

Notes from the CEO

By John Krist

Part of the program at Farm Bureau's annual meeting last month was my report to the membership on the organiza-

tion's notable activities, challenges and accomplishments over the preceding year. For those members who were unable to attend, here's a summary of that report.

The past 12 months have been extremely challenging for the agricultural community, which has faced intensified pressure from invasive pests as well as fallout from the worsening drought. Farm Bureau of Ventura County has been chal-

lenged as well, as it seeks to support the industry and seek solutions – or at least coping mechanisms – for some of the highest-priority threats.

Annual Meeting Report:
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Programs

Ventura County Agricultural Irrigated Lands Group

Over the past year, the VCAILG program's focus has been continuing to survey growers about best management practices (BMPs) they have implemented to address water-quality issues. This has enabled us to establish baseline data that will be critical as we seek to better target efforts to address persistent exceedences of state and federal pollution standards.

The coming year will be an important one for VCAILG. The Conditional Waiver we currently operate under will expire in October, and we have already begun internally discussing our renewal strategy with the VCAILG Steering Committee and our consultants. This year, we have included representatives of the small discharger group that represents nursery operators in Los Angeles County in those discussions. We've also had preliminary meetings about objectives and timelines with Regional Board staff.

As was the case with the 2010 waiver renewal, our overall objective is to keep the program intact and unchanged for another five-year term. Although we anticipate a renewal battle with skeptical environmental groups that strongly oppose the waiver and

have been successful in other regions in forcing costly and onerous changes in irrigated-lands regulations, we believe we have a powerful positive story to tell about the efforts Ventura County growers are making to improve water quality.

Membership

Farm Bureau faces new challenges to maintaining its membership base. Historically, about half the organization's members have been in the associate category, which is for individuals who do not derive income from agriculture. Most of them joined because of Farm Bureau group insurance plans and discounts offered by Health Net, Nationwide and State Compensation Insurance Fund. But the Affordable Care Act eliminated the value of group health plans, Nationwide is being required to phase out its discount program for Farm Bureau members, and SCIF has discontinued its Farm Bureau group. The result has been a steep decline in associate Farm Bureau membership statewide.

Our Board of Directors and its membership committee are developing new programs and benefits to bolster our core agricultural membership, and Farm Bureaus throughout the state are doing the same. Meanwhile, the California Farm Bureau Federation board, its membership committee and CFBF's Marketing and Member Relations Division are seeking new industry partnerships to complement those local efforts.

Education and outreach

Earlier this year, we launched a comprehensive overhaul of the Farm Bureau website. In addition to making it compatible with mobile and tablet devices, we are streamlining the way it is organized, updating the content and greatly expanding the elements related to membership recruiting and retention. We'll also be more closely linking it to our very popular *Central Coast Farm & Ranch* magazine, to offer new opportunities for digital advertising to complement the print product.

The magazine and website also will play an important role in a new program we plan to launch later this year: a "Friends of Ventura County Farming" affinity club, which will allow members of the community who support local food and local farmers to demonstrate this support by purchasing a relatively inexpensive club membership.

In addition to a subscription to *Central Coast Farm & Ranch* (currently available only to Farm Bureau members), they'll receive targeted news and

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Hansen education program celebrates another successful year

By Susana Bruzzone-Miller

It's time to reflect on another highly successful education season at the UC Hansen Agricultural Research and Extension Center (HAREC). The 4-H Youth Development Programs at HAREC, which consist of farm field trips, classroom outreach, a student farm and the Sustainable You! Summer Camp, served more than 5,000 Ventura County youth in the past year. The triumph of these programs is due to dedicated UC volunteers, staff and the many educators throughout the county that support these efforts. As demand for agriculture literacy, nutrition, food systems and sustainability education increases, the education team is busy forming partnerships in the community that will help further extend our reach.

One such collaboration is with Ventura Unified School District (VUSD). With the leadership of a Food Corps member assigned

to the district and nearly a quarter-acre of land at the HAREC, the 4-H Student Farm was established and has now completed its second year. The afterschool program meets weekly during fall and spring quarters. This year both Balboa and De Anza Middle School students had the opportunity to learn plant science and the nuts and bolts of farming. From seed to plate, they participated in many aspects of the food system – planting, harvesting, cooking, tasting and composting as well as transporting produce back to the school cafeteria and giving back to the community by donating to Food Share. More than 900 pounds of food was produced on the student farm.

Additionally, VUSD Farm to School nutrition educators teamed with HAREC staff this spring to give fifth- and sixth-graders the opportunity to spend a full day of food systems education at the center. The district

facilitated transportation, using California Department of Education funds, for 475 students. The field trips enabled youth to see where food comes from, specifically some of the produce grown for their school salad bars.

