

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR'S OFFICE

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To: Board of Supervisors
From: Birgitta Corsello, County Administrator
Date: August 7, 2012
Subject: Biweekly Update of Significant Issues

1. **County Administrator's Update on Contracts**

The County Administrator did not sign any contracts of significance since the last Significant Issues update.

2. **Gomer School Discussion Delayed Until August 28**

In response to public comment at the July 24, 2012 Board of Supervisors meeting, the Department of Resource Management was directed to report back to the Board with an update on the Office of Education's disposition of the Gomer School site at 4522 Abernathy Road in the Suisun Valley area. Since that meeting, the County Administrator's Office was contacted by the Solano County Superintendent of Schools, who requested that the Board item be deferred until the August 28, 2012 meeting. This will allow the Board of Education to consider a report on August 14, 2012 on Gomer School prior to the Board of Supervisors' discussion.

- Contact: Bill Emlen, Director, Department of Resource Management, 784-6062

3. **Drought Disaster Status for Solano County**

Solano County was not included in the recent Secretarial disaster declaration for the nationwide drought. During the 2012 crop year, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has designated 1,297 counties across 29 states as disaster areas, making all qualified farm operators in those areas eligible for low-interest emergency loans. This is the first time that an automatic process, called "Drought Monitor," has been activated to qualify counties for the declaration. The Drought Monitor regime uses local weather stations and historical data to ascertain the rainfall deficits on a statistical basis.

Under Drought Monitor, Solano, Yolo, Napa, Sacramento and San Joaquin counties did not qualify. The opportunity to join the disaster declaration through a survey of crop losses is open to counties not included automatically through Drought Monitor. In order to qualify by this method, growers must have a 50 percent loss to range and forage crops, or a 30 percent loss countywide to a specific commodity. While some Solano County growers had significant individual losses in the early season and many had additional costs due to reseeding, late rains were substantial enough to prevent most Solano growers from qualifying through this mechanism.

Contra Costa County is applying for a drought disaster declaration by the loss survey method. If it is awarded, Solano growers individually meeting certain criteria could be eligible for benefits as an adjacent county.

- Contact: Jim Allan, Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer of Weights & Measures, 784-1480

4. Advance Notice Coming for Pending Fire Prevention Fee Bills

ABx1 29 was signed into law on July 7, 2011 and establishes an annual fee to pay for fire prevention services within the State Responsibility Area (SRA). The fee applies to owners of habitable structures on properties located in the SRA. The Board of Equalization (BOE) is sending advance notices to property owners affected by this fire prevention fee legislation. The BOE is staggering this mailing, and Solano County residents are slated to be part of the mailings released by October 17, 2012.

The BOE estimates 2,127 property owners in Solano County will be affected by the fire prevention fee. The advance notice informs the property owners that they will be required to pay \$150 per habitable structure. Habitable structures within the boundaries of a local fire protection agency will receive a reduction of \$35 per habitable structure.

Property owners will receive a bill for Fiscal Year 2011/12 by December 2012. They will receive a bill for Fiscal Year 2012/13 by March 2013. Thereafter, billings will be mailed annually during the first quarter of each calendar year. The property owner has 30 days from the date on the bill to send a payment or protest in writing the amount of the bill.

Property owners can call (888) 310-6447 or visit www.firepreventionfee.org for more information about the fee.

- Contact: Michelle Heppner, Legislative, Intergovernmental & Public Affairs Officer, 784-3002

5. Empty Pesticide Container Recycling

The Agricultural Commissioner has been working with Resource Management to plan an empty pesticide container recycling event. On Tuesday, November 13, 2012 from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. growers and pest control businesses can bring properly rinsed and conditioned empty pesticide containers to the Recology facility at 6426 Hay Road in Vacaville.

The Ag Container Recycling Council (ACRC) is a non-profit product stewardship organization established and funded by the pesticide manufacturing industry – www.acrecycle.org. The ACRC contracts with Interstate Ag Plastics (IAG) to provide the recycling service free to jurisdictions like Solano County. IAG will shred the used pesticide containers on-site at Recology Hay Road using their own equipment and will then transport the commodity back to Buttonwillow, Calif., for sale to ACRC-approved end-users located in the United States who make agricultural drainage tile (perforated pipe), parking stop bumpers, and variable electrical conduit for direct sales to mid-west farms.

Between now and the event, outreach will be conducted to growers and commercial applicators on how to prepare, certify and deliver the containers for recycling. These events have been very successful in surrounding counties and build upon interdepartmental cooperation and public/private partnerships to accomplish these goals:

- Savings to growers on disposal costs

- Reduction in volume in landfills
- Decrease illegal dumping
- Environmentally responsible rinsing of containers
- Creation of useful products from used plastic
- Contact: Jim Allan, Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer of Weights & Measures, 784-1480

6. Weights and Measures – Gas Stations and Petroleum Products

Inspecting and sealing of gasoline dispensers for accuracy is one of the most visible activities of the County's Weights and Measures Division. From time to time, the California Department of Food and Agriculture Division of Measurement Standards coordinates a survey of counties to determine statistically the level of compliance for various activities performed in inspections of gas stations. Samples are drawn for lab testing of octane, availability of air and water are evaluated along with signage and other regulatory requirements. The results of this year's survey as well as past results are summarized in this document:

http://www.cdfa.ca.gov/countyg/postings/files/P-12-01_Results_1.pdf

It is notable that lab tests for regular 87 Octane gas have had a compliance level of 100 percent in every year surveyed. By far this is the most purchased product at gas stations throughout the state.

- Contact: Jim Allan, Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer of Weights & Measures, 784-1480

7. Solano Grown Expands Outreach to Promote Specialty Crops

If you have not seen or heard yet, Solano Grown is in the midst of a small media blitz. Ads and public service announcements are going out on KUIC, bus signs and billboards will soon be featuring local growers and their specialty crops. The outreach is funded by a Specialty Crops Block Grant that the Board of Supervisors authorized the Agricultural Commissioner's office to accept. Each ad will feature a "Specialty Crop" in which Solano County has a rich variety. A goal of the promotion is to inform the customer base that transits the county between the Bay Area and Sacramento about our county's products. Since its inception, Solano Grown has had some tangible results for local agriculture; one example is the number of Farmer's Market Certificates has nearly tripled.

- Contact: Jim Allan, Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer of Weights & Measures, 784-1480