

The Stanislaus Farm News

The *voice* of Stanislaus County Agriculture

STANISLAUS COUNTY



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See Hopyard Hounds on page 3

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February 25, 2025 Food Safety - FSMA

9:00-10:30am - Spanish
10:30-12:00pm - English

What is FSMA? Who does it apply to?
How do I comply? What should I expect during
an inspection?

Pricing: Member \$50/Nonmember \$60

June 5, 2025 CPR & First Aid

8:00-12:00pm - Spanish
1:00-5:00pm - English

CalOSHA requires that at least 1 employee for
every 20 employees be trained.

Pricing: Member \$100/Nonmember \$125

March 6, 2025 Pesticide Handler & Fit Testing

9:00-12:00pm - Spanish
1:00-4:00pm - English

This is an annual training required by the
Department of Pesticide Regulation.

Pricing: Member \$60/Nonmember \$75

July 31, 2025 Tractor Safety

9:00-10:00am - Spanish
10:00-11:00am - English

CalOSHA requires that employees who
operate equipment be trained annually.

Pricing: Member \$40/Nonmember \$50

May 1, 2025 Indoor&Outdoor Heat Illness Prevention

9:00-10:00am - Spanish
10:00-11:00am - English

CalOSHA requires this training annually for
employees.

Pricing: Member \$40/Nonmember \$50

October 23, 2025 Hazardous Ag Materials (HAM)

9:00-10:30am - Spanish
10:30-12:00pm - English

Everyone operating a class C vehicle carrying
hazardous material must be trained.

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To serve as the voice of Stanislaus County agriculture at all levels of government, while providing programs to assist its farms and family members and educate the general public of needs and importance to agriculture.

Hopyard Hounds

By Vicky Boyd

When they retired, Tim and Susan Dyke knew they wanted to grow something on their approximately 5 acres outside of Oakdale that would connect them to the community. Susan, formerly with the Oakdale Unified School District, said she envisioned producing fruits and vegetables and selling them at a roadside stand.

Tim, a home brewer who used to work for the city of Manteca, leaned toward cultivating hops. After all, he said, California was the largest producer of hops before Prohibition, and Hopyard Road in Pleasanton still pays homage to the crop.

“I just wanted to grow something, something that could be offered back to the community, and Tim liked to do things that are different and unusual,” Susan said.

They settled on hops and began Hopyard Hounds, a farm that pays homage to their late greyhound rescue dogs. Looking back at the five years since they started, the Dykes admitted they didn’t realize the back-breaking effort that would be needed. With each year, though, they added equipment or processes that increased their efficiency and eased the workload.

“We’re really proud of ourselves when we look back and see how much we’ve done on our own,” Susan said.

A HOPS EDUCATION

At these get-togethers, the Dykes were able to pick the brains of growers about different varieties and cultural practices as well as talk to brewers about the hop characteristics they sought.

Hops, a perennial climbing plant, is one of the four original ingredients of beer. Depending on the cultivar, hops impart bitterness, aromas or in the case of dual-purpose varieties, both.

These traits are produced by plant-based chemicals found in small lupulin glands in hop cones. Commercially, producers only use female hop bines since they bear seedless cones, and they typically cultivate hops clonally from rhizomes — underground stem-like growths.

The Dykes’ journey began with research, including attending NorCal Hops Growers Alliance meetings and classes in the Bay Area. What Susan said they quickly noticed was the brewing industry’s open and sharing philosophy.

Most of the U.S.-grown hops come from northern states, although the crop can definitely handle the Central Valley’s heat providing you irrigate properly. In the nation’s largest producer by far, Washington state, hops flourish in the eastern region where summer temperatures routinely reach 100-plus degrees.

What typically limits hops production is its

See Hops on page 4



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Tim and Susan Dyke have invested blood, sweat and tears into their 5-year-old Hopyard Hounds hops operation near Oakdale.

From Hops on page 3

sensitivity to day length. The crop does best with long hours of summer daylight, likes those seen in Washington and Idaho.

The Dykes' operation outside Oakdale receives about 45 minutes less daylight during summer's peak than where their rhizomes originated in Yakima, Washington. As a result, the Dykes' hops mature a few days earlier than those in eastern Washington and have slightly lower levels of plant-based flavor and aromatic compounds.

Nevertheless, Susan said their plants produce a "really nice product" and described the subtle differences as terroir, a French term used for the unique characteristics fostered by local environments.

A HIGH-WIRE ACT

Based on their research, the Dykes' settled on what they refer to as the four C's: Cascade, Cashmere, Chinook and Comet. They had another C, Centennial, but it didn't do well so they removed it.

Hop cones grow on bines, or climbing stems that curl around twine supports. To support the crop, growers typically build elaborate tall trellis systems. Using a tractor and auger, Susan and Tim erected theirs using 80 poles, each 20 feet long and sunk 4 feet into the soil. During the weekends, their grown children came to help, but most of the work was done by the couple.

Hops are considered a perennial crop, sprouting each spring from rhizomes. Once the bines started to emerge, the Dykes strung twine from the overhead wire supports down to the drip irrigation lines, where they secured them.

On hands and knees, they then selected three or four of the strongest bines and began training them up the coco coir twine, a biodegradable and compostable product made from coconut husks.

Susan said they'd walk the hopyard daily to twist new growth around the twine and to ensure the wind hadn't knocked off any. Growers only have a few days while the bine is limber to retwist

it around the twine before it hardens and becomes inflexible.

During the mid-August harvest, Tim guides a scissor lift down the rows, clipping the

Susan and Tim Dyke show off their hops harvester, with the scissor lift in the background.



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twine from the overhead wires. At the same time, Susan cuts the bines close to the rhizomes and snips the twine from where it was attached to the drip lines.

