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TO: San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority Board of Directors

FROM: Mike Wade, Executive Director, California Farm Water Coalition

DATE: March 4, 2024

RE: Program and Activities Update

CFWC Board Elections

CFWC members recently elected Greg Johnson, a Sacramento Valley farmer from Durham, California, and owner of Far West Rice and president of Western Canal Water District, as its new president. Johnson succeeds Bill Diedrich from San Luis Water District, who had served as CFWC president for the past eight years.

In addition to Johnson's election, the Coalition is pleased to announce the following individuals elected to its leadership team:

- Gina Dockstader, an Imperial Valley farmer from Calipatria, has been elected Vice President of the organization.
- Wayne Western, of Hammonds Ranch in Fresno County, has been elected Secretary/Treasurer of the board.

Additionally, the California Farm Water Coalition welcomes two new board members:

- Brett Lauppe, representing CoBank, brings extensive experience in agricultural finance and rural improvements to the board.
- Jeff Sutton, of the Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority, who brings with him a wealth of knowledge in water infrastructure, water policy, and water law.

Hanford FFA - Update

CFWC worked with Hanford FFA, providing California water information and a tour of some of California's large water facilities, for a statewide competition on the state's water supply history and infrastructure.

The tour group, consisting of eight students and two advisors, visited Jones Pumping Plant, Romero Visitors Center, and Mendota Dam prior to the knowledge-based competition held at the beginning of March. The Hanford FFA team finished as Reserve Grand Champions, behind the Visalia El Diamante FFA chapter.

California Salmon Strategy for a Hotter, Drier Future

CFWC produced an article on Governor Newsom's "California Salmon Strategy for a Hotter, Drier Future," that is currently running in the March 2024 issue of West Coast Nut magazine. A copy of the article is attached.

Other Media Activity

CFWC submitted the following letters and opinion pieces to the following publications:

12/28/23	Opinion	Ag Alert	Water Used to Grow Our Food (CFWC fact sheets)
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1/17/24	Letter	NY Times	Author replied 1/16/24 Correction about "privilege" in Merced River water rights story
1/18/24	Letter	LA Times	Review criticized California's water saving rules
1/27/24	Letter	CalMatters	Rachel Becker on CA's groundwater status
2/6/24	Op-ed	The Hill	Rule of Law, Aggressive Conservation, 2026 Colorado River Operational Guidelines

WEST COAST NUT

MARCH 2024 ISSUE

SPOTLIGHT:
**CONNOR WAGNER ON THE
FREEDOM AND FORTITUDE
OF MOVING BACK TO THE
FAMILY FARM**

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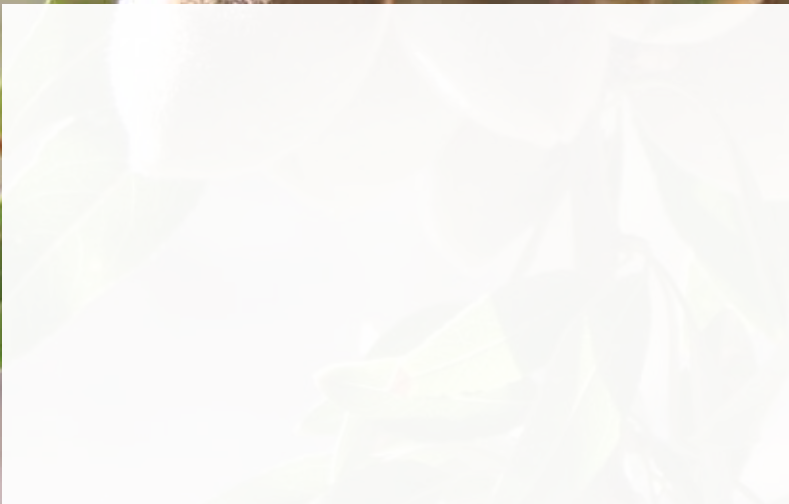


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**EVOLVING INSECT PEST
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MARKETING
PUBLICATION

California's New Salmon Strategy

By MIKE WADE | California Farm Water Coalition

GOVERNOR GAVIN NEWSOM RECENTLY released his *California Salmon Strategy for a Hotter, Drier Future*.

It is a 37-page roadmap designed to achieve the goal of restoring aquatic ecosystems in the age of climate change, as the introduction says.

It is important to recognize this comprehensive approach to restoring salmon populations is an official departure from previous efforts at the state and federal level to improve the survivability and reproduction of California's salmon. It takes a half-dozen strategies and combines them into a plan that may turn the tide on salmon restoration.

Some of it sounds great and incorporates efforts that have proved successful such as food web projects in the Sacramento Valley that have succeeded in delivering fatter, healthier young salmon to the Sacramento River, increasing their chances of survival in the wild in order to return in a few years to spawn.

Other elements remain questionable, including vague references to flow requirements that could create significant hardships or increased costs on other water users, including farmers and urban families and businesses. Growers

on the Scott and Shasta rivers in Northern California have faced significant hardships because state-mandated flow restrictions have significantly hindered their ability to divert irrigation water, even though fish populations appear to be very healthy.

The Governor's plan includes six priorities:

- Remove barriers and modernize infrastructure
- Restore and expand habitat for salmon
- Protect water flows and water quality in key rivers at the right times to support salmon
- Modernize salmon hatcheries
- Transform technology and management systems for climate adaptability
- Strengthen partnerships

The common denominator in all this, of course, is water. Salmon need it and so do people, including growers, businesses and rural and urban communities. But salmon also need habitat like rivers with side channels where baby salmon migrating to the ocean can rest. And they need food to be able to grow and make it to the ocean. They need strength to survive and return in three years to spawn to start the cycle all over again.

But salmon have not been getting consistent habitat benefits, and the abundant food they need when you consider that flow-based regulations have dominated salmon recovery efforts since the salmon biological opinion was adopted in 2009.

Newson's plan emphasizes willing buyer/willing seller transactions of water to improve stream flow. While mentioned in the document as "voluntary," the water user community, including the State Water Contractors, federal water users and local water districts, remind us when they sign onto programs like this that their efforts are mandatory. Commitments for higher water flows and millions of dollars for

restoration programs are there for the purpose of improving the success of California salmon in order to deliver better water supply reliability in the future.

In a recent LinkedIn post, State Water Contractors General Manager Jennifer Pierre demonstrated their commitment to work across the aisle with conservation groups to achieve a common goal.

"One of the most rewarding things I did during COVID isolation," said Pierre, "was strike up a friendship with Rene Henery at Trout Unlimited. We discussed all of the ways we actually AGREE on solutions and kicked off what is now the 'Reorienting to Recovery' salmon collaborative..."

The collaborative includes the Delta Stewardship Council, The Bay Institute, Trout Unlimited, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and others. Action 6.2 in the Governor's salmon strategy specifically mentions "Reorienting to Recovery," sending a clear message to state elected and

appointed officials that cooperative efforts to solve problems are a much better path than a top-down regulatory approach of the past.

Newson's plan is an effort to bring together different elements in the long effort to balance water supply reliability and protecting our natural environment. Most people will find something in it they like. They will also find things that raise questions and the level of caution in embracing it.

It is positive that the Governor's approach openly seeks partnerships and voluntary commitments toward improving the ecosystem that supports salmon. And it is a stark difference from 25 years of failed attempts at helping salmon by simply releasing more and more water to the ocean through degraded channels and expecting better results.

Comments about this article? We want to hear from you. Feel free to email us at article@jcsmarketinginc.com

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