

The Stanislaus Farm News

The *voice* of Stanislaus County Agriculture

STANISLAUS COUNTY



For the **good** of your **food**.



Official Publication of Stanislaus
County Farm Bureau
Vol.75 No.5 March 22, 2024

*Platinum Award Winner: Salvador Anaya with
Stewart & Jasper Orchards, pictured above, Salvador Anaya with Jim Jasper*

Farmworker Appreciation Program, See Page 14

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Amberley Snyder

Thursday, April 25, 2024



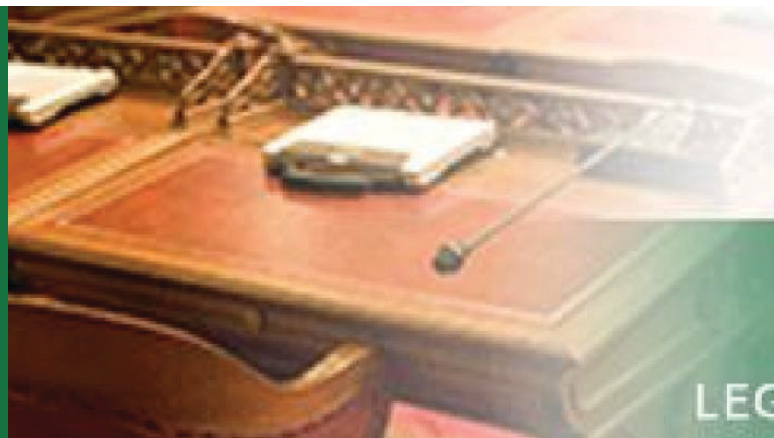
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To serve as the voice of Stanislaus County agriculture at all levels of government, while providing programs to assist its farms and family members and educate the general public of needs and importance to agriculture.



FRIDAY REVIEW

LEGISLATIVE AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS



Agriculture Employment Policy

On March 14, the Assembly Labor and Employment Committee passed AB 2011, legislation offered by Assemblymember Rebecca Bauer-Kahan (D Orinda), making permanent a small employer family leave mediation program created by 2020 budget trailer bill AB 1867. Expanded to bereavement leave in 2021, the program administered by the California Civil Rights Department is set to sunset in 2025. The regulations governing CFRA are lengthy and complex and small employers do not have the means to hire human resources professionals or counsel to advise them on the details. The private right of action in CFRA means any mistake exposes small businesses to lawsuits that could quickly put them out of business. Since its inception, the program has been successful. More than half of the mediated cases have resulted in settlement with hundreds of thousands of dollars going directly to workers rather than plaintiffs' attorneys. The Labor Committee passed AB 2011 (7-0) and referred it to the Assembly Judiciary Committee. Farm Bureau supports AB 2011. Staff: Bryan Little, blittle@cfbf.com

Air Quality

A broad coalition of agricultural groups including California Farm Bureau requested a meeting with Governor Gavin Newsom asking to discuss CARB's rulemaking around the transition to meet its electrification and climate goals. Click here. Staff: Steven Fenaroli, sfenaroli@cfbf.com
On March 5, CARB held a webinar on Advanced Clean Fleet. They reiterated that they would not enforce ACF provisions until the EPA approves their Clean Air waiver under TRUCR. However, fleets

must be registered with TRUCR. To view the recording, click here. There is funding available for Zero-Emission Class 8 Trucks under the Volkswagen Settlement. For more information, click here. Staff: Steven Fenaroli, sfenaroli@cfbf.com
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Animal Health & Welfare

WOLF COMPENSATION PROGRAM
Assembly Members throughout California have sent a budget request letter to Natural Resources Budget Subcommittee Chair Steve Bennett (D-Ventura) seeking \$3 million for continued funding of the Wolf Compensation Program. Legislators also sent a budget funding letter to Governor Gavin Newsom requesting continued \$3 million in continued funding for the Wolf Compensation Funding program. The state budget is in an estimated \$73 billion deficit and funding at all levels will be challenging. The Governor will release a May revise of his budget proposals and legislators will counter with their proposals. Funding for the program ran out in January 2024. Staff: Steven Fenaroli, sfenaroli@cfbf.com

Dairy

A number of environmental groups have filed suits with the California Energy Commission regarding dairy digesters. Click here. Staff: Steven Fenaroli, sfenaroli@cfbf.com
There have begun to be challenges at the county level when it comes to dairy expansions and permitting. Challenges have focused on water quality impact, air quality impacts, methane/GHG increases, and

water supply considerations. If you have experience with this, or know about it, please get in touch. Staff: Steven Fenaroli, sfenaroli@cfbf.com
On March 26, The California Dairy Sustainability Summit is occurring in Davis, CA. Registration is required can be done at the link listed. Staff: Steven Fenaroli, sfenaroli@cfbf.com
The February newsletter from the Central Valley Dairy Representative Monitoring Program is linked here. A heavy focus will continue to be on nitrate monitoring and the Nitrate Control Program. Staff: Steven Fenaroli, sfenaroli@cfbf.com

Insurance

FAIR PLAN OVERSIGHT HEARING
This week, the Assembly Committee on Insurance held an oversight hearing regarding the California Fair Plan. The hearing provided an update on the state of the Fair Plan, the incredible policy growth rate for both residential and commercial properties, and the unsustainable risk that the Fair Plan carries. Some notable facts: February 2024 saw a record 15,000 new Fair Plan policies written for just one month. As of December 31, 2023, the Fair Plan has over \$300 billion in claims exposure, growing by tens of billions of dollars monthly with the pace of new policies. The Fair Plan has under \$1 billion in cash available to meet potential claims, meaning that even small wildfire events could push the Fair Plan into insolvency.
California Farm Bureau provided public comments at the hearing's conclusion, sharing the impact that insurance unavailability

See "REVIEW" on page 4

From "REVIEW" on page 3

and costs have on farmers and ranchers and calling on Assembly members to look at the current state budget closely to ensure that wildfire fuels mitigation funding remains 100% intact, and to find more funds to do even more mitigation. To view the oversight hearing, click here. Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cfbf.com

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE CATASTROPHE MODELING REGULATIONS

The California Department of Insurance announced this week that it will be holding a public hearing on April 23, 2024 regarding its regulatory amendments to property insurance modeling. As part of CDI's efforts this year to restore competition to the admitted insurance marketplace, CDI agreed that insurers should be allowed to use forward looking models in developing their rate plans.

Today in California, insurers use only historical data. Catastrophe modeling looks at future claims risks. Prop

103 requires insurers to show the details of their rating plans, so a key to CDI's new regulations will be meeting the transparency requirements of Prop 103 while allowing insurance companies to use proprietary algorithms in creating these models.

