



**California/Nevada Section
Bimonthly Update
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Thirty Second Edition**

- * **CAIA SUPPORTS AG ENGINEERING BILL; TESTIFIES AT SENATE HEARING**
- * **California Regional Water Quality Control Boards**
- * **3rd Annual Water-Wise Plant Exchange and Plant Sale, Fresno, May 7, 8-noon**
- * **Producepedia website**
- * **California & Nevada Festivals and Fairs**
- * **Western Chapter-International Erosion Control Association Scholarships**

*** AG ENGINEERING BILL WELL SUPPORTED; CFBF & CAIA TESTIFY AT SENATE HEARING**

California Farm Bureau Federation (CFBF) and California Agricultural Irrigation Association (CAIA) attended the Senate Business and Professions Committee hearing last week and testified in support of Senate Bill 692. The bill passed out of committee on a bipartisan vote.

SB 692 by Senator Walters would allow agricultural engineers to perform services for which they have been trained and are well qualified. Under the current Professional Engineers Act, only Civil Engineers are allowed to practice engineering on "fixed works", a category that many irrigation systems and their components fall under. This strict requirement means added costs and restrictions on the availability of service in circumstances where an agricultural engineer, who possesses the particular expertise necessary, could do the work.

The California Farm Bureau Federation is the sponsor of SB 692 and it has strong support from the California Legislative Council of Professional Engineers (CLCPE) and other agricultural interests. It is opposed by union groups representing civil engineers.

In a statement to the Senate Committee, the CLCPE stated that "the time has come to bring California into the 21st century by providing licensed engineers equal respect. Other states encourage all engineers to use their expertise to protect the public and the environment. California discourages such activity, since it is more important to look to status, instead of competence, in our state."

The bill now moves to the Senate Appropriations Committee. If it passes, it will go to the Senate Floor for a vote, before moving to the Assembly.

For more information, please visit http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/cgi-bin/postquery?bill_number=sb_692&sess=CUR&house=B&author=walters

*** California Regional Water Quality Control Boards**

When was the last time you checked on the most recent regulations coming down from your local Regional Water Quality Control Board? Is there some way you can help your local agricultural producers? Take a look at what's going on at http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/waterboards_map.shtml. There are recent updates in multiple regions including a new Long-Term Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program Framework and Three Tier Regulatory Structure in the Southern San Joaquin Valley Water Quality Coalition. More information on RB5's programs is available at http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/centralvalley/water_issues/irrigated_lands/.

*** 3rd Annual Water-Wise Plant Exchange and Plant Sale, Fresno, May 7, 8-noon**

California State University Fresno Horticulture Unit (at 3150 E. Barstow, just east of Chestnut, across from the Gibson Farm Market) will be welcoming gardeners and anyone interested in learning how to save water in the landscape! With metered water rates on the horizon, there's never been a better time to begin conserving water by incorporating water-wise plants and efficient irrigation techniques in your landscapes and gardens. The Water-Wise Plant Exchange on May 7 at the Fresno State Horticulture Greenhouses is the perfect opportunity to pick up some drought-resistant plants, for free, and learn how to save water in your yards. Home gardeners are encouraged to donate water-wise plants at the exchange*. Trees, cuttings, bulbs and seeds will also be available and gratefully accepted throughout the event.

Master Gardeners, and Fresno State Horticulture staff and students with expertise in native and water-wise plants, will be on hand to offer advice for nurturing yards and gardens that are beautiful and can thrive in San Joaquin Valley weather with a minimal amount of water. Free brochures will be available on native plants and other water-wise plants that thrive in our climate, along with information about the new Central Valley Friendly Landscape Awards Program and planting activities for kids.

Partners in the plant exchange include: the City of Fresno Water Conservation Program, Central Valley Water Awareness Committee, California State University, Fresno's Horticulture Unit, University of California Cooperative Extension, Master Gardener Program, California Native Plant Society, Clovis Botanical Gardens, Tree Fresno, Irrigation Association, Water-wise Landscape Design and International Center for Water Technology at Fresno State.

If you can't make the event but would still like to donate some plants, you may drop them off at the Nursery anytime before the event! Just give us a call at (559)278-2952!

*** Producepedia website**

Did you know California and Arizona farmers grow almost half the produce found in grocery stores across America? Their farms are beautiful and their stories are fascinating. Take a look at www.producepedia.com.

Fruits, vegetables and nuts are delicious and nutritious and a vital component to keeping Americans - and America - healthy.

*** California & Nevada Festivals and Fairs**

Have you visited a California Festival or Fair recently? If not, check out http://californiafairsandfestivals.com/alpha_fairs.htm and check out the upcoming Calaveras County Fair and Jumping Frog Jubilee, Castroville Artichoke Festival, Desert Empire Fair, Dixon May Fair, Glenn County Fair, National Orange Show, Sacramento County Fair, Salinas Valley Fair, San Bernardino County Fair, and Silver Dollar Fair, all being held in May around California! For similar fairs in Nevada, like the Reno River Festival and Lyon County Fly-In, visit <http://festivalnet.com/state/nevada/nv.html>.

*** Western Chapter-International Erosion Control Association Scholarships**

The Western Chapter-International Erosion Control Association (WC-IECA) will be providing two tuition scholarships of \$2,500 per year, in addition to mentoring, for continuing junior, senior, or

graduate school level students with a demonstrated interest in pursuing a career in the erosion and sediment control profession who are enrolled in a related degree-program at an accredited 4-year college or university. The Western Chapter will assign a mentor to each scholarship recipient to act as a professional resource to the applicant. Since erosion and sediment control is a cross-disciplinary field, a wide variety of degree-programs will be considered, e.g., engineering, hydrology, soils, geology, forestry, environmental studies, range management, watershed, ecology, natural resources planning, etc. Students must be enrolled in institutions within the four-state area of the WC-IECA, i.e., CA, AZ, NV, or HI. For more information, visit <http://www.wcieca.org/scholarships.html>.

- Bimonthly Update contributors: Carolyn M. Jones, USDA NRCS; Betsy Gerwig, JM Lord, Inc.; Stuart Styles, Cal Poly BRAE & ITRC.
- For previous editions of the Update, please visit www.asabecanv.org.
- If you have questions or comments, feel free to contact Carolyn at 707-252-4189x103 or carolyn.jones@ca.usda.gov.
- If you have ideas for Update items or would like to get involved in the leadership group, please let us know.