ventura County. The program will include a panel discussion featuring representatives of major user groups and management agencies.

Before her appointment to the Water Board, Marcus was the western director for the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC). Prior to joining NRDC, she was the executive vice president and chief operating officer of the Trust for Public Land. Before coming to TPL, she served as regional administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Region IX in the Clinton Administration. A former manager of the Los Angeles' Department of Public Works, she was a Schwarzenegger administration appointee to the Delta Stewardship Council before being appointed to the Water Resources Control Board.

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 Cissy Perez-Haas at (805) 289-0155. Have your membership number handy. We accept Visa and MasterCard.

Aquarium of the Pacific — Adult (12+ yrs): \$19.95 (save \$9); Child (3-11 yrs): \$11.95 (save \$3). *Valid thru 12/31/14 except 4/11-13 & 12/25 2014.*

California Adventure and Disneyland 1-day Park Hopper — Adult (10+ yrs): \$131 (save \$6); Child (3-9 yrs): \$126 (save \$4). *Valid through 12/31/14.*

Cinemark Theatres — Platinum ticket, valid any show time at all Cinemark & Century locations: \$8.25 (savings \$2.75). *Additional premiums may be applied for specially priced films and/or events priced higher than normal box office. No expiration.*

Knott's Berry Farm — Buena Park/Palm Springs. Adult (12+ yrs) \$34.95 (save \$27.05); Junior (3-11 yrs) Senior (62+ yrs) \$29.95 (save \$3.05). *Valid thru 12/31/2014.*

Six Flags Magic Mountain — General use ticket (3+ yrs): \$40.95 (save \$27.04). *Valid thru 9/28/14.*

Regal Cinemas — Unrestricted tickets \$8.25 (regularly \$9.50 Sun.-Thurs, \$10 Fri.-Sat). *Good at Edwards, Regal, Signature and United Artists Theaters. No expiration.*

San Diego Sea World — Adult (10+ yrs) \$68.95 (save \$15.05); Child (3-9 yrs) \$68.95 (save \$9.05). *Valid thru 12/31/14.*

San Diego Safari Park — (Formerly Wild Animal Park) Adult-African Tram Safari: \$39 (save \$7) (12+ yrs); Child-African Tram Safari: \$31 (save \$5) (3-11 yrs). *Africa Tram Safari includes admission, unlimited rides on the Africa Tram, and all shows & exhibits. Valid through 01/31/15.*

San Diego Zoo — Adult (12+ yrs): \$39 (save \$7). Child (3-11 yrs): \$31 (save \$5). *Includes admission, unlimited use of Guided Bus Tour, Express Bus, Skyfari Aerial Tram and all shows & exhibits. Valid through 01/31/15.*

See's Candy gift certificate — One-pound box \$14.95 (Save \$2.05). *No expiration.*

"E Tickets" are available for certain amusement parks.

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