She then attaches the long bines onto hooks on a harvester, which drags them through fingers to separate the cones from the leaves and coco coir twine. A conveyor transports the cones into a side collection bin, while the other material runs out the rear for eventual composting.

POST-HARVEST CARE

But harvest is just the first of several steps that ultimately impacts quality and flavor. The essential oils and other compounds that give hops their distinctive characteristics also are subject to oxidation and spoilage.

Quickly and gently drying the hop cones after harvest is key to preserving the quality. The Dykes use a mobile kiln into which they stack the slotted harvest bins two high. First, they circulate ambient air from outside for eight hours, then use air heated to 105 degrees Fahrenheit to bring field moisture levels of 22%-25% down to 9%.

"It's another one of the challenges associated with drying. You try to dry quickly but not with too much heat," Tim said. "Every process you do is detrimental to the oils and aromas."

Susan agreed: "We like 9% because you still have a nice aroma and they're not too fragile. You can obviously ruin them if you don't dry them right."

The Dykes market their hops as whole cones. Many larger-scale growers who pelletize their hops dry them a bit more before crushing and extruding them to form the ¼- to ½-inch long masses.

After 20-24 hours of drying, the Dykes remove the hops and allow them to cool in the shade before packaging them in 5-pound bags, known as mini-bales, or 1-pound bags for home brewers.

As part of that, they use a new trash compactor to compress the fluffy cones. Then they use nitrogen to purge remaining oxygen before vacuum sealing the hops in Mylar bags, which protects them from light and oxidation. The packages can be stored at 26 F for up to two years. With each harvest, the Dykes also send samples to a testing lab to assay for several components, including alpha and beta acids, which impart bitterness, and total oil content, which is responsible for aroma. These are the characteristics many brewers want to know as they create or follow recipes.

The Dykes market their crop on their website, hopyardhounds.com, or through the Lupulin Exchange, lupulinexchange.com, an online trading platform and marketplace for hops. Many of their customers are from the East Coast, although Susan said they've also sold to home and craft brewers throughout the country.

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Dale Nicol on Syngenta, Farming Challenges, and Feeding the World

Source: AgNet West

A Lifetime in Agriculture

Few names in agriculture carry the respect and legacy of Dale Nicol, AgriEdge Manager at Syngenta and a proud native of Wasco, California. With over 45 years in the ag industry, Nicol's career began before he even graduated from Fresno State, working for Syngenta's legacy company, ICI Americas. Over the decades, he witnessed the evolution of the industry through mergers, acquisitions, and the birth of Syngenta in 2000.

Nicol's roots run deep in Wasco. A graduate of Wasco High School—and a former football player who proudly recalls victories over rival Shafter—he and his family remain deeply connected to the community. His wife serves on the Wasco High School Board, and the couple holds season tickets to support the Wasco Tigers.

The Growth of Syngenta

From its early days, Syngenta has grown into a global leader in crop protection and seed technology. Nicol emphasizes that the company's strength lies in its pipeline of innovative products, from herbicides and insecticides to fungicides and seed treatments.

"Syngenta has a process of bringing new products to market that is second to none," Nicol explains. His region spans the western United States, where different crops and climates demand tailored solutions. Whether it's North Dakota, the Pacific Northwest, California, or Arizona, Syngenta delivers targeted products to meet local challenges.

California: Innovation Under Pressure

California agriculture faces unique challenges as the most heavily regulated state

in the country. Farmers must navigate strict environmental and safety rules, often at higher costs than growers in other regions. Nicol points out that Syngenta invests in solutions such as biological soil treatments from Valagro (now Syngenta Biologicals) that improve water penetration and retention—an essential tool in a state with chronic water shortages.

But farming today is a far cry from the 1970s. Nicol recalls his father's decision to diversify by planting almonds when the crop was just emerging in California. Now, almonds dominate the state's agriculture, illustrating how innovation and adaptation remain crucial for survival.

Seeds, Technology, and Sustainability

Beyond crop protection, Syngenta is also a major seed supplier. Under brands like Golden Harvest and NK, the company provides corn and soybean seeds, while also operating a strong vegetable seed business. Syngenta ranks as the third-largest seed provider in the U.S. for corn and soybeans.

Nicol also leads Agri-Edge, Syngenta's grower program that combines crop protection with digital tools like CropWise Financials, CropWise Imagery, and CropWise Sustainability. These technologies support record keeping, satellite field imagery, and sustainability benchmarking, helping growers prove their environmental stewardship to buyers.


Economic and Political Pressures on Farmers

While technology advances, farmers continue to struggle with low commodity prices and global competition. Nicol highlights troubling examples:

- Potato growers in the Northwest losing money on uncontracted crops.
- California wine grape producers facing competition from frozen imports from South America and Australia.


For Nicol, the issue is fairness. California farmers operate under strict regulations

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that raise costs, while imported products often bypass those same standards. “We need a level playing field,” he stresses. The political climate also weighs heavily. Nicol criticizes one-party dominance in California and the influence of extreme environmental voices, arguing that many policymakers lack even basic knowledge of agriculture. He recalls a federal regulator asking where “the driver sits” on a center pivot irrigation system—a striking example of the disconnect between regulators and the realities of farming.

Stewardship, Education, and Advocacy

Despite challenges, Nicol believes in standing up for agriculture. He urges farmers and industry professionals to engage with lawmakers and educate them about the importance of farming. “So many people have no idea what we do in agriculture, but

they’re making the rules,” he says.

Syngenta, for its part, actively engages with state and federal governments to ensure farmers’ voices are heard. Nicol stresses that agriculture is not only about producing food but also about caring for the land: “Farmers are the greatest environmentalists. They take care of the land like no other.”

Feeding the World

As global populations grow and food demand increases, Nicol underscores the reality: there is not an infinite food supply. While affluent shoppers in places like Whole Foods may choose organic produce, the broader challenge is ensuring enough affordable food for everyone.

