



Riverside County

AGRICULTURE

The official publication of Riverside County Farm Bureau, Inc.

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

Protecting the Williamson Act in Riverside County

By Steven A. Pastor, Executive Director



I'm sure by now many of you are aware of Riverside County's strained financial situation and of the cutbacks the county faces in the coming fiscal year. Once again, as cutbacks are mentioned, the Williamson Act contracts between landowners and the county could be cut.

The Williamson Act (Act), also known as the California Land Conservation Act of 1965, is a voluntary program that provides lower property taxes to agricultural landowners in exchange for their contractual commitments with participating counties to keep their land in commercial agriculture production or open space for a minimum of ten years. To date, it is the most cost effective incentive-based farm and ranch land conservation tool in California. The State of California provides payments or "backfill" to participating counties based on enrolled acreage in the program. Because of the state's own financial problems, it has cutback on the money it sends to participating counties to make-up for the difference in property taxes paid by landowners enrolled in a Williamson Act contract.

If Riverside County decides to cancel or send non-renewal notices to those landowners enrolled in the Act, many of the farming and ranching operations in the county would be unable to stay in business without the benefit of the Act. In a recent survey conducted by the state of state and county officials who are most knowledgeable about the Williamson Act, 87 percent of the surveyed officials said that the benefits of the program outweigh the costs. The backfill of the foregone property tax is the state's only significant contribution to farmland protection.

Currently, Riverside County has approximately 52,825 acres of prime farmland and 6,601 acres of non-prime land enrolled in the Act. According to John Gamper from the California Farm Bureau Federation, "...in the 2008-2009 fiscal year, Riverside County claimed \$204,041 in Williamson Act subventions and was paid 90 percent of that claim. The total assessed value of property in Riverside County (FY 2007-2008) was \$237,210,270,000 and the county share of the property tax based on that net taxable assessed value was \$291,226,000. Thus, the \$204,041 in claimed subventions from the state represents only 0.07 of one percent of the counties total property tax take. This is a very small price to pay for our most important farmland protection tool."

In short, we are asking our members to write or call the Riverside County Board of Supervisors and request that the Williamson Act be preserved in Riverside County. Eliminating the Act will not make a significant difference to the county's bottom line but will make a large difference in preserving prime farmland and open space in the county as well as preserving jobs.

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Welcome New Members

We would like to "Thank You" for becoming part
of the Farm Bureau Family.

**Update: Santa Margarita Watershed
and
SKR Lawsuit**

The Riverside County Farm Bureau continues to move forward with establishing a non-profit group to deal with the Santa Margarita Watershed issues. A core group of Farm Bureau directors/landowners in the Santa Margarita Watershed area met with the Claremont Law Group on January 12th to begin laying out the framework needed to establish an independent non-profit organization for the watershed. The Farm Bureau has continued to meet with the Regional Water Quality Control Board in San Diego to help determine the costs associated with any monitoring plan as well as what will be monitored; who will do the monitoring; and where will the monitoring stations be located. The Farm Bureau is still planning to hold a workshop for its members located in the watershed area. The date, time, and location of the workshop will be given to our members in the near future.

On December 14, 2009, the Riverside County Farm Bureau (Farm Bureau) filed suit (complaint) against the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) in order to force the Service to make a final ruling on the Farm Bureau's two Stephens Kangaroo Rat (SKR) delisting petitions. As you may recall, the Farm Bureau first requested the Service delist the SKR in 1995 and again in 2002. Under the Endangered Species Act, the Service has 90-days to determine whether the petition has merit. The Service still has never made the required 90-day finding on the previous petitions submitted by the Farm Bureau. Since the first petition fourteen years ago was ignored by the Service, the Farm Bureau felt it was time for the Service to "stop dragging its feet" and make a ruling, hence, the lawsuit.

The Farm Bureau will continue to update its members on the progress of these two very important topics as we continue to move forward.

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Former Ontario dairy owner receives state recognition

Courtesy of Liset Marquez, Staff Writer at Inland Valley Daily Bulletin.

