



Riverside County

AGRICULTURE

The official publication of Riverside County Farm Bureau, Inc.

A private, nonprofit organization serving farmers throughout Riverside County since 1917

California Water Crisis - "A Perfect Storm"

By John V. Rossi, General Manager, Western Municipal Water District

California's escalating water shortage is taking a severe toll on Riverside County's billion-plus dollar agricultural business. The growing strain on Riverside's local agriculture industry is evident throughout the region; fields are left dormant in part because of the shortage in water supply necessary to make them productive. A number of factors contribute to this increasingly evident – and serious problem – including; prolonged drought on the Colorado River, court ordered reductions in water supplies delivered through the State Water Project and diminishing snow pack in the Sierra Mountains. Adding to the gravity of this situation is the recent announcement by Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (Metropolitan) that it will soon begin phasing out the Interim Agriculture Water Program (IAWP).

The IAWP was started in the early 1990s as a way to deliver surplus imported water at a discounted price to agencies with agricultural customers located in Metropolitan's service areas. In exchange for receiving these discounted surplus water supplies, a mandatory reduction in water delivery is implemented during supply shortage conditions in advance of urban water users. As a Metropolitan member agency, Western Municipal Water District is a participant in the program.

Because of dwindling water supplies in the state, Metropolitan imposed a 30 percent cut in water deliveries on January 1, 2008. Metropolitan recently announced that the IAWP will be phased out over the next four years starting in early 2009. Because of potentially significant and historically low deliveries in the upcoming months from the State Water Project, Metropolitan is considering implementing mandatory water reductions for urban water users this summer. Mandatory reductions for urban users translates to additional deeper cuts in IAWP deliveries.

A decision on whether this action is taken will be voted on by the Metropolitan Board this spring. In the meantime, Metropolitan has announced plans to continue with 30 percent reductions in IAWP water delivery that began in 2008 due to the court ordered reduction in the amount of water pumped from the Sacramento Bay-Delta.

These factors have all come together to form a "perfect storm" resulting in potentially negative impacts felt by the agricultural community both locally and state wide. Dave Kranz, Manager of Media Services for the California Farm Bureau has stated this situation is critical across the state.

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NORTHERN CALIFORNIA

Tuesday, March 17, 2009

Reception 5:30 p.m.

Dinner 6:30 p.m.

Cathedral of the Blessed Sacrament, 1017 11th Street
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30-minute tours of the newly renovated Cathedral 5:45 p.m. and
6:00 p.m.

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Saturday, March 28, 2009

Tour 10:00 - 11:15 a.m.

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Water use efficiency ordinance revised by Eastern Municipal Water District

Perris, CA (February 6, 2009)—The reliability of water supplies in western Riverside County was enhanced Wednesday, Feb. 4, when Eastern Municipal Water District's board of directors revised its water use efficiency ordinance.

The latest revisions incorporate the district's water budget-based tiered rates structure as a method to enforce greater water efficiency and discourage water waste. Some of these requirements include repairing water leaks in a timely manner, and avoiding hosing down driveways and irrigating during daytime. Ordinance 72.24 is effective March 1, 2009, when tiered rates also become effective.

The ordinance also revised penalties against customers who allow water to run off their property and into streets. Single-family customers who allow water to run-off their property and into streets will receive two written notices before paying penalties. These penalties start at \$25 with the third violation notice within a year, down from \$100 currently. Subsequent violations against the same customers would result in surcharges of \$50 and \$100, down from \$200 and \$300.

The reduced surcharge on single family residents is because of the new tiered-rate structure incorporates higher charges for excessive and wasteful practices by single-family residents. Penalties of \$100, \$200 and \$300 remain unchanged for water runoff by multi-family, commercial, institutional, industrial, agricultural, and landscape accounts.

Under the new rate schedule, large landscaping accounts with more than 3,000 square feet of irrigation and dedicated landscape meters are required to adhere to their water allocations on a monthly basis, rather than an annual basis. In 2008, some large landscape accounts exceeded their water budgets and are subject to about \$600,000 collectively for their excessive and wasteful irrigation practices.

It was noted during board discussions that the elected official of cities, park and school districts, and other large landscape accounts should be notified when invoices with excessive or wasteful tiers are sent out. Currently, only the customers on record receive the notices.

In the future, mandatory conservation measures may be necessary to comply with state or regional requirements.

As a reminder, information, services and other help is freely available for EMWD customers. To see a copy of Ord. 72.24 and for information about current conservation programs, go to <http://www.emwd.org/usewaterwisely/>.

For information on tiered rates and to access EMWD's water-budget calculator, go to http://www.emwd.org/water_service/UnderstandingTieredRates.html.

The water use efficiency ordinance was established in 1991 in response to several years of drought and Metropolitan Water District's implementation of a service interruption and conservation plan.

###

EMWD is the freshwater, wastewater service and recycled water provider to a 555-square mile area from Moreno Valley southward along the I-215 corridor to Temecula and eastward to Hemet and San Jacinto. Approximately 675,000 people live and work in this area. In addition to its own water customers, EMWD supplements water to eight local water agencies and municipalities that have their own water departments. EMWD operates four water reclamation facilities and treats some 46 million gallons of wastewater daily. More information can be found at EMWD's web site www.emwd.org.

