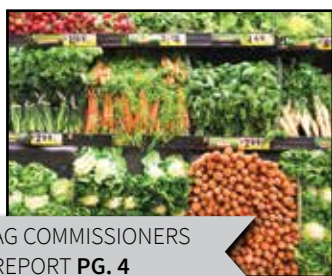


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Landowners encouraged to stay informed, give input at state hearing for Tulare Lake Subbasin *Farm Bureau, GSAs prepared to help answer questions*

By Lisa McEwen

Landowners in the Tulare Lake Subbasin are urged to stay abreast of anticipated changes in groundwater pumping and reporting procedures as a State Water Resources Control Board probationary hearing inches closer in December.

The Tulare Lake Subbasin, comprised of five Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) that cover 85 percent of Kings County, will be the first to face potential state intervention because of an inadequate Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP).

The subbasin's GSP was deemed insufficient in both 2022 and 2023 by the Department of Water Resources (DWR), which recommended state intervention under Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) regulations.

Oversight will now shift from DWR to the State Water Resources Control Board, which will conduct probationary hearings in Sacramento in person and online. A staff report on the Tulare Lake Subbasin GSP is expected to be released to the public in September that will detail



the case for probation. Landowners, farmers, the general public, tribes and other stakeholders are encouraged to prepare and submit comments based on the report during the public comment period before the hearing.

Probationary hearings are also set for the Tule Subbasin in Tulare County in January 2024, followed by Kaweah, Kern County, Delta-Mendota and Chowchilla, in that order, by October 2024. According to a June 21 press release from

State Water Resources Control Board, factors used to determine the sequence of hearings included the potential for urgent impacts to drinking water supplies, impacts to infrastructure from subsidence, the amount of overdraft in the basins and the degree of inadequacy in the plans submitted by the GSAs.

If a subbasin goes into probation, it is likely that state regulators will contact landowners and stakeholders directly rather than communicating through the GSAs, as has been the case since SGMA was enacted in 2014. The initial phase of probation would require the registration of all wells with the state and the collection of pumping data beginning soon after probation begins. Fees per well and for every acre-foot of groundwater pumped would be levied.

The second phase of probation would unfold approximately 12 months after probation starts with the State Water Resources Board implementing an interim plan that could set pumping limits to incentivize those in the subbasin to achieve the necessary changes needed



"Tulare Lake" continued on page 2

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The importance of Annual Meeting

By Dusty Ference, Executive Director



Dusty Ference

To celebrate its 105th year of service to Kings County agriculture, KCFB has brought back a social annual meeting. While members are invited every year to participate, provide feedback, and ask questions, the board recognizes the value of an annual meeting with more to offer. This year's committee has been

appointed and is working hard to organize a great event. 2023 has been a year for the record books.

Members choosing to attend will have a chance to hear from KCFB officers and the Executive Director on all the great work that has been done on their behalf. These meetings may seem unimportant or a formality, but they are imperative to membership organizations. Not only can attendees expect an update on the year's activities and meet the board's officers and directors. The gathering is a unique opportunity to interact with one another while sharing why you value being a member and letting us know what issues affect you most.

With an active and engaged membership, KCFB gains effectiveness. Spending time together is one of the best ways to engage and build trust. With trust and connection, our membership is capable of great things! We are excited to meet with a large group of members again and look forward to working for you for years to come.

This year's meeting includes a dinner, no-host bar, and live auction at the Carnegie Museum of Kings County on November 16, 2023. Seats are limited, and we encourage anyone wishing to attend to purchase their tickets early. Don't hesitate to contact the office for tickets or more information. If there is a topic you would like covered during the meeting, please let us know; this is a meeting of the members, and your input matters. 🍷

Membership Highlight: Athena Financial Group

Athena Financial Group was established in 2005 in Visalia. They opened their Hanford office in



2010 to serve the residents of Kings County. Robert Butts, Financial Advisor joined Susan Tackett, Financial Advisor as a business partner in 2017. Athena Financial also has a small office in Visalia for their Tulare County clients. Athena Financial has 2 advisors and 2 support staff. Between all of them, the Athena Financial staff has over 30 years of service in financial services.