Additionally, since insurers began requesting the use of catastrophe modeling in their rate plans, Farm Bureau has been advocating that the state, federal, local, and even private landowner investments in wildfire fuels mitigation be required data points in these models. Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cfbf.com

Livestock

On March 28 from 6-7:30 pm, there is a livestock

health and wildfire webinar. The flyer is attached and registration can be found at this link. The webinar costs \$10 to attend (4 people per ranch) Staff: Steven Fenaroli, sfenaroli@cfbf.com

Pesticides

The Farm Bureau has been part of discussions with other agricultural organizations related to AB 1864, authored by Assemblymember Damon Connolly (D San Rafael). This bill changes the notification requirements related to pesticide use around schools. After a recent meeting with authors office, it's our hope he will be open to amending this bill to eliminate our concerns regarding non-restricted use notices of intent. Will keep you informed on our progress as we proceed! Staff: Chris Reardon, creardon@cfbf.com

Taxation

SB 927, authored by Senator Brian Dahle (R Bieber) passed from the Senate Revenue and Tax Committee. It will move next to Senate Appropriations suspense file. Senate Bill 927 enacts Personal Income and

Corporation Tax exclusions for any amount received in settlement by a taxpayer to replace property damaged or destroyed by a natural disaster that was declared a state of emergency by both the Governor and the President of the United States. The measure applies commencing in the 2023 taxable year. Farm Bureau supports SB 927, as the bill moves past the current Legislature piecemeal approach to this type of income tax exclusions related to wildfire and disaster relief payments requiring a new bill specific to each disaster and impact county residents. With an estimated fiscal impact to the general fund revenue of at least \$7,000,000, the bill's biggest challenge may be that impact during a bad state budget. Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cfbf.com

Transportation

A coalition of freight and rail carriers are sending a letter to the US EPA asking them to reject a CARB waiver to require ZEV locomotives which among other issues, are not currently commercially available. CARB would also limit the life of 25,000 locomotives by barring any locomotive that

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Water

STATE WATER BOARD TO CONSIDER REDUCING SGMA FEES

During its March 19 meeting, the State Water Resources Control Board will vote on whether to change the current Sustainable Groundwater Management Act fee schedule it previously adopted in 2017. The current fee structure includes a volumetric fee of \$40 per acre-foot, which board staff have

proposed reducing to \$20 per acre-foot. The notice for this action includes additional information on the purpose of the change, and the meeting agenda includes in-person and remote participation instructions. Staff: Alex Biering, abiering@cbbf.com

ANNOUNCEMENTS

VACANCIES CDFA ANNOUNCES VACANCIES ON FEED INSPECTION ADVISORY BOARD TECHNICAL ADVISORY SUBCOMMITTEE CDFA is announcing three vacancies on the Feed Inspection Advisory Board Technical Advisory Subcommittee. This subcommittee provides technical and scientific advice to the Feed Inspection Advisory Board and CDFA on animal food nutrition, safety and efficacy data review of new and unapproved feed ingredients, research project oversight and other issues that will affect the Commercial Feed Regulatory Program, the Livestock Drug Program, and

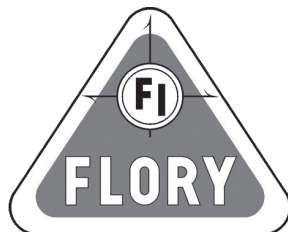
the Safe Animal Feed Education Program. Applicants must demonstrate technical, applied, and scientific expertise in the fields of toxicology, pathology, ruminant and non-ruminant nutrition, as well as possess general knowledge of the California feed industry. The term of office for subcommittee members is three years. Members receive no compensation but are entitled to payment of necessary travel expenses. Individuals interested in being considered for appointment should send a resume and a Prospective Member Appointment Questionnaire (http://www.cdca.ca.gov/is/fldrs/pdfs/FIAB-TASC_PMAQ.pdf) to SAFE@cdca.ca.gov. The application deadline is March 25, 2024. For further information about the Feed Inspection Advisory Board TASC, please contact CDFA Feed, Fertilizer and Livestock Drugs Regulatory Services branch staff at (916) 900-5022 or visit http://www.cdca.ca.gov/is/fldrs/Feed_FIAB.html.

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As another membership service, Farm Bureau members are offered FREE classified advertising in the Stanislaus Farm News. Ads must be 18 words or less and only one ad per month per membership (membership number required.) Ads may be MAILED to the Stanislaus Farm News, or BROUGHT to the SCFB office, 1201 L Street, Downtown Modesto. NO PHONE-IN OR FAX free ads will be accepted. Free ads are restricted to farm machinery or equipment or unprocessed farm products. Farm jobs wanted or offered will also be accepted. No real estate ads and no commercial items or services will be accepted. 209-522-7278

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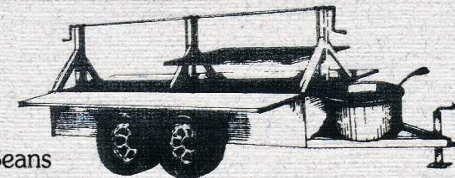
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International Complications for U.S. Exports

Source: Sabrina Halvorson, AgNet Media, Inc.

Agricultural exports are heading down from a post-pandemic peak as experts deal with international complications that can stunt export growth or, sometimes, stop exports altogether.

According to USDA, the value of U.S. agricultural exports peaked in fiscal year 2022 but declined in 2023. In 2023, the total export value was \$178.7 billion, which was \$17 billion less than in 2022. A panel of experts discussed rebuilding export markets and overseas demand for U.S. agricultural goods at the Ag and Food Policy Summit hosted by Agri-Pulse in Washington D.C.

Dan Halstrom, President and CEO of the U.S. Meat Export Federation (USMEF), said that higher shipping rates and logistical challenges around the world are concerning for all industries, not just agriculture. He used the example of pirate activity by Houthi rebels causing ship-

ping uncertainty in the Red Sea.

"These sorts of [events], they seem one off, but they're really not. Those of us international world, we know that these vessels don't just go to the Red Sea, they're going around the world. So, what you're doing is you're adding more cost, more time, more inputs, higher across the board," he said. "So, the more these conflicts happen or continue to happen, the higher the cost of logistics and freight will be."

Kam Quarles, CEO of the National Potato Council, said the international issues are "tremendously complicated."

Halstrom said the U.S. Meat Export Federation is "extremely optimistic" for export markets and overseas demand in the future.

"I have always looked at it this way: that the more success we have, the more issues that come up. So, all the more reason that we have to be aligned as industries. I'm not just talking beef and pork," he said. "I'm talking agriculture. Agriculture is the backbone of the American economy. And I think with the folks in this room, on this panel, with FAS, USTR, USDA, we're well equipped to handle the challenge."



