



Farm Bureau at work

California Farm Bureau's government affairs team is at the Capitol, advocating for farmers, ranchers and agriculture's future. Here are some key issues Farm Bureau is focused on this week.

February 10, 2023

Agricultural Employment Policy

On the last day allowed under state laws governing regulatory processes for the agency to take action, the Department of Finance on February 3 approved the COVID-19 Non-Emergency Standard, making it immediately effective. It will remain in effect until February 3, 2025. The Non-Emergency Standard is very similar to prior Emergency Temporary Standard iterations except that it does not require employers to furnish exclusion pay (maintenance of pay, benefits and seniority for employees the employer must exclude from the workplace because they may pose a COVID-19 infection hazard). *Staff: Bryan Little; blittle@cbbf.com*

Air Quality

CA Farm Bureau would like to caution our members about an effort in the San Joaquin Valley to place air quality monitors on, or near, agricultural facilities. A local group out of UC Merced called the San Joaquin Valley Center for Community Air Assessment and Injustice Reduction is attempting to gather air quality data from Stockton to Fresno. Members of the group are approaching producers and asking them to place these air monitors on their operations. The group claims that these monitors will; 1) Understand air quality in your location and the potential impacts on public health, 2) Develop strategies to improve air quality, and 3) Share research results with stakeholders. As CBBF has not been included on this program's goals or contacted by this group – it is unlikely the data will be shared with us, a stakeholder, and be depicted accurately. Other farming organizations share similar concerns and have pointed out that these monitors do not meet federal EPA guidelines. Farm Bureau would like to emphasize that you are in no way obligated to place one on your property. An example of the letter that is being presented for the monitor's placement is here <https://www.cbbf.com/ag-advocacy/all-issues/sjv-air-pollution>. *Staff: Katie Little, klittle@cbbf.com*

Climate Change

[SB 253](#) by Senator Wiener would require the State Air Resources Board, on or before January 1, 2025, to develop and adopt regulations requiring United States partnerships, corporations, limited liability companies, and other business entities with total annual revenues in excess of \$1,000,000,000 and that do business in California, defined as "reporting entities," to publicly disclose to the emissions registry, as defined, and verify, starting in 2026 on a date to be determined by the state board, and annually thereafter, their greenhouse gas emissions, categorized as scope 1, 2, and 3 emissions, as defined, from the prior calendar year, as provided. The bill would require the state board, on or before January 1, 2030, to review, and update as necessary, these deadlines to evaluate trends in scope 3 emissions reporting and to consider changes to the deadlines, as provided. The bill would require reporting entities to disclose their greenhouse gas emissions in a manner that is easily understandable and accessible to residents of the state. The bill would require reporting entities to ensure that their public disclosures have been independently verified by the emissions registry or a third-party auditor, approved by the state board, with expertise in greenhouse gas emissions accounting. The bill would require the state board, in developing these regulations, to consult with the Attorney General, other government stakeholders, investors, stakeholders representing consumer and environmental justice interests, and reporting entities that have demonstrated leadership in full-scope greenhouse gas emissions accounting and public disclosure and greenhouse gas emissions reductions. *Staff: Chris Reardon; creardon@cbbf.com*

The California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 requires the State Air Resources Board to make available, and update at least annually, on its internet website the emissions of greenhouse gases, criteria pollutants, and toxic air contaminants for each facility that reports to the state board, as provided. Under the act, a violation of a rule, regulation, order, emission limitation, emission reduction measure, or other measure adopted by the state board under the act is a crime. [SB 261](#) by Senator Stern would require, on or before December 31, 2024, and annually thereafter, a covered entity, as defined, to prepare a climate-related financial risk report disclosing the entity's climate-related financial risk and measures adopted to reduce and adapt to climate-related financial risk disclosed. The bill would require the covered entity to submit to the state board, and make available to the public on its own internet website, a copy of the report and to submit to the Secretary of State a statement affirming, not under penalty of perjury, that the report discloses climate-related financial risk. The bill would also set forth the duties of the Climate-Related Risk Disclosure Advisory Group, as specified, including the duty to collect and review climate-related financial risk reports received in the prior calendar year and the duty to annually prepare a public report that contains specified information, including a review of the disclosure of climate-related financial risk contained in climate-related financial risk reports and an analysis of the systemic and sectorwide climate-related financial risks facing the state. *Staff: Chris Reardon; creardon@cfbf.com*