Athena Financial specializes in personal financial planning and consulting as well as providing solutions in the 1031 market utilizing DST's. In addition to personal financial planning, Athena Financial provides



Left to right: Robert Butts- Financial Advisor, Susan Tackett- Financial Advisor, Karina Marquez- Insurance Processing Manager/ Administrative Assistant, Dianna Sherrill- Office Manager/ Administrative Assistant

"Member Highlight" continued on page 8

KINGS COUNTY FARM BUREAU 2023 ANNUAL MEETING

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Thursday, November 16, 2023

6:00 p.m. Carnegie Museum

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A pesticide container handling and labeling course presented by the Kings County Ag Commissioners Office in addition to the English and Spanish training sessions.

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@ KCFB office: 870 Greenfield Ave. Hanford
- **English: 9-10:30 a.m.**
- **Spanish: 1-2:30 p.m.**
- **Limited seating is available for this in-person training. Call the KCFB office at (559) 584-3557 or email kcfb@kcfb.org to register.**
- **For other California Farm Bureau programs and services visit cxfb.com**



“Tulare Lake” continued from page 1

for approval of the local GSP.

Local water managers and industry leaders stress that the goal is to avoid probation, if possible, or for probation to be temporary.

Kings County Farm Bureau executive director Dusty Ference said he anticipates the Tulare Lake Subbasin being placed in probation, and as such, is ready to help answer growers' questions.

“We are trying to soften the blow and let growers know this is real,” he said. “It is important that growers know that the State Water Resources Board will be reaching out to pumpers they have record of. It is also important that growers understand that we need to have a unified message about this. The GSAs aren't going anywhere and will continue to stay involved. Our ultimate goal is to maintain local control, and it may take a few years to get that back. We need them to stay with us and form that unified front.”

Dennis Mills wears two hats: he has worked as the general manager of the Mid-Kings River GSA since 2017, and has been manager of the Kings County Water District since 2014. He said 2023 has been a year of balancing two emergencies, first the winter flooding along rivers and creeks that brought Tulare Lake back to existence and then, as that situation slowly transitioned into managing a regular irrigation season, issues with the state board became a second local emergency.

Mills works closely with the managers of the other GSAs in the subbasin: South Fork Kings, El Rico, Tri-County Water Authority and Southwest Kings. All five GSAs adopted the same GSP, yet it was deemed inadequate twice.

“It will take several months to develop the needed GSP revisions and state board staff has conveyed that it will take them four to six months, after resubmittal, to review a revised GSP. Staff wanted to temper local expectation about GSP revisions prior to the hearing being sufficient to stave off the finding of probation,” Mills said. “With that understanding, probation seems like a pretty certain outcome of the hearing, though the local GSAs will continue to revise the GSP as quickly as possible.”

Mills said the Tulare Lake Subbasin GSAs asked the state to take into consideration the flooding emergency so many continue to deal with but learned that the board wanted to keep moving the process forward.

“Now we are challenged with continuing to deal with continued surface water delivery and groundwater recharge efforts in the aftermath of the flooding while also taking on the effort to provide a long-term transitional groundwater management plan so we can maintain local control,” Mills said.

He encourages farmers to come up with a coordinated message from the area, and to remember that the State Water Resources Board is made up of five individuals from various parts of California who understand their own area but



2022 financial documents are available at the KCFB office to members upon request.

may not be aware of the unique qualities of each subbasin.

“The Tulare Lake Subbasin is a really different place because of the lakebed,” Mills said. “It is the low spot in the Valley where several river systems come together. We're finding the way things are managed and the area's unique geology is a challenge with the state board. When you're from here, you understand that the lake is supposed to flood under certain big events. We do our best to avoid flooding but about one out of every 15 years, that normally dry lake floods. That's the system that has been in place since the 1950s. The local dams and flood channels are only big enough to protect against certain events, and when the runoff exceeds protection level, it has to go to the lowest spot in the Valley.”

Sharing the viewpoint of growers will be critical, he said.

“I encourage growers to participate in the probationary hearing and submit comments to the state board to the extent possible,” Mills said. “What we are understanding from the state board is that they will be looking for comments directly from landowners in the area.”

Ference said those in the agriculture industry will need patience, cooperation and clear communication during this next phase of groundwater sustainability planning.

“Like all things SGMA, we started out with a tremendous amount of gray area that has taken years to figure out,” he said. “This situation is no different. There will be more to come. We need growers to know that the water professionals in the subbasin are trying to get back local control, and it will be much easier to do if everyone cooperates. Farm Bureau will continue to watch this closely and work to keep members up to date.”