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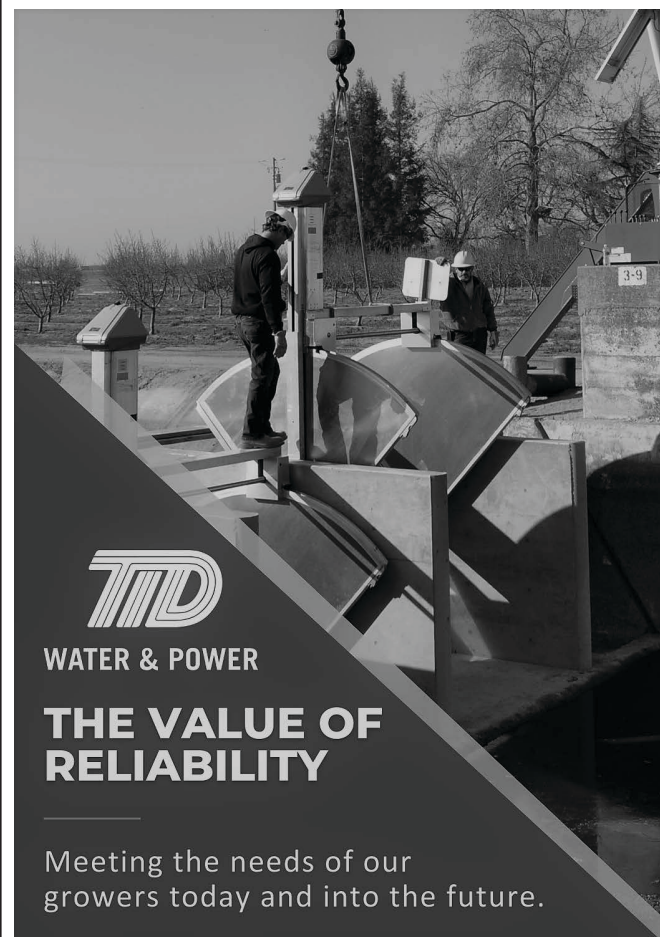
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National Ag Week, Celebrating our local Agriculturalists

By Vicky Boyd

Growing up, Jake Wenger watched as his father, Paul Wenger, took on new leadership roles and rose through the ranks of the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau and ultimately, the California Farm Bureau.

“Some of my earliest memories were going to county Farm Bureau meetings with my dad,” said Jake, who is general manager of Salida Hulling Association west of Modesto. “By the time I could drive, my dad was already second vice president of the California Farm Bureau. So I would drive to one of the Farm Bureau events while he worked on his speech.”

Now Jake is taking on CFBF leadership responsibilities, having been elected District 13 representative at the 2023 CFBF Annual Meeting. The position came open after previous district representative Ron Peterson was elected 2nd vice president of the California Farm Bureau in December 2023. District 13 encompasses Stanislaus and Tuolumne counties.

While Paul served as an example, Jake said he never felt pressure from his parents to become a leader — it just happened.

“It was addicting in the sense of the opportunities it provided for you,” Jake said. “Not only that, but the impact you can make. The more involved you get in leadership, the more opportunities are presented to you to tell your stories, whether it’s at a local Rotary meeting or whether it’s in Sacramento or Washington, D.C.”

Paul and his wife, Debbie, have always taken a hands-off approach with their three sons when it comes to their interests and “let them do their own thing.” But it probably didn’t hurt that their sons were exposed to ag issues at a young age.

“When I was Farm Bureau president, the boys would travel with me and we’d talk about farm policy or immigration,” Paul said. “They kind of got it by osmosis, and the funny thing is, they listened.”

FFA built the foundation

Jake cut his teeth in leadership through FFA, where he excelled in public speaking. He pointed to the years of watching his dad make presentations and some guidance his dad provided early on.

Although Jake felt comfortable speaking in front of groups, he said he had to overcome the nervousness of presenting in front of his parents. He also sought FFA leadership positions, serving as section, region and eventually state president.

“My dad had been a state FFA officer, so I knew the opportunities. But I was never pushed by my parents,” Jake said.

And it was in FFA that he met his eventual wife, Juliana, who grew up on a Galt dairy farm. Both went on to graduate from California State University, Fresno.

Now their oldest child, Jaden, is active in FFA and raising a pig to show at the Stanislaus County Fair this summer. Their


middle child, Jayna, also is raising a pig, but Jake said she isn’t as enthusiastic about it as her older brother. And youngest child Josiah, who is chomping at the bit to raise an animal, isn’t quite old enough.

The wild west of water

One of Jake’s first forays into politics was with the Modesto Irrigation District. He had been attending MID board meetings beforehand, monitoring water issues on behalf of the family-owned Wenger Ranches where he worked. At the time, proposed water sales to San Francisco were a hot-button issue.

“I became a regular at the MID meetings, and my dad said, ‘Why don’t you just run for the board?’” Jake said.

During the four years he spent as a board member, they faced a drought where initial agricultural allocations were reduced to only 20 inches. Through a lot of advocating on behalf of agriculture, Jake said he was able to convince the board to raise it to 24 inches.



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“So I really felt I was in the right spot at the right time when we were having those struggles,” he said.

Among the other issues the board grappled with were Federal Energy Regulatory Commission relicensing of Don Pedro Reservoir and Bay-Delta water quality standards. During one meeting with federal fisheries agencies on water flows and anadromous, or migratory fish, Paul got to see Jake in action. As CFBF president, Paul commented on

how the flow reductions would affect agriculture and then turned it over to his son.

“He knew the points, and he got it across,” Paul said. “I brought the impacts — more of the touchy feeling stuff. But he had the science, and the science was on our side. He came through and gave lot of good information. I was really proud of him.”

Although Jake ran for MID board reelection in 2017, he didn’t campaign much and ended up narrowly losing to Stu Gilman, a Modesto business consultant. Calling it a “bummer,” Jake said he enjoyed his time on the water board and felt he “was making a difference.”

Farm Bureau leadership path

As a 25-year-old, Jake joined the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau Board of Directors, eventually being elected president in 2020. But his two years as the top officer were

disrupted by the COVID pandemic as well as son Jaden being diagnosed with a rare form of cancer. With the help and support of friends, family — including his Farm Bureau family, doctors and countless others, Jaden is in remission and back playing baseball.

Three months into his two-year term as a CFBF director, Jake is currently learning the ropes. As part of his district representative responsibilities, he attends Stanislaus and Tuolumne County Farm Bureau board meetings. The first few Tuolumne County meetings brought back memories of when he would travel to Sonora with his dad. “My son (Jaden) is now riding up there with me, so it’s kind of full circle,” Jake said. When asked if he would eventually seek a higher CFBF office, Jake said he had no plans at the moment.

“I enjoy what I’m doing today — I wouldn’t be doing it if I didn’t. The beauty of life is leaving opportunities open. I don’t have any plans, but things can happen in your life.”

And part of that gratification comes from advocating on behalf of agriculture. As part of an industry comprising less than 2% of the U.S. population, Jake said it’s imperative that farmers connect with the general public. To that end, he always tries to accommodate requests from media or for tours of Salida Hulling. He looks at it as a way to educate the public about agriculture.