HAREC will again host Sustainable You! Summer Camp, a program that teaches youth, ages 9-12, what it means to be sustainable through fun hands-on activities. Each day of camp revolves around one of the five major sustainability themes: land, water, food, air and energy. This year, the education team partners with the City of Ventura Sustainability Division. The city's environmental educators will share their expertise and educational resources to help extend camp activities at the Center. This teamwork will no doubt help strengthen an already enlightening program.

Preparation for fall programming has already begun and the education team looks forward to building more partnerships in the coming year.

— Susana Bruzzone-Miller is the education outreach coordinator at the UC Hansen Agricultural Research and Extension Center. Contact her at sbmiller@ucanr.edu

Summer: Time to prepare for hot weather

By Mike Burns

Working outdoors during the hot summer months puts special demands on the body's cooling system. Under certain conditions, a person's body may have trouble regulating its temperature. The harder a person works, the more heat his or her body needs to lose.

This year, Cal/OSHA has updated its heat illness regulations, effective May 1, 2015. Some of the notable changes include:

- Water is to be as close as practical to where employees are working and must be "fresh, pure, and suitably cool."
- Shade is to be present at 80 degrees and must accommodate all employees on break, and for all meal periods onsite.
- A 10-minute cool down rest period every two hours must be allowed when temperatures equal or exceed 95 degrees.
- New employees must become acclimated and closely monitored for their first 14 days on the job. Close observation of all employees must be done during a heat wave of 80 degrees or higher.

Two of the heat-related conditions that are of greatest concern are heat stress and heat stroke.

Heat stress occurs when the body builds more heat than it can handle. In its less severe form, it can lead to cramps, rash,

and exhaustion. Whether mild, moderate or severe, heat stress can come on suddenly and be dangerous to your health. But if you're prepared, you can prevent heat-related problems.

One of the most serious threats to people working in a high-temperature environment is heat stroke. Heat stroke occurs when the body has used up all of its water and salt and stops sweating as a result. This can cause the body temperature to rise. The victim may be weak, confused, upset, or acting strangely. In its more advanced stages, heat stroke may cause the victim to pass out or have convulsions.

If you observe a person showing signs of heat stroke, it is imperative to act immediately because this condition can kill a person very quickly. The first thing to do is call 911 to call in professional help. Once you have done that, remove excess clothing from the victim and try to cool his or her body by fanning or spraying with cool water. Offer sips of water if the person is conscious.

— Mike Burns is Farm Bureau Group manager for State Compensation Insurance Fund. Contact him at mjburns@scif.com. Since 1943, the California Farm Bureau-State Fund partnership has provided affordable worker compensation insurance coverage and accident prevention training for agricultural employers and their employees.

Notes from the CEO

(cont'd from front page)

information about local farm happenings, discounts on products and services, and gifts such as tote bags and books. Our hope is that in addition to providing an additional source of revenue for Farm Bureau, the affinity program will increase public understanding and support of Ventura County agriculture by tapping growing consumer interest in the stories behind local food and the local landscape – stories we tell in each issue of the magazine.

Local Issues

Water

The past year has brought unprecedented water-supply challenges to Ventura County agriculture. With the severe drought entering its fourth year, local resources have been strained to the breaking point, prompting system outages and emergency legislation that is already having a significant impact on producers. Additionally, passage of the landmark Sustainable

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Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) has set in motion a dramatic and long-term change in our approach to local groundwater management.

Over the past year, Farm Bureau has taken a leadership role in helping the farming and ranching community respond, by organizing workshops, hosting stakeholder meetings, and convening commodity groups to develop formal responses to proposed regulatory measures. Our efforts will expand in coming months, as we monitor the establishment of groundwater sustainability agencies as required by SGMA, and ensure that agricultural groundwater users have a seat at the table as those agencies begin developing groundwater sustainability plans for Ventura County's basins.

Agricultural groundwater users and property owners in some basins are already organized, or are in the process of doing so. In areas where that is not yet the case, Farm Bureau is working with other local organizations – including Ventura County Agricultural Association; Coalition of Labor, Agriculture and Business; and California Women for Agriculture – to facilitate and support such efforts.

The new groundwater law grants an explicit role in basin governance only to public agencies, although it does require broad consultation with stakeholders as basin plans are developed. Farm Bureau's objective is to help growers and landowners participate in that process effectively by enabling them to work together and speak with one voice.

Pests

Farm Bureau continued to play a leadership role in coordinating the Ventura County citrus industry's response to the spread of Asian citrus psyllid throughout Southern California. The past year saw a significant shift in the program's focus and a dramatic increase in the time and effort required to manage it.

