

## Notes from the CEO

By John Krist

For the past two months, Farm Bureau has invested a significant amount of time and energy in the effort to prepare Ventura County for the likely arrival of the Asian citrus psyllid (ACP), an invasive insect pest that carries the citrus-killing disease Huanglongbing (HLB). As I reported to you in the January newsletter, the Farm Bureau has convened a countywide task force to coordinate an education and outreach program so that the region is prepared to respond effectively when the pest arrives.

And by “effectively,” I mean capable of detecting an ACP infestation as soon as it occurs, and killing every last one of the bugs as quickly as possible.

The Task Force and its Steering Committee, both chaired by Farm Bureau President Leslie Leavens-Crowe, have met several times to develop a strategy for informing members of the community about the magnitude of the threat – the possible extinction of Ventura County’s citrus industry and the loss of every backyard lemon, orange, lime and mandarin – and enlisting their help in the effort

to detect and swiftly eradicate the pest before it can become established.

The Farm Bureau board last month approved startup funding for the project, with the understanding that additional funds will be sought to cover expenses and to reimburse the organization, and we hired a part-time contract project manager to coordinate day-to-day logistics of the complex undertaking. The Task Force has obtained and begun distributing a variety of printed materials, including fliers and ACP identifica-

tion kits that include small magnifying glasses. Steering Committee members have also begun an aggressive series of public presentations to elected leaders, community groups and other organizations.

That schedule has included individual briefings for members of the Board of Supervisors, followed by a public presentation during the March 16 board meeting, as well as presentations to a number of community and city councils, the Association of Water Agencies, an assortment of Rotary and Lions clubs, and other organizations. We have also personally briefed Rep. Lois Capps,

Assemblymember Audra Strickland and Sen. Fran Pavley, and discussed ACP-HLB with the staffs of Rep. Elton Gallegly, Assemblymember Pedro Nava and Sen. Tony Strickland.

These efforts resulted in widespread media coverage, including newspaper stories in the Ventura County Star, Moorpark and Simi Valley Acorns, and Santa Paula Times; television reports on stations KEYT and KABC, radio coverage by KCLU; and even a posting on Sunset magazine’s gardening blog.

I have added a pest issues page to the Farm Bureau website ([www.farmbureauvc.com/pest.html](http://www.farmbureauvc.com/pest.html)) and have created a Facebook page for the Ventura County ACP-HLB Task Force, allowing us to post materials, updates and links in a central location. We also set up a dedicated phone line (805-535-8641) to field calls related to ACP-HLB and the Task Force activities, along with an email address: [taskforce@farmbureauvc.com](mailto:taskforce@farmbureauvc.com).

We are continuing to expand the campaign and are pursuing additional opportunities to spread the word. The most recent detection of ACP puts the bug in Van Nuys, just seven miles from the Ventura County line. If it hasn’t already made its way into a suburban yard somewhere in Ventura County, it will soon. We have very little time to educate the community about this threat and what individuals can do to help combat it.

If you have any suggestions or would like to help the Task Force spread the message – by distributing ACP-HLB materials at your farm, roadside stand or farmers market booth; by inviting us to make a presentation to your community group, church, school or other organization; or by inserting information (which we can provide in ready-to-use format) in your newsletter, please get in touch with us using the phone number or email address listed above.

### Grading ordinance revision continues

Members of the Farm Bureau leadership team, along with several other representatives of the agricultural community, participated April 12 in a workshop organized by the County Public Works Department to solicit stakeholder input as the county develops a new grading ordinance.

As I reported last month, the Board of Supervisors has directed county staff to revise the grading ordinance and do away with the Hillside Erosion Control Ordinance permits that historically been issued by the Resource Conservation District. Instead, grading involving operations on both hillsides and flat land will be regulated under a single ordinance, administered and enforced by the County Public Works Agency.

The county defines grading as “The movement, removal or deposit of earth materials by artificial means,” which obviously encompasses a wide range of customary (continued on page 3)

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### What’s Inside?

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- Member Benefits

# Strawberry plants can be established with less water

By Oleg Daugovish

Three years of drought and a very mild El Niño year with moderate rainfall make everyone worry about already scarce water reserves in 2010. Homeowners are encouraged to collect rainwater, grow native plants instead of lush green lawns and take short showers together.