Insurance

[AB 478](#) has been introduced by Assembly member Damon Connolly. For insureds 65 years of age or older, this bill would limit an increase in their yearly premium for a policy of residential property insurance by no more than 25 percent for insured property located in a high or very high fire hazard severity zone, as identified by the State Fire Marshal, as specified, and allow only one premium increase in a 5-year period. *Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cfbf.com*

Organics

Assembly member Damon Connolly has introduced three bills [AB 404](#), [AB 405](#) and [AB 406](#) that deal with Organic Farming. The first bill would require the Department of Food Agriculture to evaluate duplicative reporting requirements that affect small and mid-size farmers and farming operations. The second bill would create an online registration and payment option for those engaged in organic farming with the specified oversight department or agency and the last bill would authorize the Healthy Soils Program to include the funding of organic farming projects that further the goals of the program and require the Department of Food and Agriculture to establish the technical advisory committee if it elects to fund those projects. *Staff: Chris Reardon; creardon@cfbf.com*

Rural Broadband

[AB 415](#), introduced by Assembly member Freddie Rodriguez, would enact the Emergency Fairgrounds Communications Grant Act and would require the Office of Emergency Services to establish a grant program to provide fairgrounds with grant funding for the purpose of building and upgrading communication and internet infrastructure on fairgrounds. The bill would require the office to establish standards to determine the awarding of grant funding that award funding based on a fairground's need for internet capabilities in order to service an emergency response operation. The bill would require those standards to require, at a minimum, that a fairground receiving grant funds be located in an area with sufficient open-access middle-mile broadband infrastructure within a reasonable distance to support the fairground's expanded broadband capabilities and be capable of providing public access to the fairground's broadband network throughout the year. *Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cfbf.com*

Utilities

A bill to expand the state's electric grid, [AB 538](#) (Holden-D), was introduced on Wednesday. It is the latest iteration of the effort to expand the management of the western transmission grid to include other states and potentially take advantage of other western generation sources. The bill would authorize CAISO (the California Transmission Operator) to develop a governance proposal for a regional grid. The governing

documents would be reviewed by the California Energy Commission. Thereafter, the proposals and documents would be subject to review by the California Energy Commission, the California Public Utilities Commission and the CAISO for review, to make sure the plan followed parameters set in the bill. The bill would also create a committee to "provide guidance" to CAISO, with representatives from Western states whose utilities have joined the new regional grid.

The last time the regionalization proposal was considered was in 2018 and was met with significant resistance for various reasons, including some who are concerned that the clean energy goals of California would be difficult to measure if power was imported from other states. In reviewing the bill one cause for concern is that there is no mention of the need to ensure that rates do not increase as a result of any expansion. California has a history of creating new entities and imposing the cost for their administration on customers. CAFB will continue to monitor the progress of the legislation for impacts to California ratepayers. *Staff Contacts: Karen Mills, kmills@cbbf.com; Kevin Johnston, kjohnston@cbbf.com*

Water

[AB 422](#) introduced by Assembly member Juan Alanis would require the Natural Resources Agency to post on its publicly available internet website information tracking the progress to increase statewide water storage, and to keep that information updated. *Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cbbf.com*

Assembly member Jim Wood introduced [AB 541](#), which would direct the State Water Resources Control Board to require a public water system, water corporation, or water district that has experienced a major wildfire event within their service territory to test their water source for the presence of benzene immediately following that major wildfire event. *Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cbbf.com*

