

INSIDE



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highlights

Advocacy

LEGISLATIVE EFFORTS

- Held 6 meetings with Senator Melissa Hurtado, 4 meetings with Assemblyman Devin Mathis, met with House Ag Committee Chair Glen "GT" Thompson. Also met with CDFA Secretary Karen Ross.
- Attended multiple GSA Board Meetings, a State Water Board Public Workshop, Published articles in FarmLife, eNews, and shared posts on social media.
- Worked extensively to oppose Assembly Bill 1016 and Assembly Bill 399.
- Submitted 12 comment letters to state lawmakers, regulators, and the Kings County Board of Supervisors.

FLOOD RELIEF

- Hosted 2 disaster relief workshops, with CDFA Undersecretary Birdsong presenting at one
- Participated in over 15 Office of Emergency Services calls from April to August. Attended a flood workshop hosted by Senator Hurtado.
- Gathered emergency evacuation space for over 2,000+ head of cattle, 30 stalls for horses, and 18 acres of open ground of other livestock.



COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- Led the Excelsior Kings River Conservation District in applying for and receiving \$5.5 million in grant funding and was appointed as their General Manager.
- Attended over 40 Board of Supervisors meetings and conducted one-on-one meetings with Supervisors outside of regularly scheduled meetings.
- KCFB Staff is actively involved in Kings Economic Development Corporation, Tulare Kings Women in Ag, the Kings County Ag Advisory Committee, and Hanford Noon Rotary.



Events



- Harvest Classic's biggest year yet!
138 Players
31 Sponsors
Sold Out Tournament
(over a month in advance)
- KCFB gave over 800 tickets away to members and sponsors to attend our Membership Appreciation Night at the Rawhide Ball Field in April
- Farm Day was back to full capacity since Covid.
2,200 Students
102 Teachers
35 Schools
48 Presenters
200+ Volunteers

Outreach

- 23 eNews Publications sent to 800+ recipients
- 41% Average Open Rate compared to a 21% industry average
- 4% Average Click Rate compared to a 2% industry average
- Over 6,000 Accounts reached on Instagram
- Over 30,000 Accounts reached on Facebook
- Executive Director Dusty Ference gave 17 interviews to the press, including a feature on Good Morning America and Hulu
- Four \$1,000 Scholarships given to Kings County seniors
- Farm Life 12 issues published 750 copies per issue delivered to the community over 120 articles written





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Vision

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Values

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100'S Turn Out to Hear State Water Board Staff Justify Probation for Tulare Lake Subbasin

By Don A. Wright

About 300, motivated people showed up Wednesday evening November 8th at the beautiful and historic Hanford Civic Center to hear the State Water Resources Control Board staff talk about putting the Tulare Lake Subbasin into probation by April 2024. This will cost the area an immediate \$30 million fine when it happens – if it happens. This is all part of how the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act is playing out in the San Joaquin Valley. On October 12th staff sent out a 176 page notice of the workshop scheduled on this topic. Folks showed up, listened and then responded.

SGMA

In 2014 two pieces of legislation were passed; SGMA – the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act and the Proposition One water ballot initiative. Prop One dedicated \$2.7 billion to increased surface water storage. Now, nine years later not a single new reservoir has been built and no new surface water supplies have been made available to the San Joaquin Valley. And that's about all there is to say about Prop One. SGMA however has rolled on. Advocates for SGMA say California was one of the last developed places in the first world that didn't regulate its groundwater. Denmark is a country almost wholly dependent on its groundwater. Denmark studied the problem for a decade and then wrote laws and regulations. Arizona studied the problem for five years and then wrote laws and regulations.

Two urban California legislators wrote SGMA and gave farmers three years to create an entirely new bureaucracy known as Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSA) geographically based within hydrological subbasins. Then in 2017 after all of the required GSAs were established within the deadline, they had three more years to figure out a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) to bring their area into groundwater balance by 2040. No one had ever written a GSP before but all of the subbasins were able to submit their plans by the 2020 deadline at the cost of tens of millions of dollars. But the carrot to go with SGMA's stick was the promise of local control.

GSPs

SGMA doesn't state how to write a GSP as much as it states how not to. GSPs are meant to be plans to avoid six undesirable results.

