



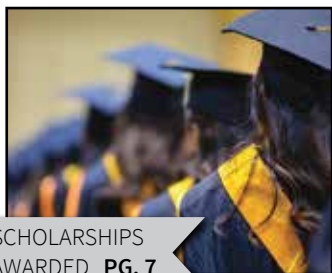
## INSIDE



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SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED **PG. 7**

## YF&R Committee elects new leadership team

By Dusty Ference, Executive Director

Kings County Farm Bureau's new YF&R committee held their first organizational meeting last month. During their April 19 meeting, the committee set goals and elected a leadership team. In their first year, the group plans to host at least one fundraiser, with plans to sponsor committee members' attendance at the 2022 CAFB Young Farmers and Ranchers Leadership Conference, plan activities with neighboring county YF&R committees, and have enough money to award a scholarship in 2023.

The committee elected an excited leadership team comprised of Chairperson Nathan Hawkins, Vice Chair Aaron Avila, and Secretary/Treasurer Bridget Dias. Nicole Wurzel volunteered to help manage the group's Facebook page and explore creating accounts on other social media platforms.

The next YF&R meeting, scheduled for Tuesday, May 10 at 6:30 p.m., will be held at KCFB's office, 870 Greenfield Ave. in Hanford. If you would like to receive meeting notices, please contact the office at [kcfb@kcfb.org](mailto:kcfb@kcfb.org) and follow YF&R on Facebook @kingsYFR. 🐾



Members of KCFB's new YF&R committee at their April meeting. Pictured from left around the table: Christian Dutra, Nicole Wurzel, Nathan Hawkins, Christian Low, Jon Garcia, Bridget Dias, Cody Wurzel, and Aaron Avila.

## Executive order makes ag well drilling more difficult

By Amy D. Fienen

With the Valley's rainy season officially behind us and the certainty of a drought year looming large, the ag industry is once again being targeted by state lawmakers. At the end of March, Gov. Newsom passed an executive order that makes ag well drilling more difficult for California farmers.

Under the order, farmers must obtain approval from their local GSA (groundwater sustainability agency) in order to drill a new well. A county, city or public agency may no longer approve permits for new groundwater wells or alterations to existing wells in basins subject to SGMA and classified as medium-or high-priority without written verification from their GSA. Every sub-basin in the Valley meets the medium- or high-priority classification.

GSAs will now have to determine that new wells or changes to existing wells are consistent with SGMA regulations in that the proposed well won't interfere with existing nearby wells or cause subsidence that would impact nearby infrastructure.

Here in Kings County, the Community Development Agency worked quickly to develop a plan to comply.

"There are additional steps in place now because of the governor's executive order," said Chuck Kinney, director of the Kings County Community Development Agency. "We're trying to make it as easy as possible, but growers are going to have to attest to being in compliance with SGMA."

Now, landowners applying for a new well or alterations to an



"Ag Well Drilling" continued on page 7

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## Member to Member *People, Products, Prosperity*

### Farm Credit West By Amy D. Fienen



Employees of the Hanford branch of Farm Credit West. Contributed photo

Since its founding 105 years ago, Farm Credit West, a platinum-level Friend of Farm Bureau, has grown to one of the leading agricultural lenders in California and Arizona. A member-owned cooperative, Farm Credit West has 14 offices providing financial services to farmers, ranchers and agribusinesses, with one of their four Valley offices located in Hanford.

Ryan Dooley has worked at the Hanford branch of Farm Credit West since 2001, and has been the branch manager since 2009. His team specializes in operating financing, equipment needs, real estate financing and dairy financing.

Dooley said when Farm Credit West was founded in 1917, there was a growing need for ag lending to help farmers and rural communities weather the financial ups and downs of the industry. He credits their longevity to a number of factors.

Aside from offering competitive rates, Farm Credit West's members share in the cooperative's financial success with year-end patronage dividends, helping reduce borrowing costs. Dooley said last year's patronage paid a 1.25 percent return. The patronage program has distributed more than a billion dollars to customers since its inception in 2002.

"We offer a good value in terms of rate products," he said.

The staff at the Hanford Farm Credit West branch is knowledgeable, committed and has a personal understanding of each customer's unique situation, Dooley said. Through working with one of their four lenders, each with a strong understanding of the ag industry, relationships are established. Dooley said he has a great deal of local control when it comes

to decision making and approvals, allowing things to move forward in a timely and efficient manner.

