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## Rural Crime Unit encourages farmers to protect property with SmartWater CSI

By Amy D. Fienen

It's been a year since Kings County Farm Bureau and the Kings County Sheriff's office first introduced SmartWater CSI to Kings County, and as ag-related thefts continue to increase, this revolutionary crime-fighting tool is needed now more than ever.

SmartWater CSI is an invisible, odorless liquid that remains on marked items for up to five years and can only be seen once illuminated with a special UV light. Each vial contains a one-of-a-kind forensic code similar to DNA. Each code is registered with the sheriff's department and the manufacturer for reference if a marked item requires identification.

Kings County Rural Crime Task Force Supervisor Rod Shulman said more than a dozen various pieces of farm equipment have been stolen from Kings and Tulare counties in just the first month of 2021. These thefts were the result of a crime ring that has been targeting area agribusinesses since last year. Of the property that has been recovered thus far, Shulman said most of it was located in Kings and Tulare counties, but some of the equipment was found as far south as Los Angeles County.

It's during the recovery process that SmartWater can be especially helpful, Shulman said. The stolen property his unit recovered in Los Angeles County had the vehicle identification numbers (VINs) ground off – a process routinely used by thieves that makes identifying the owner difficult as there's no way to track who the property is registered to. Because

*"SmartWaterCSI" continued on page 5*



A SmartWater sign warns potential thieves that these beehives are protected by SmartWater.

## Local agencies fight Kern County water grab attempt Public hearing to be held in April

By Amy D. Fienen



Kings County Farm Bureau is joining the efforts to protect our Kings River water supply for local communities. Kings River water rights are under attack by a Kern County agency that is trying to take water away from Kings River communities and move the supply to the south. Ultimately, this unprecedented water grab attempt would take much-needed water away from local residents and farmers.

The Semitropic Water Storage District is the agency responsible for challenging two of the six licenses that allow Kings River water to remain at its source. By exploiting a legal loophole, they are attempting to undo the Kings River's Fully Appropriated Streams designation in response to the drought that plagued that Valley in recent years. More than a million people in Kings, Tulare and Fresno counties would be adversely affected by the diversion of the local water

*"Kern County Water" continued on page 10*





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# Think twice before judging leadership decisions you disagree with

By Dusty Ference, Executive Director



Dusty Ference

Leadership is a constant topic of conversation and consideration, at least amongst those I am closest to. I recently realized that I while I often talk about leadership, I hadn't considered the essential qualities that leaders possess. After thinking about it for some time, I did what all of us do in 2021: I asked all-knowing Google. Without boring you with the definitions I read and the count-

less quotes on leadership that I found, I am ready to share more of my thoughts on the topic.

While thinking about those leaders I admire most, I noticed a common trait. They do what they believe is right in the face of adversity, no matter the consequence. Most of the time, that means making the hard decision even when they know ridicule is on the other side of that decision.

Today, it appears that people are unwilling to think about issues from more than one perspective, and too often, we expect our leader to act the way we think we would if we lived in their shoes. We fail and get upset by people's decisions by forgetting that leaders are selected to do a difficult job on behalf of many, not each of us individually. More importantly, leaders are put in situations to represent a group and are privy to more information than the general population. These are essential details to remember be-

cause they are the reasons constituent groups select leaders in the first place.

As constituents of elected officials, reacting to our leaders' decisions is expected and encouraged. Methodology, however, must be considered. In the past, a person would have to take time to write a letter or find a phone number and make a call to express their displeasure. But today, anyone can reach in their pocket, grab their cell phone and comment on any issue around the world in moments without taking time to fully consider the situation. Too often, we fail to take the necessary time to consider what we may not know about a situation, or what additional information is needed in order to reach a more educated conclusion. Leaders make hard choices based on what they think will be best for the many despite the reactions of the few, and thanks to them, we don't have to wrestle with those decisions.

Next time a leader you believe in makes a decision you disagree with at face value, take a minute and ask yourself a tough question: Do you know all the reasons behind the decision he or she made? Are you looking at both sides of the issue, or basing your conclusion on your own set of facts? And here's a wild idea: Ask the person who made the decision to share the considerations that led to their decision. Chances are you will see the situation in a whole new light. 🙌



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## New contact info for Congressman Valadao's local office

Newly elected Congressman David Valado has provided KCFB with the contact information for his new office in Hanford and asked us to share it with

our members. Congressman Valadao and his staff and looking forward to looking closely with their local constituents.