Just recently, Jake hosted a group of Illinois soybean producers at the hulling facility. He also talked to a Los Angeles Times reporter about a large corporate farm management group that owns 17 almond orchards and recently filed bankruptcy.

“I understand the nervousness of people — I’ve been burned by media,” Jake said. “But I think it’s important for growers to be able to tell their story. We shouldn’t be ashamed of it. Part of educating the public is teaching them what we do, and that includes putting healthy food on the tables of the American consumer.”



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California agrees to water-supply cuts from Colorado River

California has agreed to make long-term cuts to the amount of water the state uses from the Colorado River. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation and seven states in the Colorado River Basin, as well as 30 tribes and Mexico, are negotiating a plan to protect the river after a decades-long megadrought depleted flows and left key reservoirs Lake Mead and Lake Powell in danger of running dry. Under a Lower Basin states' proposal, which would take effect after 2026 and potentially last decades, California would forfeit about 10% of its allocation in most conditions.

With groundwater law to turn 10 in 2024, challenges remain for farmers

California's landmark 2014 Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, which requires local agencies to create a roadmap to protect aquifer supplies for generations to come, turns 10 this year. The law was adopt-

ed amid the 2012-2015 drought, when a lack of surface water and depleted groundwater brought agriculture—especially California's citrus belt on the east side of the San Joaquin Valley—to a near halt. SGMA presents a difficult adjustment for agriculture. Researchers say the groundwater law could result in the fallowing of between 500,000 and 1 million acres of farmland.

Spring planting means decision time for California farmers

Falling commodity prices, rising production costs and water supply uncertainty are some of the factors weighing on planting decisions for California farmers this season. They say their crop options have narrowed, with canneries needing less acreage of processing tomatoes and a major seed company ending its sunflower seed program in California. Growers who have pulled out permanent crops such as almonds and walnuts in recent years due to lower prices are also looking to

plant annual crops on the open ground. Cotton and feed crops, such as corn silage, may be possibilities.

Researchers study whether agave can be state's next drought-tolerant crop

Researchers at the University of California, Davis, are studying agave plants as a potential drought-tolerant option for California farmers. The research is centered on agave genetics, virus susceptibility, pest control, soil management and crop productivity. UC Davis began investigating the crop after farm owners Stuart and Lisa Woolf established a research fund to determine if agave is viable for agriculture in California. Agave, used to produce tequila and mezcal in Mexico, can be distilled into spirits, used as a fiber or converted into a sweetener.

California tomato farmers scale down acreage after huge crop

California farmers are scaling down their

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processing tomato acreage this year as processors enter the planting season with boosted inventory. The state's tomato processors planned to contract for 11.6 million tons this year, down about 10% from the 12.9 million tons they contracted for in 2023. In 2023, California growers harvested their largest tomato crop in several years after winter storms replenished water supplies. Processors looking to bolster inventory depleted during the drought paid a record-high price. Now acreage is declining as demand softens for processed tomato products.

Famed research farm seeks financial help as income declines

The commonplace practice in California of applying precise water to individual plants rather than broadcasting with sprinklers may not have taken off if not for the research trials conducted decades ago at the Nickels Soil

Laboratory in Colusa County. The privately owned research farm in Arbuckle is often credited with helping to propel the state's tree nut industry to the powerhouse it is today. Now, just as growers have faced tough times as the price of almonds and walnuts has plummeted, research funding for Nickels has depleted because of shrinking crop revenue.

New federal climate-risk reporting rule imposes softer standard than in CA

California is the first state in the U.S. to pass laws that eventually require large corporations to publicly disclose greenhouse gas emissions and their climate risks. The U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission followed suit last week. But it approved a weakened federal regulation that drops a proposed requirement for companies to report emissions from their supply chains and customer use

of their products. Opponents argued that the reporting rule would burden farmers, who provide most raw products that go into the food supply chain.

State completes vast groundwater mapping project

The California Department of Water Resources has completed a groundwater mapping project that the agency said provides critical information about California's underground water supply. DWR announced the completion of the statewide Airborne Electromagnetic, or AEM, survey project last week. Between December 2021 and November 2023, the agency collected nearly 16,000 miles of AEM data within 95 groundwater basins across California. DWR said the data "is invaluable for identifying the most suitable locations to implement groundwater recharge projects."