Driving this dramatic increase in workload has been an equally dramatic increase in the scale of the ACP infestation. Our countywide eradication and suppression campaign, conducted under the oversight of the Ventura County ACP-HLB Task Force, worked extremely well for nearly four years. By late 2014, however, it was clear that

parts of the county had become generally infested, necessitating adoption of a new strategy. Rather than try to locally eradicate ACP populations by spraying pesticides in response to trap detections, we developed an area-wide management (AWM) strategy as recommended by the university researchers and scientists advising the Citrus Pest and Disease Prevention Program.

The goal of that strategy is to treat a very large area in a coordinated fashion during a very short period of time, two or three times a year, to achieve maximum suppression of the adult ACP population. Based on the pattern of trap finds, the Task Force determined that the eastern Santa Clara River Valley would be the first of Ventura County's production areas to implement AWM. Coordinated treatments there began in January and wrapped around the beginning of April. Beginning this fall, the Santa Clara AWM treatment zones will likely be extended west of Santa Paula, and we will be adding the Las Posas and Santa Rosa Valleys, including Camarillo, Moorpark and Somis, to the program.

Managing a program that involves hundreds of growers, pest-control advisors, applicators and packinghouses, across thousands of acres of citrus, is difficult. We are still evaluating the effectiveness of our initial effort in the Fillmore-Piru-Bardsdale area, and we plan to use what we've learned from that experience to improve our strategy. Cooperation within the industry has been good, and having a second grower liaison on hand to assist will certainly help as we scale up the program.

Recent data analysis indicates a strong likelihood that HLB has begun spreading across Southern California, even though there has been no official determination of infection beyond a single tree in Hacienda Heights. But the prudent course is to assume it has, and to try to work out the flaws in our suppression program before the disease arrives in Ventura County – which will probably happen sooner than we think.

— John Krist is chief executive officer of the Farm Bureau of Ventura County. Contact him at 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 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 12/31/15.

California Adventure and Disneyland 1-Day

Park Hopper — Adult (10+ yrs): \$144 (save \$6); Child (3-9 yrs): \$139 (save \$5). Valid thru 12/31/15.

Cinemark & Century Theatres — Platinum ticket, valid all show times at all Cinemark & Century locations: \$8.75 (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) \$36.95 (save \$28.05); Junior (3-11 yrs) Senior (62+ yrs) \$32.95 (save \$2.05). Valid thru 12/31/2015.

Legoland — "E" tickets only. Adult (13+ yrs) \$74.95 (save \$10.05); Child (3-12 yrs) \$69.96 (save \$9.05). Includes 2nd day free ticket within 90 days of 1st visit.

Resort Hopper Ticket — "E" Ticket only. Adult (13+ yrs) \$79.95 (save \$29.05); Child (3-12 yrs) \$74.95 (save \$28.05). Includes 2 visits to Legoland, including new Waterpark (seasonal) and 2 visits to Sea Life Aquarium. Valid thru 12/31/2015.

Magic Mountain — \$43.50 (savings \$26.49) General use ticket (3 yrs. +). Valid thru 9/27/15.

Regal Cinemas — Unrestricted tickets \$8.75 (regularly \$9.50 Sun.-Thurs, \$10 Fri.-Sat). Good at Edwards, Regal, Signature and United Artists Theaters. No expiration.

San Diego Safari Park

(Formerly Wild Animal Park)
Adult-African Tram Safari: \$40.75 (save \$7.25) (12+ yrs);
Child-African Tram Safari: \$33 (save \$5) (3-11 yrs). African Tram Safari includes admission, unlimited use of the Journey into Africa Tour, Conservation Carousel and other shows/exhibits. Valid through 12/31/15.

San Diego Sea World – 2nd Day Free Ticket. First Visit must occur on or before 9/30/15. 2nd Visit valid thru 12/25/2015. Adult (10 yrs. +) \$57 (save \$32); Child (3-9 yrs.) \$57 (save \$26).

San Diego Zoo — Adult (12+ yrs): \$40.75 (save \$7.25). Child (3-11 yrs): \$33 (save \$5). Includes admission, unlimited use of Guided Bus Tour, Express Bus, Skyfari Aerial Tram and all shows & exhibits. Valid through 12/31/15.

See's Candy gift certificate — One-pound box \$15.45 (Save \$2.05). No expiration.

"E Tickets" — Disneyland: 1 day/1 park, 2 day/1 park, 2 Day Park Hopper. Universal Studios, buy 1 day, get "2015" FREE (3+ yrs). Valid thru 12/31/15. Blackout dates apply after first visit.

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