Weston Anderson, District Director  
(559) 231-6796  
weston.anderson@mail.house.gov

Clayton Smith, District Rep., Tulare/Kings  
(559) 231-4416  
clayton.smith@mail.house.gov



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# JP Honey Farms

By Amy D. Fienen

Bees are no doubt some of the hardest workers in the ag industry, as pollination is crucial to the Valley's food supply. Friend of Farm Bureau JP Honey Farms provides pollination services to Kings, Tulare, Fresno and Madera counties.



The four Patino children help their dad, Jose, tend the bees at JP Honey Farms. Contributed photo

Riverdale-based JP Honey Farms is home to 12,000 honey bee colonies. This is the season when they're preparing for their biggest job of the year: almond pollination. Almond bloom typically starts in February, and bees play an essential role in the production of almonds – Kings County's third largest commodity in 2019. Additionally, JP Honey Farms pollinates alfalfa seed, melons, blueberries, cherries and avocados. Throughout the Valley's growing season, bee colonies are leased out to area farmers to pollinate their fields – a process crucial to any crop's survival.

Jessica Patino, who runs JP Honey Farms with her husband, Jose, said that one of the most helpful things an almond farmer can do to help the bees be productive is to plant a cover crop of clover or mustard mix. Without a cover crop, the colony can quickly reduce in size, she said.

During the winter months, JP Honey Farm's bees are kept in Ventura County due to a lack of pollen and nectar-producing flowers in the Valley. From April through August, they focus on honey production. The Patinos have four children under the age of 10, and the family and their bees spends summers in North Dakota – the state with the highest honey production in the country. Most of their honey is sold there, but they do bring some back to California where it's sold at Riverdale Farm & Home Center, or by appointment at their shop.

For JP Honey Farms, which was founded in 2006, pollination is their main focus, but both aspects of the bee-keeping business are currently fraught with challenges. "This is a tough industry," Patino said. "You really have to love what you do."

On the pollination side of the business, bee-keeping is under scrutiny as a result of the misconception that bees are exploited and mistreated, Patino said. She said that in spite of the industry's sustainability efforts, commercial beekeeping is being blamed on the decline of bee populations. Additionally, drought conditions have led to a lack of forage for bees to feed on, and that leads to colony collapse disorder, where bees suddenly disappear.

When it comes to honey production, Patino said that thanks to foreign honey inundating the market, prices are at an all-time low per pound. There is zero demand for American honey from major retailers like Costco and Wal-Mart, she said, which is doing a major disservice to domestic growers.

"We need help from legislators and big merchants to put American agriculture first," Patino said. "So much of our country relies on the farming industry, and the bees are needed for crops to grow."

For growers looking for a beekeeper to work with, Patino said the vetting process is important. Bee theft is rampant, and when thieves steal hives, lease out the bees and then abandon them after getting paid, a grower can end up with unhealthy bees. This can result in a grower having to hire another beekeeper to finish the job.

Growers can eliminate this risk by asking where a beekeeper is from, how long they've been in business, and who their other clients are.

As far as what growers get when they hire JP Honey Farms, Patino said they offer a competitive price point, provide great colonies, and value establishing long-term relationships with their clients. Many beekeepers come to the Valley from out of state, but JP Honey Farms provides the benefits of local service. During their 15 years in business, they have never lost a client, and most of their new business is the result of referrals from satisfied customers.

"We really care for our customers and try to foster good relationships with them," Patino said.

JP Honey Farms can be reached at (559) 285-1739, or email [jzpatino@gmail.com](mailto:jzpatino@gmail.com).