- Chronic lowering of groundwater levels indicating a significant and unreasonable depletion of supply
- Significant and unreasonable reduction of groundwater storage
- Significant and unreasonable seawater intrusion
- Significant and unreasonable degradation of water quality
- Significant and unreasonable land subsidence
- Groundwater-related surface water depletions that have significant and unreasonable adverse impacts on beneficial uses of surface water.

Once the plans were complete, they were reviewed by the Department of Water Resources and comments were returned to the GSAs. The GSAs had to address each comment in a rewrite of the GSP. Upon further review if the rewritten GSPs were deemed inadequate they are referred



San Joaquin Valley Tulare Lake Subbasin Map
waterboards.ca.gov

to the State Board to determine if the subbasin should be placed in probation.

The Workshop

State Board staff conducted an online workshop Friday, November 3rd. The Hanford workshop was in person only. Four of the five State Board members, **Laurel Firestone, Doreen D'Adamo, Sean McGuire** and **Chairman Joaquin Esquivel** were in attendance.

After Esquivel's opening remarks staff members **Caroline Hackett, Sarah Sugar, Natalie Stork** and attorney **Amanda Pierson** gave presentations covering an overview of state intervention under SGMA, the issues they had with the GSP and proposals they recommend the State Board adopt requiring certain actions by those pumping water in the Tulare Lake Subbasin.

Staff recommend at the scheduled April 16, 2024 hearing the State Board place the Tulare Lake Subbasin on probation. I've been told by sources who listened in on the previous Zoom meeting non-governmental organizations such as Visalia's Community Water Center called for probation. Staff recommends all wells pumping more than 500 acre feet per year be required to install meters and the groundwater extraction reporting schedule be moved back from February to December.

Staff explained they found probation necessary because the GSP didn't provide enough detail on how the GSA was going to mitigate harm to drinking water wells, slow and stop subsidence and prevent degradation of groundwater quality. They said the GSA hasn't collected enough water quality data or set up adequate well mitigation funding.

The claim was made probationary fees are not meant to be punitive. However, if probation is adopted well owners will be charged \$300 per well, \$40 per acre foot pumped and late fees will be 25 percent per month. And meters cost on average about \$4,000 each. According to the Department of Water Resources' latest annual SGMA report from 2022 the Tulare Lake Subbasin pumped 549,066 acre feet of groundwater. Although the exact number of wells pumping more than 500 acre feet per year isn't known, a reasonable estimate of 2,300 wells was given by a local water professionals. This amounts to an additional cost to

"Tulare Lake Subbasin" continued on page 3

landowners in the Tulare Lake Subbasin of \$690,000 for existing wells, \$9.2 million for meters and \$21,962,640 for water pumping fees. That totals \$31,852,640 being removed from the local agricultural economy in 2024 should the subbasin go into probation.

It was added domestic wells are exempt from these fees and staff won't recommend carving out any "good actor" locations for parts of the subbasin that are meeting expected SGMA goals.

Public Response

The meeting then opened the floor to questions and answers and comments. The first question was how will GSAs pay for well mitigation funding? It was pointed out 218 elections are costly to put on and often result in rejection. (Elections, known as 218 elections, are required before a local government agency can raise assessment fees.) Staff agreed 218 elections can be difficult but offered no alternative for funding the probation requirements.

It was asked how the \$30 million will be spent. It will go to cover State Board costs for administering the probation. Staff said adjustments can be made depending on actual costs.

The 176 page letter from staff was rife with references to racial equity not being met by the GSP. Staff was asked where any mention of such considerations can be found in SGMA – because it's not in the language of the law – how can it be used as criteria for judging GSPs? Staff said because the State Board has been authorized under SGMA to administer probationary actions and because the State Board has adopted a resolution to apply the lens of racial equity to its decision making process it has the ability to incorporate racial equity and public trust doctrine into its procedural guides.

From page 126 of the staff letter, "5.3.2 A Brief History of the Public Trust Doctrine. The public trust doctrine flows to the present from ancient Roman codes and English Common Law judicial opinions about public rights to use water, air, wildlife, and common spaces that are held in trust by the sovereign for the benefit of the public."

The next sentence of the letter, "The sovereign here is the State of California and local jurisdictions implementing SGMA."

Staff was asked if the people living in the Tulare Lake Subbasin are citizens or subjects because if they think the State Government of California is sovereign over the public then by extension the State Board must be sovereign over the public. Staff replied that wasn't their intent when using that language. What else could they say? It was unfortunate the question had to be asked.