ONTARIO - Milk and cows have long been part of former Inland Valley dairyman Ralph te Velde's family. George te Velde, his father, started his dairy in the early 1930s in what is now known as Bellflower. Four of his brothers have diaries in the San Joaquin Valley and a sister has interest in a dairy she once owned, he said.

After more than 30 years of service to agriculture in San Bernardino County and statewide, the Ontario resident was recognized with the California Farm Bureau Federation Distinguished Service Award during the Farm Bureau annual meeting in December. The bureau is a non-profit organization that assists farmers, ranchers, and growers on issues that affect the farming community. "I can't put a price on his knowledge and expertise and you can't match that," said Gayle Learned, executive director of the San Bernardino County Farm Bureau.

Starting the business

At first te Velde said he wasn't too keen on following the family tradition. Following his senior year in high school, te Velde spent 1951-1955 in the Navy and then worked with North American Aviation for 12 years. He left the aviation industry to get into the more profitable dairy industry, he said. TeVe Dairy came into existence in 1969 with 300 cows on a couple of acres near Mountain and Schaffer avenues in what is now south Ontario. Soon he added nearby acreage including 80 acres rented from his father. "We were expanding, adding cows and modernizing the facility," he said.

As he sat in his living room, te Velde reminisced about an industry that operated much differently than today, and changes that ultimately led him to leave. "We didn't have all the regulation impediments that we now have," 78-year-old said. "It got to the point that you'd go to your mailbox, and you'd get some mail from government agency with new regulations." The regulations would vary from new air quality standards to making sure water carrying manure did not run off the property, he said.

In 2006, te Velde said closed the south Ontario Dairy and enter into a partnership with his son, Ken, and move the business to Hobbs, N.M. "We miss our family and friends but we don't have to deal with the regulation system," Ken said. All the regulations that were being imposed, te Velde said, were due in part to the new housing popping up in the area. That's progress," te Velde said as he shrugged.

At Archibald and Edison avenues, there's little left of teVe Dairy. The barn has been leveled and only the front of his home remains. For 26 years, te Velde and his wife Carol raised their six children, all of whom grew up working on the farm and milking cows. Owning your own diary meant "you're kind of your own boss," but it also meant supervising a staff of about 14 to make sure things got done, he said. The day for te Velde ran from 6 a.m. to 5 p.m., with some longer than others. By the time teVe Dairy left Ontario, the operation had grown to 1,750 cows generating about 8,000 gallons a day.

Devoting time to the bureau

Early into his career, he realized the importance of the Farm Bureau. "We tried to influence legislation away from damaging farming," he said. "The Farm Bureau does not use a lot of cash to do that, it uses volunteers." While the issues they tackled weren't huge, they were issues that impacted the industry, he said. Just like a proposed tree cutting ordinance that first sparked his interest. The county was proposing five pages worth of new regulations on cutting down a tree on private property, te Velde said. He, and other diary owners worked against it and "that ordinance never made it off the ground," te Velde said proudly. And from there, his involvement with the organization grew. It started with monthly meetings and then into joining committees and soon he was serving on different boards.

Dedication to the bureau

In his 30 years of volunteering with the Farm Bureau, te Velde has twice served as president of the San Bernardino County Farm Bureau. Despite his recent bout with cancer, Te Velde continues to serve as secretary/treasurer of the organization, said Learned. In the last six months since his cancer diagnosis te Velde has only missed two meetings, she said. At the state level, he has had a role in determining Farm Bureau policy through his involvement in commodity advisory committees, she said.