Syngenta’s mission, as Nicol summarizes,

is to “bring plant potential to life.” From innovative seed genetics to advanced crop protection, the company works to help growers produce abundant, sustainable harvests.

Conclusion

Dale Nicol’s decades of experience and advocacy embody the resilience of agriculture in California and beyond. He champions innovation, fairness, and education, reminding policymakers and consumers alike that “we feed the world here.”

For farmers, Syngenta offers solutions, partnerships, and a commitment to stewardship—helping ensure that future generations can continue to thrive in agriculture.

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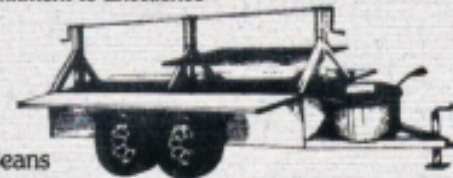
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Farm Bureau Advocacy Secures Delay in Harmful Coyote Management Proposal

By: Anna Genasci

California ranchers and livestock producers breathed a sigh of relief this spring after the California Fish and Game Commission decided to delay action on a proposal that could have drastically changed the way coyotes are managed in the state.

Currently, coyotes are classified as a non-game animal, which allows farmers, ranchers, and property owners to control them year-round without restrictions. A proposal brought before the Commission earlier this year sought to reclassify coyotes as a fur-bearing animal—a change that would have imposed stricter hunting regulations, limited management options, and created new burdens for livestock producers already facing predator pressures.

For Farm Bureau members across the state, this decision was more than just a procedural delay—it was a significant win that protects the day-to-day ability of ranchers to safeguard their animals and livelihoods.

Why It Matters

Coyotes are one of the most persistent predators California livestock producers face. They prey heavily on sheep, goats, and calves,

causing devastating losses for ranching families. These losses are not only financial but deeply personal, as ranchers work tirelessly to raise healthy animals only to see them taken by predators.

Steven Fenaroli, Director of Policy Advocacy for the California Farm Bureau Federation (CFBF), underscored the importance of keeping existing management tools in place.

“Coyotes are one of the most significant predators we face in California agriculture,” Fenaroli explained. “Livestock producers are already dealing with significant losses. Taking away management tools would only make a tough situation worse.”

If the proposal had advanced, ranchers would have faced new regulatory hurdles and fewer options for protecting their herds. Farm Bureau pushed back forcefully, emphasizing that predator control is not just about convenience—it’s about survival for many operations.

Farm Bureau Members Make the Difference

The delay by the Commission was due in large part to strong advocacy from Farm Bureau and the voices of ranchers who shared their stories. Members explained how coyote depredation affects their operations, making the case that further restrictions would be devastating.

According to reports from Ag Alert and Sierra Daily News, this unified response helped persuade the Commission to step back and reconsider, leaving the current classification of coyotes in place.

Fenaroli said the outcome underscores the power of grassroots involvement, over 1300 members and 32 County Farm Bureaus signed on to help:

“When producers raise their voices and Farm Bureau brings those stories to Sacramento, it makes a difference,” he said. “This wasn’t just about regulations—it was about protecting our way of life and ensuring California agriculture remains viable.”

Looking Ahead

While this represents a victory for agriculture, Fenaroli cautioned that the fight may not be over. The Fish and Game Commission could revisit the proposal in the future. Farm Bureau will remain vigilant, continuing to monitor the process and ensure that any future actions account for the realities of ranching in California.

In the meantime, producers are encouraged to stay engaged, share their experiences, and support Farm Bureau’s advocacy efforts.

“We need members to share their stories and losses with us,” Fenaroli urged. “That first-hand information is what equips us to fight effectively for agriculture.”

Hear More on the Podcast

For a deeper look at this issue and Farm Bureau’s work on behalf of livestock producers, you can listen to the full podcast interview with Steven Fenaroli on MyAgLife’s Farm Bureau Friday series.



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TUOLUMNE COUNTY FARM NEWS

Tuolumne County Farm Bureau had a great event this past month with its Annual BBQ and Auction. Thank you to all who came out and to the sponsors who helped make the event a true success!

"It was such an impressive event for our little county," shared Terri Arrington, Farm Bureau Board Director. "Every year we get almost 300 people. This year we had a great auction, signed up new members and as always, the dinner was unbelievably good."

We are so lucky to have Covers' Apple Crisps and BackCountry Horsemen's dutch oven desserts. BBQ and Auction always brings members of our amazing community out to support Tuolumne County Ag, and it's pretty special."

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Dairies use in vitro fertilization to tap strong beef market

Recent improvements in cattle reproductive technology have given dairy farmers access to a lucrative market segment. Within the past few years, more dairies have begun transferring beef cattle embryos to dairy cow surrogates, earning money amid soaring demand for the calves. "It's becoming a much bigger piece of the puzzle," Tulare County dairy farmer Blake Wilbur said. Retired dairy cows have long been used for low-priced steaks and ground beef. And during the past decade, breeding a portion of dairy herds with beef genetics has become common, as dairies earn a higher price for crossbred calves. More recently, embryos made through in vitro fertilization have enabled dairies to sell purebred calves into the beef supply chain.

Low prices, other woes put squeeze on farm economy

California farmers continue to face significant economic challenges as they contend with lower commodity prices and soaring production costs that have been made worse by inflation, regulatory burdens, trade disruptions and other financial headwinds. That was a central message from the State Board of Food and Agriculture meeting last week in Sacramento, where industry leaders pointed to current and trending conditions that have impacted farm profitability and threaten the long-term viability of some farms. Inflation, pest control restrictions, regulatory uncertainty, water constraints, and rising labor and capital costs have created "a level of instability that we have not seen in decades," said Alexi Rodriguez, president and CEO of the Almond Alliance.