Your Chance to Respond

After the meeting Esquivel and other members of the Board and staff made themselves available to talk. The Board members emphasized they have not made up their mind to accept staff recommendations and invoke probation. They want to hear from others before that decision is made. The Tulare Lake Subbasin is one of six subbasins, all in the San Joaquin Valley, under consideration of being placed on probation.

If you would like to comment on the State Board staff's recommendation to place the Tulare Lake Subbasin in probation the deadline is noon December 11, 2023. You can submit comments at:

SGMA-TulareLake@waterboards.ca.gov. If the file is greater than 15 megabytes in size, the written comments may be submitted by fax at (916) 341-5620, in multiple emails, by mail, or hand delivery.

Mail/Hand Delivery: Comments submitted by mail or hand delivery must be addressed as follows:

Courtney Tyler, Clerk to the Board, State Water Resources Control Board
1001 I Street, 24th Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814-0100 (hand delivery)
P.O. Box 100, Sacramento, CA 95812-2000 (mail)

Mail must be received (not postmarked) at the State Water Board office by December 11, 2023. All hand-delivered submittals must arrive and be date and timestamped prior to December 11, 2023, at 12:00 noon. Couriers delivering hard copies of comment letters must check-in with lobby security personnel who will contact the Clerk to the Board at (916) 341-5611

Don A. Wright is the founder of Water Wrights, an electronic publication devoted to covering California's complex water issues. For more information, visit waterwrights.net



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KCFB Annual Meeting

Photos Courtesy of Bridgett Reid Photo



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Ag Commissioner's Compliance Report



Jimmy Hook,
Agricultural
Commissioner/Sealer

California Citrus Maturity Program

Contributed by Mario Gutierrez

The California Citrus Maturity Program plays a crucial role in ensuring the quality and marketability of citrus fruits produced in the state. The legislation was originally developed in 1994 and established by the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA). The program focuses on determining the maturity and readiness of citrus crops for harvesting.

The primary objective of the Citrus Maturity Program is to regulate the harvest timing, which directly impacts the flavor, sweetness, and overall quality of citrus fruits. In 2005 the California Citrus Industry sponsored legislation establishing a continued inspection program pertaining to the standards for orange maturity and citrus freeze damage. Funding for this program is based on a mill fee assessed on the total weight received of oranges, mandarin citrus varieties and lemons. The assessments collected are used to cover county agricultural commissioner's cost for the inspection program, maintain a reserve to be used in the event of a freeze and provide funding for acreage and crop surveys.

The program employs a set of rigorous standards and sampling procedures to assess the maturity of different citrus varieties, such as oranges, lemons, and grapefruits. One key aspect of the program is the reliance on the Brix measurement, which quantifies the sugar content in the fruit. The Brix indicates the number of dissolved solids in a liquid measure through its specific gravity. One degree Brix is 1 g of sucrose in 100 g of solution (1 Brix = 1% sugar). This measurement is a key indicator of the fruit's sweetness and maturity. The California Standard Brix for the Navel and Valencia orange varieties is 90%. Growers participating in the program submit samples



from orchards, and these samples undergo meticulous testing to determine their Brix levels.

The CDFA utilizes a network of county agricultural commissioner inspectors and sampling stations strategically located throughout citrus growing regions. Inspectors collect fruit samples from various orchards, representing different blocks and varieties. The samples are then analyzed to gauge sugar content and acidity level, providing valuable data to assess the fruit's maturity.

The information gathered through the Citrus Maturity Program helps growers make informed decisions about the optimal time to harvest their crops. Harvesting at the right maturity ensures that consumers receive citrus fruits at their peak flavor, enhancing overall satisfaction and promoting repeat purchases. Additionally, the program aids in standardizing the quality of California citrus in the market, contributing to the state's reputation for producing premium citrus products. Consistent quality also benefits export efforts, as international markets often have strict standards for fruit maturity.

Kings County has one packing facility that receives citrus. The County's citrus acreage has increased over the last ten years, citrus varieties totaled 816 acres in 2022 compared to 214 acres in 2012. This year navel orange harvest in surrounding counties began in the middle of October. The Kings County packing facility received its first load on November 1st. All the Brix results were above the California Standard and no loads have been rejected due to

color or defects by agricultural commissioner's staff.

