



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.

September 16, 2022

Agricultural Education

The Department of Food and Agriculture is accepting proposals for the 2022 California Agriculture Special Interest License Plate grant program, which provides \$250,000 grants for agricultural education activities for K-12 students. These funds are generated through the sale of specialized agricultural license plates. The application for grants are due Friday, October 7th by 5pm and more information about the program can be found [here](#). Staff: Taylor Roschen, troschen@cfbf.com

Agricultural Employment

The Cal/OSHA Standards Board met on September 15 to hear a proposal from Cal/OSHA to adopt a non-emergency COVID-19 workplace safety regulation. If adopted as planned in December 2022, it would become effective on January 1, 2023 and be in effect for two years, during which time it is anticipated that the agency will work on development of a new infectious disease standard. The proposed non-emergency COVID-19 regulation is similar in most respects to the COVID-19 emergency temporary standards that have been in effect since November 2020, but drops troublesome requirements from the emergency standards for employers to provide "exclusion pay" with little definition of what that included (wages, benefits, seniority, etc.). The exclusion pay requirement was also very much open-ended, continuing for the duration of an employee's or family member's illness with no definitive limitations as with COVID-19 supplemental paid sick leave enacted by the California Legislature. Farm Bureau urged the Standards Board to refrain from adopting a non-emergency standard because it is unneeded as California transitions from dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic to an endemic, seasonal disease that bears more resemblance to seasonal influenza outbreaks. Farm Bureau also urged the Board, if it moves forward with this standard, to clarify the confusion caused by recent California Department of Health (CDPH) guidance eliminating the six-foot component from the "within six feet for 15 minutes in a 24-hour period" definition of "close contact." In the absence of definitive distance guidance, any large building like a packing shed that lacks floor-to-ceiling space divisions could be considered a single space and any COVID case who visits such a space could cause the employer to consider every person in that space to have been exposed to COVID. Farm Bureau also urged the Board to re-define "outbreak" status in the regulation (worksites experiencing an outbreak, as few as three cases in a two week period are required to trace contacts, must monitor employees and test employees weekly) to prevent employers from being permanently consigned to "outbreak" status as COVID become more contagious and employees easily acquire COVID and bring it to the workplace with them. Last, Farm Bureau urged the Board to drop extensive contact tracing and recordkeeping requirements of the draft rule, in accordance with CDPH guidance to the effect that contact tracing is not longer an effective means of dealing with COVID. Staff: Bryan Little, blittle@cfbf.com.

Climate Change

Following through on his interest to approve more aggressive climate goals, Governor Newsom signed the four bills that make up his climate pillars in the Bay Area at a signing ceremony. Farm Bureau at Work readers may remember the Governor requested these proposals in the last three weeks of session. They include:

- [AB-1757](#) which requires the California natural resources agency to establish climate goals for natural and working lands. These goals will be incorporated into the scoping plan.
- [AB-1279](#) will put into state law the existing policy goal of reaching statewide “carbon neutrality” by 2045.
- [SB-1020](#) will set benchmarks that the state electric grid has to hit before sourcing all of its power from renewable sources by 2045.
- [SB-905](#) will require the Air Resources Board to come up with regulations for projects that capture, reuse and store carbon emissions.
- [SB-1137](#) will ban the drilling of any new oil and gas wells within 3,200 feet of homes, schools, nursing homes and hospitals, effectively banning the activity from most developed areas in the state.
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The Department of Food and Agriculture is now accepting applications for pilot projects in the Southern Desert Region (Imperial and Riverside counties) for the State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEEP). Farm Bureau staff and allies argued that the gravity fed nature of Southern California water distribution has mistakenly disqualified southern California farmers that cannot demonstrate energy reductions when implementing water efficient irrigation systems. Following this criticism, the Department has agreed to allocate \$2 million of the \$50 million available for the SWEEP Program, to fund \$200,000 grants to implement weather, soil or plant-based sensors for scheduling, irrigation system changes, fuel conversion, installation of renewable energy, utility interconnections, and pump retrofits or replacements. Applicants must be submitted by November 8th at 5 p.m. Information about the pilot program can be found [here](#). *Staff: Taylor Roschen, troschen@cfbf.com*

Equity

Governor Newsom has signed an [executive order](#) requiring state agencies and departments to update their strategic plans to incorporate equity, practices to engage historically disadvantaged and underserved communities and make these plans public. It also charges Cal HR to analyze state employee data to collect demographic information to advise changes to the state hiring system. Government Operations Agency and Health and Human Services Agency are obligated by September 30, 2023, to develop recommendations to improve language and communications in state government and provide training modules for state agencies to implement. The Executive Order also requires state agencies apply for federal funds through the Infrastructure, Investment and Jobs Act. The Order also includes several actions regarding anti-hate action, such as establishing a Commission on the State of Hate and creating a Racial Equity Commission to review potentially discriminatory policies. *Staff: Taylor Roschen, troschen@cfbf.com*