[AB 560](#) regarding groundwater adjudications has been introduced by Assembly member Steve Bennett. Current law prohibits a court from approving entry of judgment in certain adjudication actions for a basin required to have a groundwater sustainability plan under the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act, unless the court finds that the judgment would not substantially impair the ability of a groundwater sustainability agency, the State Water Resources Control Board, or the Department of Water Resources to comply with the act and to achieve sustainable groundwater management. [AB 560](#) would require the court to refer the proposed judgment to the board for an advisory determination as to whether the proposed judgment will substantially impair the ability of a groundwater sustainability agency, the board, or the department to achieve sustainable groundwater management. The bill would require the board to consult with the department before making its determination. *Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cbbf.com*

In another SGMA focused bill, Senator Melissa Hurtado has introduced [SB 315](#), a spot bill that would express the intent of the Legislature to enact future legislation that would assist groundwater sustainability agencies in fostering discussions among diverse water management interests and local agencies as they strive to implement the act. *Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cbbf.com*

[SB 361](#) from Senator Bill Dodd has been introduced. Its focus is to improve data gathering and management from the state's network of stream gages. The bill would require the Department of Water Resources and the State Water Resources Control Board, upon appropriation of funds by the Legislature, to reactivate, upgrade, and install new stream gages and would require the department and board to use the recommendations and data provided in the California Stream Gaging Prioritization Plan 2022 to complete specified actions by 2030. The bill would require the data from all stream gages operating with any public money to be published as provisional data within 10 days of collection and made publicly available on the state's open water data platforms. SB 361 would require the department and board to develop and adopt a set of standards and processes for assessing, tracking, and reporting the accuracy of stream gages, evapotranspiration data, water meters, and other critical data inputs for water management, as provided. The bill would require the department and the board to consult with interested stakeholders to develop a

plan to identify the gaps in the network of automated weather stations and eddy covariance towers to ensure accurate and comprehensive data collection. Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cbbf.com

Senator Anna Caballero has introduced [SB 366](#), a spot bill that would state the intent of the Legislature to enact future legislation that modernizes the California Water Plan, including the establishment of long-term water supply targets. Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cbbf.com

Wildfire

[SB 310](#) has been introduced by Senator Bill Dodd. Current law provides that no person shall be liable for any fire suppression or other costs otherwise recoverable for a prescribed burn if specified conditions are met, including, among others, a burn boss, as certified through a certification program developed by the State Fire Marshal, has reviewed and approved a written prescription for the burn, the burn complies with that written prescription, and either the landowner has provided written permission or the governing body of a Native American tribe has given approval, as provided. Current law exempts cultural burns conducted by a cultural fire practitioner from those requirements that a person certified as a burn boss review and approve a written prescription and that the burn be conducted in compliance with the written prescription. SB 310 would expand the definition of burn boss to also include a person qualified for specified positions through the National Wildfire Coordinating Group, as provided, and limiting the tribal approval condition to the approval of the governing body of a California Native American tribe. Staff: Peter Ansel; pansel@cbbf.com

Wildlife and CESA

This week, the Fish and Game Commission (Commission) discussed the petition to list the Western Joshua Tree (WJT) under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA). This topic has been discussed at several meetings over the last year, although the ultimate decision keeps getting pushed to a future date. This meeting was no different. The department discussed [legislation](#) that was released on Tuesday aimed at addressing the WJT conservation efforts. The bill may be formally introduced as a budget trailer bill later this year. The Department of Fish and Wildlife created the bill in response to the Commission's request. In a past meeting, Commissioners shared the mentality that "the WJT is deserving of special attention and requires a novel approach to ensure the long-term conservation of the species and alternate protection before it declines further." This bill would prohibit any person or public agency from importing into the state, exporting out of the state, or taking, possessing, purchasing, or selling within the state, a western Joshua tree or any part or product of the tree. It would also require the Commission, beginning in 2026 and at a public meeting, to annually review the status of the WJT and the effectiveness of the permitting and mitigation program established under the act. The Commission discussed tracking the new piece of legislation as it moves through the process. If it is in fact incorporated into the budget process, its fate might not be known until July – or possibly beyond. The Commission will monitor the bill's progress and set it for a hearing date as its fate becomes clearer. Staff: Katie Little, klittle@cbbf.com