USDA fields questions about plan to slash staff, facilities

As the U.S. Department of Agriculture moves forward with its reorganization, questions remain about how the changes will affect farmers. USDA Deputy Secretary Stephen Vaden responded to concerns and fielded questions late last month about the reorganization during a hearing of the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry. Sen. Adam Schiff, D-Calif., a member of the committee, asked why a USDA hub was not placed in California, the No. 1 agriculture-producing state. In response, Vaden said the proposed hub in Utah is closer to California than Washington, D.C., and said that hub locations were chosen to lower the cost of living for federal employees. Agricultural stakeholders have until Aug. 26 to weigh in on USDA's sweeping reorganization plan, which Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins announced late last month.

Farmers grapple with pest challenges due to neglected farmland

Farmers continue to face pest exposure from abandoned or poorly maintained farmland. The sagging farm economy has left many farmers unable to maintain their farmland, with the winegrape sector alone having lost almost 35,000 acres of vineyards during the past year. "There are more and more aban-

done fields and orchards,” Jenny Holtermann, president of the Kern County Farm Bureau, said in a recent episode of the Voice of California Agriculture podcast, which is produced by the California Farm Bureau. Holtermann spoke with podcast host Gary Sack about the burden of untended lands on neighboring farms. “Whenever there’s an abandoned field around you, you have to consider the pests associated with that,” Holtermann said. “When you have abandoned fields, our land values are also decreasing.”

Golden mussels complicate effort to meet 'huge' recreational fishing demand

Tehama County fish farmer Katie Harris uses this time of year to rebuild her fish inventory ahead of stocking season in October, when she will supply lakes and other recreational fishing programs with trout. “The demand for recreational fishing has been huge,” Harris told Ag Alert® this month in a field report, adding she has had “a hard time keeping up with demand.” That’s partly due to longstanding challenges such as water rights and costs. But Harris and other California fish farmers also face a newer threat in the emergence of golden mussels, which can devastate fish farms

and infrastructure. “Anywhere water moves, this invasive species can move with it,” Harris said. She added she has taken proactive biosecurity measures to protect her farm.

Wolf resurgence continues to impact California ranchers and rural communities

The migration of gray wolves into the Sierra Valley in Northern California has disrupted rural communities and led to significant losses for cattle ranchers. “We started having wolf attacks on cattle on the north end of our Sierra Valley,” Sierra County Sheriff Mike Fisher said during an interview in a recent episode of the Voice of California Agriculture podcast, which is produced by the California Farm Bureau. Fisher spoke with host Gary Sack about challenges such as confirming how many cattle kills were caused by wolves, as well as the economic and emotional stress ranchers have faced. Because of the growing population of wolves, “I suspect that we are going to see some of the ranchers in this valley next year not return,” the sheriff said.

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Project Apis m.'s Seeds for Bees program -supported by the Almond Board of California - is now open. Growers can receive \$2,500 in free seed for first-year participants and \$1,500 in free seed for second-year participants. Cover crops and resident vegetation can provide enhanced agronomic and ecosystem benefits to California almond orchards.

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The application period for the 2025 Seeds for Bees program will be open from April 1 to August 31, 2025. Scan the QR code and apply today!



Happy Accidents turn to Happy Memories: The Heartfelt Journey of Marsella Family Vineyards

By *Destiny Reyes, SCFB Intern*

Nestled along the serene floodplain of the Stanislaus River, Marsella Family Vineyards is more than just a winery—it's a testament to family, perseverance, and the beauty of unexpected moments. The rustic red barn, originally built in 1878 and once serving as a dairy for over a century, now stands as the heart of this thriving vineyard. Purchased by the Marsella family 11 years ago, the property has blossomed into a cherished winery, blending rich history with modern winemaking.

Farmer John and Kristi Marsella, both with over 30 years of home winemaking experience from a local wine club, embarked

on this journey with a vision. Despite the challenges posed by the shallow soil and rocky terrain left by the nearby river, they decided to cultivate grapes. With determination, John cleared river stones, installed drip irrigation, and balanced nutrients—transforming adversity into opportunity.

To truly understand the essence of Marsella Family Vineyards, one must walk the barn with Farmer John. Amidst barrels and grapevines, he reflects:

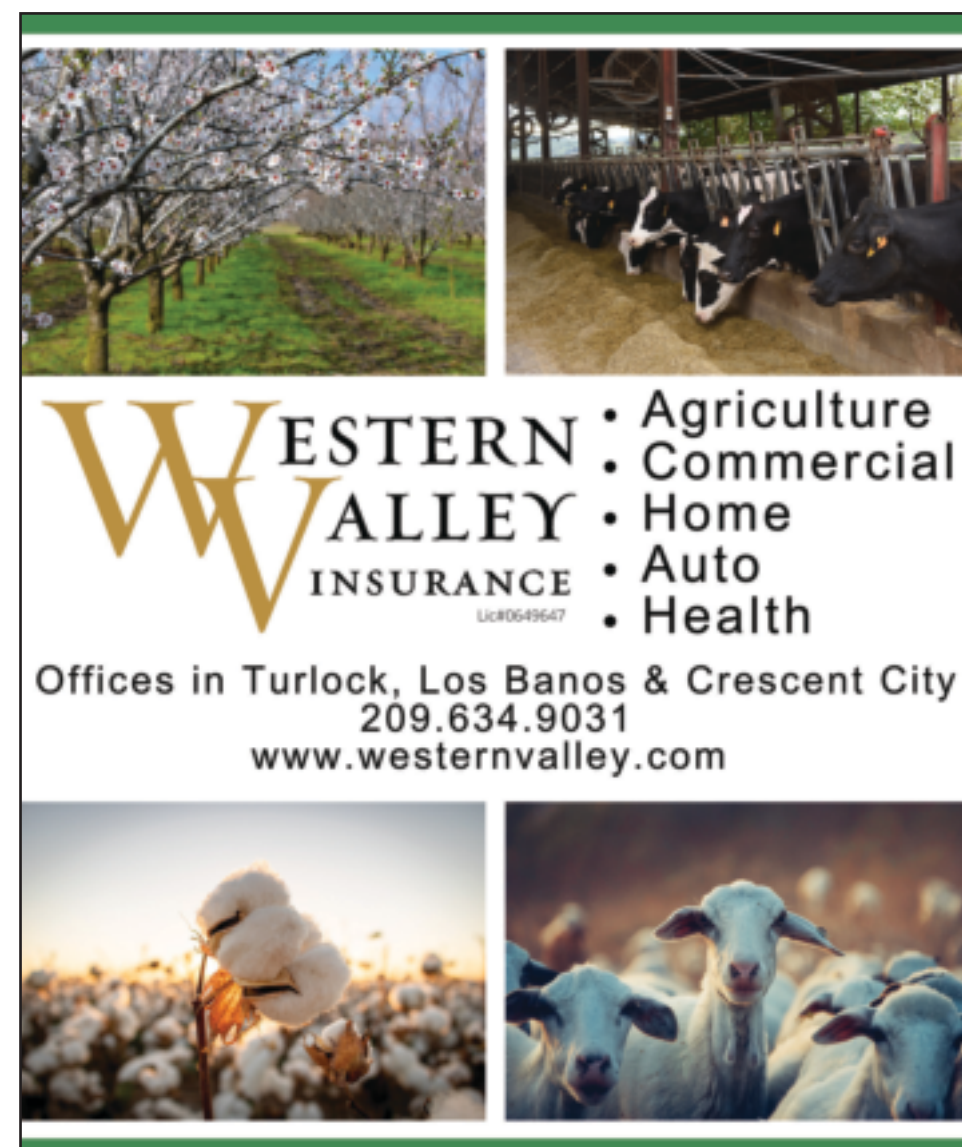
“Happy accidents—lot of the things that came to life today were the result of my accidents, but I call them happy accidents.”

This philosophy of embracing the unexpected has shaped the vineyard's character, giving each bottle its unique story.

The Marsellas produce a thoughtful port-

folio of estate wines, each named with love and meaning:

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- Diotallevi – 2023 Estate Cabernet Sauvignon
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Crafted from Mission grapes and dark brandy; “gorgeous with caramel, butter-scotch and chocolate desserts.” This Gold Medal winner honors a dear friend, Bob

See Vineyard on page 19



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From Vineyard on page 17

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At Marsella Family Vineyards, the wine tasting experience is as personal as the wines themselves. For just \$15, enjoy a curated flight of five wines—three table wines and two dessert wines—crafted with love and tradition. Walk-ins are welcome, but reservations are recommended to ensure a spot. Appointments can be made by calling (209) 602-8031.

Step into the world of winemaking with the hands-on Harvest Experience. For \$50 per person, you'll receive instruction, a light breakfast and lunch, a full tasting flight, a Harvest Crew T-shirt, and a bottle of signature wine or Angelica. This immersive experience is perfect for wine enthusiasts and those looking to connect with the land. Harvest dates are Saturdays and Sundays from September 6 to October 5, with week-day team-building events available upon request. To sign up, text your name, email address, and expected number in your party to 209-606-6109.

Within their years of retail the Marsellas continue to sell out 350 cases, a nod to the community's embrace—proof that quality, passion, and storytelling pair well in any glass. Walking the grounds and hear-

ing John's stories—his struggles, joys, and “happy accidents”—reveals the true secret behind their wines: genuine love. From the crisp Alicia Rose that pays tribute to Grandma Marsella, to the joyful Chief blend honoring their late dog, every label captures a piece of the family's journey. And those dessert wines? Sweet endings built on friendship, memory, and a bit of serendipity.

Marsella Family Vineyards isn't just a place to taste wine—it's a place to experience the heart and soul of winemaking. Every bottle tells a story, and every visit adds a new chapter to the legacy of this remarkable family.

For more information or to book your tasting or Harvest Experience, visit marsella-family.com or call (209) 602-8031.





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At the Harvest Luncheon, we come together to support and celebrate the heart of our region—agriculture. Rooted in the rich farmlands of Stanislaus County and the greater Central Valley, this event honors our deep agricultural heritage while investing in its future. Through our scholarship program, we are proud to support Modesto Junior College (MJC) Agriculture students as they pursue higher education and prepare to lead the next generation of the industry. These scholarships provide vital opportunities for local students to grow, innovate, and carry forward the legacy of agriculture in our community.

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Mike West, son of Cary West, is a fourth-generation executive and current President & CEO of J.S. West & Companies. He serves on the boards of United Egg Producers, NuCal Foods, Inc. (as President), and Del Rio Country Club. Mike began his career at J.S. West in 1998 in agriculture, transitioned to propane after five years, and joined the executive suite in 2008. A Cal Poly San Luis Obispo Poultry Science graduate, he has also served on boards including Modesto Rotary, Memorial Hospital Foundation, Cricket House, and McHenry Marathon Foundation.

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Inside Farm Bureau: Legal successes deliver results for California farmers

By Shannon Douglass
President, California Farm Bureau

At the California Farm Bureau, we know our members would rather focus on growing food than deal with red tape. That's why we invest in strong legal advocacy—to stand up for agriculture when laws and regulations create unnecessary hurdles.

Our legal advocacy efforts span a wide range of legal and regulatory issues that affect how agriculture operates in California. From utility rates and water policy to land-use regulations, pesticide rules and species protections, we advocate with one goal in mind: securing better outcomes for our members and county Farm Bureaus across the state.

