

Farm Focus

A publication of Monterey County Farm Bureau

Giannini condemns LandWatch Initiative

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Monterey County: Staying ahead of the Water Game

All around the state, water supply projects seem to be focused on two main goals: gaining independence from the state water project and finding more and improved ways to reclaim non-potable water. In Monterey County, we have both and are working to stay ahead of the pack. Using hundreds of acres of wetlands to treat urban runoff or de-salting groundwater to supplement drinking water, innovation abounds in California. Here are a few of the projects I visited in Southern California with the Water Education Foundation.

Mother nature and the Orange County Water District have found an economical way to treat wastewater discharged into the Santa Ana River. By routing the river, which carries urban drainage water, through a network of **constructed wetland ponds** the District has created a natural, cost-effective process that reduces nitrate levels to below the drinking water standard of 45 mg/L nitrate nitrogen. Fifty shallow ponds make up the 465 acres of constructed wetlands. After that treatment, the water is stored in Prado Dam of Riverside County for use by the areas residents. The Santa Ana River is the main source of recharge for the vast Orange County groundwater basin so this water is further treated to three steps of **Advanced Water Purification** : micro-filtration, reverse osmosis, and an application of ultra-violet rays. The resulting water is recharged to add to the groundwater supply and to keep seawater intrusion at bay.

Irvine Ranch Water District showed us their **"Desalter Project"** where they turn millions of gallons of high nitrate groundwater into drinking water and turn trichloroethylene (TCE) polluted water under El Toro Air Base into non-potable, landscape irrigation water. This is an amazing use of technology because TCE is a volatile organic compound that is often used an industrial degreasing solvent. It is toxic and is listed as a cancer-causing chemical under Proposition 65 (www.sbcfire.org/hazmat/env_terms.asp).

This water odyssey continued by entering the more controversial world of **sea water desalination**. On the way to the beach, a Surfrider Foundation representative clearly laid out the concerns that environmental groups have with **open ocean desalination**. They believe there are significant impacts to marine resources that result from the sea water intakes of coastal power plants where many of the

proposed desalination projects would be co-located. The so-called "one-through cooling" systems of power plants built throughout the state in the 1950's would provide the sea water intake function for both the power plant and the desalination system unless regulatory agencies decide the impacts are too great.

Walking out onto the sand at Doheny beach, we were shown the place where a **beach well** was drilled last winter as a pilot desalination project of the Municipal Water District of Orange County. **Beach wells** are alternatives to open ocean sea water intake. One difference between the two methods of desalination is the amount of water each can yield. A company called Poseidon Resources has proposed an open ocean desalination station for Moss Landing they say would produce 21,000 to 23,000 acre-feet per year, or 12,000 gallons per minute. Four beach wells pumping 3,000 gallons per minute would be required to produce the same amount of potable water. A potentially significant difference now being scrutinized by regulators is that beach wells may completely avoid significant impacts on marine life by using sub-sea-floor intakes.

Emergency storage is the key phrase at the Olivenhain Dam nestled back among the foothills east of San Diego. The dam will provide emergency water for San Diego county in the event of severe drought or an earthquake that cuts the region off from the State Water Project aqueduct. The dam stores 24,000 acre feet of water and is expected to last six months during an emergency.

The massive Diamond Valley Lake in Hemet is a primary lifeline for Southern California in times of **emergency water needs**. The lake has the capacity to supply all twenty-six of the Metropolitan Water District's (MWD) associated agencies from Ventura to San Diego, a population of 18 million people, for six months. When this dam (four miles across the top where our bus drove) was completed in 2001 it was the largest public works project in the world. It is now only second to the Seven Gorges Dam in China. The gigantic influence that MWD has had on water resources in the state is also seen through their major in-kind and financial support of the new **Center for Water Education** right next to Diamond Valley Lake. The state of the art building with its solar energy, drought tolerant landscaping, and interactive educational exhibits is a mecca for teaching Californians the importance of water in our lives.

