



June 29, 2007

Your help is needed to preserve Williamson Act

Fresno County landowners are in jeopardy of losing a long-standing land use tool that has helped conserve fertile farmland. The Williamson Act, which has offered an innovative approach to agricultural land protection for over 42 years by building an interrelated set of property tax, land use and conservation measures in a single act, faces a serious threat of being cut from the proposed state budget.

The Act provides landowners with a reduced property tax obligation in return for keeping it under a Williamson Act Contract to remain in agriculture and open spaces and not be sold for other uses. Counties are reimbursed by the state for participation in the act. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has indicated he may line-item veto reimbursement funds to participating counties in the proposed state budget. The reimbursement – or subventions -- funds help replace the foregone property tax revenue due to county participation in the Act. If the subventions are not funded, there is no doubt that counties will be forced to discontinue their participation in the Act.

This week, Fresno County Board of Supervisors voted to put farmers on notice that Fresno County cannot sustain the program if the Governor vetoes the subvention funding. Last year, Fresno County received \$5.3 million in subvention funds reimbursements. Fresno County has 1.5 million acres under the Act.

Farm Bureau and other agricultural organizations are urging landowners and producers to contact the Governor's office, urging him to protect this important conservation tool. Attached to this email is a sample letter and contact information. Your voices will be heard on this issue. Your help is needed to emphasize just how important this Act is to help ensure a farmer's long-term economic viability. For details, contact FCFB at (559) 237-0263, or Email: info@fcfb.org.

Senate Immigration cloture vote fails

By a vote of 46-53 on Thursday, the Senate failed to invoke cloture to move to final debate and

then passage of the comprehensive immigration reform legislation, S1639.

As of *Friday Follow-Up's* deadline, it was not apparent what will happen next. It will take some time for the dust to settle and for options to be assessed, but it appears the overall immigration reform legislation is stalled for this year. The much-needed AgJOBS temporary-worker program legislation was part of the comprehensive S1639. Farm Bureau has been a key supporter of AgJOBS, which would establish an improved temporary-worker program allowing people to enter the nation legally to fill on-farm jobs.

Despite the setback CA Farm Bureau Federation President Doug Mosebar said farmers and ranchers will continue to press for reform of the nation's immigration laws.

"We can't give up and we won't give up," Mosebar said. "This is too important to farmers, ranchers, farm workers and consumers."

Mosebar added: "Because immigration reform apparently won't move forward this year, family farmers and ranchers face another year under the threat that crops will go to waste because of a lack of hands to harvest them. It's a terrible shame."

Mosebar thanked California Senators Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer for voting to continue debate on the immigration bill, adding that Feinstein has been a "tireless champion" for farmers throughout the debate.

"No one wins under the current system," he said. "We must fix that system in order to assure that American consumers can continue to rely on safe, affordable, American-grown food and farm products."

Food safety bills stall in committee

Senator Dean Florez's food safety bills were unable to move through the California Assembly's Agriculture Committee on Wednesday as SB 202 failed on a 4-2 vote and SB 200 and 201 will remain "held" in the committee.

The Agriculture Committee Chair Assemblymember Nicole Para said at the hearing that she agrees with Sen. Florez about the importance of food safety, but that she and her colleagues in the committee simply disagreed with the Senator's

approach — instead lending support to the Leafy Greens Handler Marketing Agreement. Before the committee adjourned, Assemblymember Cathleen Galgiani added that the Marketing Agreement is a first program and it is important to give the industry an opportunity to see if this approach works before passing these pieces of legislation.

Testimony in opposition to the bills was presented by CFBF, Western Growers Association, California Cattlemen's Association and the California Chamber of Commerce.

Water Woes ease somewhat

Pumping in the beleaguered Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is near normal levels and that has eased some of the urgent concerns facing south-of-Delta agricultural water districts and farmers who rely on that surface water supply to produce food and fiber crops. However, there still is long-term uncertainty about the impacts from the prolonged pumping restrictions of the past two weeks.

"The shutdown of the state pumps had unexpected effects that rippled through the agricultural community, causing farmers to scramble to find replacement water through groundwater pumping, exchanges or any means possible," said Mike Wade, of the California Farm Water Coalition.

Farmers and water districts have taken action to make up the lost water resulting from the reduced pumping. And, it has come at a cost as some recent reports of supplemental water trades going as high as \$700 per acre-foot. Dry year conditions have already forced a cutback in deliveries to 50 percent from the federal system and 60 percent from the state. It remains to be seen what the impacts from reduced pumping will have on next year's water supply.

Air District seeks its own vehicle emission standards

The San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District has issued a letter to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency informing it of the District's intent to join the State of California's lawsuit seeking to set its own vehicle emissions standards.

The District's Governing Board voted unanimously last week to join the state action. It is the first local air district to do so, reported by the Air District in a news releases issued this week.

