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Executive Director
Michael Wade

TO: San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority Board of Directors
FROM: Mike Wade, Executive Director
DATE: September 9, 2024
RE: Program and Activities Update

Social Media Influencer Tour

CFWC hosted one of its two annual social media influencer tours on August 21-23 in the Salinas Valley. The tour participants were Valerie Mitchell (@valerie.mitchell), Alison Needham (@agirl_defloured), and Kate Ramos (@holajalapeno), all from Southern California. The tour covered many aspects of Salinas Valley agriculture, including a stop at Hartnell College’s Ag Tech Center where the focus is on robotics and automation. We visited Huntington farms to see broccoli and celery harvest operations, with an added stop where they are cultivating wild bee populations.

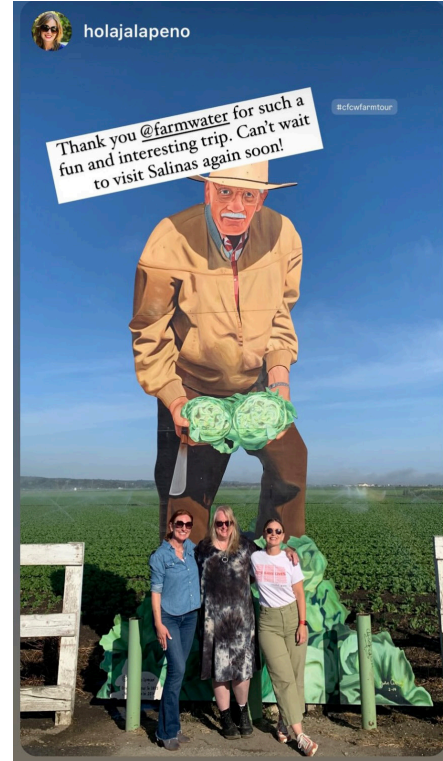
Next was a stop at Braga Farms for a first-hand look at leafy green processing for salads in a hyper clean room. Food safety requirements had everyone covered from head to foot and sanitized before entering the facility. The second stop for Braga Farms was a number of fields dedicated to regenerative farming research, or ways that crop production can be leveraged into carbon capture and soil health improvements. They’re seeing other farms in the area begin to adopt these practices.

The next morning, the group visited Monterey County Water Resources Agency General Manager, Ara Azhderian. Ara is the former water resources director for the San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority. If you know him, you know what a great host he is and the terrific job he did representing the water supply and water quality challenges on the Monterey Peninsula.

Congressional Hearing

The House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife & Fisheries met on September 6 in Santa Nella to take testimony from witnesses on the topic Water Abundance: Opportunities and Challenges in California. CFWC provided data to speakers in advance of the hearing on exports, following, and groundwater impacts. The data, from federal and State sources, provided an accurate picture of the San Joaquin Valley’s water supply over several decades, painting a picture of economic harm and threats to the nation’s food security because of missed opportunities for food production.

In response to the hearing, CFWC issued a press release and produced social media content on Facebook and X, informing our followers and members of the public about the important message being delivered to the committee members.



Continued

Pumping the Great Lakes to California

CFWC and the Family Farm Alliance collaborated to draft an opinion piece on the success farmers in California and Arizona have achieved in self-managing their resources because of SGMA and other water management activities. Westlands Water District is cited in the essay for its success in managing groundwater recharge during the last year. The piece emphasizes local control over a top-down approach and says that the U.S. does not need a drastic, nationwide overhaul of water policy or the construction of transcontinental pipelines. Instead, localized, science-based solutions tailored to the unique needs of each region offer the most effective path to sustainable water management.

An outrageous opinion piece by Jay Famiglietti that appeared in the New York Times warned of the West's need for water supplies and threatened people in the Great Lakes region with the specter of giant pipelines carrying water to farmers and other users across the country. The essay was a warning that overuse of Western groundwater has resulted in the need for a national groundwater policy. The effort is being driven by the Biden White House's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology's (PCAST's) creation of the "Groundwater Working Group". Farmers across the West are concerned that tasking federal agencies to develop a national strategy on groundwater would inevitably result in yet another one-size-fits-all, top-down approach. On July 22, the working group hosted a workshop on this matter at Arizona State University (ASU) in Tempe. Now, the White House is working on a document that will reflect the findings of the Tempe workshop.

The piece is currently awaiting publication.

Cultivate California and ACWA

CFWC gave presentations to both the ACWA Agriculture and Communications committees on its popular Cultivate California program. ACWA has been a dedicated supporter of the program for several years and wanted more information for its committee members and staff. Cultivate California delivered more than 200 individual social media posts, reels, and advertisements on Facebook, Instagram, and X during the 2023-2024 program year. The program's reach increased by over 2.68 million accounts over previous efforts in the 2022-2023 program year with a total of 6.45 million accounts reached for the year on 38 million impressions.

Colorado Water Congress

I spoke at the Colorado Water Congress, similar to ACWA in California, with Dan Keppen of the Family Farm Alliance on the topic, "Ag Perspectives on the Colorado River and Food Security". The presentation was aimed at helping the audience understand the vital importance of California's Mediterranean Climate and its role providing specialty crops to the United States and our trading partners around the world. With global unrest, a history of supply chain disruptions, trade imbalance, and the risk posed by unsustainable foreign food production, we shared the importance of delivering reliable farm water supplies in the Western United States.

A similar presentation was scheduled this week for the California Ag Irrigation Association Conference in Pismo Beach.