As the temperatures go up in summer, so does the demand for water. However, every October, water pumping doubles even when compared to summer months. This water is used to sprinkler-irrigate

newly planted strawberries, a main crop of Ventura County.

At that time the most frequent question I hear from the public is “Why do they irrigate plastic?” Indeed, it is hard to see the small leaf-

less transplants in slits cut in the plastic mulch that covers the beds. And it is obvious that only a fraction of water applied by sprinklers reaches the plant, while most of it runs off the plastic to furrows. The explanation that overhead water provides salt leaching and instant hydration of sensitive plants does not seem to satisfy everyone.

In previous years, we have been learning about strawberry establishment without overhead water in small-scale plots at Hansen Agricultural Center. In 2009-2010, in collaboration with Reiter Affiliated Companies, Resource Conservation District folks, Cal Poly engineer Stuart Styles and John Deere, we were able to run a large scale field test.

We compared standard overhead sprinkler irrigation with either partial sprinkler irrigation or drip-only irrigation. Normally, the two drip lines are placed between four future plant rows. In drip-only beds, we tested four drip lines, either buried or placed on bed surface in planting rows, intending to provide water to the plants and move salts away from them.

Here’s what we have learned from this study:

- Water use was reduced 34 percent in drip-only treatments and 20 percent in the reduced sprinkler irrigation treatment compared to standard sprinkler irrigation

- Runoff was nonexistent in drip-only plots and the furrows remained dry.

- Soil pore EC (a measure of salinity) was generally greater in drip-only treatments than in sprinkler irrigation treatments, ranging from 3.4 to 7.9 dS/m. In drip-only plots, placement of four drip lines on the bed surface and in planting rows reduced EC of soil 10 to 40 percent

- Additional costs were approximately \$110 per acre for moving drip to the surface and about \$200 for doubling the number of drip lines. These costs may be offset by savings in water, and sprinkler pipe movement.

- Strawberry mortality was 70 percent greater in plots where drip tape was buried compared to standard sprinkler, but was less than 2 percent in all treatments, a level acceptable for commercial production.

- Incidence of leaf spot and leaf blotch diseases on strawberry leaves was 75 percent lower in drip and reduced-sprinkler treatments compared to standard sprinkler irrigation.

- Strawberry plants were 13 to 18 percent smaller under standard irrigation compared to other treatments, but more

uniform in size.

- New root biomass in reduced-sprinkler and surface-drip treatment was 26 percent and 51 percent greater, respectively, than with either standard sprinkler or buried drip irrigation.

- Early fruit yield was similar among treatments.

These results suggest that reduced irrigation and precise water placement can be adequate for strawberry establishment, provide substantial savings in water, and may protect plants from water-splash pathogens. Drip-only establishment, however, may only become possible if increased attention is given to salt leaching prior to planting, accurate and timely soil moisture and salinity monitoring is conducted, and water delivery to plants is flawless. It may be wise to start with a partial sprinkler system before converting to drip-only water delivery for strawberry establishment.

— Oleg Daugovish is a farm advisor with the University of California Cooperative Extension office in Ventura, specializing in strawberries and vegetable crops. Contact him at [odaugovish@ucdavis.edu](mailto:odaugovish@ucdavis.edu).

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## UCCE to host fumigant workshop

The University of California Cooperative Extension office in Ventura will host a free workshop on May 7 titled “Alternative Fumigants and Fumigant Alternatives: Research Updates.” The workshop will be from 8 a.m to noon, followed by lunch, at the UCCE conference room, 669 County Square Drive, Ventura. The program is as follows:

8-8:30a.m.	Registration.
8:30-9:00	Latest regulations for fumigant use: Rudy Martel, deputy Ventura County agricultural commissioner.
9-9:30	Alternative fumigants and emission reduction technologies: Husein Ajwa, UC Davis.
9:30-10:00	Raised-bed trough substrate systems: Ian Green, Tom Sjulín, California Strawberry Commission, Watsonville.
10:00-10:30	Soil disinfestation with steam or hot gas: Steve Fennimore, UC Davis.
10:30-10:45	BREAK
10:45-11:15	Anaerobic soil disinfestations: Carol Shennan, Joji Muramoto, UC Santa Cruz.
11:15-11:30	Biofumigational potential of mustards: Oleg Daugovish, UCCE-Ventura.
11:30-Noon	California Strawberry Commission update – regulations and research: Dan Legard, CSC.
12-12:45 p.m.	LUNCH (provided)