With decades of combined legal experience and a deep commitment to agriculture, our in-house legal staff—including attorneys and support professionals, each with deep,

personal commitments to agriculture and the mission of Farm Bureau—drafts legal briefs, testifies before regulatory bodies, provides legal analysis, attends hearings, and monitors legislative and agency actions. Through this work, we help shape practical, long-term solutions to the challenges farmers face every day.

Energy is one area where this work makes a clear impact. With power costs ranking among the highest operating expenses for farms and ranches, we engage in regulatory proceedings that affect electricity rates, generation and delivery. Farm Bureau's team has built productive relationships with investor-owned utilities to help resolve issues and advocate for agriculture. By closely monitoring rate changes, we can step in to mitigate rising costs that directly impact the viability of farming operations.

In June, for example, Farm Bureau was the only agricultural advocate that took part in negotiations with Southern California Edison during a recent rate case. This work led to a favorable settlement for agricultural ratepayers, and the agreement—pending approval by the California Public Utilities Commission—resulted in an overall 0.58% decrease for the agricultural rate class.

Of most significance, large agricultural customers originally faced an increase of almost 10%. Farm Bureau's sustained efforts on this case resulted in those customers instead seeing a substantially lower 1.13% increase. This outcome changed what would



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have otherwise been a significant rate hike, delivering a meaningful win for members who rely on affordable, reliable energy.

Water remains the foundation of California agriculture, and we're engaged on all fronts—availability, supply, rights and quality. Our issue experts work closely together and often join coalitions to defend agricultural water rights and promote sound, workable policy. Our recent legal efforts include litigation tied to the federal "Waters of the United States," or WOTUS, rule as well as the ongoing implementation of the state's Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.

To strengthen our support in this area, we recently increased staff capacity focused

specifically on water law, ensuring we remain responsive as state and federal regulations grow increasingly complex.

Our efforts center around providing sustainable business solutions for farmers and ranchers, and we're doing just that. Farm Bureau's sustained efforts have helped farmers save money under California's Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program, which governs nitrate levels in groundwater. By advocating for a coalition-based compliance model, we were successful in gaining a framework that significantly reduces costs for growers. Through participation in a local water coalition, a farmer's administrative fee is now just \$1.50 per acre—compared to \$37.40 per acre for the first 300 acres and \$18.71 per acre thereafter under individual compliance.

Following litigation involving state regulations aimed at improving water quality and managing nitrates, we played a key role in the litigation and the convening of the original agricultural expert panel. A second panel has been reconvened to help ensure that practical

solutions reflect on-the-ground realities for farmers.

Because agricultural lands are often subject to state and federal environmental protections, we weigh in on issues that could affect a farmer's ability to operate. Our team regularly submits comments and legal input on our members' behalf to ensure agricultural activity is taken into account. Recent examples include our responses to the proposed listings of the monarch butterfly as threatened and the Suckley's cuckoo bumble bee as endangered under the Endangered Species Act—cases where we ensured agricultural activity would be considered in the final decisions.

We also provide direct legal support to county Farm Bureaus. Farm Bureau staff assists with governance and operational matters, including bylaw interpretation, lease agreements, employment issues, contracts, intellectual property concerns, and compliance with campaign finance, tax and lobbying rules.

Our work focuses on these cases that impact large segments of California agri-

culture—addressing issues that affect entire commodities, counties and regions, instead of individual legal representation.

Through skilled advocacy, trusted relationships and a long-term commitment to agriculture, California Farm Bureau continues to deliver results for farmers, ranchers and agribusinesses across the state. I'm proud to highlight the work we do together to support our members.

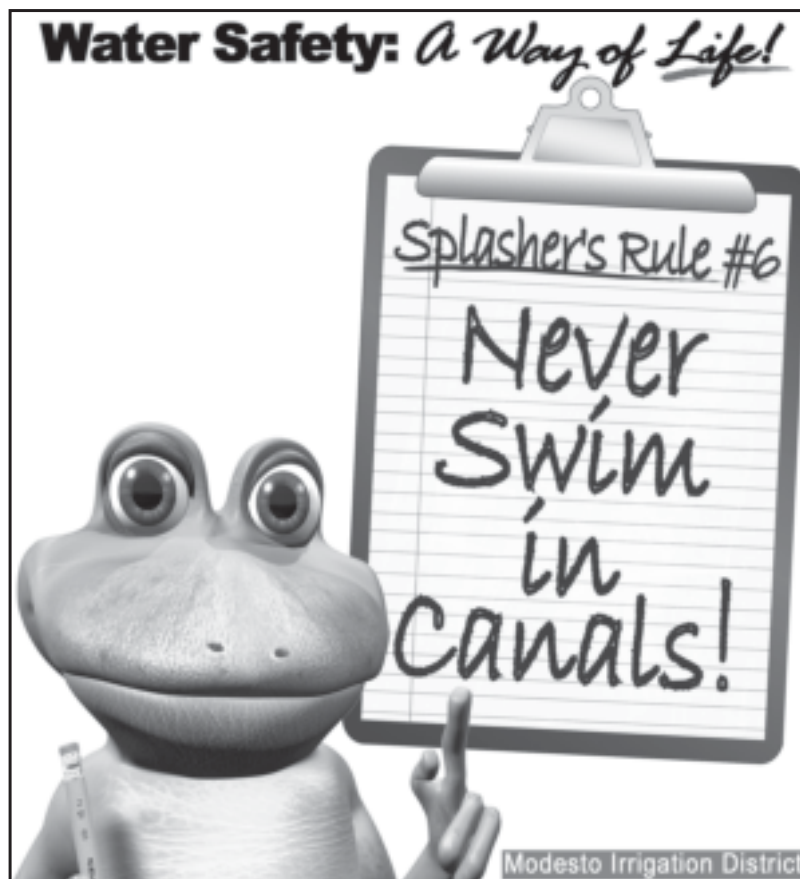


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Science, Safety, and Stewardship: Dr. Eliza Lockwood Shares Medical Perspective on Pesticides

By: Anna Genasci

Farm Bureau members recently had the opportunity to hear directly from Dr. S. Eliza Lockwood, MD, FACMT, Medical Affairs Lead and Senior Science Fellow at Bayer U.S. Crop Science, during a continuing education session on pesticide safety and health impacts. The program was approved for both DPR and CCA credits, giving participants not only practical knowledge but also credit toward their professional licenses.