As a community-minded company, Farm Credit West contributes to more than 60 organizations annually. Locally, they are a big supporter of Kings County Farm Bureau and local 4-H and FFA chapters. Their employees volunteer at the Kings Fair, EAT Foundation classes and other events.

Dooley said supporting ag education is one of the company's priorities, as the next generation is crucial to ensuring the ag industry survives. Because Farm Bureau focuses heavily on ag education, Dooley said Farm Credit West is committed to helping their cause. Additionally, Farm Bureau has one of the strongest voices when it comes to advocating for an industry facing a number of challenges.

"There are fewer and fewer voices speaking out for the ag industry as we face a decline in the number of farms and operating dairies," Dooley said. "But Farm Bureau still has a big platform to communicate what's important to the industry."

The Hanford branch of Farm Credit West is located at 1111 W. Lacey Blvd. and can be reached at (559) 584-2681, or learn more on their website, [farmcredit-west.com](http://farmcredit-west.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.* 🌾

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# Coffee with Friends of Farm Bureau Renewable Solar shares challenges facing the solar industry

By Amy D. Fienen

A new Kings County Farm Bureau program was introduced last month. Coffee with Friends of Farm Bureau is a way for KCFB staff to connect one-on-one with the companies whose generous financial support allows us to continue advocating for our members.

“We started Coffee with Friends of Farm Bureau to better understand the needs of our members and to help determine ways KCFB can be of service,” said KCFB Executive Director Dusty Ference.

Our first Coffee with Friends of Farm Bureau took place at the offices of Renewable Solar, where we sat down with President Dusty Howze and Marketing Director Ronn Christensen. Based in Hanford, Renewable Solar is a leader in the full-service development, construction, integration, installation and maintenance of solar electric systems.

Howze and Christensen shared that the solar industry is currently facing some serious challenges. Renewable Solar is amongst the many companies struggling with supply chain issues. Christensen said their shipping costs have spiked dramatically, from \$3,000 per container to \$15,000 per container.

As much as 80 percent of solar panels are imported to the U.S. from Asia. When President Biden extended tariffs on imported solar panels in February to protect domestic manufacturing, it added a 14 to 15 percent tax over the next four years, raising their



Left to right: Renewable Solar Marketing Director Ronn Christensen and President Dusty Howze, and KCFB Director of Government and Member Relations Paula Vinzant and Executive Director Dusty Ference meet for the first Coffee with Friends of Farm Bureau.

cost in the U.S.

Also concerning is a Commerce Department investigation into whether imports of solar panels from Southeast Asia are circumventing anti-dumping rules that limit imports from China. The investigation could result in

*continued on page 5*

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## Ag Commissioner's Compliance Report



Jimmy Hook,  
Agricultural  
Commissioner/Sealer

## New regulations for decontamination facilities coming this year

Contributed by Janet Eckles, Deputy Ag Commissioner

Title 3 California Code of Regulations (3CCR) 6734 is being changed by the California Department of Pesticide Regulation in 2022 to better align with current OSHA requirements, protect worker health, adhere to national standard for eyewash, and to expand to support production agriculture and “other” use requirements.

Regulations currently require that a decontamination site for employees handling pesticides for “other” uses than the commercial or research production of an agricultural plant commodity shall be within 100 feet of the mix/load site when handling WARNING or DANGER signal word products only. For employees handling pesticides used in the commercial or research production of an agricultural commodity, the decontamination site must be at the mix/load site and not more than ¼ mile from other handlers, no matter what the signal word is for the product used. Regulations also state that employees must have immediate access to at least one system capable of delivering gently running water at a rate of at least 0.4 gallons per minute for at least 15 minutes, or at least six gallons of water in containers suitable for providing a gentle eye-flush for about 15 minutes for emergency eye-flushing, if the product labeling requires protective eyewear or a closed mixing system is used.

Eyewash stations at decontamination facilities are not currently required to be American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Z358.1 compliant. Some eyewash stations have been constructed by the growers and/or applicators to meet current requirements. Most were not designed to be hands free and are only required for production agriculture use. Eyewash fluid does not currently have a specific temperature that has to be maintained either.

