



August 31, 2007

USDA official to be in Fresno Sept. 5 to discuss Farm Bill

The federal Farm Bill will be the focus of a discussion with Marc Kesselman, chief council for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, on Wednesday, Sept. 5 at 9 a.m. at the Fresno County Farm Bureau office, 1274 W. Hedges Ave., Fresno.

Kesselman will be in Fresno next week visiting with agricultural leaders, including small farm and ethnic farmer representatives. At the Wednesday meeting, Kesselman will provide an update on the latest components in the draft 2007 Farm Bill and will take input from producers on what else should be addressed by federal farm policy. The meeting is open to the public.

Decision expected today on Delta Smelt-ESA issue

As of *Friday Follow-Up's* deadline, a decision that could have far-reaching impacts to an already water-short area is expected in the Delta Smelt hearing that has been in progress during the past two weeks.

U.S. Judge Wanger is expected to rule immediately following testimony, which concludes this afternoon. The decision could decide whether farmers buying water from State and federal Central Valley Project pumps in the Delta will face a more severe man-made drought next year and will have additional cuts in their contractual supplies.

The hearing began last week in response to an earlier ruling that the operation of the pumps do not comply with the federal Environmental Species Act and threatens the existence of the Delta Smelt. A group of environmental organizations filed the earlier suit and are now asking for a cutback in 2008 deliveries to protect the fish.

The issue clearly illustrates the need to "fix" the Delta, but it further demonstrates the extreme impacts that can result from enforcement of the federal Endangered Species Act. Under the ESA, social and economic impacts are not considered when it comes to protection of listed species. However, reports from the courthouse this morning indicate that

Judge Wanger may consider economic impacts in his decision.

Water officials have expressed frustration with the focus of the pumps being the cause of the Delta Smelt's decline. Dan Nelson, executive director of the San Luis & Delta Mendota Water Authority, explains that scientists claim the pumps play an insignificant role in controlling the smelt population. Other factors representing a greater effect on the smelt numbers are loss of food supplies for the fish and the introduction of invasive plant and fish species that have dramatically altered the environment.

Much is at stake. A cutback of contracted water deliveries in 2008 will have far-reaching consequences for the west side of Fresno County and rural communities – particularly with lost local and regional jobs that depend on the value-added benefit of having crops in the ground.

Statewide, more than three million acres of farmland could be affected by the court's decision, including large portions of the nation's fruits and vegetables which are grown in the state and federal water service area.

Pray for dry, breezy days ahead

Surprise thundershowers in Fresno County on Thursday raised concerns from farmers and the agricultural community. Up to one-quarter inch was reported in certain parts of Fresno County.

The raisin-grape harvest is underway, and unseasonable rain could impact grapes that have been laid down for drying into raisins. Other crops that could show quality and yield impacts from the rain are almonds, table and wine grapes, deciduous tree fruit, late-season tomatoes and fresh-cut alfalfa hay. Late varieties of nectarines have been reported to be hurt by the rain, causing them to break-down.

Fresno County Agricultural Commissioner Jerry Prieto said it's too early to tell the extent of damage, but "there will be some damage reported." About 30-to-40 percent of the raisin crop is on the ground for drying, with about 10 percent estimated to be rolled (a final step in the drying process that offers some protection from rain). Farmers report the dried-on-the-vine-type raisin grape is not typically as affected by rain as the tray picking.

Urge a veto on labor bill

Farm Bureau and other agricultural groups are urging Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger to veto a farm labor bill that would take away an employee's right to secret ballot vote in union elections.

SB 180 (Migden, D-San Francisco), which was recently approved by the State Legislature, would eliminate an employee's right to a secret ballot election under the Agricultural Labor Relations Act. The bill is on the Governor's desk. He has three choices: sign the bill into law, allow it to become law without his signature, or veto it.

When the ALRA was enacted in 1975, legislative proponents, as well as agricultural labor unions, insisted that an employee's right to a secret ballot election be written into the law. SB 180 would change that, allowing union representation cards, also known as "card check," to be used for conducting an election. If the union collects signatures from more than 51 percent of my employees, they will be recognized as the bargaining representative.

Currently, secret ballot elections are held after a labor union collects signature cards from a majority of the employees. Most times, the number of signatures far exceeds the minimum requirement because workers are pressured into signing the cards. The election which proceeds is overseen by Agricultural Labor Relations Board (ALRB) election observers. SB 180 would diminish the role of the ALRB to nothing more than signature verification. As a result, the enactment of SB 180 would increase employee intimidation dramatically.

This bill could have precedence-setting implications for other businesses that deal with unions. Please fax a letter urging his veto of SB 180 today to: Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, Attention Michael Prozio, FAX: (916) 445-4633.

Fresno Fair – Shamrock Shows scholarship accepting applications

Shamrock Shows, the Big Fresno Fair's carnival provider, is offering the Shamrock Shows Educational Scholarship Program to Fresno County graduating high school seniors, continuing university, junior college or trade school students.

A minimum of three scholarships totaling \$3,000 will be awarded to students based on an essay, overall grade point average, their involvement in school and their community, and an oral interview. The Scholarship Judging Committee will be comprised

of four judges including representatives from the Big Fresno Fair and Shamrock Shows. Scholarships will be announced during the 2007 Big Fresno Fair in the Junior Exhibits Building on Thursday, Oct. 11 at 7 p.m.

Applicants must be a graduating high school senior or continuing university, junior college or trade school student. Written applications, which must include three letters of recommendation, are due by Sept. 15 to the Big Fresno Fair. Applications are available online at www.FresnoFair.com/fair/carnival/. Details: (559) 650-3247.

Ag Boosters Barbecue is Sept. 9

The 30th Annual Ag Boosters Barbecue will be held on Sunday, Sept. 9 from 4 to 8 p.m. at the Rancho Vista del Rio (Borba Ranch), Highway 99 and the San Joaquin River.

After 30 years, the Ag Boosters Barbecue has become a fall tradition for supporters and friends of the Ag One Foundation and CWA, raising more than \$560,000 with event proceeds benefiting students and programs in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Technology at Fresno State and CWA's educational efforts.

Tickets cost \$60 per person with a table of 10 available for \$550. Tickets can be purchased from the Ag One Foundation office at (559) 278-4266 or from any CWA or Ag One member.

Next Week's Calendar

Sept. 3 Labor Day Holiday. Office closed.

Sept. 4 San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District Citizen's Advisory Committee, 10 a.m., Air District

Sept. 5 USDA meeting on Farm Bill, 9 .m. FCFB Office, 1274 W. Hedges Ave.

Sept. 6 FCFB Board of Directors, 6 p.m., FCFB office

This Week's Calendar

Aug. 27 CA Farm Water Coalition Board meeting

Aug. 28 Fresno Fair Education Committee; Fresno Fair Board of Directors

Aug. 31 Fresno Ag Roundtable; FACT applications are due.

Visit www.fcfb.org

Fresno County
Farm Bureau

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