Dr. Lockwood brings a unique background to her work—she is both an emergency physician and a medical toxicologist, and she explained how her career path brought her into agriculture. “Ag is having a little bit of an emergency,” she said, noting that the gap between medical understanding, public perception, and regulatory science can often create confusion. Her mission is to help ensure that growers, regulators, and consumers all have access to accurate, science-based information about pesticides and human health.

Understanding Risk: Hazard vs. Exposure

One of the key concepts Dr. Lockwood emphasized was the difference between hazard and risk. Many substances, including everyday items like caffeine or table salt, can be hazardous at high enough doses. What matters most is exposure—how much, how often, and in what way people come into contact with a substance.

“Risk is hazard plus exposure,” she explained. “If exposure is controlled or limited, then the risk is minimized.” This principle is at the heart of pesticide regulation. Before any pesticide product

is registered, it undergoes years of toxicological testing, including studies on acute and chronic effects, carcinogenicity, reproductive health, and environmental impacts.

Regulatory agencies, such as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and California Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR), apply safety factors that are often 100 times or more below the levels shown to cause harm in laboratory testing. “The safety margins built into these systems are incredibly conservative,” Lockwood noted.

Addressing Misconceptions

Dr. Lockwood acknowledged that pesticides are often misunderstood in public conversations about food and farming. Headlines can be alarming, but they rarely explain the science behind how exposure levels are determined. “There’s a big difference between hazard and actual real-world risk,” she said.

For growers, this misunderstanding can lead to challenges in building trust with consumers. She encouraged attendees to feel confident in explaining that pesticides undergo some of the most rigorous safety evaluations of any product on the market, and

that farmers themselves are often the most invested in safe use because they are on the front lines.

Practical Takeaways for Farmers

While much of her presentation focused on science, Dr. Lockwood also highlighted practical steps growers can take to protect themselves, their employees, and their communities:

- **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Following label requirements for gloves, respirators, and protective clothing remains one of the most effective ways to reduce exposure.
- **Labels as Law:** Every instruction on a pesticide label is backed by extensive



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toxicological research. Skipping steps may seem convenient in the short term but undermines safety.

- **Clear Communication in Emergencies:** If an exposure incident occurs, providing doctors with the pesticide name and EPA registration number can dramatically improve medical response time.
- **Ongoing Stewardship:** Keeping

detailed application records, calibrating equipment regularly, and training employees are all part of reducing risk and building consumer trust.

Farmers as Stewards

Dr. Lockwood stressed that farmers should feel proud of their role as stewards of both food and health. "You are protecting your

families, your workers, and your consumers by using these products responsibly," she said. "The agricultural community should be confident in the fact that the system is working as intended."

She added that growers have an important role in educating the broader community. By sharing their experiences and explaining the science in everyday terms, farmers can help bridge the gap between perception and reality when it comes to pesticide safety.

Continuing the Conversation

The session closed with a reminder that the work of protecting human health in agriculture is ongoing. From new product development to regulatory review, the science behind pesticides is continually evolving. Dr. Lockwood encouraged growers to stay engaged in these conversations and to take pride in their role as advocates for safe, sustainable farming practices.

For Farm Bureau members, the session not only provided CE credit but also offered a valuable chance to hear from a medical expert who understands both the science and the stakes. It was a reminder that in the world of agriculture, science, safety, and stewardship go hand in hand.

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REMEMBER to STOP, THINK, LOOK!
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Agricultural Trade Boosts Farms and the Economy

Zippy Duvall, American Farm Bureau President

U.S. farmers and ranchers are committed to growing high-quality agricultural products and safe, nutritious food for families near and far. Here in the U.S. and abroad, American-grown means high quality and value. We know that our products can compete anywhere in the world, when barriers are removed. That's why we are eager to see a boost in trade opportunities for U.S. farmers and ranchers with new and existing markets.

Trade matters to farmers and ranchers because we need export markets to help us remain competitive and economically sustainable. If we're going to keep growing the food, fiber, and renewable fuel that our country needs for national security, we need to ensure that farms of all sizes have opportunities for growth. Agricultural trade can maximize the value of our products. For example, some cuts of meat are more popular in other countries, and a variety of fresh produce is grown for both consumers in the U.S. and abroad.

When farmers have this variety of market opportunities, they can keep their businesses running and support jobs across our nation's economy. Our agricultural trade helps to create jobs right here on American soil. Did you know that more than 1 million full-time jobs are supported by U.S. agricultural exports? According to USDA data from 2023, about half of those jobs were on the farm and the remaining half were across related industries like shipping, pro-

cessing and storage. If we look at trade as a return on investment, agricultural exports double our returns, with every \$1 of farm products sold overseas bringing back more than \$2 in economic activity here in the U.S.

At Farm Bureau, we are grateful for the administration's focus on achieving new trade deals with a commitment to making agriculture a priority. With the recently announced framework deals in the EU, Japan, Indonesia, South Korea and the Philippines, in addition to recent deals with Vietnam and the U.K., we see real opportunities for U.S. farmers and ranchers. We are urging the administration to finalize new deals and to reach agreements with large agricultural markets like China.