The proposed changes are similar to the current regulation with key differences. These changes apply to both the eyewash stations by themselves and the decontamination facility as a whole. Eyewash stations at decontamination facilities will be required to be ANSI Z358.1 compliant. This will guarantee that all of the eyewash stations are hands-free, capable of delivering gently running water at a rate of at least 0.4 gallons per minute for at least 15 minutes, and maintain a temperature of between 60 and 100 degrees Fahrenheit. ANSI Z358.1 eyewash stations will also be required for any product label-



This eyewash station is not ANSI Z358.1 certified.

ing requiring employees to wear protective eyewear while mixing or loading, or if employees are using a closed system.

There are two different types of eyewash stations that are acceptable by the ANSI Z358.1 standard: self-contained, gravity-fed portable eyewashes and plumbed eyewashes.

Portable eyewash stations have their own flushing fluid and are plumbed to connect to a potable water source. These eyewash stations have covers attached to the spray heads to minimize airborne contaminants, are positioned between 33 and 53 inches from the floor and at least 6 inches from the nearest obstruction, washes both eyes simultaneously, is hands free, and should all be activated or checked weekly and be inspected for compliance annually.

A decontamination site for both commercial or research production of an agricultural commodity and for “other” uses will be required for any materials and is not dependent on product labeling. It will be required to be located at the mix and load site for both employees handling pesticides for commercial research production of an agricultural plant commodity and for “other” uses. These “other” uses include roadside applications, structural applications and structural fumigations.

Sufficient water for routine washing and for washing of the entire body in case of emergency decontamination will also be required at the mix and load site. This water shall be of quality and temperature (between 60 and 100 degrees Fahrenheit) that will not cause illness or injury when it contacts the skin or eyes or if it is swallowed, and shall be stored separately from water used for mixing with pesticides unless the tank holding water for mixing with pesticides is equipped with appropriate valves to prevent back flow of pesticides into the water.

These proposed changes will require employers to educate their employees on how to use the new eyewash stations and where the decontamination facility will be located before applications begin. There is no set date in 2022 as to when these proposed changes will take effect, but a grace period to allow for compliance is expected. Our office will gladly provide assistance in helping growers and business become compliant. If you have questions, call the Kings County Agricultural Commissioner's office at (559) 852-2830. 📞

### Renewable Solar (continued from page 4)

retroactive tariffs going back to last year. Christensen said that suppliers won't sell to customers in the U.S. unless they assume the risk of the tariff. The California Solar & Storage Association (CALSSA) estimates the impacts of the potential tariff could be 50 to 250 percent. At 150 percent, the upfront cost increase is \$5,000 for residential solar and \$210,000 for medium commercial.

“We're developing a plan to move forward and we think we can acquire the panels we need, but it's been a real mental marathon,” Christensen said. “We're in a good position to weather this storm because the owners have been good stewards of the business, but it's painful.”

The solar industry is also facing the possibility of net-metering changes that would make solar much less affordable. Christensen said the current ag business payback time for solar is three to five years. Under the proposed NEM (net energy metering) 3.0, the payback time would increase to 15 years. For residential solar projects, the payback period is estimated to increase from five to six years under the current metering structure to 14 to 15 years.

Should NEM 3.0 pass, California's residential solar market could be cut in half by 2024 because solar would no longer make economic sense for many homeowners.

“It would take customers three times longer to pay back their solar investment under NEM 3.0,” Christensen said. “It's simply a money grab by the power companies because they have to figure out a way to stay in business.”

The California Utilities Commission's decision on NEM 3.0 was delayed earlier this year, and Christensen expects it will be an issue that receives attention in the election later this year. In the meantime, the solar industry is continuing to lobby against it. 🗣️



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*This work is supported by Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN) (grant no. 2021-70035-35573) from the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture.*

## KCFB awards four scholarships to graduating seniors

As part of their ongoing commitment to supporting agriculture education and investing in the industry's future leaders, Kings County Farm Bureau awards scholarships to graduating high school seniors each year. Since the scholarship program's implementation in 2007, KCFB has awarded over \$100,000 to more than 1,000 students. This year, four outstanding students are receiving scholarships of \$1,000 each.