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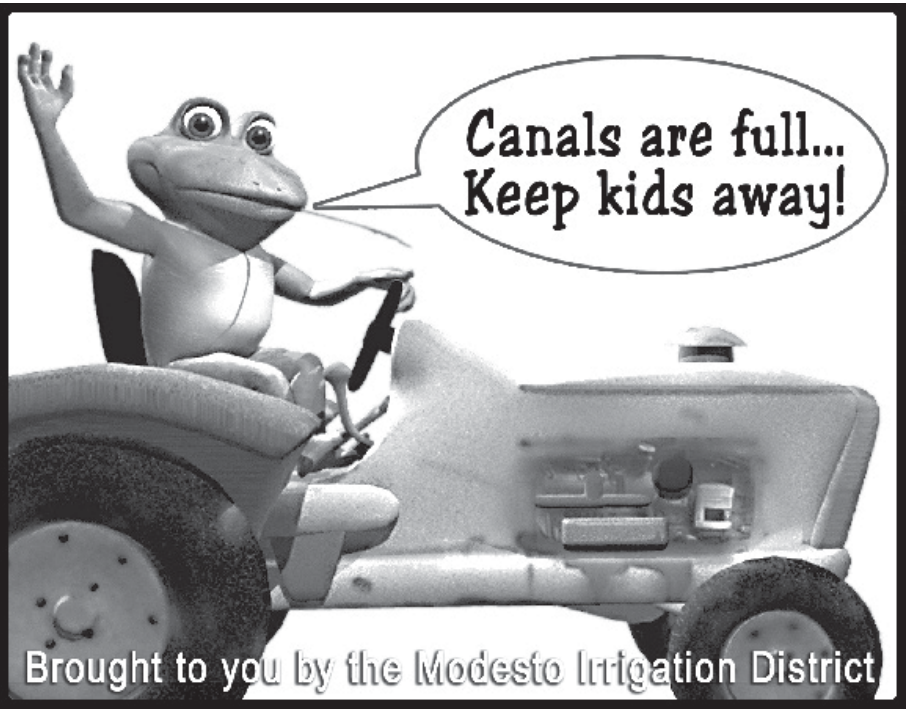
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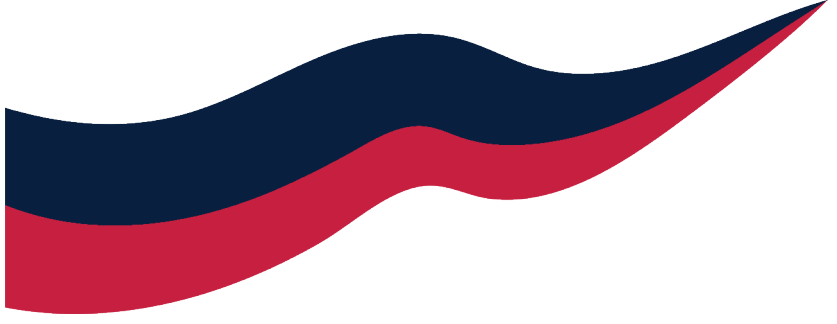
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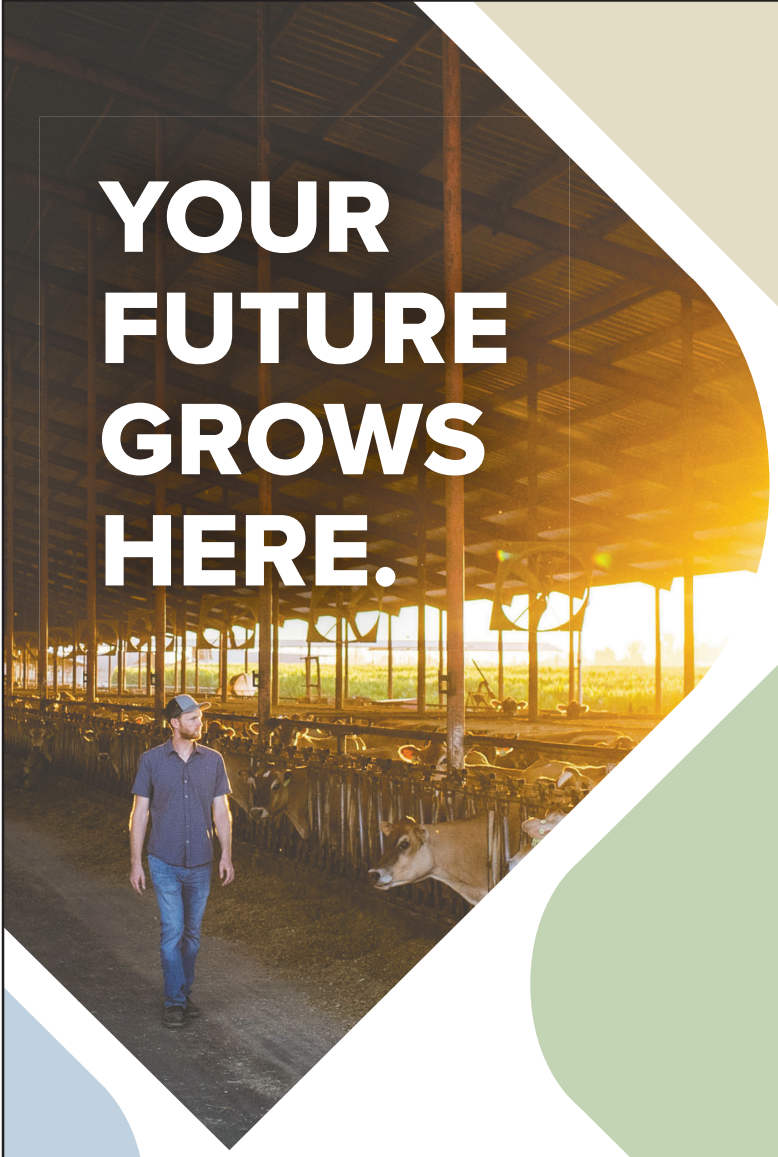


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SCAN ME

Harvesting Pride, Celebrating National Agriculture Week in Modesto and Stanislaus County

By Kathryn Kim Ramos, Sisbro Innovation Website and Digital Marketing Consultant

National Agriculture Week, celebrated from March 17th to March 23rd, is not only a time to recognize the vital role of agriculture right here the backyards of our communities but also an opportunity to explore how online marketing is revolutionizing the industry. As we mark National Agriculture Week in 2024, the spotlight is on Modesto and Stanislaus County, two thriving agricultural hubs in California's Central Valley, where digital marketing is playing

a crucial role in shaping the future of farming.

In Modesto, known as the 'City of Water, Wealth, Contentment, and Health,' and throughout Stanislaus County, digital marketing has become essential for farmers and agribusinesses to reach consumers and promote their products. Through social media platforms, websites, and email newsletters, farmers can engage directly with customers, sharing information about their crops, farming practices, and upcoming events such as farmers' markets and farm tours. This direct line of communication helps farmers connect with their local community, builds customer relationships, and fosters brand loyalty.

Additionally, online marketing enables

farmers to educate consumers about agriculture's importance and the industry's challenges. Through blogs, videos, and infographics, farmers can share insights into sustainable farming practices, water conservation, and the impact of climate change on agriculture. By raising awareness and fostering dialogue, farmers can cultivate a greater appreciation for their work and the importance of supporting local agriculture.

Digital marketing also provides farmers with valuable data and insights that can help improve their operations. For instance, a local farmer in Modesto used social media analytics to identify posts about organic farming practices that received the most engagement. This insight led them to focus

See "Ag Week" on page 19



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Farmworker of the Year

By Vicky Boyd

Stewart & Jasper Orchards is celebrating its 76th anniversary in 2024, and Salvador Anaya has been part of the almond grower-processor's employee family for 55 of those years.

As a 17 year old, Anaya worked part time after high school for the Newman-based company picking up brush after the pruning crews made their way through the orchards. Upon graduation, he asked to work full time.

The answer was easy. Company President Jim Jasper said he saw Anaya as a dedicated person with a work ethic not often found. During his 55 years, Anaya has continued to take on more responsibility — often times on his own initiative — and all with a can-do attitude and a positive personality. In the past 25 years, he has overseen employees, performed safety training, overseen pesticide and fertilizer applications, supervised irrigation and kept meticulous records, among other tasks. For those reasons and more, Jasper nominated Anaya for the 2024 Farm Worker of the Year. The judges agreed, awarding him the platinum title.

"I remember it like it was yesterday," Jasper said, reminiscing about when Anaya

first began working part time. "He had a passion for work and a strong work ethic for a young man. He has been very loyal and very dependable.

"Nowadays, it's very hard to get young people who want work. Someone like Salvador, he just wanted to work. Once he started, we've never thought about him not working here."

When the Stanislaus Farm Bureau told Anaya of his award during a recent meeting at Stewart & Jasper's headquarters near Newman, he said he was "surprised and happy at the same time."

"Thanks to (Stewart & Jasper) because I enjoy what I do and am still happy being here."

Farmworker of the Year continues

Now in its fourth year, the Farm Worker of the Year award program was started by the Stanislaus Farm Bureau, AgSafe and the Modesto Rotary Club during the COVID pandemic. They saw it as a way to recognize essential workers vital to producing, harvesting and packing food.