Continuous education credits (including laws and regulations) have been requested from California Department of Pesticide Regulation. If you require special arrangements, translation into Spanish or have further questions, please contact Oleg Daugovish at UCCE-Ventura: (805) 645-1454 or [odaugovish@ucdavis.edu](mailto:odaugovish@ucdavis.edu).

## Notes from the CEO *(cont'd from p. 1)*

agricultural activities and therefore means the ordinance revision has the potential to affect every farmer and rancher in the county.

There were some dismaying moments during the workshop, as representatives of the agricultural community struggled to help county staff understand the implications of the regulatory approaches they are considering, and to inform them about the kinds of soil-movement activities that are necessary for any agricultural operation. But the county's representatives seemed to recognize the gaps in their understanding and appeared to be paying attention to the information and suggestions offered by stakeholders in the audience.

The next test will come on April 26, at a second workshop for agricultural stakeholders. At that time, county staff will return with some suggested guidelines, based on the input provided April 12, that outline which kinds of activities would be exempt from permit requirements and county review. County staff repeatedly said their goal was to minimize the burden on agricultural operations and to exempt a broad range of routine and traditional cultural practices. We will continue to monitor the county's efforts throughout the process – up to and including eventual consideration of the ordinance by the Board of Supervisors – to ensure that this is, indeed, the case.

Involvement in this process is frustrating, but it is critical that we remain engaged at each step. If we do not, we forfeit the right to be taken seriously if we raise objections in the final phase.

### Other land-use decisions

On April 6, the Board of Supervisors approved a package of amendments to the county's Scenic Resource Protection (SRP) Ordinance, which applies to designated SRP zones (currently along ridgelines visible from designated scenic roads and lakes).

Neither the Farm Bureau nor the Ventura County Agricultural Association provided formal comments or testimony on the matter, which may have led some in the agricultural community to conclude that we were not aware of the proposal.

In fact, Farm Bureau had already reviewed the SRP proposal and concluded that its overall impact on Ventura County agriculture was trivial and did not warrant further attention. The Farm Bureau directors had also received a report on the matter from fellow board member and Planning Commissioner Steve Onstot, who had joined other planning commissioners in approving the changes after concluding that they had only minimal implications for agriculture.

What actually was on the April 6 Board of Supervisors agenda was a fairly narrow set of minor modifications to the SRP Ordinance, and to the way it is applied on unincorporated land near Thousand Oaks. These modifications consist of several elements:

1. Removing land around Lake Sherwood from the Scenic Protection zone because it is already a developed area and subject to rather rigorous restrictions imposed specifically on that community.

2. Minor changes to the regulations governing development in the Lake Sherwood area, to make them consistent with other county policies.

3. Minor changes in the county regulations governing ridgeline construction within the Thousand Oaks sphere of influence, to make them consistent with that city's existing regulations.

4. Amendments to the SRP ordinance, as follows:

- Instead of requiring a planned development permit for dwellings in SRP zones and a Conditional Use Permit for other types of projects in those zones, all regulated projects and activities will require only a PD permit, which is less onerous to obtain than a CUP. This is actually an improvement from an agricultural standpoint.

- Grading standards were relaxed so that fewer projects in SRP zones require a permit. Previously, the law required a discretionary permit for any grading of more than 1,000 cubic feet or involving a cut or fill of more than two feet in height; the amendment raised that threshold to a cut or fill height of five feet. Again, from an ag standpoint, that's an improvement.

- Language was added to the ordinance specifically exempting re-grading and vegetation removal on farmland from the permit requirement. Previously, the ordinance had been silent on this matter, although it has been county policy not to require permits for such activities. Again, this was an improvement, and it was made in response to early comments by Farm Bureau and others regarding this issue before the draft was publicly released.

- Thresholds pertaining to construction or expansion of structures in the SRP zones were modified so that small buildings are exempted from the permit requirements (they previously were not) and larger expansions are allowed before permits are required. This was another improvement, from an ag standpoint.