✦ ANNOUNCEMENTS ✦

CDFA SELECTS 17 PROJECTS FOR 2021 STATE WATER EFFICIENCY AND ENHANCEMENT PROGRAM SOUTHERN DESERT REGION PILOT GRANTS

[California Department of Food and Agriculture \(CDFA\)](#) is pleased to announce the projects selected for 2021 [State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program Southern Desert Region Pilot \(SWEEP\)](#) grant awards. Seventeen agricultural operations located in parts of Riverside and Imperial counties have been selected to receive funding, totaling \$2.7 million. These projects will improve crop irrigation systems, resulting in an estimated 48,500 acre-feet of water savings over the course of 10 years. The 2021 SWEEP Southern Desert Region list of selected projects is available [online](#). "We are proud to continue investing in water use efficiency

in agriculture to help address our changing climate,” said CDFA Secretary Karen Ross. “Farmers involved in this program are making positive on-farm changes to grow food with more efficient watering systems in an important agricultural region of the state.”

CDFA’s SWEEP team prepared a pilot solicitation targeted at agricultural areas located in the southern desert region, a region defined as Imperial County and Riverside County, east of the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains. With guidance of CDFA’s Environmental Farming Act (EFA) Science Advisory Panel (SAP) and the [SWEEP Ad Hoc Advisory Group](#), a \$2 million portion of the 2021 SWEEP allocation (\$50 M) was dedicated to projects located in the southern desert region, a region, which due to its unique water distribution and energy systems, has historically received low levels of funding from SWEEP. An additional \$700,000 was remaining from the 2021 SWEEP solicitation and was combined with the \$2M reserved for this targeted solicitation for the total \$2.7M awarded.

Projects funded through this Pilot program must demonstrate water savings from proposed irrigation improvements but will not be required to reduce GHG emissions from irrigation pumping. Projects must not result in an increase in GHG emissions. Fifty agricultural operations applied for funding through the 2021 SWEEP Southern Desert Region Pilot solicitation process. Applications were reviewed by a team of irrigation specialists from the University of California and California State University systems. The program is part of CDFA’s [Office of Environmental Farming and Innovation \(OEFI\)](#) Climate Smart Agriculture portfolio.

CDFA ANNOUNCES 2023 PREVENTION OF ANIMAL HOMELESSNESS AND CRUELTY VOLUNTARY TAX CONTRIBUTION FUND FUNDING

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) is currently accepting applications for the 2023 Prevention of Animal Homelessness and Cruelty Voluntary Tax Contribution Fund (Prevention Fund) Program. The Prevention Fund is supported by California taxpayer contributions for the sole purpose of spay and neuter activities to eliminate cat and dog homelessness. CDFA anticipates awarding up to \$184,000 on a competitive basis to be distributed to municipal animal control agencies and eligible affiliates. Grant Applications must be submitted electronically to CDFA’s Office of Grants Administration at grants@cdfa.ca.gov and received by Wednesday, March 8, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. PT. For further information and grant application materials, please visit: <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/SpayNeuter/>

CDFA NOW ACCEPTING RESEARCH GRANT PROPOSALS FOR CALIFORNIA FRUIT TREE, NUT TREE, AND GRAPEVINE IMPROVEMENT ADVISORY BOARD (IAB)

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) is now accepting applications for the California Fruit Tree, Nut Tree, and Grapevine Improvement Advisory Board (IAB) research grant proposals. The IAB funds research to promote the production of fruit tree, nut tree, and grapevines resulting in improved nursery stock. The intended research should address important disease and pest problems or other cultural aspects of fruit tree, nut tree, and grapevine nursery stock production. Funding is made possible from industry assessments.

Projects funded through IAB commonly include elements such as research of diseases and genetic disorders, variety identification, education and outreach, alternative treatment methods, and rootstock advancements as it relates to the production of high-quality tree and grapevine nursery stock. Applicants should review the research proposal solicitation materials posted on the IAB webpage [HERE](#). The research grant proposals submission window opportunity will end by April 3, 2023 at 5 p.m.