Both Ference and Mills encourage local residents to stay informed by regularly checking their GSA's websites, kcfb.org, as well as the dedicated Tulare Lake Subbasin page on the State Water Resources Control Board's website at https://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sgma/groundwater_basins/san_joaquin_valley_tulare_lake_subbasin.html 📄

Ag Commissioner's Compliance Report



Jimmy Hook,
Agricultural
Commissioner/Sealer

California's Organic Program

Contributed by Mario Gutierrez

California's agricultural landscape is known for its diverse array of crops and its undertaking to sustainable and organic farming practices. California's organic agricultural industry plays an important role in California's economy and the California Department of Food and Agriculture's (CDFA) organic program plays a pivotal role in upholding the integrity of organic agriculture. The County Agricultural Commissioner (CAC) acts as the enforcer of these standards and the two form a framework that ensures consumers can trust the authenticity of organic products and supports the growth of the organic industry.

California leads the nation in the number of organic farms, land in organic production, and organic sales accounting for 36 percent of organic sales in the U.S. Kings County accounted for 58,521.66 of the statewide 2,018,013.81 organic harvested acreage in 2021 and had 164 organic registrants. CDFA's State Organic Program (SOP) follows the United States Department of Agriculture's National Organic Program guidelines and enforce the Organic Food Production Act of 1990 and the California Organic Food and Farming Act. The SOP is a standardized system that sets forth guidelines for organic farming, production, and handling. These laws and regulations protect consumers, producers, handlers, processors, and retailers by establishing standards for agricultural products and foods that are labeled and/or sold as organic. Organic products must meet strict standards, which include prohibiting the use of synthetic pesticides, genetically modified organisms, and certain chemical fertilizers. The SOP maintains and builds consumer confidence in the organic industry by ensuring that the organic food supply chain is free of fraud, deception, and



mislabeling.

Farmers seeking organic certification undergo a thorough evaluation process, including on-site inspections and recordkeeping audits. To qualify the ground as organic the site must be free from conventional fertilizers and pesticides (insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, and rodenticides) applications for three years. Upon request, The CAC can provide you with a report of your last three years of pesticide use data. Most of the initial on-site and recordkeeping inspections for certification are conducted by accredited third-party certifying agents approved by the USDA and can be found on CDFA's website (cdfa.ca.gov). The SOP registers every person engaged in the state in the production and handling of raw organic agricultural products, processors and handlers of processed organic meat, poultry, dairy products, and retailers engaged in processing or handling of products sold as organic. Use of the term "Organic" when selling commodities is prohibited unless the requirements of the organic laws and regulations

"Ag Commissioner" continued on page 8



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AG NEWS IN BRIEF

VSV UPDATE

VSV update as of August 22nd 2023: there is one newly confirmed premises in Santa Barbara County. This is the third bovine premises that has been confirmed during this outbreak thus far. The VSV incident and situation in California remains active and ongoing, and continues to require vigilance throughout the state. Ongoing and active outreach to encourage prompt reporting of suspect lesions in horses and susceptible livestock and an **immediate stop movement** of any suspect animals will continue to assist with preventing virus spread by infected animals.

California has identified 193 affected premises (65 confirmed positive, 128 suspect) in 9 counties (Fresno, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, and Ventura Counties).

As VS is **highly contagious** among susceptible

species (primarily equids and cattle, but also camelids and small ruminants, and occasionally swine) as well as potentially **zoonotic**, we also want to ensure proper personal protective equipment and biosecurity measures are in place on your facilities. Please notify your CDFA district office immediately if you or your personnel identify animals with consistent lesions.

CARB TRUCK RULE

The California Air Resources Board (CARB) has posted Guidance on Upcoming Requirements in Clean Truck Check on CARB's webpages. These guidance documents provide further information on the expected start date of Clean Truck Check periodic compliance testing in 2024 and projected compliance deadlines for vehicles subject to semiannual (twice per year) testing. CARB will continue to release additional information and conduct

training sessions to support vehicle owners and other regulated entities with meeting their upcoming compliance requirements.

CAL AG PLATES

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) is accepting proposals for the 2023 California Agriculture Special Interest License Plate (CalAgPlate) grant program.