- Previous rules require a permit for any removal of more than 1,000 square feet of vegetation in an SRP zone; *(cont'd on back page)*

## 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 (Age 12+): \$18.95 (save \$5); Child (age 3-11): \$10.95 (save \$1). Valid through 12/31/10.

**California Adventure and Disneyland one-day Park Hopper** — Adult (age 10+): \$86 (save \$11); Child (age 3-9): \$78 (save \$9). Valid 4/25/10 thru 1/31/11.

**Knott's Berry Farm** — Adult (48" + tall): \$29.95 (save \$22.04); Junior (age 3+, under 48" tall): \$21.95 (save \$2.04). Valid through 12/31/10.

**Knott's Soak City** (Buena Vista, Chula Vista, & Palm Springs) — Regular Ticket (age 12+ yrs): \$21.95 (Save-\$9.05). Junior Ticket (age 3-11) or Senior Ticket (62+ - \$19.95 (Save \$.04). Valid any 1 day of the 2010 season.

**Legoland** — General use ticket: \$51.95 (save \$15 adult, \$5 child). Triple Park General: \$62.95 (save \$24 adult, \$14 child) Valid through 12/31/10. Includes two visits to Legoland, including new Water Park opening Memorial Day weekend, and two visits to Sea Life Aquarium.

**Magic Mountain** — General use ticket: Adult (48" + tall): \$25.95, (save \$29.04); Child (under 48" tall): \$16 (save \$11.50). Valid through 12/31/10.

**Raging Waters** — General Use Ticket: \$23 (Save \$13.99) (For all persons greater than 48" tall). Valid any 1 day of the 2010 season.

**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 : "Two Days of Fun"** — Adult (age 10+): \$57.95 (save \$11.05); Child (age 3-9): \$52 (save \$7). Valid through 12/31/10.

**San Diego Wild Animal Park** — Adult (age 12+): \$31.95 (save \$5.05). Child (age 3-11): \$23.95 (save \$3.05). Valid through 12/15/10.

**San Diego Zoo** — Adult (age 12+): \$31.95 (save \$5.05). Child (age 3-11): \$23.95 (save \$3.05). Valid through 12/15/10.

**See's Candy** gift certificate — One-pound box \$13.45 (Save \$2.65)

**Six Flags Hurricane Harbor** — General Use Ticket: (48" tall +) — \$19.95 (Save \$5.04). Child (under 48" tall) — \$14 (Save \$5.99). Valid any 1 day of the 2010 season.

**Universal Studios: Buy a day, get 2010 free** — General Use Ticket (Age 3 +) - \$69. Must be activated by 6/30/2010 (Blackout dates listed on ticket). Proceed to Annual Pass Center to convert this ticket into a personalized pass. ID and finger scan required for park entry.

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### MISSION STATEMENT

We represent the collective interests of the agricultural industry, for the benefit of our members, in political and policy interactions with our urban and rural neighbors. We seek to be aggressive in promoting the interests of our members and are committed to the long-term success of agriculture in Ventura County.

## FARM BUREAU OF VENTURA COUNTY

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## Notes from the CEO *(cont'd from p. 3)*

this was amended to exempt fire-clearance activities.

The ordinance was amended so that even grading activities that would have required a permit under previous law can be exempted from the requirement if the property owner can demonstrate that the work would not be visible from a public vantage point. The ordinance did not previously allow such exemptions. That's another modest improvement.

That's it. There is currently no proposal to vastly expand the SRP ordinance restrictions to tens of thousands of acres of ag land on the Oxnard Plain and in other prime farming areas. If such a proposal is made in the future, it will be subject to considerable public review and comment, and Farm Bureau will take the lead in opposing it. We would expect to be joined in that opposition by other advocacy organizations with a longstanding history of credible involvement in issues relevant to agriculture.

— 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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## FARM BUREAU OF VENTURA COUNTY

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FARM BUREAU NEWSLETTER published monthly by the Farm Bureau of Ventura County. Subscription is included in membership fee. Subscription to non-members is \$10 per year. (USPS 896-880)

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Farm Bureau Newsletter  
 5156 McGrath St.  
 Ventura, CA 93003