Scholarships are awarded to qualified students who plan to further their education at a two- or four-year accredited college, university or vocational institute and pursue a career in agriculture. The recipients are selected based on academic achievement, extracurricular activities, determination, leadership skills and a commitment to a career in agriculture.

### Congratulations to the 2021-22 Kings County Farm Bureau scholarship recipients.

*Jordon Coelho*, son of Manuel and Christine Coelho, is graduating from Lemoore High School. He plans to attend Fresno State and major in agribusiness in preparation for a career as a pest control advisor.

*Colten Palomino*, son of Michael and Nancy Palomino, is graduating from Kingsburg High School. He plans to study mechanized agriculture at Reedley College in preparation for a career as an ag mechanic.

*Ericka Simas*, daughter of Rick and Jennifer Simas, is graduating from Lemoore High School. To prepare for a career in ag marketing and communications, she will be majoring in ag business with a minor in communication at West Hills College Lemoore.

*Shyanna Ward*, daughter of Eric and Heather Ward, is graduating from Immanuel Schools. She has applied to Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo where she plans to major in experience industry management and minor in agribusiness in preparation for a career in event planning for the ag industry. 🌾

*"Ag Well Drilling" continued from page 1*

existing well must submit a notarized self-attestation form to the Community Development Agency as part of the application process. Landowners will have to attest, in part, that the proposed well:

- is not inconsistent with any sustainable groundwater management program currently established in any applicable Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) adopted by the appropriate groundwater sustainability agency (GSA);
- will not decrease the likelihood of achieving a sustainability goal for the basin covered by such GSP;
- is not likely to interfere with the production and functioning of existing nearby wells;
- is not likely to cause subsidence that would adversely impact or damage nearby infrastructure.

Additionally, landowners must submit project approval from the appropriate GSA in writing before the permit application is reviewed by the county. It is the landowner's responsibility to provide whatever exhibits are necessary to their GSA to prove their well project is SGMA compliant.

Kinney said that only once the landowner has submitted their self-attestation form and their GSA's written approval of SGMA compliance will the county review their well application.

He added that all area well drillers are being notified of the new requirements.

The landowner attestation form and a sample GSA comment form are available on the Community Development Agency page of the Kings County website, [countyofkings.com](http://countyofkings.com). 🌾

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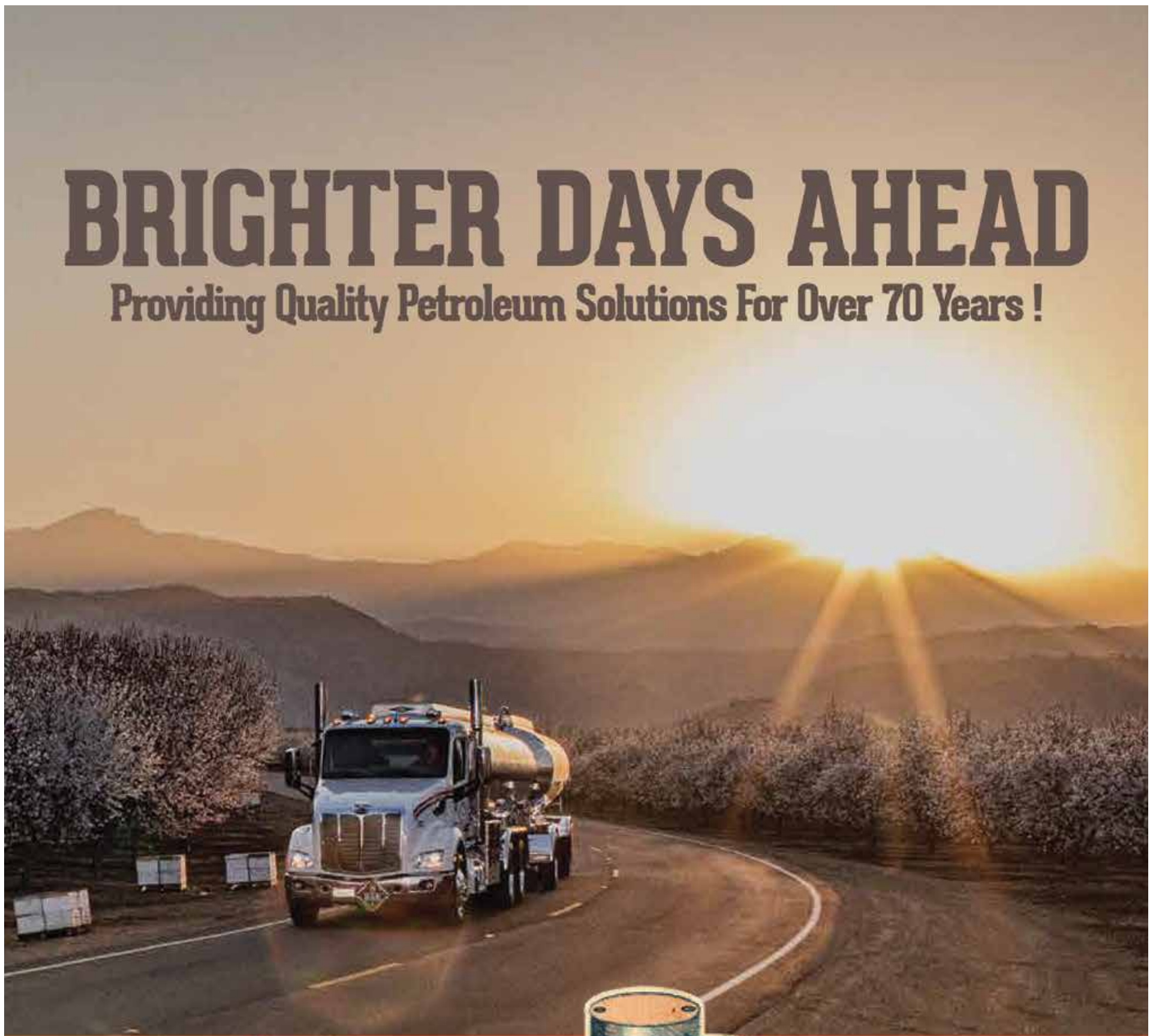
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## Kings County Rural Crime Report