While the Citrus Maturity Program is a regulatory tool, it ultimately serves the interest of both growers and consumers. By aligning harvest timing with optimal fruit maturity, the program supports the economic viability of citrus farming in California and ensures that consumers enjoy high quality, flavorful citrus products. If you have any questions, please call the Kings County Agricultural Commission-Sealers Office at 559-852-2830. 🌿





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What a year!

By Breanna Larman



Breanna Larman

Which one of Santa's reindeer are dinosaurs most afraid of? Comet.

On Thursday, November 16th we had a full house at this year's Annual Meeting. Thank you to everyone that attended, sponsored and volunteered to help make this year's meeting such a success. It was a beautiful night of fellowship at The Carnegie Museum.

Taking a look back at 2023, I am proud of year we have had. I have been challenged in this position and was presented with so many opportunities to grow over the course of 2023.

Planning Farm Day for the first time. Being tested by flooding and outreach efforts to make sure our members were safe and informed. Working with the Excelsior-Kings River Conservation District to put on two flood disaster relief workshops in the Kings county community. Hosting a membership appreciation night at the Rawhide baseball stadium. The largest Harvest Classic Golf tournament to date. Bringing back and selling out Annual Meeting. Taking over social media, E-News, Farm Life and our social media platforms. Being nominated and elected onto the Executive Board of the Tulare Kings Women in Ag chapter as their secretary, and soon transitioning into my fourth position here at Farm Bureau. I am honored to have started as an administrative assistant, then onto an executive

assistant, member outreach manager and soon a new role where I will shift into attending GSA meetings and diving into all things SGMA alongside Dusty.




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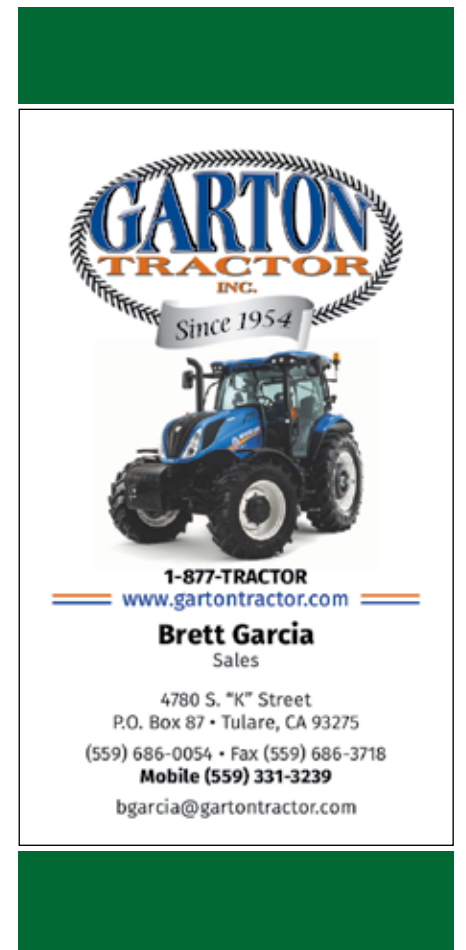


