



Fresno County Farm Bureau

1274 W. Hedges Ave.

Fresno, CA 93728

(559) 237-0263

Fax: (559) 237-3396

www.fcfb.org

info@fcfb.org

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Williamson Act funding is victim of budget cuts

Funding for the Williamson Act was almost completely eliminated with Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's signing of the California budget this week. Despite efforts to preserve the majority of the subvention funds in the final version of the budget, the Governor vetoed all but \$1,000 of funding for the Williamson Act, effectively suspending the program.

The budget revisions passed by the Legislature allocated 80 percent of the funding for this program. But with the failure of the Assembly to pass the diversion of the local gasoline excise tax to pay down general obligation bond debt and the Tranquillon Ridge oil drilling legislation, the State Budget was \$156 million out of balance. The governor used his line-item veto to bring the budget back to balance and create at least a \$500 million reserve for economic uncertainties and or natural disasters.

State Williamson Act funds compensate county governments that provide the tax relief for farmers who contract to keep their land in agricultural production for a period of 10 years or longer. Without the State's \$27.7 million reimbursement, or subvention, funds, cash-strapped counties will have difficulties honoring the long-term contracts. At the Wednesday Coffee Talk in Easton, Fresno County Supervisor Phil Larson said the county can't cancel the contracts, but will likely place existing contracts in a non-renewal status for one year. The impacts of the loss of subvention funds and what it means to landowners in Fresno County, however, remain to be seen at this time.

According to California Farm Bureau Federation, if counties choose to exit the program by nonrenewal all of their Williamson Act contracts, landowners only option would be to protest the notice of nonrenewal. A written protest filed with counties would result in the maintenance of the Williamson Act property values until there is less than six years on the contract. At that time the property taxes on the farm or ranch land would escalate very quickly to the acquisition value under Proposition 13.

Fresno Agricultural Department's Detector Dog team scores a find

Fresno County Agricultural Commissioner Carol Hafner reported one of the Department's Agricultural Detector Dog teams recently intercepted a shipment containing a major pest threat, the Asian citrus psyllid at the Fresno FedEx parcel facility.

On July 10, Agricultural Specialist Stephanie LeBarron and her canine partner Chelsea were checking packages at FedEx when Chelsea "hit" on a canvas duffle bag shipped from India, containing among other items, fresh peppers and leaf material believed to be curry leaves. An inspection of the leaves showed 10 Asian citrus psyllids (adults and nymphs).

"Although Fresno receives no direct international commercial flights, other than Mexico, we still continue to be at risk from serious plant pests coming into Fresno County from around the world," said Hafner. This bag originated from India and was flown to FedEx in Los Angeles and then to the Fresno FedEx.

Asian citrus psyllid is a small aphid-like insect. It is responsible for the spread of Huanglongbing, a very serious citrus disease also known as citrus greening. The Asian citrus psyllid has been found in San Diego and Imperial counties, although the citrus greening disease has not been found in California.

Signatures still sought for "Save our Water" petition drive

The Pacific Legal Foundation is continuing its outreach to reach a goal of 10,000 signatures on its "Save our Water" petition by mid-August. To-date, the Foundation has collected more than 7,862 signatures.

Pacific Legal Foundation's emergency "Save our Water" petition campaign urges President Barack Obama and Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to act to convene a special federal panel, nicknamed the "God Squad," to address California's water emergency caused by harsh federal environmental restrictions.

To sign the petition, visit: www.pacificlegal.org.

Water for All plans rally in Bay Area for Aug. 13

The Water for All grassroots group is organizing a protest rally at the Bay Area office of Rep. George Miller on Thursday, Aug. 13 at 10 a.m. in Concord.

Rep. Miller is a long-time critic of irrigated agriculture on the west side of the San Joaquin Valley, and like Rep. Nancy Pelosi, has failed to address the human and economic impacts from the Endangered Species Act-induced pumping restrictions and regulatory drought. Water for All organizers are calling for Valley residents to join the protest at Rep. Miller's office at 1333 Willow Pass Rd., Ste 203, in Concord.

For details about the rally, call (559) 229-9034/35 or email at: piedad@thewaterforall.com or ben@centralvalleyteaparty.com.

Air quality truck regulations Web site offers useful information

A one-stop Web site containing important information for diesel truck owners/operators is up and running. The CA Air Resources Board's "Truck Stop" provides users a one-stop shop experience for information on ARB diesel regulations and available financial assistance opportunities.

All diesel-fueled trucks, buses, trailers and transportation refrigeration units operating in California, including those based out of state, are required by regulations to take steps to reduce air pollution. The Web site, "Truck Stop," is designed to be straightforward and easy to navigate. A truck owner can answer a few basic questions about his or her fleet and get a personalized list of regulatory requirements and potential funding options, from that list they can access more specific information about the regulations and

funding programs that apply to their unique situation. The site is designed primarily for the fleet owner but the information also is useful for the truck dealer, lender, air districts and others in the trucking community.

"Truck Stop" is available at <http://www.arb.ca.gov/truckstop> or call (866) 6DIESEL (866-634-3735) from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Mondays-Fridays, or email at 8666DIESEL@arb.ca.gov.

Western Agricultural Processors Association selects Isom to lead new organization

Well-known agricultural air quality and cotton industry advocate Roger Isom has been selected to lead the new Fresno-based organization, Western Agricultural Processors Association, which is focusing on environmental and safety services for agricultural processing operations. The WAPA represents a diverse array of food and fiber processing operations, including almond hullers and processors, pistachio and walnut plants, vegetable dehydrators, and tomato processing facilities throughout California and Arizona.

Isom will serve as the president/CEO of the newly formed organization as well as will remain as the executive vice president of the California Cotton Ginners and Growers Associations.

Isom will be responsible for the critical areas of regulatory and legislative issues affecting the agricultural processing industry in the Western U.S. In addition, the organization will be providing contract services on safety and environmental issues to cotton gins, cotton warehouses, food processing plants, packing houses and farms. Isom brings more than 17 years of regulatory and governmental affairs experience to the new organization.

Next Week's Calendar

- Aug. 4** San Joaquin Valley Air District Citizens' Advisory Committee meeting, 10 a.m., Air District office
- Aug. 6** CMAC Board of Directors, 3:30 p.m., Dickey Youth Center

This Week's Calendar

- July 28** San Joaquin Political Academy Board of Directors;
Fresno Fair Board of Directors
 - July 29** FCFB Coffee Talk;
Fresno County Ag Lands Conservation Committee;
Fresno Chamber Governmental Affairs Committee
 - July 30** FCFB Media and Partners Appreciation night, 5:30 p.m., P-R Farms, Clovis
 - July 31** Fresno Ag Roundtable, 7 a.m., Marie Calendar's Shaw and Cedar avenues, Fresno
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