Back home in the Salinas Valley, the message that water is a valuable resource is magnified when I think of the incredible array of specialty crops grown here and the unique agricultural and tourism-based economy we have. In pursuing the Salinas Valley Water Project, the Monterey County Water

Resources Agency (MCWRA) is working to **stop seawater intrusion** at the coast, **avert a maximum flood event** at Nacimiento Dam, and **recharge the Salinas River groundwater basin**. These project goals are similar to other water agencies across the state. But our Water Agency is in the unique position of already having a water supply that is **independent from the state system**. From the looks of things, keeping water management in **local hands** is not only a growing trend, but the very best way to ensure future water supplies. *Traci Roberts, Environmental Resources Coordinator for the Farm Bureau participated in the 2006 Water Leaders Class of the Water Education Foundation (www.water-ed.org).*

Young Farmers and Ranchers join opposition to LandWatch Initiative

Central Coast Young Farmers and Ranchers joined the growing list of organizations opposing the LandWatch Initiative, and their opposition is particularly significant because these are the young people who are most concerned about the future of agriculture in Monterey County.

At their February 21 meeting, the Central Coast Young Farmers and Ranchers voted unanimously to oppose the LandWatch General Plan Initiative, to support the 2006 Monterey County General Plan, and to endorse the Plan for the People campaign.

The CCYF&Rs supported the Plan for the People campaign kick-off at the National Steinbeck Center in February, encouraging attendance to dramatize the threat to agriculture posed by the LandWatch Initiative.

Scholarships offered by Farm Bureau and YF&Rs

Farm Bureau and the Central Coast Young Farmers and Ranches are once again offering college scholarships to students studying agriculture.

YF&Rs are offering scholarships of up to \$2,000. Monterey County Farm Bureau has scholarships of \$1,000.

Other organizations are also offering scholarships in the field of agriculture. Information about these programs can be found at Farm Bureau's website at www.MontereyCFB.com.

For Farm Bureau and YF&R information, call 831/751-3100.

Scholarship Chair Frank Devine said, "The support from the industry and the Farm Bureau Members this past year has been astonishing. Due to their support of our fundraising events, we are able to award four scholarships totaling \$6,000."



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Hammond named to statewide membership committee

Monterey County Farm Bureau President Bill Hammond has been asked to serve on a statewide committee to review the definition of Farm Bureau memberships.

Hammond said delegates at the California Farm Bureau Federation in December had discussed a resolution to change the definition of a bona fide farmer but decided to refer it to a committee, to bring it back next December.

Farm Bureau members who serve on county and state boards must earn their living largely from agriculture. Delegates postponed a policy that would broaden the definition to allow members with farm-related or more off-farm income to serve in office.

YF&Rs get the word out

Central Coast Young Farmers and Ranchers continue to get the message out that spinach and other leafy greens are okay to eat, reports April England, who was featured on two radio interviews from the World Ag Expo in Tulare in February.

England, who was part of a YF&R bus trip to the show, talked about YF&Rs' widely recognized "I (heart) Spinach" bumper stickers and last year's E. coli outbreak.

The interviews aired to over 40 million listeners in the mid-west and east coast.

One interview aired on February 14, and the second interview aired on February 15.

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Giannini, others condemn LandWatch Initiative

Dirk Giannini, a third generation farmer, condemned the LandWatch Initiative on a June 5 special election as a threat to agriculture.

Giannini was the keynote speaker at a press conference on February 27, when Plan for the People, a broad-based citizens' group, announced its formal opposition to the LandWatch General Plan Initiative.

W.B. "Butch" Lindley, a local grape grower, farmer, rancher and former Monterey County Supervisor, emceed the event and introduced committee members, whose mission is "to preserve the unique, diverse character of Monterey County and protect our County's heritage, economy and livability, which are all threatened by the LandWatch Initiative."

Other speakers at the event included: Tom Carvey, Executive Director, Common Ground Monterey County, great-grandfather and former elementary school principal; Alfred Diaz Infante, President/CEO of CHISPA (Community Housing Improvement Systems Planning Association), board member of the California Coalition for Rural Housing and Monterey County Housing Alliance; Juan Uranga, Executive Director of the Center for Community Advocacy and active member of the California State Assembly Agricultural Worker Health and Housing Commission; and, Lorri Koster, Mann Packing Co-Chairwoman, 3rd generation produce industry leader, Past Chairman of International Fresh-Cut Produce Association and 2006 California Junior Chamber of Commerce Outstanding Young Californian.

Giannini of Christensen & Giannini, is a Monterey County Farm Bureau vice president, Monterey County Ag Education past president and past recipient of the Monterey County Young Farmer of the Year.