This program will provide an estimated \$250,000 in grant to promote agricultural education and leadership activities for students at the K-12, post-secondary, and adult-education levels, with the objectives of increased knowledge of agriculture and nutrition, the introduction of young people to potential careers in agriculture, and public engagement to enhance understanding of agriculture and food production.

Funding is available on a competitive basis for state-adopted Agricultural Education Programs (Education Code Section 52450-52454), government agencies, and non-profit organizations that administer agricultural education programs. The application deadline is Wednesday, September 20, 2023, at 5:00 p.m. PT. Prospective applicants are encouraged to visit the program website: www.cdfa.ca.gov/calagplate The CalAgPlate program has funded more than \$2.1million in youth educational activities since the program's inception. You can help support agricultural education by purchasing a special interest license plate at a local DMV office or online. 📄

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“Member Highlight” continued from page 2

solutions to farmers and ranchers when they are ready to sell their land. If they want to avoid capital gains taxes and not purchase rental or commercial property, Athena Financial can offer solutions in the 1031 space by utilizing a DST.

Athena Financial wants farmers and ranchers to know that there is a full-service financial planning firm here in Hanford that offers many of the same solutions and services found in the larger cities to the north and south. The Athena Financial Group Staff agrees that agriculture plays a huge role in Kings County; “it touches almost every aspect of life here and in the valley. Ag is important because farmers feed the world. And farming is not just farmers; it is the fuel and equipment suppliers, the fertilizer and pesticide people, as well as the myriad of people who maintain the farms, dairies, ranches and machinery that ultimately put the steak on our plate and the salad in our bowl” says Susan Tackett.

The Athena Financial staff are looking forward to getting to know more farmers and ranchers, networking with Farm Bureau members and listening to what people want in the personal financial planning arena. Susan Tackett, says she is looking forward to membership simply as a vote for the importance of agriculture here in Kings County and the greater San Joaquin Valley. Farming and ag has been a part of her family for generations. Susan also said, “Through membership and involvement, I am looking forward to being able to keep abreast of both the political and agricultural issues affecting farmers today.” Robert Butts, says he is new to Farm Bureau activities but is looking forward to learning more about Farm Bureau and getting involved. Agriculture has been in his family for generations as well. 🙌

“Ag Commissioner” continued from page 4

are followed.

Locally, the CAC is the link between the SOP, farmers, processors, and the consumers raising awareness about organic practices by provide education and outreach. The CACs are appointed responsibility for overseeing and enforcing the regulations related to organic production. A key function of the CAC staff in organic oversight includes on-site inspections of farms and processing facilities, ensuring that organic operations adhere to the required practices and standards. Agricultural commissioner staff review farm records, production methods, and handling procedures to ensure compliance with organic regulations. They investigate and take enforcement action in cases of potential violations or non-compliance, issuing warnings, fines and provide information used by the state to revoke certification. The one exception to the third-party certification is if your organic sales will be less than \$5,000 and your commodity will not be repacked or relabeled by a retail store. In these cases, the CAC fills the roll of the third-party certifier.

The Agricultural Commissioner’s role in the SOP is to provide guidance on the registration process and how to become certified. Through inspections the CAC staff ensure that organic products meet established standards, increasing consumer confidence in the organic label. This supports the growth of the organic market by fostering trust between producers and consumers.