The lawsuit, initiated by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, seeks a waiver of federal preemption for Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions regulations for passenger cars, light-duty trucks and medium-duty passenger vehicles beginning with the 2009 model year. Under the Federal Clean Air Act, California has the right to set its own vehicle emission standards, which other states then have the right to adopt as their own, after receiving a waiver from the EPA.

In the Valley air basin, more than half of ozone-forming emissions are the result of vehicle use. However, the District has no legislative authority to regulate them.

For more information, visit <http://www.valleyair.org/> or call Fresno (559) 230-6000.

Korean Retail Buying Mission set for July

The California Center for International Trade Development and the California Department of Food and Agriculture, in cooperation with the Western United States Agricultural Trade Association, will be coordinating participation in the Korean Retail Buying Mission set for July 23 and 24.

The buying missions will be held on Monday, July 23 in San Francisco and on Tuesday, July 24 in Los Angeles. California companies interested in the Korean market can meet one-on-one with qualified foreign buyers of retail products. Korea is a dynamic market with 60-70 percent of food consumption being provided by imported products and U.S. exports of consumer goods are valued at more than \$850 million dollars.

There is no cost to participate in this activity. Suitable products include, but are not limited to, the following: Natural/Organic Products, Condiments/Dressings, Sauces, Confectionary Products, Snack Foods, and Retail Products. For additional information, contact Alicia Rios, of the Center for International Trade Development, (559) 241-6566 or alicia.rios@scccd.edu.

FCFB accepting nominations for Annual Journalism Awards

Fresno County Farm Bureau is looking for the best in agricultural reporting. Entries for the 13th Annual FCFB Journalism Award will be accepted until July 5. The awards will be presented at the annual

Media Appreciation Night on July 26 at the Clovis Rodeo Grounds in Clovis.

With last summer's peach fruit fly quarantine and excessive heat and crop/ livestock losses, this January's freeze, and the ongoing immigration reform debates, there were no shortages of farm-related issues to cover in 2006-07. News articles or stories published or broadcast from June 30, 2006 to June 30, 2007 are eligible. With the Fourth of July holiday next week, the original deadline of July 2 has been extended until July 5.

The annual award recognizes excellence in reporting on agricultural issues. Farm Bureau will present print media awards in two categories, recognizing the best in general media publications and in agricultural trade publications. The electronic media category now includes a separate category each for radio and television. First place and runner-up awards will be presented in each category. This year's first place winners will receive a silver western belt buckle.

Entries may include any regional agricultural-related story or series in any newspaper, magazine, radio or television format. The criteria for the award are: awareness of agriculture's importance in the Valley; demonstration of knowledge; thorough and objective coverage of the issue; and educational element for the non-farm public.

Any full-time, part-time or free-lance journalist who covers agricultural-related topics may enter the competition. However, first place winners in 2006 are asked not to submit entries for the 2007 competition.

Contact the FCFB office at (559) 237-0263 for a nomination form and information about the program.

Celebrate freedom next Wednesday

On July 4, 1776, our nation claimed independence from Britain and democracy was born. Every day thousands leave their homeland to come to the "land of the free and the home of the brave" so they can begin their own American Dream. The United States is truly a diverse nation made up of dynamic people. Each year on July 4, we celebrate that freedom and independence with barbecues, picnics, family gatherings and fireworks.

As you celebrate next week, pause to reflect on the words contained in that important document adopted 231 years ago – they ring just as true today:

The Declaration of Independence of the Thirteen Colonies In CONGRESS, July 4, 1776:

"...We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. That whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new Government, laying its foundation on such principles and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their Safety and Happiness..."

Quote of the week...

"Your flag stands for humanity, for an equal opportunity to all the sons of men. Of course we haven't arrived yet at that goal; there are many injustices yet among us, many senseless and cruel customs of the past still clinging to us, but the only hope of righting the wrongs of men lies in the feeling produced in our bosoms by the sight of that flag.



"Other flags mean a glorious past, this flag a glorious future. It is not so much the flag of our fathers as it is the flag of our children, and of all children's children yet unborn. It is the flag of tomorrow. It is the signal of the "Good Time Coming."

ALVIN M. OWSLEY, Past National Commander, The American Legion

This Week's Calendar

- June 25** CA Farm Water Coalition Board of Directors meeting
- June 26** Diesel Engine air quality workshop; Texas Farm Bureau Leadership Tour of Fresno County Agriculture
- June 28** CFBF By-Laws Revision Committee meeting, Sacramento
- June 29** Fresno Ag Roundtable

Next Week's Calendar

- July 3** Air District Citizen's Advisory Committee meeting, 10 a.m., Air District office
- July 4** Independence Day Holiday. Office closed.
- July 5** (No FCFB Monthly Board meeting!)

Fresno County
Farm Bureau

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