### *Be on the lookout for trap wagons and chemical tanks being used in fuel thefts*

Contributed by Detective Kody Holt

The Kings County Sheriff's Rural Crime unit has been busy with investigations and following up with interviews and arrests to close out several cases. Last month, we had several illegal dumpings throughout the county. In one of the cases, our unit identified one of the suspects and located him in Fresno County where he was arrested.



Our unit located several pieces of stolen equipment in April. One was a Kubota tractor that was stolen out of Tulare County and located in one of Blair Air's orchards next to their airstrip. The other was a Kubota RTV that was stolen from Boswell farms and was located within the city of Hanford.

Since the arrest of Chris Williams, wire thefts have slowed considerably, but it appears there is still a crew out there committing these thefts. Our unit is working on identifying and locating them. We are still looking for the wire theft suspect who was at Westlake Farms property. He is a Hispanic male who was last seen driving a white Ford F-150 extra cab pickup with a female passenger. The license plate for the truck is 46173C1. If anyone sees this vehicle, please give one of our detectives a call immediately.

With fuel prices rising, we are seeing an uptick in fuel thefts. Over 700 gallons of gasoline and diesel were stolen from Willow Grove Farms on the north end of the county. There is little evidence at this time, so please keep an eye out for any trap wagons you see being pulled that are out of place. In most cases, trap wagons and chemical tanks are used to steal the fuel.

Additionally, the unit is continuing our efforts to identify a crew that burglarized the solar farms in the area of Highway 41 & Laurel, and Laurel Avenue and 25th Avenue mentioned in last month's report. Please keep an eye out if you are in the areas of these solar farms and call us if you see anything out of the ordinary.

As always, please give any of our detectives a call if you witness suspicious activity on or near your property. We also want to encourage members to utilize the OAN (owner applied number) and Smart Water CSI to help us more easily reunite stolen property with its owner. If you need an OAN, give any of our detectives a call, and call the KCFB office for more information about SmartWater CSI. Thanks for your continued support!

**Task Force Supervisor  
Rod Shulman**

**559-469-4004**

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That’s why most lending decisions are made at the branch level. We take the time to get to know your business so you can get back to what matters most to you—running your operation.

**DINUBA**  
559.591.9378

**HANFORD**  
559.584.2681

**TULARE**  
559.684.1478

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*Committed. Experienced. Trusted.*

