

## From the Ground UP



*A quarterly publication of  
the Sacramento County  
Farm Bureau*

**Agriculture news from around the County— coming to you from farmers and ranchers...**

### **Water Coalition works to meet Irrigated Lands Conditional Waiver**

In July of 2003, the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board adopted resolution R5-2003-0105, which sets forth two Conditional Waivers of Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs) for discharges of waste to surface water from irrigated lands. One Irrigated Lands Conditional Waiver is for Coalition Groups, the other is for Individual Dischargers. The Irrigated Lands Program is to address discharges of sediment, pesticides and other potential contaminants into surface water bodies.

The Regional Board has given landowner/operators who irrigate their lands three options to comply with the Waiver. The first option required landowners with irrigated lands to join a coalition group (in Sacramento and Amador Coun-

ties that group is the Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition). The second option is for landowners/operators to apply as individuals for waiver coverage. The third option is for a discharge to file a Report of Water Discharge and obtain a Water Discharge Permit. The second and third options require the irrigator to contact the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board directly.

A broad coalition group of agricultural and waterfowl interests have developed the Sacramento Valley Water Quality Coalition (SVWQC) to organize growers to share best management practices, conduct monitoring of rivers and creeks, apply for grants and work cooperatively. See **SVWQC** page 2

### **Changes to Clean Water Act would seriously affect agriculture**

Revisions to the Clean Water Authority Restoration Act (H.R. 2421) will have serious side effects to agriculture. With the proposed deletion of the word “navigable” from the Clean Water Act, farmers would be required to obtain more permits to carry out daily land management activities; which would result in increase cost of doing business, but more importantly it would go beyond protecting wetlands and waterways. This legislation would grant the Environmental Protection Agency and the Army Corps of Engineers federal authority over all “interstate waters” and expand the scope of the regulation to all “activities affecting these waters.” The legislation would greatly expand the Clean Water Act to the detriment of the U.S. economic growth and

agricultural operations. Moreover, the legislation is not necessary to protect vital wetlands and waterways. They are already protected under the United States Supreme Court’s 1985 unanimous decision in *United States v. Riverside Bayview Homes*, which the Court reaffirmed in its recent decisions in *SWANCC* and *Rapanos*. The unifying theme of all the Justices in *Rapanos* was not to amend the CWA, but rather that the Corps of Engineers and EPA should issue new regulations. As stated in the dissenting opinion of Justice Breyer in *Rapanos*, and as echoed by Chief Justice Roberts and Justice Kennedy, the “Army Corps of Engineers (should) write new regulations, and speedily so.”



### **Dairies respond to need for new buyer by banding together for help**

It has been a roller coaster year for dairy producers Elsie and Dave Machado (*left*) of Elk Grove. In December they received notice that they would need to find a new buyer for the milk produced at their 400 cow dairy in Elk


Grove. The Machados have been shipping milk to Crystal Cream and Butter since Dave’s father built the dairy in 1972. Crystal was bought last year by HP Hood LLC, a company based See **Dairies** Page 2

## From our fields

May is a busy time of year for Sacramento County farmers who produce hay, alfalfa and forage crops; these commodities are being harvested for nearby livestock such as dairy cows, beef cattle and horses. Corn for feed grain is being planted, as well as tomatoes for both the fresh market and canneries; safflower is in various stages of production and artichokes are currently being harvested. Cherries will soon be harvested and in July will come pears. The blooms on both cherries and pears look good and should be a promising harvest. Wine grapes have suf-

fered mild to moderate freeze damage, which will result in a smaller crop. Grazing land around the county is drying down and producers are beginning to supplement animals with hay.

Farm Bureau encourages you to support local Farmers Markets and buy local produce every chance you get. It not only helps the environment, but our local farm families as well.

For more information about Sacramento County agriculture and a link to local Farmers Markets, visit our website, [www.sacfarmbureau.org](http://www.sacfarmbureau.org). 


## SVWQC (continued from page 1)

toward improving water quality through the development of implementation of management plans.

To ease the strain on the resources in implementing this program, the SVWQC is divided into 10 sub-watersheds. The Sacramento/Amador Water Quality Alliance (Alliance), which our Sacramento County farmers are members of, was formed to help irrigators qualify for a Waiver as part of a coalition group making it unnecessary for them to obtain an individual permit. The cost for an individual permit was estimated at \$10,000 to \$15,000 per year per irrigator. Irrigators who are members of the Alliance are paying an annual fee of \$75 and roughly \$1.50 per acre.

Three monitoring sites are within the Alliance. Those sites are monitored and if contaminants are found, additional testing is done to pin-point the source. Landowner's are notified and through a collaborative

effort with technical advisors a management plan is either developed or further refined so landowners can better meet water quality objectives.

The Alliance is an example of a collaborative effort that is working to meet environmental regulatory programs. The cost of environmental regulations are affecting the bottom line of farmers and ranchers, who are not able to pass those costs on to the consumer. Working collaboratively with the Alliance has allowed irrigators to comply without the high cost of applying for individual permits. In addition, the Alliance offers the ability for landowners to work with technical staff to develop management practices for their operations to protect water quality. 

*Growers meet at a Sac/Amador Water Quality Alliance Meeting in Walnut Grove.*



*Ken Oneto of KLM Ranches harvests "kiss of burgundy" artichokes at his Elk Grove ranch. The unique variety of artichoke is more drought and extreme temperature resistant than the typical artichoke grown in coastal regions and is thriving in Sacramento County.*

## Dairies (Continued from page 1)

out of Massachusetts; since the purchase, Hood sold the Crystal label and due to plant changes will only be receiving milk from five local dairies. This decision left the Machados and 20 other farms in the area with six months to find a home for their milk.

It wasn't until mid April, that Milk Movers of America announced that they will purchase the milk from all twenty-one dairies for six months. "We were so excited and relieved that there will be a home for our milk," said Dave.

"We invited all of the other producers to our home and banded together. We found that we had to have hope," explained Elsie. "Once we got together as a group, people started to listen and tried to come up with ways to help all of the dairies in our situa-

tion." This group of dairy producers worked collectively to meet with state agriculture officials and answer media questions.

"It really opened my eyes to know that other dairymen wanted to know what they could do. Some were even willing to sacrifice their own shipping rights to help their neighbors. There are a lot of good people who care in this industry," added Dave.

This situation was a huge threat to the Sacramento County dairy industry. Nearly half of the county's dairies were in danger of going out of business had they not found a place to ship their milk.

Milk production in Sacramento County was valued at nearly \$41 million dollars in 2006. 