

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



Jason Phillips
Chief Executive Officer

Put mildly, it's been a strange month since we sent out the last eWaterline. The COVID-19 response and planning efforts

have dramatically altered how we handle meetings, issues, and operations, but we're managing through it well. Things are evolving quickly, and the safety of FWA employees are a top priority for me and our leadership team. As we take measures to make sure our employees are safe, deliveries of water in the Friant-Kern Canal will continue uninterrupted. I've stayed in close coordination with Bureau of Reclamation Regional Director Conant, SLDMWA ED Federico Barajas, and Bureau of Reclamation Area Manager Michael Jackson to compare notes on actions we're taking and preparations to share resources if necessary to continue operations, especially if there's a situation where multiple members of any of our teams are unable to work for an extended period of time. On a related note, clearly more people in the country are recognizing the importance of having a vibrant and healthy agricultural sector to provide the food and fiber we need to survive. While it's good to see that appreciation, we wish it was happening for a better reason.

One of the many adjustments we've had to make is to change our Board and committee meetings to WebEx ONLY, which is a result of the directives from Federal and State officials to comply with requirements to reduce gatherings as much as possible. I am pleased to report that our first attempt at conducting what I think is the first ever FWA virtual Board meeting last Thursday was a success. It wasn't without a few small technology hiccups, but I must say, FWA business was conducted efficiently and we had many members of

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IN THE NEWS

THE HEROES OF AMERICA'S CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC FILL YOUR GROCERY BASKET

by Wayne Western, Jr. – The Sun | March 19, 2020

The time has once again arrived to remind folks of the significance American agriculture has to the nation and world.

A key lesson in our panic is that food, fiber, and dairy independence for our country has and should remain a top priority. The only shortage appears to be employees stocking shelves, which is why grocers are in the midst of a hiring spree.

While politics and media are no doubt playing a domineering role in creating the reaction of many, it is a perfect time to remind people that your food is not coming from the back of stores. It is coming from farmers, ranchers, and dairymen and women in America.

The dependence on China for prescription drugs has garnered attention. Now, imagine if your food was dependent on another nation's attitude toward America in a time of need and high demand.

We should thank the grocery workers who are tirelessly working and think about the American farmer who is working every day to make sure you have no shortages.

At the same time, we should be reminded to pay attention to the people, politicians, and special interest groups who have a mission of hindering American agricultural production.

A bright light has been shown on priorities. It would have been informative to learn the percentage of people waiting in line for their grocery store to open who were thinking about Delta Smelt or the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Much like making it a priority for many of you to stock your pantry, it is a priority of American farmers and ranchers to make certain you can.

There is no one area, county, state, or country in the world that has contributed to filling your grocery store shelves more than the Central Valley of California. If this story reaches every corner of America, that remains true.

We find ourselves now discussing essential services and businesses. Safe, affordable and dependable food grown in the United States is easily taken for granted when always in abundance.

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EVENTS AROUND THE VALLEY

The FWA Annual Meeting scheduled for April 16th has been POSTPONED.

Stay tuned for new date in the fall.

APRIL 23
FWA Board of Directors Meeting
Via WebEx

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JUNE 17
California Water Commission

Sacramento, CA

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JULY 28-31
ACWA Summer Conference

Monterey, CA

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the public on the conference and engaged. It is our expectation that, at least for the foreseeable future, all FWA public meetings will be conducted in a similar way.

Turning to Friant water supplies this year, the weather was not cooperative at all in January and February when we typically see our snowpack develop and reservoirs fill. Because of this near-record dry period, most of the Valley that relies on the CVP and Friant systems for surface water will only see about 15% of total contract amounts delivered. Not a good time for this shortfall as we start our first year of reducing reliance on groundwater required by the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (aka SGMA). On the bright side, and this is a very important note, without the progress on a number of fronts made by the Trump Administration over the past two years, including the new Biological Opinions just signed, we would almost certainly be at a zero allocation on the CVP south of the Delta this year, and likely be in a battle with the Bureau of Reclamation over whether water would need be released to meet the Exchange Contract water on the San Joaquin River. So please remember to thank the Administration for the surface water you do get this year, they are working hard to increase your water supply.

On the Friant-Kern Canal, as has been reported in the press, Congress and the Trump Administration have, and continue to look to pass stimulus bills in response to COVID-19. The stimulus bill that was signed into law by President Trump on Friday was focused primarily on family, worker, and industry relief and direct stimulus. It has been reported that there may be an effort to assemble a bill that provides infrastructure funding, or what some refer to as a "jobs bill." The FWA team is tracking this closely and talking to congressional members and staff regularly about the possibility of securing funding for the Friant-Kern Canal Capacity Correction Project. As you know, fixing the Friant-Kern Canal is one of the top priorities for the FWA team, and we have always envisioned a funding plan for the project that includes federal, state, and local partnerships to get it done. As this continues to evolve, we will be sure to provide updates, since the Friant-Kern Canal is the backbone of the local economy and water supply, and a critical piece of the statewide water delivery system.

Lastly, as has been reported in the past, FWA is a partner in the San Joaquin Valley Water Blueprint, which is a broad and diverse statewide coalition seeking consensus reforms and infrastructure investments required to help lessen community, environmental and industry impacts from water shortages. A great deal of work has been done in a relatively short amount of time, to educate the public and federal, state, and local leaders about the water supply deficit in the Valley. Please take the time to visit the recently launched website to learn more or join the effort at www.waterblueprintca.com.

Please stay safe and healthy.

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We have recently witnessed on a global level the priority many people place on the availability of food. Now, Americans are replacing panic buying with full shopping carts thanks to American agriculture.

This is a time to use caution, common sense, and good hygiene.

It is also a very important opportunity to remind people that filling those grocery store shelves takes months of planning, required inputs, navigation of burdensome regulation, and some of the hardest work on the planet by very few.

Less than 2 percent of the employed American population feeds the rest of us. With so many of us absolutely relying on so few to sustain us, agriculture is at the top of the "essential" list.

As more of us realize our shelves are full maybe we can not only increasingly appreciate what it takes to accomplish that but also participate in its success.

Arm yourself with facts and know this issues of agriculture, teach it in schools, and vote for the success of local food, fiber, and dairy production on your ballot.

More importantly, voice your concern and opinions to political leaders and special interest groups who either make things very hard for farmers or seek to destroy them.

Know that while you hear and read about water shortages and droughts, California sends more than 80 percent of the freshwater in your state to the ocean through the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

On average, you get between 17-18 percent of that water.

Know that your state has become experts at selling scarcity in a world of plenty. You can find that scarcity in your own rising water bills.

Until we all get on board in defense of our own food supply, let's hope American farmers and ranchers can hang in there.

They have been waiting for us long enough.

Yet, we aren't the only ones who rely on California agriculture. Products grown here are shipped far and wide to countries who are not able to feed themselves. They are shipped to populations who value what we are able to do with our soil and climate, because they have neither. We may soon realize the absolute importance of recent trade deals. While we face many issues as mentioned above in food production, labor shortages are nothing new but are as big an issue as any.

Reports from China are showing pessimism in their agriculture production for this reason after reeling from the pandemic which started there.

They will get their food from somewhere and that somewhere is largely America.

While we work day-to-day to get through these times together we are able to celebrate the fact we have had no food shortages.

While counties and states issue orders that are temporarily suspending a great economy, your food is being planted and grown for the next time you visit the store.

Take a minute to appreciate the fact it is there, and going forward, do what is necessary to see that it stays. There are people who have the land, knowledge, and grit to make sure you have food. They are there for us.

We should all be there for them.

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