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Meet John C. Gless RCFB Associate Director

John's knowledge and expertise in farming is the product of his life in the agriculture industry. He was raised a fifth generation citrus farmer. John says this gives him an historical perspective of the citrus industry in California dating back to his great, great, grandfather, whom began farming in 1907. He continues to work alongside his father and grandfather and has learned the industry from the ground up.

To follow in his family's tradition of citrus farming, John says since the age of fifteen he has been employed by Gless Ranch, Inc. As his career progressed, he has been responsible for overseeing the equipment, the retail store, and more recently the farm management for their Riverside County groves.

Furthering his education, he has obtained his pest control applicators license, actively attends seminars, extension classes and recently traveled to Florida with California Citrus Mutual in an attempt to gain knowledge regarding the Asian Citrus Psyllid.

John lives in Riverside with his wife, Alexis.

FARM TEAM

ACTION

Dairy Farmers Face Devastating Price Drop

Standards for CCC Purchases
Need Change

Contact your member of Congress today for their help in getting the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to take immediate action to fix the Dairy Product Price Support Program (DPPSP). Under DPPSP, the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) is authorized to purchase basic dairy products - butter, powder and cheese - at a specified price. This support is intended to keep prices at a stable rate when market prices fall below the pre-defined level of support. Wholesale cheese prices, which are established on the Chicago Mercantile Exchange, heavily influence the milk price paid to producers. The wholesale prices have dropped below the CCC established purchase price of \$1.13 per hundred-weight. This occurred throughout January, yet, the emergency purchase mechanism failed to kick-in because CCC has a separate set of standards. USDA must change the standards to align with CME, so that CCC may purchase cheese at the support level and clear the market of excess inventory. Weigh-in on this important price-support mechanism - write your member of Congress today!

Governor's Response to RCFB's Williamson Act Letter

Thank you for writing to share your thoughts with me about the proposed elimination of the Williamson Act. Your input is important to me during these challenging economic times.

Since I signed the 2008-09 budget, economic conditions have been

deteriorating rapidly, and we are now facing a \$14.8-billion revenue shortfall. Without immediate action, our state is headed for a fiscal disaster. On November 6, I called the Legislature into Special Session to close our projected shortfall, but unfortunately for California, the Legislators adjourned without any new solutions. I have now called a fiscal emergency special session, and the Legislature has 45 days to send me bills addressing the budget.

To close the shortfall, I have proposed a combination of spending reductions and new revenues. I have made tough choices I wish I did not have to make, and I know this is a terrible time to cut programs people depend on. But in an emergency like this, we have to take quick action to keep our problems from getting worse - even if it requires decisions we do not like. Even though funding for the Williamson Act will be cut, the proposal does not eliminate the ability for local entities to enter into these agreements. While local governments can cancel contracts if state funding is eliminated, they cannot begin to collect taxes based on the property's full value until after four years.

I continue to urge the people of California to call their legislators, send them e-mails and postcards and tell

them not to waste any more time. If we attack these problems head-on, make the difficult choices and work together for the common good, California will pull through this challenging time.

Sincerely,
Arnold Schwarzenegger

CALIFORNIA CITRUS CROPS THREATENED

The *Los Angeles Times* reported that state agriculture inspectors are stepping up their efforts to battle what they believe is an agricultural time bomb. The Asian citrus psyllid was discovered in the Hillcrest neighborhood of San Diego last week, the farthest north the bug has been found in the city.

Agriculture officials warned that the bug was rapidly moving north since crossing the Mexican border at Tijuana in July. The pest spreads citrus greening disease, which has caused heavy losses to orange farms in Florida and Brazil. The same disease could be a catastrophe for California's \$1.2-billion citrus industry. Quarantines have been established in parts of San Diego and Imperial counties to slow the advance of the bug by prohibiting the movement of citrus plant material out of those areas. The fruit can still be shipped, but must be cleaned first.



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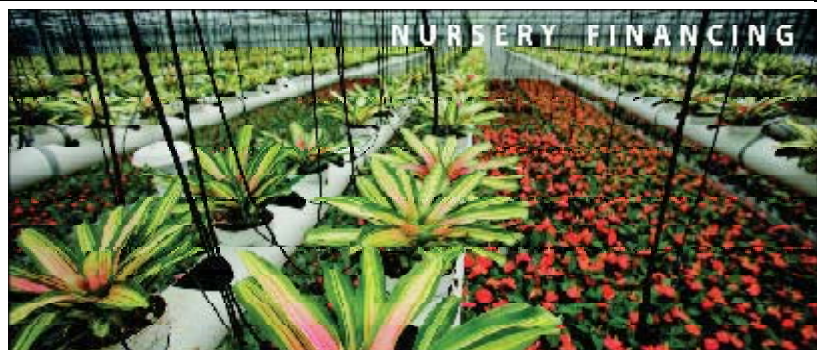
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.....CONTINUED FROM FRONT COVER.