During the 1990s, te Velde was a director on the California Farm Bureau Federation board, representing Riverside, San Bernardino and Inyo-Mono counties, Learned said. Despite his countless hours of commitment, te Velde doesn't understand why he received the Distinguished Service Award, which is the highest honor bestowed by the California Farm Bureau. "I'm just an everyday person," he said. "I go and do my thing and go to the meetings I'm suppose to." Just then, his wife Carol chimes in, "it's because you are so dedicated to it." Carol would know firsthand the work te Velde has put into the bureau, like the days her husband would fly to Sacramento for one-day meetings. Or most recently when, the chemo had left him weak and unable to drive, and she would take him to the meetings and sit in the back and wait. "I was very proud, he worked very hard for it," she said of the award. "Although he was just doing his thing, the reward he got was for his dedication." But Carol said she understands why her husband remained so involved with the bureau through the years. "He never got a paycheck but he started to make things better for farmers. He wasn't in there for money and glory," Carol said. "He's been working hard for the industry that we were in." But it's his work with the Rural Health and Safety Committee that te Velde said he has taken the most pride.

Through the years, his involvement and contacts with the committee has led to San Bernardino County Sheriff's Department assigning a rural officer. It's an accomplishment but also a benefit to the agricultural industry, he said. "He's not a quitter, he's a very tough man," Learned said. "He doesn't make any money but he has had the heart and soul to save agriculture in the state."



Longtime dairyman Ralph te Velde of Ontario has been awarded the California Farm Bureau Federation's Distinguished Service Award. His TeVe Dairy was founded in 1969. (Jennifer Cappuccio-Maher/Staff Photographer)

Agricultural Theft

Agriculture deputies in San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara and Ventura counties are experiencing an increase in agriculture equipment and construction site thefts. It appears there are some similarities to pass theft reports in San Diego county.

Ventura County has reason to believe that their recent rural burglaries are tied to an organized group.

It appears the criminal crew is now possibly working their way back down the coast to our area as they just hit a construction site at a school off State Hwy 154 in Los Olivos last night. Up in Los Olivos they took small hand tools, chain saws, and air compressors.

They use bolt cutters to get into storage containers (connex boxes, shipping containers) on ranches and rural operations. Everything is fair game, but they love pumps, generators, welders, air compressors, spray rigs.

Double up on your farm and ranch security, report any suspicious persons to your local law enforcement agency and be safe..

Jackie Cruz
San Diego Sheriff Department
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Use care when working with electricity

By Mike Klimenko, Farm Bureau Group Manager

As farmers and ranchers take their work indoors during these chilly winter months, they frequently find themselves working more with electricity as they maintain and repair their equipment for another growing season.

Electricity is the most widely utilized form of energy on the farm, providing a steady and reliable power source to assist us in our tasks. But along with this use comes some potential dangers. Electrocutation is the greatest hazard associated with electricity. A person's inability to let go and detach oneself from the source of electricity may result in receiving a near-fatal or even fatal shock if the source of electricity is not shut down or removed.

Burns are the most common injuries associated with electricity. They are particularly bad because they often extend quite deep into the tissues of the body. Frequently these accidents occur in situation where equipment is allowed to deteriorate, resulting in broken outlets, cracked cables, improperly grounded tools and other such preventable situations. Careful inspections of equipment and wiring are wise preventative practices.

Water and electricity can be a fatal combination. Damp areas and metal objects can offer good shortcuts for electricity to reach the ground. In wet, winter months, extra caution should be observed when working with electrical equipment or when working near grounded objects.

Here are some other important tips for working with and around electricity.

- Treat every electric wire as if it were a live one.
- Inspect equipment and extension cords before each use.
- Take faulty equipment or plugs with bent or missing prongs out of service for repair.
- Only qualified electricians should repair electrical equipment or work on energized lines.
- If a plug doesn't have three prongs or if the receptacle doesn't have three openings, make sure the tool is grounded in some other way before use.
- Never try to bypass an electrical system by cutting off the third prong of a plug.
- Turn off the power and report the smell of hot or burning plastic, smoke, sparks or flickering lights.
- Stop using a tool or appliance if a slight shock or tingling is felt.
- Never disconnect an electrical plug by pulling on the cord.
- Whenever working on an electric circuit, the circuit should be turned off and locked out at the circuit breaker or fuse box to ensure that the circuit cannot be accidentally turned on.
- Those who regularly work on or around energized electrical equipment should be trained in emergency response and CPR.