The awards continue today to spotlight the people who help feed and clothe not only county residents but also those elsewhere and around the world.

55 years of dedication

Anaya, his four siblings and their parents moved from Michoacán, Mexico, to the Newman area in 1965. After graduating from Orestimba High School, he began working full time for Stewart & Jasper. "I was young and wanted to work and felt comfortable here," he said. "I didn't know too much about the company, but I got the impression that it was going to be a good place to work."

The operation planted their first almond orchard in 1955. During the early years, it was more diversified with row crops like alfalfa and processing tomatoes as well as tree crops. They even made a foray into white-skinned peaches in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Slowly Jasper & Stewart decided to focus more on growing, hulling and shelling almonds, and they eventually got out of the other crops.

Along the way, Anaya began keeping meticulous records of every spray and fertilizer application he made or supervised as well as irrigation sets and water-run durations. Those records have come in handy, too, Jasper said.

In 2004, someone accidentally delivered a herbicide rather than a nutrient. The material was applied to 150 acres, resulting in severe tree damage and loss. "They



Platinum Award: Salvador Anaya with Stewart & Jasper Orchards



Gold Award: Ishmael Garcia with Heinrich Farms



Silver Award: German Partida with Avila Family Dairy

wouldn't admit they delivered the wrong chemical, but Salvador had all of the records," Jasper said. "They came in very, very handy."

Water is always a precious commodity on the Westside, where Stewart & Jasper farms. But it became even more valuable during the most recent drought. To ensure it was delivering the proper amount, the Del Puerto Water District sought Anaya's records that showed before and after water meter readings. In addition, he noted the run times in case the meters were inaccurate.

"It's helped us tremendously," said Ray Henriques, manager of farming and hulling-shelling. "If we ever have a question of what we've done in the past, I don't have to have a good memory. I just ask Salvador what did we do that year."

Continual growth and improvement

About 13 years ago, Anaya took Dale Carnegie leadership courses. While he learned several skills he could use at work, he said it probably helped more with his family and people outside of work.

More recently, Anaya has begun checking the quality of bees that arrive for almond pollination. Donned in a bee suit, he meets with beekeepers as they make deliveries

and checks hive strength.

"He's our bee guy," Jasper said of Anaya. "Bees are very, very important this time of year when the bloom comes. Bees cost a lot of money, and you don't want to be spend \$200 a hive if there are no bees in the hives."

Anaya said he started doing it because of the important role bees play in overall almond production. But he also enjoyed it. "Every year is different," he said. "I talk to bee keepers, where they came from and get to know them."

Although Anaya could have left and worked elsewhere, he said the thought never crossed his mind. During his tenure, he and his wife, Maria, have raised three daughters and a son. They also have 11 grandchildren and two great grandchildren. More than 20 years ago, he and Maria became U.S. citizens in a ceremony in Fresno.

Anaya enjoys his job and comes to work every day with a positive attitude, but he said his favorite activity is spending time surrounded by family.

Gold Award: Ishmael Garcia with Heinrich Farms

In the 31 years that Ishmael Garcia has

worked for Heinrich Farms in Wood Colony, he has become known as a dedicated, hard worker who always gives 110%.

"When we give him something to do, we don't have to worry about it getting done," said Gordon Heinrich, who farms with his three sons. "If we give him something to do and he sees something else that needs to be done, he does it. Not only is he loyal, he goes above and beyond."

Heinrich Farms grows walnuts and almonds as well as custom harvests the nuts and runs a commercial walnut huller/drier. Garcia can do most of the jobs, from pruning to equipment operation.

He typically is the first person at the farm in the morning and one of the last to leave. As a crew leader, Heinrich said, he's well respected.

Garcia also took it upon himself to learn English so he could communicate with all of the employees. As he works, he frequently sings and just seems happy with the task at hand.

"Every one of our employees is pretty much like him, but he's a standout," Heinrich said.

See "Farmworker" on page 16



Award of Excellence: Nathan White with Serpa Ranches



Award of Excellence: Antonio Machuca with Gambini Farms



Award of Excellence: Keaton Machado with Machado Ranch

From "Farmworker" on page 15

Silver Award: German Partida with Avila Family Dairy

Since German Partida began working at Avila Family Dairy southwest of Modesto about 23 years ago, he has continued to learn and taken on new responsibilities. Today, he performs a range of jobs from milking cows and repairing equipment to scheduling employees.

Yet, Partida also knows his limits and will tell co-owner George Avila when he's not able to perform a task rather than mess it up. The trust built by Partida has allowed Avila to thrive.

"I'm now a lot more able to step away, whether it's for a vacation or some other place that I have to be," Avila said. "He's really become my right-hand man."

Chalk that up to dedication, punctuality, a positive demeanor and taking initiative. If Partida sees something needs fixing or a valve shut off, for example, he'll take care of it without being asked.

When he first started working at the dairy, Partida's limited English may have been an obstacle. But Avila said that's not the case any more. Partida has learned the language and now acts as an interpreter with Spanish-speaking employees.

The honoree also has embraced the benefits of working together as a team.

"I think he understands that if we do better, the employees do better," Avila said. "We're trying to make improvements in our facility to help not only us but everyone,

and it will also be better for the cows to keep them comfortable."

Award of Excellence: Antonio Machucha with Gambini Farms

During the 39 years that Antonio Machucha has worked for Gambini Farms, Rod Gambini has come to know him for his dedication, hard work and reliability.

"He always knows what to do," said Gambini, who grows walnuts, almonds and forage crops near Oakdale. "He knows what fields have to be mowed. He's done it for so long, we could go on vacation and he would keep going. He makes it really easy."

Over the years, Machucha has done most jobs, from pruning and disking to harvesting and sweeping. He continues to seek different ways to save the farm money or to make the operation better. In addition, Gambini said, Machucha always has a positive attitude and goes above and beyond

what is expected.

When he's not at the farm, Machucha spends time working in his yard, which daughter Julianna Garcia described as "Yosemite" because of all the pine trees. After the growing season ends, Machucha returns to Michoacán, Mexico, to help his brothers run their bakery, which has been in the family for about 100 years.

And it's this type of work ethic that continues to impress Gambini.

"Every farm needs more workers like Antonio," he said. "I think if you had more farm workers like him, you'd need less people to get the job done."

Award of Excellence: Keaton Machado with Machado Ranch



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Perhaps Keaton Machado, the fourth generation to work on the family's farm near Westport, has agriculture in his blood. After graduating from California State University, Fresno, he returned to farming and has worked beside his father, Joe Machado, for the past 15 years.

As Keaton has taken over more duties, Joe has stepped back to allow him to grow. "He has my job now," Joe said, laughing. "I just feel I'm the luckiest man in the world to get to work with my son."