He said:

"Initiative backers say it will preserve our farmland economy. If that were really true, why does the Monterey County Farm Bureau and virtually every farmer and rancher in the county oppose it? The truth is, the number of acres of farmland in Monterey County has increased by 6% over the last 20 years. Here is what the initiative would really do to agriculture:

"It would prohibit construction of new processing and agricultural support facilities in the essential regions of our county. The farming business is changing rapidly, and the ability of farmers to "add value" through packaging and processing in close proximity to the fields has become critical to economic survival. As you well know, with the recent food safety marketing agreements, flexibility is essential to our survival.

"Who would have known 25 years ago how convenience packaged vegetables would have changed the ag industry? We can't afford to limit farmers ability to react to consumers and the global economy by stagnating their progress for the next 25 years."

"Under current County regulations, farmers can provide on-site housing for farm workers. The initiative requires that farm workers living in such housing must work on site. This requirement would effectively eliminate farm worker housing, because virtually all farmworkers work at multiple sites, and often work for a labor contractor who provides services to multiple employers.

"Farmers and ranchers must be able to keep family members on the land to keep generations of our families steeped in ag. Part of the incentive to stay is for a family member to build a house and make a home for his or her family on the ranch. The initiative would effectively eliminate this option because it prohibits any subdivision of rural or ag land.

The initiative threatens the economic survival of agriculture in Monterey County.

Family ranching economics dictate that a small new parcel must be provided to that family member for home financing and estate purposes. Large existing parcels ceded to family members – as required by the initiative – would ultimately lead to the breakup of the ranching operation.

"Bottom line: The initiative threatens the economic survival of agriculture in Monterey County. Farmers and ranchers are the custodians of our county's agricultural heritage. If the General Plan Initiative becomes law, their ability to preserve that heritage will be seriously compromised.

"Monterey County's unique character and economy have been shaped by its agricultural heritage. The LandWatch initiative is a direct threat to Monterey County agriculture.

"The initiative requires an expensive, time-consuming countywide election every time a farmer or rancher needs to make even minor changes on his or her own property.

"To stay in business, farmers and ranchers must adjust rapidly to changing

market conditions. For example, packaging facilities that enabled local spinach, lettuce and vegetable growers to remain competitive would be restricted by the initiative.

"The initiative would also block construction of processing and storage facilities for wine growers, requiring local grapes to be exported to counties that have these facilities, resulting in hundreds of millions of losses for our local economy.

"If farmers and ranchers can't compete, many will be forced to abandon operations, threatening conversion of agricultural land to more intense development, and leading to more sprawl growth.

"That's why nearly every agricultural organization in Monterey County opposes the initiative.

"The Monterey County Farm Bureau has participated in every step of the public process that produced the new county plan. We believe it is a reasonable plan that protects agriculture, encourages affordable housing, allows needed infrastructure and respects environmental laws.

"GPU4 contains tough protections for existing agricultural lands while enabling farmers and ranchers to keep their businesses healthy. It will allow us to keep future generations of our families in farming."

Butch Lindley described Plan for the People as "a coalition of farmers and ranchers, hospitality businesses, housing advocates, organized labor, social justice advocates, public safety personnel, educators, local elected officials and residents from throughout Monterey County."

Members of the group explained how the initiative would result in numerous unintended consequences harmful to Monterey County's future.

"Initiative backers claim it will give the people a voice in land use decisions, but just the opposite is true. Outsiders would dictate to local residents what's best for their communities," said farmworker advocate Juan Uranga. "It takes control away from local residents. In the process, it hurts working people, eliminates affordable housing and increases the disparity between rich and poor in our county. This initiative is an attack on every working person in Monterey County, and we strongly urge its defeat," he said.

"While LandWatch claims to support affordable housing, they have played no part in providing affordable housing in our community," said affordable housing advocate Alfred Diaz Infante. "When it comes to affordable housing, the initiative is a fraud designed to deceive Monterey County voters."

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“Put Me Out of Business – Please” : Attorney Marler at the 2007 Ag Forum

Not everyone likes Bill Marler, an attorney with Marler Clark legal practice based in Seattle. But his audience at the Steinbeck Center on February 28th certainly learned a lot from the man who has represented thousands of food illness victims in all states of the nation. Settlements and verdicts obtained by Marler Clark from these cases have totaled nearly \$300,000,000 since 1993.