Forestry & Wildfire

The Wildfire and Forest Health Taskforce’s Joint Institute for Innovative Wood Products Innovation Advisory Council met on Wednesday September 14, 2022. The first update was provided by Becky Roe of Shasta College on the Workforce Development Group. The group is completing a strategic plan to present at the November Wildfire and Forest Health Taskforce meeting, focused on whether the state has workers to build this supply chain. Data was gathered through a forest product company survey. Next, Joe Desmond presented a grid responsive energy water storage system. It’s a pump and store system using renewables to move the water back uphill for storage. His goal is to leverage renewable energy to address the famed energy “duck curve”. During the night or during peak use events, the water storage system would release water to produce electricity, capture that water in a closed loop and then pump it back uphill to the storage facility again during the day.

These could be long lived systems with 70 year lifespans, tied to energy, water and wastewater systems. The system can be integrated into local firefighting capacity by moving water to the upper holding facility,

and then becoming available in fire emergencies. The system can also be leveraged into short term microgrids, that could provide 12-36 hours of independent local energy. The system is charged once with raw groundwater and stays in a closed loop until a fire emergency event would cause a recharge. Two projects slated for completion in 2024 in Lake County are adding emergency fire flow capacity and 70 megawatts of stored energy for Lakeport and Middletown. The projects are costly still on a per megawatt basis, but they have significant revenue opportunities because of their flexibility. This provides an interesting drought protected solution for rural areas to gain microgrid like functionality, added emergency fire capacity and renewable energy resiliency. Next the Council meeting moved into a discussion about ranking the priority of a variety of different projects for the Council to want to push forward. These include biochar, biomass, biofuels, brownfields, California grown timber preferences, mass timber, chain of custody certifications, and other types. The second ranked project was a California mass timber purchasing requirement and discussion revolved around whether the chain of custody certification came with it. They have not made any decisions on which project types should receive funding or council support. *Staff: Peter Ansel, pansel@cfbf.com*

Land Use

The California Natural Resources Agency is hosting a kickoff event for partners in their effort to achieve 30x30: conserving 30% of the land and coastal waters by 2030. The agenda, which can be found [here](#), will include discussions on opportunities for partnership with tribes, environmental justice communities and industries. The event will be held in person or via zoom and registration can be found [here](#). *Staff: Taylor Roschen, troschen@cfbf.com*

Organics

Governor Newsom has vetoed AB 1870 (Mark Stone, D-Santa Cruz). This bill, supported by Farm Bureau, would have required the Department of Public Health to resolve organic certification complaints of processed products within 90 days and require certain information to be shared with the California Organic Products Advisory Committee. In his veto message, Governor Newsom noted these would result in additional General Fund costs. *Staff: Taylor Roschen, troschen@cfbf.com*

Pollinators

CDFA's Office of Environmental Farming and Innovation is hosting webinars to review the Pollinator Habitat Program requirements and application materials. Following the webinars, a recording will be posted. If you would like to participate in the next webinar on Tuesday, September 20, 2022 at 6pm please follow this [link](#). Additionally, the Pollinator Partnership is asking members to participate in a survey on California growers' preferences for on-farm conservation programs. Responses will be used to improve programs offered by the USDA. To qualify to take [this survey](#), you must currently own and/or manage farmland in California. [The survey](#) should take about 10 minutes. Please complete the survey in one sitting, and take the survey only once. All participants who complete a valid survey response will be rewarded with a \$20 Amazon gift card. To receive a gift card, simply provide your email at the end of the survey. To ensure validity, all responses will be screened to qualify for a gift card. Here is the link to the [survey](#). *Staff: Katie Little, klittle@cfbf.com*

Water

The State Water Resources Control Board will consider adopting emergency regulations next week revising the Core Water Quality Regulatory Fee Schedules, amending the Water Rights Fee Schedules, and amending the Drinking Water Fee Schedules. Each year the Water Board adopts the fee schedules as emergency regulations because they are adopting after the fiscal year, July 1 to June 30 has already begun. *Staff: Danny Merkley, dmerkley@cfbf.com*

Wildlife

The California Fish and Game Commission and California Department of Fish and Wildlife are hosting a public forum on Thursday to discuss wild pigs in California. CABF will be participating in this forum and presenting on the negative economic impacts of feral swine on agriculture throughout the state. This forum will take place on Thursday, September 22, 2020 from 9:00am-12:00pm. Instructions for joining the forum, an agenda, and background materials will be posted on the [Commission Meetings](#) webpage. Other stakeholders will be presenting on the environment, impacts on public land, and human and animal health (domestic and wild). Panelists will engage in a dialogue about potential mitigation measures that could be used effectively in California to address these impacts. If you have any feedback or questions, *Contact Katie Little, klittle@cfbf.com*