The "Member to Member" feature is our way of promoting the members that help make our work possible through their financial support. Please consider doing business with companies who show their commitment to the local ag industry through their support of Farm Bureau. 🐝



## Ag Commissioner's Compliance Report



Jimmy Hook,  
Agricultural  
Commissioner/Sealer

## Identifying and documenting alternative mitigation measures

Contributed by Mario Gutierrez, Deputy Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer

When you visit the county agricultural commissioner (CAC) to apply for a restricted material permit (RMP), our office makes you aware of new or proposed changes by the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (CDPR) that may affect your operation. CDPR, the state agency California law designates to put controls on pesticides, including those designated as restricted materials, has recently enacted regulations addressing pesticide use near schools. They cancelled pesticide registrations after designating products as toxic air contaminants and made changes or further restrictions on labeling for the use of others, such as those recently implemented for products containing Paraquat. You now must complete a statement describing the feasible alternatives you considered before applying for the RMP.

While we have always considered alternatives in the use of restricted materials, there has been direction that these alternative considerations will need to be documented. These alternatives, which you may already be considering and implementing, are satisfying a requirement in regulation. The considering of alternatives to restricted materials during the permit process fulfills one of the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act. Title 3 of the California Code of Regulations, section 6426 requires a permit applicant (grower) and their pest control advisor to consider feasible alternatives to the use of restricted materials before applying for a restrict-

ed material permit with the CAC. This section provides:

*6426(a) Each licensed agricultural pest control advisor and grower, when determining if and when to use a pesticide that requires a permit, shall consider, and if feasible, adopt any reasonable, effective and practical mitigation measure or use any feasible alternative which would substantially lessen any significant adverse impact on the environment.*

If you have had a weeding crew or have plowed a field for weed control, you considered and implemented a feasible alternative measure. If you have trapped rodents, used mating disruptors or pheromones, practice field sanitation or other habitat modifications you considered and implemented a feasible alternative measure. The use of predators for rodents, beneficial insects and reduced risk chemicals including, but not limited to, non-restricted pesticide products, certified organic or FIFRA section 25(b) exempt/minimum risk pesticide products would be considering feasible alternative measures.

When a grower applying for a restricted materials permit supplies a map for review identifying the sensitive surrounding areas that could be harmed by pesticide applications to their fields, we evaluate the impact or potential hazards associated with the use of the restricted materials listed on the permit. This evaluation is an abbreviated environmental review. When a notice of intent submitted by the grower to the CAC for a time and site-specific pesticide application of a restricted

material, the CAC decides if substantial harm is likely from the application. The CAC can require the grower evaluate and consider alternative mitigation measures before the use of a restricted material, impose extra controls designed to reduce the risk of harm to people or the environment, or deny the application. Completing the alternatives statement during issuance of the RMP documents the grower's mitigation measures for our office to verify.

Completing the statement has spurred further discussion in the use of alternative materials, such as certified organic or FIFRA 25(b) exempt/minimum risk pesticides. A product's organic certification does not mean it is legal to use on all crops to control any pest. If a certified organic material is a registered pesticide, the product's labeling will specify the allowed uses. The materials exempt from tolerance and FIFRA section 25(b) exempt/minimum risk pesticides comprise of products with active

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## Behavioral Threat Assessment: Preventing the Active Shooter

Wednesday, April 14, 2021, 8am - 5pm

Kings County Farm Bureau, 870 Greenfield Ave., Hanford

**COURSE DESCRIPTION:** This course is designed to teach an evidence and research based behavioral threat assessment methodology to equip law enforcement and security stakeholders with the skills and tools necessary to identify potentially violent individuals, assess the risks they pose of engaging in targeted violence, proactively manage the risk, and prevent violent attacks that include active shooter and mass casualty events.

**COURSE OBJECTIVES:**

- Fundamentals of behavioral threat assessment;
- Threat identification, including warning behaviors which potentially indicate a subject is on the pathway to violence to carry out a targeted violent attack; and
- Application of behavioral threat assessment techniques in a variety of contexts and environments, including, but not limited to, the workplace, schools, places of worship, public spaces, and other potentially vulnerable areas in the community.

**REGISTRATION:** There is no registration fee. Travel/per diem expenses are the responsibility of the attendee. Register online at [www.sacrta.org](http://www.sacrta.org). Use the "Training" link and select "Community Calendar" to access the registration link. For assistance, contact the CCIC/SACRTAC Training Manager at [training@sacrta.org](mailto:training@sacrta.org)

**CERTIFICATE:** This course is POST certified under plan N/A, 1279-22316-20-009. STC# 10322-82703. CCIC/SACRTAC will supply a certificate of completion at the end of the course. This course is eligible for 8 EMS (EMT's & Paramedics) Continuing Education Units (CEU's) at no charge. CEUs are also available for RNs, LVNs and CNAs.

