California Farm Water Coalition

CFWC Activity Report

TO: San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority Board of Directors
FROM: Michelle Paul, Executive Director
DATE: October 12, 2026
SUBJECT: CFWC Activity Report, September 2026

Summary

September kept me on the road, talking with members and water professionals across the region. I presented at nine member districts, connected with several water agencies north of Sacramento, and learned more about water issues shaping each region. I also connected with agricultural commodity groups as we brainstormed new partnership opportunities to share clear, timely educational information about California's current water situation with a broader audience.

Media Landscape and Response

September brought just over 260 California agriculture-related articles, roughly the same amount as in August. Most coverage was neutral, but positive stories edged out negative ones, a welcome shift from August, when negative stories outnumbered positive stories by more than three to two. Groundwater and SGMA remained central, though mentions declined from August. Water infrastructure, drought and water supply, the Delta and Bay-Delta, and ecosystems and the environment rounded out the leading topics.

Water infrastructure also had a big month, with coverage more than tripling. Stories followed Gov. Gavin Newsom's announcement that Sites Reservoir was nearing construction ahead of a key permit vote, federal grants for projects in Kern and Tulare counties, Delta Caucus funding for Delta levees, and the Friant Water Authority's groundbreaking for a replacement pump station. The Delta also drew considerably more

attention, with coverage nearly tripling as the public weighed in on the SWRCB's new Delta water plan.

Editorial Outreach and Placement



The Coalition's editorial exploring different approaches to financing water infrastructure ran in Comstock Magazine last month. I also represented irrigated agriculture's struggles with a dwindling surface water supply in an on-camera interview on CBS 13 Sacramento. Finally, an editorial arguing that California's real water problem won't be solved by mandating industry usage reports ran in Capitol Weekly.

We have two additional editorials drafted that we are looking to place, one that highlights that a super El Nino is not a replacement for a reliable water strategy and a second piece highlighting the value farming in the Imperial Valley has for the local community.

Outreach

Our brand refresh and website redesign are well underway! We are currently populating the newly redesigned sites for Cultivate California and Farm Water Coalition to give our members, the public, and the media access to information on farm water use. We anticipate these sites being launched before the end of the year.

Social Media

Since mid-August, we have been testing new content formats across our Cultivate California channels. We released a three-part video series with @MaddoxFarmBoys, showcasing their family farm through the next generation's eyes. The series portrayed California agriculture in a welcoming, engaging way, generating 12.8K post interactions and 3.5K new followers. We will continue this collaborative style with a visit to Machado Family Farms in late October.

We also began a video series on the Colorado River across both CFWC and Cultivate California channels, our first step toward bringing high-level, approachable water messaging to Cultivate California.

On CFWC channels, we continued promoting op-eds, focusing on LinkedIn, and added "water footprint" graphics for select National Commodity Days that show California's water efficiency compared to global competitors.

At the end of September, we hosted our Fall Influencer Tour in Yolo County, bringing three food and cooking influencers to meet farmers and water experts on local farms. In just three days, they went from curious about where their food comes from to genuinely invested in getting involved in agriculture back home. They'll release recap videos in the coming weeks, extending the experience to their own audiences.



Top-performing Cultivate California posts in September:



California Farmers are Keeping Your Plate Full
Interactions: 2.8k
Views: 70.6k



Colorado River and Winter Produce
Interactions: 2.4k
Views: 83.6k



Why Farmers Love Their Job
Interactions: 2.4k
Views: 101.2k