The Machados grow and harvest their own almonds as well as do custom work for other almond growers and alfalfa and grain producers. But their bread and butter is custom hay baling.

Over the years, the equipment has become more sophisticated, and Keaton has taken on the technology. They currently have at least five self-driving tractors and use automated irrigation systems and weather stations, among other technologies.

"I really admire him — he has that interest and has taken it to the next level," Joe Machado said.

Nathan White is one of those unique individuals who is uplifting to everyone around him at Serpa Ranches and Serpa's Milk Transport in Turlock.

"He's always positive, always in a great mood," said Jared Serpa. "He's very strong faithed. No matter what is thrown his way, whether it is work related or some other issue, he tackles it."

White joined the family-run operations about three years ago. About half his time is spent working on Serpa Ranches, which grows walnuts, almonds and forage crops. The other half is spent as a mechanic. He's always open to learning new tasks, too. Serpa has worked for the family businesses for the past 15 years and said he's never encountered someone like White who just radiates positivity.

"Nathan, hands down, has to be the one that stands out all of these years," Serpa said. "He's always giving us his best. He's very smart, very capable, and he's always got good ideas." In talking to others in management who have been their longer, Serpa said they all agreed that White "is special."

When White isn't working at the trucking company or on the farm, he devotes time to volunteering in his community and his church.

"He has devoted his life to serving God," Serpa said.

He also pointed to the deep-hearted passion for ag that brought Keaton back to the farm after college and pushes him through the long, hard hours they often work. "It's refreshing. There aren't a lot of young men in our area that are carrying on the farm," Joe said.

Award of Excellence: Nathan White with Serpa Ranches



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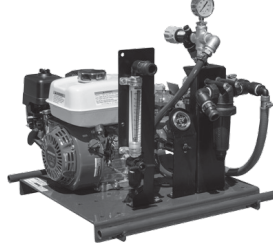
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From the Fields - Tim Sanders

By: Tim Sanders, Stanislaus County Almond Grower

Source: California Farm Bureau

This was probably one of the best pollination seasons we've had in a couple of years. Last year we had all the rain, and the year before that, we had some really cold weather. I'm surprised we had any crop at all. This year was better. Bees had time to work. Hopefully, we'll have a good crop. But it's always a long way between now and harvest, so a lot of things can happen. We're thankful for the storms that came in later. We should get a full complement of irrigation water from Turlock Irrigation District. That's always very helpful.

Most of my trees are old. We took some trees out a couple of years ago, and I've let the ground rest. I rented the property to my friend Ron Macedo, and he raised pumpkins. My kids and my grandkids all loved the pumpkins. They came out and brought their friends and took lots of pumpkins. Ron still filled the containers up in the trucks. He had a heck of a crop. Now we're going to come back next January and put another orchard back in. It's expensive, but it's a lot of fun. I enjoy watching the trees develop.

Right now, I'm going through the different orchards getting the weeds knocked down and keeping an eye on the weather. Supposedly it's going to be little bit colder with maybe a little more rain this coming weekend, so we might have to put some fungicides on. But everything looks pretty good. I just wish prices would come up a little bit. COVID really messed up shipping all over the world, and we're finally getting that back to where it should be, so I think almond prices will rebound a little bit. We don't want excessive prices, but we want prices so the consumer can get almonds at a reasonable price and we can make a little bit of money growing them.

Nominating Committee Report

As directed by President Eric Heinrich, through careful thought and consideration, the Nominating Committee of the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau makes the following recommendation for the term 2024-2026:

The following members will be nominated as Officers of the organization at the 110th Annual Meeting of Members, April 25, 2024 at the Stanislaus County Fairgrounds, Turlock, CA.

President: Kelly Fogarty Tilma, Oakdale

First Vice President: Vance Ahlem, Denair

Second Vice President: Vince Dykzeul, Grayson

Secretary: Corinne Santos, Oakdale

Treasurer: Daniel Bays, Westley

Thank you to the Board Members who served on this year's Nominating Committee and the candidates who have volunteered to lead the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau.

Sincerely,
Kurt Hoekstra, Chairperson
SCFB Nominating Committee 2024

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From "Ag Week" on page 13

their marketing efforts on promoting their organic products, significantly increasing sales. By analyzing website traffic, social media interactions, and email open rates, farmers can gain insights into their target audience and make changes to their marketing strategies accordingly. This abundance of data presents enhanced opportunities for growth and enhancement in effectively reaching and engaging with customers. With increased data comes greater opportunities for growth and improvement in reaching and engaging with customers. This data-driven approach allows farmers to optimize their marketing strategies,

maximize their reach, and ultimately increase sales.

Furthermore, digital marketing creates fresh opportunities for farmers to directly sell their products to consumers. Platforms such as online farmers' markets and farm-to-table subscription services enable farmers to reach customers beyond their local community and tap into new markets. However, it's important to note that this approach also comes with challenges. For instance, managing an online presence can be time-consuming and require technical skills that some farmers may need more.

This direct-to-consumer approach provides farmers with a more stable source of income. It allows them to bypass traditional distribution channels and retain more of the profits from their sales despite the potential challenges. By embracing digital tools and platforms, farmers in Modesto, Stanislaus County, and beyond are paving the way for a more sustainable, resilient, and connected agricultural industry.

As we celebrate National Agriculture Week in 2024, let's take a moment to appreciate and honor farmers' and the hard-working individuals who feed and fuel our world. Let's recognize the abundance of the land and the resilience of those who tend it. And let's commit ourselves to supporting agriculture – not just this week, but every day of the year.

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Camp Sylvester, Approaching its 100th Anniversary

By: Ken Peterson, Camp Sylvester, Director

It is that time of year, youth summer camp programs everywhere have begun sign-ups for the upcoming summer season. Although, things are a bit different in Pinecrest, where Camp Sylvester is a year-round destination that allows campers to participate in youth programming regardless of the season.

Established in 1927, Camp Sylvester is quickly approaching its 100th anniversary, which most certainly has to be a monumental achievement for the Camp's founders. What started as a summer seasonal pitch-your-tent campsite for farming youth groups, Camp Sylvester has become a year-round Sierra destination with all the traditional services one would expect a quality Camp facility/venue to offer. This past year, 2023, Camp Sylvester welcomed at least (4,580) guest campers; the vast majority of which participated in an overnight camper program. Photos of campers dating back to the early 30s' show how far Camp has come since the days when the best of the best options included outdoor cooking over a campfire, dim candle lite evenings and hoping a bear did not raid the food pantry overnight. Although, truth be told, these campfire, candle lite, and bear raiding experiences are still present today. Evolving from the early days, today's campers certainly appreciate that present day Camp offers cabin lodging, indoor heating, plumbing and power. However, we can all agree that it is for the best that Camp still does not offer camper's access to WIFI, streaming television, or general use of cell phones. With that said, Camp Sylvester is still a place youth experience new adventures, take on personal growth challenges, gain leadership skills, and make real human connections with fellow campers that often last a lifetime.