**IDENTIFICATION REQUIRED AT CHECK-IN**

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## KCFB 2021 scholarship applications being accepted

Kings County Farm Bureau offers scholarships to students based upon academic achievement, extra-curricular activities, determination, leadership skills, and a commitment to a career in agriculture.

**Deadline: March 9, 2021**

Scholarship application can be downloaded from KCFB website: [www.kcfb.org](http://www.kcfb.org).

For more information: (559) 584-3557



*"SmartWater CSI" continued from page 1*

SmartWater CSI is imperceptible to criminals and therefore can't be removed, the technology makes it easier for law enforcement to return recovered property to its owner.

The sheriff's department is currently in possession of two recovered trailers without identified owners.

"If these trailers had SmartWater on them, we could have tested them and returned them to their owners," Shulman said. "It's a tool that would have helped us identify who the stolen property belongs to."

SmartWater CSI's Randy Butschillinger said that while the invisible liquid can be used to mark farm equipment, it can also be used on all types of personal property. While large pieces of farm equipment require about an inch of solution, a dab is all that's needed for smaller possessions. As many pieces of farm equipment don't contain VINS or serial numbers, that dab of liquid can be the difference between having an expensive piece of equipment returned or never seeing it again.

"If more farmers committed to using this technology, it would make the jobs of law enforcement easier," Shulman said. "It's definitely a worthwhile investment for farmers."

Jessica Patino with JP Honey Farms said SmartWater CSI has been an investment worth making for her family's beekeeping business because as pollination prices have increased, so have bee thefts. Their bee hives are often stored in isolated areas on a farmer's land or in bee yards where they can be easy targets for thieves. A couple years ago, they lost two truckloads of bees to theft. When the bee thief was apprehended a few months later, Patino had no way of determining whether JP Honey Farm's property was among what law enforcement recovered as all the company brands had been sanded off or painted over.

"Without a tool like SmartWater, it's difficult to find stolen equipment and prove it's yours," Patino said. "Having it on our hives makes me feel secure, and I think it does deter people from taking things that aren't theirs."

The deterrent she refers to is the SmartWater CSI signage that users are encouraged to display. The starter kit KCFB offers comes with signs and stickers to warn potential thieves that the solution is being used on that property.

KCFB Executive Director Dusty Ference said that as a growing rural crime problem leads to significant property loss for area farmers, SmartWater CSI offers a proactive, affordable solution for Farm Bureau members.

"The initial SmartWater investment far outweighs the cost of the potential loss of thousands of dollars in stolen equipment costs," he said. "We're proud to offer this product to our members as part of our commitment to protecting their right to farm."

SmartWater CSI starter kits are available only to Kings County Farm Bureau members. The \$300 kit includes the marking solution, property signs and stickers. It can be purchased at the Farm Bureau office. 🐝



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# Kings County Rural Crime Report

## Suspect in custody in farm equipment theft investigation

Contributed by Task Force Supervisor Rod Shulman

The Kings County Rural Crime Task Force had some changes in personnel this month. Detective Ben Moore was promoted, so taking his place in the unit is Detective Colten Verhoeven. He has hit the ground running and is already the lead on two new investigations.

January was busy as our unit completed a two-month long farm equipment theft investigation. The suspect in this investigation is currently in custody after he was arrested twice and released. He was responsible for more than 24 theft investigations conducted by our unit, and was also wanted by the Tulare County Sheriff's Office for seven theft investigations. We arrested the suspect a third time and were able to recover all of the Tulare County Sheriff's Office stolen equipment. We also were able to recover several items of stolen equipment, including seven tractors, eight trailers and two UTVs. This investigation was successful thanks to the assistance of Tulare County Sheriff's Office Ag Crime Unit and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office. Most of the equipment was located in Kings and Tulare counties. Several other stolen equipment items were also located by our unit in the Los Angeles County area. The suspect in all of these investigations is currently in custody going through the court process.