Marler's straight forward and matter-of-fact communication strategy won him at least some respect from agricultural industry representatives who attended his talk. He amused everyone by sharing an email he received from a food code instructor,

“That unfortunate fact doesn't serve []

the law profession, but I assure you people like myself in hospitality training and certification are doing [our] best to put people like you out of business, first and foremost for the customers['] safety, secondly because for once it would be to take food out [of] a lawyer's mouth . . . Sort of ironic, you shut down restaurants, I shut down lawyers . . . Lol. **Have a bad, bad day you Parasite.**”

Marler made several, universally useful points to his agricultural production audience.

First, strict liability is all that needs to be proven with a foodborne illness case in a court of law. Marler explained to his relatively quiet audience that, as an attorney for a sickened individual, he is required to prove the connection between what was in the bag and the person's illness – and that's all. There is no legal requirement that he must prove anything at all about the possible source of the contamination or how it arrived in the food.

Second, immediate communication of the facts as they are known and an expression of remorse for the illnesses caused should come from any company implicated in a foodborne illness. Marler noted that “We only bring forward a fraction of the victims who contact our offices.” The company that starts

paying for medical bills and loss of wages for the sick people right away, he says, will probably be “less sued.”

Third, there are more E.coli strains associated with each of the recent outbreaks than just E.coli 0157:H7 though they have not been widely discussed. It is more accurate and probably more useful to use the term “EHEC” which includes all shiga toxin producing E.coli serotypes. EHEC stands for Enterohaemorrhagic Escherichia coli.

Fourth, the beef industry handled their contamination problems well, said Marler, and not just because they could cook the meat to kill pathogens. Rather than relying on minimum wage workers in the restaurant kitchens of America to cook the beef properly, the industry “looked upstream.” They slowed the production process down and instituted efforts to keep contamination out of beef at every step along the way.

Finally, Marler ended with a ray of hope by sharing that a 2005 report from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) in collaboration with the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) showed important declines in foodborne infections due to common bacterial pathogens in 2004. From 1996-2004, the incidence of *E. coli* O157:H7 infections actually decreased 42 percent.



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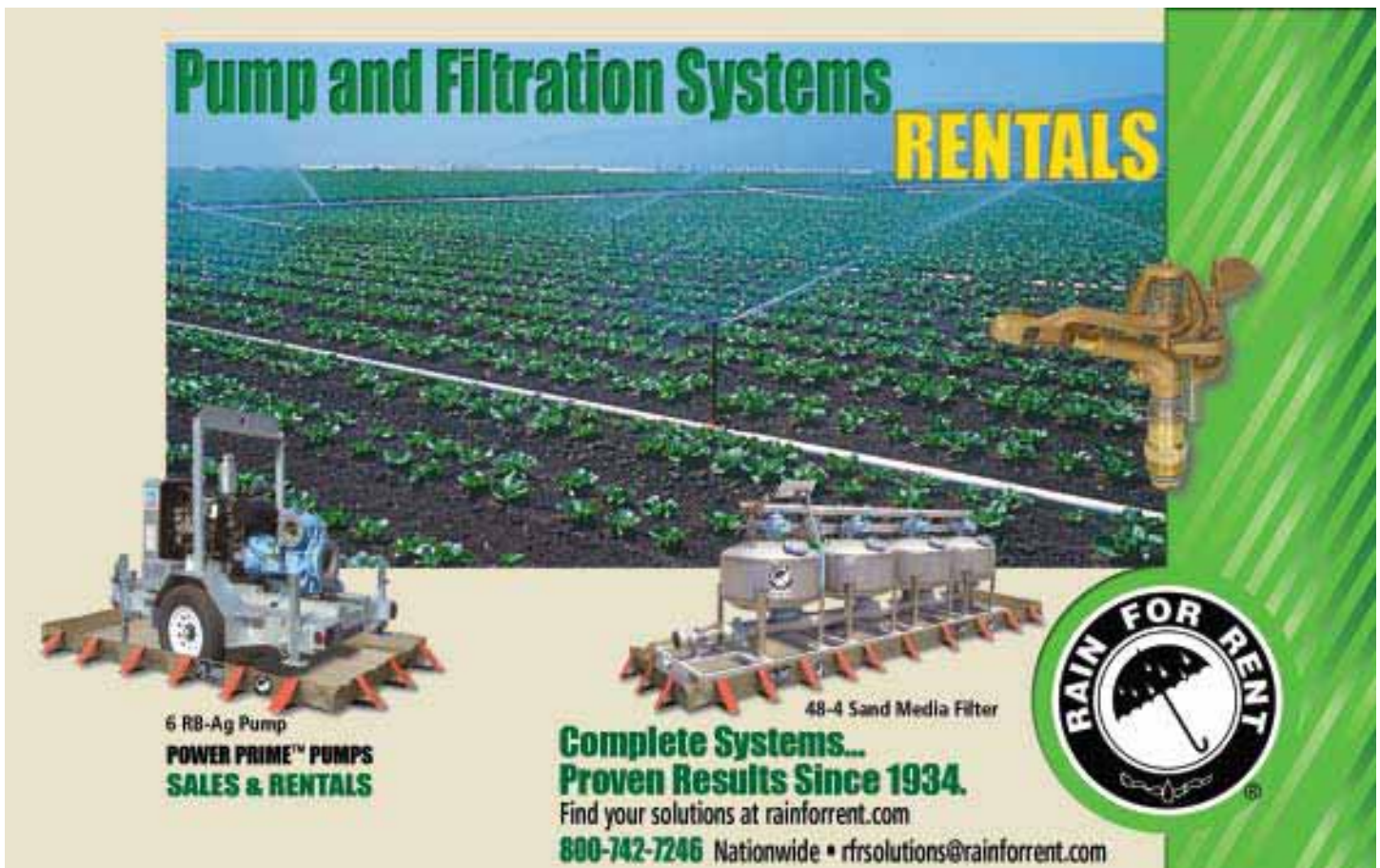
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Board appointed for Marketing Agreement