Training can instill in everyone the importance of using common sense and an understanding of safe practices. Take the time to determine what needs to be done to ensure that everyone is safe from electrical hazards. And then follow through.

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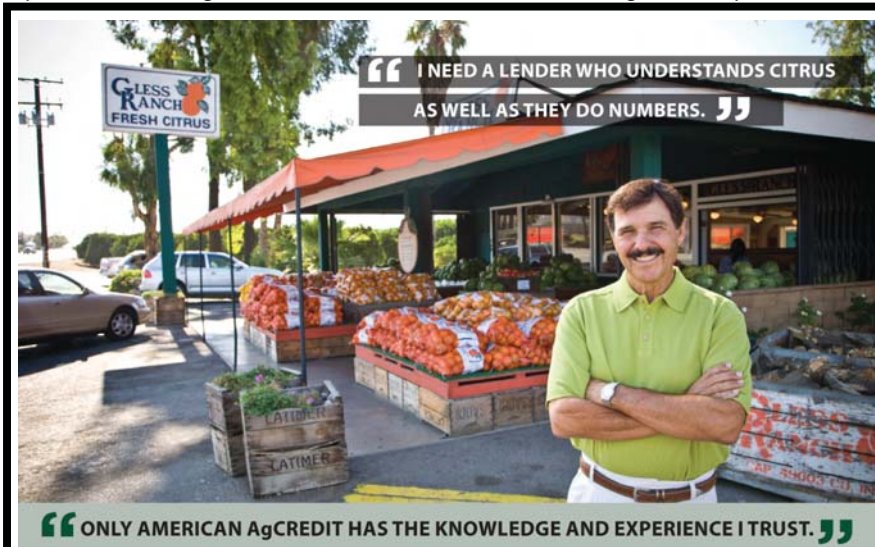
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For many, the start of spring signifies a time for new beginnings, particularly for those of you involved in the world of agriculture. Soon, the days will grow longer, and the soil will begin to warm, new crops will be planted, and all around us we will sense an optimism and excitement about the future.

California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom (CFAITC) invites you to help celebrate **National Agriculture Week** with two special events which will serve to honor and create an awareness for the men and women of this vital industry that we all depend on. Please save the date and join us for one, or both, of these very special gatherings:

Southern California

Saturday, March 20, 2010

An afternoon cruise and luncheon aboard John Wayne's yacht, The Wild Goose, in Newport Beach.

Northern California

Thursday, March 25, 2010

An elegant dinner prepared by The Grange restaurant in Sacramento's Citizen Hotel, inside a 3,000 square-foot tented rooftop terrace, with views of the State Capitol.

Now, more than ever, it is essential that today's students become aware of the many important land use, water, and environmental issues that will impact agriculture, and society as a whole. CFAITC is dedicated to promoting agricultural literacy and general awareness regarding our food, fiber and shelter systems in classrooms across the state, allowing today's students, tomorrow's voters, consumers and leaders, to make informed, sound decisions.

I encourage you to attend and support our National Agriculture Week events. Keep in mind, sponsors will receive special recognition for their support as described on the Web site. We are always in search of other organizations and individuals who may be potential supporters. Please inform us if any of your friends or colleagues may also be interested in sustaining agricultural education in California—we'll be happy to invite them to join us!

Thank you, as always, for your ongoing support. We sincerely appreciate your contribution to agriculture awareness and education for California's students.

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Judy Culbertson
Executive Director



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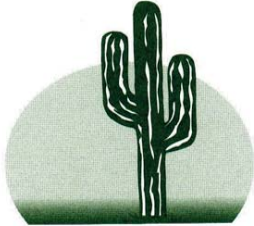
2010 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- ✦ February 3rd - California Agriculture Water Summit, Conveyance Workshop, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm at the California Farm Bureau Federation headquarters in Sacramento.
- ✦ February 10th - RCFB Board meeting, 5:30 pm at the Farmhouse Restaurant in Banning. RCFB Board of Directors the financial report will be presented at 5:00 pm, please plan to attend.
- ✦ February 15th - RCFB office will be closed in observance of President's Day.

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