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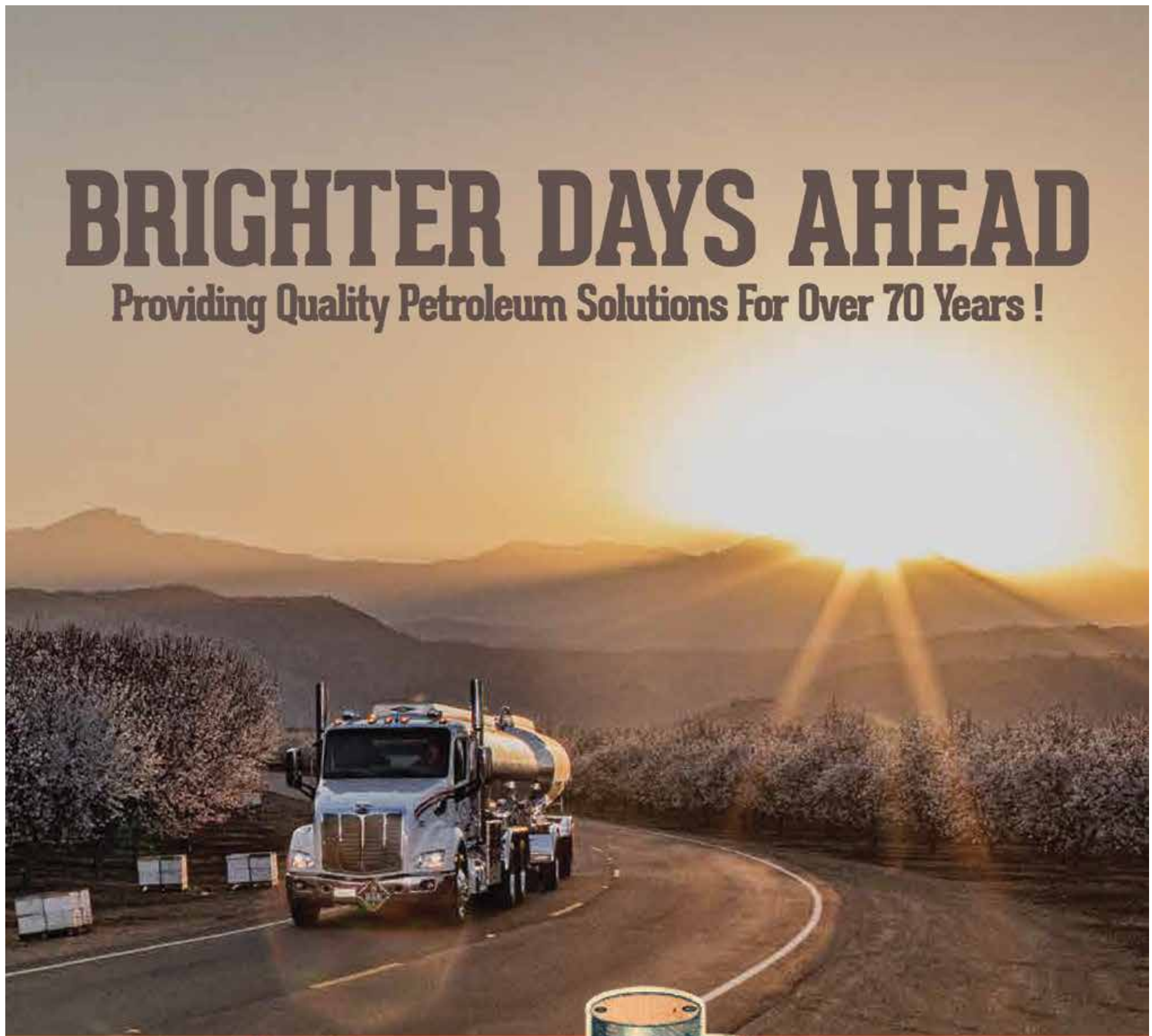
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Kings County Rural Crime Report

Contributed by Detective Dakotah Fausnett

The Kings County Sheriff's Office Rural Crime Task Force is currently conducting several investigations.

Throughout the month of November, the Kings County Rural Crimes Task Force has continued to stay busy investigating copper wire theft, fraud and theft of heavy equipment. We are currently investigating the theft of an \$80,000 John Deere tractor that occurred near the 9500 block of Niles. We have continuously worked this case and have investigated other similar tractors being sold online.

This past month, we have also seen a rise in copper wire thefts near the northeast and southeast end of the county. These types of cases are difficult to investigate because the theft is being carried out in the middle of the night or occurred sometime over the weekend. They are difficult to work due to the lack of evidence. With that being said, we continue to work any leads to bring the suspects into custody. We have implemented Reconyx cellular cameras to continuously monitor the theft sites. The task force has provided access to our dispatch for a faster response time to stop the thefts from occurring.

Detectives located a stolen trailer out of Fresno County which was returned to the victim. Detectives investigated a burglary to a "C" train and stole three Kubota's which were later recovered near the area of Avenue 380 and Road 58 in Tulare County. The suspects, Cody Bierman and Terry Simmons were interviewed and TCSO authored a search warrant for the search for the residence located at 5810 Avenue 376. While at the scene, we identified a vehicle that was used during a copper wire theft investigation. All subjects residing at that address were interviewed regarding the copper wire theft. We are continuing to work this investigation along with several other copper wire theft investigations. 🙌



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