CDDA Secretary A.G. Kawamura has appointed a 13-member advisory board of directors for the Leafy Greens Marketing Agreement in February. Each board member represents a signatory to the agreement.

The appointees are:

Salinas-Watsonville-San Joaquin Valley-Kern County District: Tom Nunes, The Nunes Company; Joe Pezzini, Ocean Mist Farms; Jamie Strachan, Growers Express LLC; Alec Leach, Taylor Farms; Eric Schwartz, Dole Fresh Vegetables, Inc.; John D'Arrigo, D'Arrigo Bros of California; and, Dave Eldridge,

NewStar Fresh Foods.

Oxnard-Santa Maria District: Chris Deardorff, Deardorff Family Farms; Ryan Talley, Talley Farms; and, Mitch Ardantz, Bonita Packing Company.

Blythe-Imperial Valley District: Jack Vessey, Vessey and Company; Eric Wexler, Tanimura and Antle; and, Joe Colace, Five Crowns Marketing.

Ten alternates have been named, as well. They are:

Salinas-Watsonville-San Joaquin Valley-Kern County District: Bardin Bengard, Bengard Ranch Inc.; Charles Sweat, Earthbound Farms; Tom Russell, Pacific International Marketing; Andrew Cummings, Metz Fresh; Ron Ratto, Ratto Bros Inc.; Steve Church, Church Bros Produce; and Phil Adrian, Coastline (Sunridge

Bunn nominated for CFBF National Affairs Trip

Christopher H. Bunn, Jr., will be nominated to participate in the California Farm Bureau Federation National Affairs Trip to Washington, D. C., this year.

Bunn's nomination was approved by the Monterey County Farm Bureau Board of Directors at their February meeting.

Bunn works in the Bunn family farming business in Salinas. He represents Farm Bureau on the Refinement Group and previously served as legislative chairman for Central Coast Young Farmers and Ranchers.

Workers comp rates decline

The workers compensation rates for the Farm Bureau State Fund group declined an average of 9% over the past year, reported State Fund Group Manager Mike Klimenko, but the dramatic declines in the last couple of years have had their effect, and rates are starting to level off.

Klimenko gave an update on the group insurance program to directors of Monterey County Farm Bureau at their February meeting.

Farms).

Oxnard-Santa Maria District: George Boscovich, Boscovich Farms; Glenn Teixeira, Teixeira Farms; and, Victor Tognazzini, Gold Coast Farms, Inc.

A public member will also be named.

The board will work together to make recommendations on the operation of the marketing agreement to the secretary and CDDA, which act as facilitators as defined in the California Marketing Act of 1937.

The marketing agreement was created by the leafy greens industry and will require handlers to comply with their own standards.



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