Over the decades Camp Sylvester has

served hundreds of thousands of youth campers at the treasured Pinecrest mountainous location. The majority of campers that visit Camp Sylvester are from California's Central Valley. But Camp often attracts guest campers from nationwide and even international locations. For many of the campers, their visit to Camp Sylvester is often their first time experiencing the High Sierra, seeing winter snow, catching a glimpse of a shooting star, or spending time away from city urban life. Camp Sylvester's Director of Facilities, Ken Peterson, often tells cherished stories to colleagues of how memorable the Camp experiences are for campers, particularly for those that visit from larger urban areas such as the San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles, or low-income youth. As one such story goes, periodically, students from Oakland Unified School District visit Camp Sylvester. At least once during every single group visit a student expresses their surprise see clear natural water within the lake and rivers surrounding Camp, genuinely confused as to where the water comes from or who is cleaning the water to maintain its clarity. The first time Director Ken hearing this was puzzling, until he realized that if a student has never seen clean, clean water in nature, from the student's perspective water in nature has only ever been associ-

ated with being dirty. Opportunities such as these offers new and valued experiences to youth, and it is the bedrock for why Camp's leadership works to maintain and protect this cherished site. It is a personal goal for many who volunteer to preserve the history of generations past, current, and provide opportunity for generations future.

To maintain such a historic and well used place takes a great amount of care and planning efforts, and of course funding. As anyone could imagine maintaining a safe

See "Camp" on page 22



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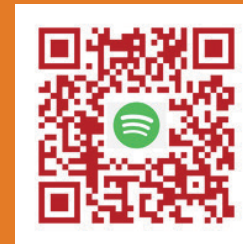
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From "Camp" on page 20

educational and recreational camp facility in the High Sierra, consisting of more than (28) cabins, dining and recreation halls, and support buildings is a never-ending task. Camp's mission is to provide the best possible camping experience at the lowest possible price. Camp is doing this well. Camp Sylvester regularly hears from guest groups the quality of the Camp's facilities and grounds is very good and affordable for their young campers to attend. Guest group leadership often commenting Camp Sylvester could charge more if it wanted to. However, Camp Sylvester strives to serve everyone regardless of income level. The leadership team behind maintaining Camp Sylvester, including dozens of individuals with the Stanislaus County Farm Bureau, pays particularly attention to serving low income and at-risk communities; even more so especially for those living within agriculturally based communities. The leadership team recognizes that if Camp were unable to maintain its low-cost operating structure, the majority of youth who visit would be unable to participate in a quality overnight camp program experience.

To maintain a low-cost operating structure is a community effort. It requires thousands of volunteer hours annually and community-based sponsorships to tackle the larger undertakings. In the most recent of years, Camp Sylvester wishes to offer special thanks to the Mary Stuart Rogers Foundation, Hilmar Cheese Company, and an anonymous individual donor from the Modesto Beckwith Road Area. These three sources of financial generosity helped enabled Camp Sylvester to quickly recover from the recent COVID pandemic, which forced widespread cancellations of youth programs and prompted serious financial strains on Camp's ability to sustain facilities. To the excitement of the Camp Sylvester Board of Directors, Camp has recovered quickly and camper participation has even grown beyond pre-pandemic levels, a milestone achievement for everyone involved.

Camp is always working to improve facilities to allow for the best camper experience

possible. Renovation work was delayed this last spring following the epic winter snow season of 2023. But, if you visited Camp Sylvester in summer 2023, it is all but certain you would have noticed the amphitheater stage and campfire area renovations were underway. Again, with great appreciation for a significant contribution from the Hilmar Cheese Company, Camp Sylvester was able to renovate the amphitheater stage and campfire area this past year for the enjoyment of thousands of youth campers and guests who visit Camp annually. The amphitheater stage and campfire area features a reinforced foundation, weather resistant decking, more theatrical stage backdrop, and updated seating. These exciting updates are wonderful additions to improve the youth experiences during Camp's nightly campfire skits, songs, and memory making.

Planning efforts are still underway, but Camp Staff anticipate beginning work for a phase 1 project to complete improvements for an updated outdoor picnic area and outdoor classroom area in 2024. Catalyst

funds for this improved amenity are being provided by the Mary Stuart Rogers Foundation of Modesto.

Also new for 2024, for the first time in decades, Camp Sylvester is offering youth camp programs to any youth who wish to attend an overnight summer camp program hosted at Camp Sylvester. In 2023, Camp partnered with Run for Fun Camps, a well-established youth service organization who will be hosting four-(4), one-(1) week-long summer camp sessions available to all youth ages 7-13 to attend. Campers can learn more and directly sign-up for overnight camp programs at www.campsylvester.org/camp-programs. It is an exciting time; Camp staff is looking forward to the upcoming year and years to follow.

To learn more about Camp Sylvester, sponsor a child's enrollment in an overnight camp program, or sponsor a Camp facility improvement project, please call (209) 459-1560, visit CampSylvester.org or email Ken@CampSylvester.org.

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TUOLUMNE COUNTY FARM NEWS



From the Fields - Shaun Crook

By: Shaun Crook, Tuolumne County Forester, California Farm Bureau First Vice President
Source: California Farm Bureau

Operators are getting back to the woods and working on mastication, or fuel-reduc-

tion projects. Our company is getting ready for the traditional logging season that begins in the coming weeks. Once we return to the woods, we'll be logging and removing biomass east of Sonora as part of a U.S. Forest Service stewardship contract. In our area of the Stanislaus National Forest, we're in the middle of about a thousand-acre mastication project, and other operators are doing similar jobs. More of these projects will be bid on in the coming months. Many projects happening on national forestland are for removing submerchantable biomass, which is turned into wood chips and processed at a cogeneration facility. More traditional logging jobs on private land are happening by others, such as those operating for Sierra Pacific Industries.

A few local loggers were able to operate this winter because the conditions worked

out. The Sierra Pacific sawmill needed some larger logs, and that is what loggers went after to fill the gap. The mill that takes small logs has enough inventory to make it to mid-summer. Because of the oversupply, prices, particularly for white fir, are lower than they've been in the recent past. If you are a timberland owner trying to sell logs, it's not the best market conditions for small white fir.

Last year was a pretty mild fire season in California. Conventional wisdom tells me this year is going to be about the same on timber ground and on national forestland. The lower, 3,000-foot elevation, which contains brush and chapparal, has received good water, but there is a lot of untreated brush and growth, so I worry about our foothill counties. This material, regardless of the precipitation received, will burn hot, so it is important to take care of any fire starts immediately. My crystal ball says it may be a lower-elevation fire season as opposed to the forest fires we've had in years going back to the Dixie Fire and others.

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