While all of the stolen equipment was not recovered, we continue to follow leads and hope to recover more stolen property in the near future. I would like to acknowledge the detectives in our unit for the excellent job they have done on these investigations, and additionally would like to thank the Tulare County Sheriff's Office and Los Angeles County Sheriff's Office for their assistance.

When we weren't working on these investigations, we were conducting follow-up investigations on several burglary cases. These investigations involve suspects breaking into shops and Conex boxes. There have been over four shop burglaries and six cases where suspects have broken into Conex boxes. Items stolen include power tools, generators, copper wire and a GPS system. We have some investigative leads and hope to have a suspect identified soon.

Please give any of our detectives a call if you see anything that appears



**Task Force Supervisor  
Rod Shulman:**  
559-469-4004

**Detective Carlos Santos:**  
559-904-6893

**Detective Kody Holt:**  
559-362-8928

**Detective  
Colten Verhoeven:**  
559-469-6146


suspicious. I also want to remind you about the owner applied number (OAN) and SmartWater CSI. If either one of these identifiers had been on some of the equipment we recovered, it would have made it much easier to identify the owners. If you need an OAN, give any of our detectives a call. If you want more information about SmartWater CSI, give Dusty a call at the Kings County Farm Bureau. Thanks again for your continued support. 🙌

*"Mitigation Measures" continued from page 4*

ingredients such as cedar wood oil, garlic oil, lemongrass oil and rosemary oil. A user of these products still needs to make sure these materials are legal for use and do not contain prohibited inert ingredients.


We know some of the CDPR requirements create additional work; your efforts in the RMP application process is not new, but the documentation of those efforts is. This process provides the CAC with the opportunity to discuss the use restrictions with the property operator or pest control business well in advance of the actual application. Kings County will consider the information you provide in its review of your permit application and in the consideration of feasible alternatives and mitigation measures, per Title 3, CCR section 6432.

Should you have any questions, please contact the Kings County Agricultural Commissioner/Sealer's office at 559-582-2830. 🙌



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“Kern County Water” continued from page 1

supply. The Kings River floodwater is crucial for local groundwater sustainability agencies to accomplish groundwater recharge projects required to meet SGMA mandates.

Kings River Watermaster Steven Haugen manages the Kings River Water Association (KRWA). He describes Semitropic’s proposal as an old-fashioned water grab that would be devastating to dozens of cities relying on Kings River water.

“What this Kern County agency is attempting to do is gain a right to take huge amounts of Kings River water from future flood runoff and physically move it south from its place of origin and place of use within the Kings River service area’s 1.1 million acres,” Haugen said. “Dozens of rural areas that would be harmed by Semitropic are disadvantaged. Their residents are already experiencing groundwater quantity and quality issues ranging from significant to severe.”

Haugen explained it was long ago when the state declared the Kings River’s natural runoff to be spoken for. But now, KRWA and its 28 member units are

having to fight Semitropic, who wants the water to benefit Kern County farmers and other agencies, including some in Southern California, that use Semitropic’s extensive water banking facilities west of Wasco.

KCFB Executive Director Dusty Ference explained that Semitropic is completely ignoring the necessity of the full yield of Kings River waters to the sustainability of the Kings, Tulare and Fresno county ag industries.

“In addition to negatively impacting the regional economy of 93 of the region’s disadvantaged communities, Semitropic’s proposal would forever preclude the ability of this watershed to achieve groundwater sustainability or SGMA compliance,” Ference said. “We cannot allow our essential surface water supply to be stolen by an agency that has no rights to it.”

The State Water Resources Control Board will conduct a public hearing on the matter via Zoom beginning on April 15 from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. The hearing will continue as needed on April 16 and from

April 19-22. Per the hearing notice, the agency will consider whether or not it should:

- revoke two of KRWA’s six existing licenses for use of Kings River water;
- issue a cease and desist order against KRWA or any of its member units for “the unauthorized diversion, or threat of unauthorized diversion, of water as alleged in the Semitropic complaint;”
- revise or revoke a declaration, made long ago by the State Board, that the Kings River is a “fully-appropriated stream” and that the state’s Division of Water Rights should be authorized “to accept applications to appropriate water from the Kings River system.”