“If it is dry again in 2009, we will be in really bad shape. We need to take positive action now.” Continued reductions in water supply means that an increasing number of farmers must cut back their production, which in-turn drives food prices higher for consumers. This alarming trend will continue to increase as crop production decreases in response to water shortages.

In southwest Riverside County, avocado farmers are stumping trees. Others will not be able to plant as many crops this spring. The increasing unpredictability in reliable imported water supply makes addressing the current lack of water storage infrastructure imperative. Too often, valuable winter storm water runoff is flowing into the Pacific Ocean - unused and lost forever because of the lack of water storage capacity. Given Southern California’s arid climate, the need to build more water storage reservoirs and related facilities in order to increase water storage capacity during times of plentiful rainfall is critical to long-term, regional reliability.

An ironic situation currently occurs in California. Amidst the worst drought conditions experienced since the late 1800s, there are reservoirs that must be emptied during flash flood conditions due to a fundamental lack of capacity to hold excess water coming from Sierra Nevada run off. Every winter, California’s largest single natural reservoir, the Northern Sierra snow pack, is replenished. In the spring, this snow melts and the resulting run off is used to supply the state with fresh water for urban use and for the production of crops that feed our state and in fact our entire nation. This lack of storage capacity means that on many occasions an invaluable resource - water - is lost forever as it flows into the ocean.

Riverside County farmers continue to do their part to help conserve water. State of the art irrigation systems have increased water use efficiency in crop production, yet this action alone is not an adequate solution. Quite simply, there is no effective substitute for strengthening our existing water conveyance infrastructure.

Western Director Don Galleano notes that it is imperative that local *ad valorem* taxes remain in the region to provide for a host of much-needed infrastructure projects such as desalination, recycling and storm water capture. “If the legislature votes to redirect property taxes that agencies are using to create these new, more reliable water supplies, fierce competition between all water users, including agricultural interests, will be one of the damaging results.”

During these challenging times, Western Municipal Water District will continue working in partnership with Riverside County’s agricultural industry to find solutions to these issues while advocating at the state level to ensure local property taxes remain in the region as a means to provide, maintain and enhance our necessary and vital water supply infrastructure.



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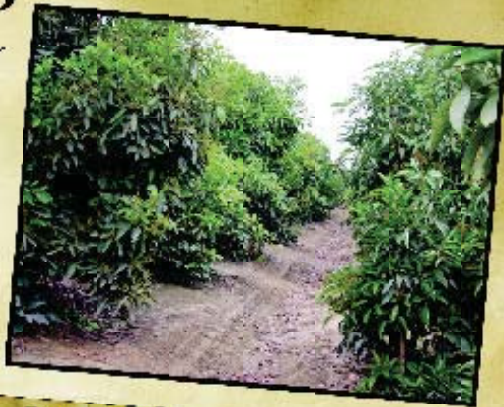
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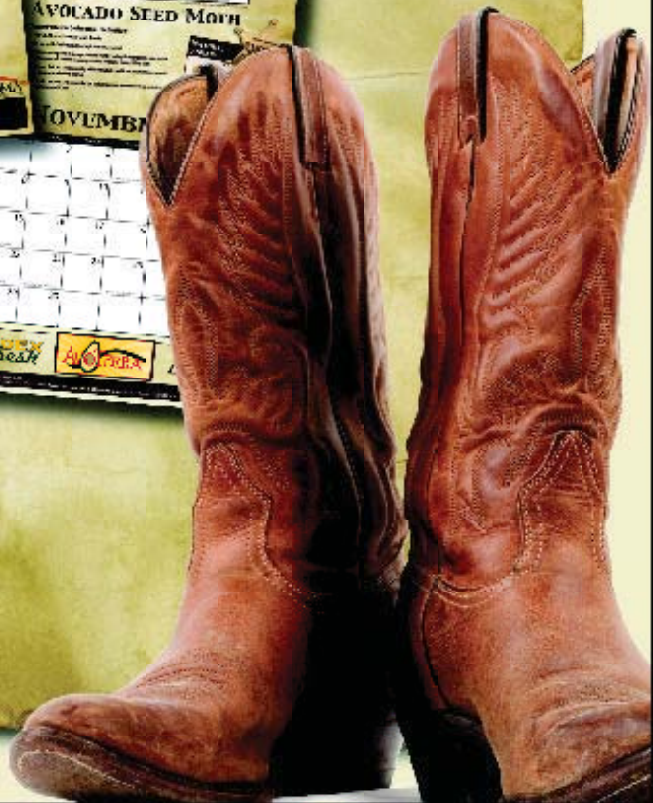
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2009 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- * March 6th – meeting with Assemblyman Kevin Jefferies. Call the RCFB office for details.
- * March 11th – RCFB Board meeting – 6 pm at the Sizzler Restaurant in Indio.
- * March 19th – San Geronio Heritage Corridor meeting – 10 am at the RCFB office.
- * March 28th – AITC Fundraiser – call the RCFB office for details.



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