For more information, please contact our office at (559) 852-2830. 🙌



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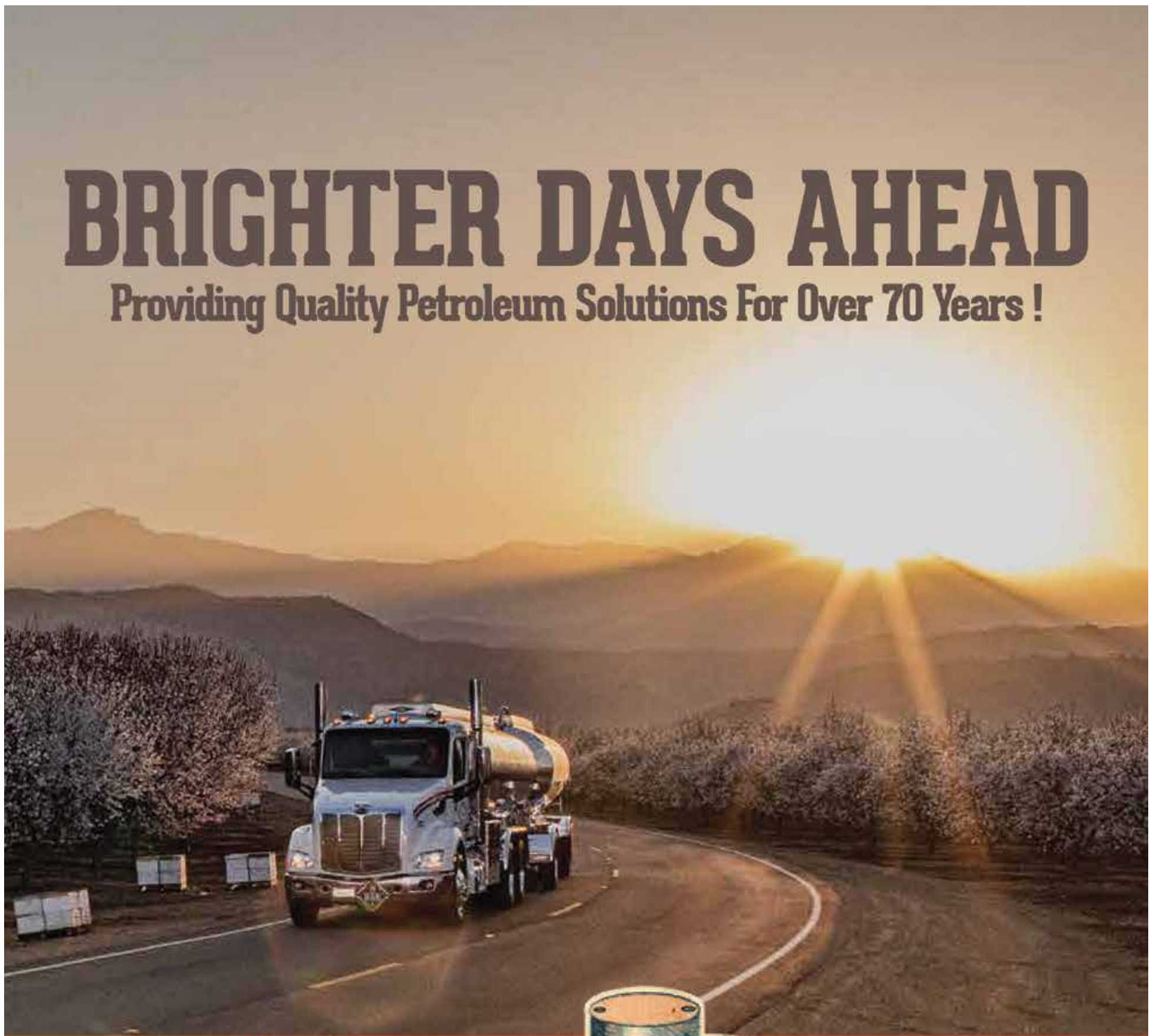
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Kings County Rural Crime Report

Contributed by Detective Dakotah Fausnett

The Kings County Sheriff's Office Rural Crime Task Force is currently conducting several investigations. August: Throughout the month of August, the Kings County Rural Crimes Task Force has continued to be busy in the southeast end of the county regarding copper, and ATV thefts. The Kings County Fire Department asked for our assistance regarding multiple arsons that were taking place near the Riverdale area. The ag unit set up two cellular game cameras to assist the Kings County Fire Department with monitoring the Kings River. Sometime over the weekend a subject was seen on camera, stealing both game cameras on Sunday, 08/03/23. We are conducting follow up and are close to identifying the individual who committed the theft.

During a theft investigation involving an ATV and UTV, we were able to recover the ATV and UTV. We identified the suspect as Mario Mora Ramirez out of the Coalinga area. As far as the other ATV thefts, we are continuing to monitor social media sites to recover the stolen equipment.

Copper theft is staying steady. We are continuing to work on wire thefts, which are difficult to investigate because often, the theft is being done in the middle of the night and they are typically discovered by a worker who has walked or driven over the scene, destroying any evidence such as shoe or tire impressions left by the suspects.

As always it is imperative that if anyone knows of or hears of any buying or selling obviously stolen equipment, to call the Sheriff's Office. We continue to investigate all Ag related thefts and encourage members to call and report all Ag related crimes. If we do not receive calls from our members and community, we may not be aware of certain crimes occurring in your area. 📞



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