The website containing information about the hearing is [waterboards.ca.gov/water\\_issues/programs/administrative\\_hearings\\_office/kings\\_river.html](http://waterboards.ca.gov/water_issues/programs/administrative_hearings_office/kings_river.html).

More information about efforts by local agencies to fight Semitropic can be found at [savekingsriverwater.org](http://savekingsriverwater.org). 🙌

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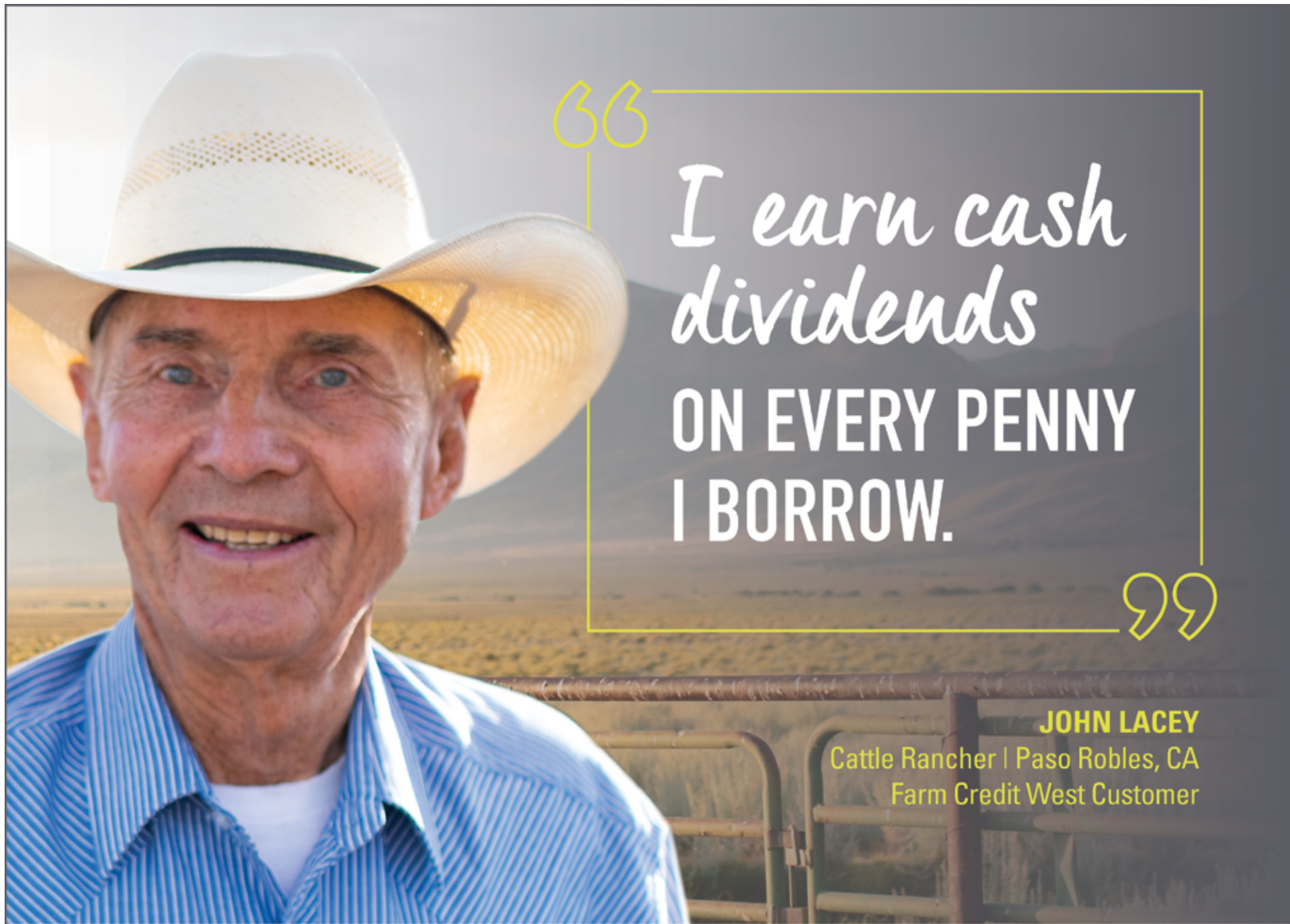
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