The stakes are high when it comes to trade negotiations, and unfortunately, farmers and ranchers are often first to bear the brunt of retaliatory tariffs. That's why we consistently urge the administration to limit trade disruptions and work to resolve disagreements quickly. Farmers and ranchers, our employees, our families, our rural communities, and our fellow Americans across the country cannot afford to lose markets or the trading relationships we have built with our businesses over the years. One-fifth of U.S. agricultural products are exported, and behind those products are hundreds of thousands of hard-working Americans.

Let's keep working to open new markets and strengthen our existing partnerships so that U.S. farmers and ranchers can keep leading the world in growing safe and sustainable food for families at home and around the world.

50 Acres of Farmland Available – Sharecrop Opportunity (Vernalis, CA)

We've got 50 acres of clean, flat farmland available in Vernalis, California, right across the road from our compost facility. It was previously used for almonds, but the orchard has been removed and the ground is ready to prep for farming. We're open to suggestions on what to plant.

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If you're interested or want to talk details, contact Tim Hester, General Manager at Recology Blossom Valley Organics North, at thester@recology.com



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August 2025 CAFB Legal Advocacy

Cal/OSHA Advisory Committee Considers Changes to Autonomous Ag Equipment Rules

The Cal/OSHA Standards Board's Autonomous Agricultural Tractor Advisory Committee met in Salinas on Aug. 6 and 7. During the meeting, the committee received detailed information on the functionality of various autonomous agricultural machinery, including tractors. Members also expressed a greater willingness than in the past to consider amending General Industry Safety Order 3441(b) (Operation of Agricultural Equipment), which currently requires self-propelled equipment to have

an operator at the vehicular controls—an obvious obstacle for certain equipment such as autonomous sprayers, weeders and tractors. The advisory committee is expected to report back to the Cal/OSHA Standards Board in November or December. Staff contact: Bryan Little, blittle@cbbf.com

FTC Settlement Ends Clean Truck Partnership Agreements with California
The Federal Trade Commission has reached an agreement with major heavy-duty truck engine manufacturers, barring them from making any future regulatory deals with California regarding the state's vehicle emission standards, according to reporting by Politico's Alex Guillén and Alex

Nieves. As part of the settlement, the FTC announced it

has dropped its antitrust investigation into the Clean Truck Partnership—a voluntary agreement in which engine manufacturers committed to meeting California's zero-emission truck sales targets, even if the rule was struck down in court. Staff contact: Steven Fenaroli, sfenaroli@cbbf.com

FAA Proposes Updates for Commercial and Recreational Drone Usage

Last week, the Federal Aviation Administration announced a proposed rule entitled "Normalizing Unmanned Aircraft Systems Beyond Visual Line of Sight Operations." The proposal would establish requirements for conducting Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) operations in U.S. airspace. This

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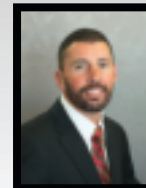
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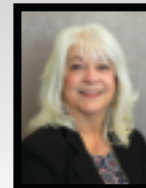


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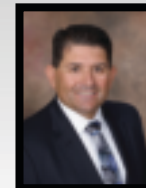
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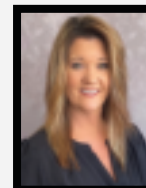
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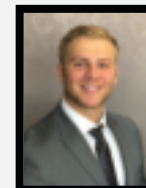
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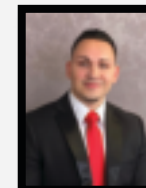
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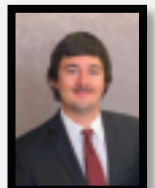
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action would normalize certain low altitude UAS operations and expedite the introduction of BVLOS UAS operations in the national airspace system while ensuring the safety and efficiency of U.S. airspace. It is intended to provide a predictable and clear pathway for safe, routine and scalable UAS operations that include package delivery, agriculture, aerial surveying, civic interest, operations training, demonstration, recreation and flight testing. Currently, drone operators must get individual waivers or exemptions to use their drones without visual line of sight. These are approved on a case-by-case basis, and the process is burdensome. Comments are being accepted through Oct. 6. Staff contact: Matthew Viohl, mviohl@cfbf.com

CDFW Reports Wolf Activity Expansion into Kern County
The California Department of Fish and Wildlife has posted its Quarterly Wolf

News Updates: April - June 2025 (PDF), a new Approximate Area of Gray Wolf Activity Map (July 2025) (PDF), and an updated version of the Known Wolves - July 2025 (PDF). Among other highlights is the news that there were two dispersing wolves in the Tehachapi Mountains in Kern County. Currently, the southernmost wolf pack is in Tulare County. Staff contact: Steven Fenaroli, sfenaroli@cfbf.com

CARB Posts Initial Community Air Monitoring Plans

Community Air Monitoring Plans (CAMPs) have begun to be posted to the California Air Resources Board's website. CARB anticipates receiving and approving the remaining CAMPs in the coming weeks. Broad area and targeted monitoring may begin in communities with fully approved CAMPs. For details and the current list of approved CAMPs, see CARB's Statewide Mobile Monitoring Initiative (SMMI) webpage. Staff contact: Steven Fenaroli, sfen-

aroli@cfbf.com

Tariffs on China to be Delayed

Earlier this week, it was announced that the U.S. would be delaying a planned increase on Chinese tariffs. The 90-day pause will give the Trump administration more time to work with its Chinese counterparts on a number of grievances that remain between the two nations. Originally, a planned 34% increase was supposed to take effect on Tuesday. The back and forth between both countries has been the most closely watched in terms of the administration's trade dealings. Both have stepped back from rates that reached triple digits in April, but it remains to be seen how productive the continued conversations would be. China remains a significant trading partner, and any major increases would likely have a direct and quick impact on many American consumers. Staff contact: Matthew Viohl, mviohl@cfbf.com



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