



Communicating about California rice during the drought



Rice Grower Tom McClellan is interviewed on the drought by reporter Edward Ortiz of the *Sacramento Bee*.

If there is one thing that is associated with rice other than rice straw burning it is misperceptions about its water use. The common dig that rice uses a lot of water was started in 1986 when Marc Reisner wrote the book *Cadillac Desert*. While Marc later revised his position on rice, noting that it was the only crop that replaced the once vast wetlands in the Central Valley, most still have a misperception that rice is a water thirsty crop.

During this third year of an historic drought, it is imperative that lawmakers, regulators and the public have a better understanding of our crop and water use. To that end, the CRC has been actively working with the Northern California Water Association to first educate people about how

[Continued on page 2](#)

The Agricultural Act of 2014: A new dawn for American farm policy

By The Russell Group, a Washington, D.C. government affairs firm specializing in food, agriculture and trade issues.

A simple name--- the Agricultural Act of 2014--- and two anticlimactic votes brought to close a Farm Bill process that spanned five calendar years dating back to the spring of 2010. What had become a lightning rod for partisanship over the summer of 2013 evolved into a bipartisan bill garnering wide support from the left and right in both the House and in the Senate. Gone but not to be forgotten

are memories of a grueling legislative process which saw the first-ever defeat of a Farm Bill on the House floor and efforts to split from the Farm Bill, the food stamp section which brought upon the Farm Bill something it had never experienced before --- hyper partisanship.

Covering 950 pages, the new Farm Bill is projected by the Congressional

Budget Office to cost \$956 billion with \$44 billion spent on commodity support programs and some \$756 billion spent on nutrition programs including the renamed food stamp program, SNAP. Perhaps the bill's lasting hallmark will be a new option for farmers to choose either revenue loss coverage or price protection. For

[Continued on page 2](#)

Farm Policy

Continued from cover

price protection, now known as the Price Loss Coverage program (PLC), a premium pricing factor of 115 percent for temperate japonica rice was adopted giving CRC members the opportunity to protect against falling prices at a higher rate reflecting historically higher prices and cost of production in California.

This bill will foster in a new era of federal farm support by retiring direct payments in place since 1996 and, in their place, providing a new, more robust crop insurance program known as the Supplemental Coverage Option (SCO), designed to be stacked on top

Grower Farm Bill Tool available

Well-known attorney Tim Kelleher has developed an information spreadsheet on the Farm Bill for growers to plug in information on their operations to assist them in determining which programs best meet their needs. This information can be found at Calrice.org/FarmBillTool or go to CalRice.org and click on “Grower Farm Bill Tool” on the home page.

of basic, catastrophic crop insurance coverage. In accordance with the new law, SCO policies will not be available until 2015, giving time to the USDA Risk Management Agency (RMA) to implement the new wide ranging crop insurance program.

Within the conservation title of the Act, a new Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) was formed by combining the agriculture water enhancement program, the cooperative conservation initiative and separate authorities for the Great Lakes Basin and the Chesapeake Watershed. With the Waterbird Habitat Enhancement Program now in place covering 120,000 rice acres in the state, California Rice is poised to compete aggressively for continued funding out of this newly created RCPP.

Now that Congressional action is complete, the next steps toward putting this law into practice rest with USDA which has assembled an internal task force to begin implementation immediately. Producer signup will likely begin in late April and last through June. At the time of signup, California rice farmers must be prepared to make a one-time election of signing up either for the price loss coverage program or the revenue loss program known as the Agriculture Risk Coverage program (ARC). Once this choice is made, it is irrevocable for the life of the new farm bill lasting through 2018.

Drought

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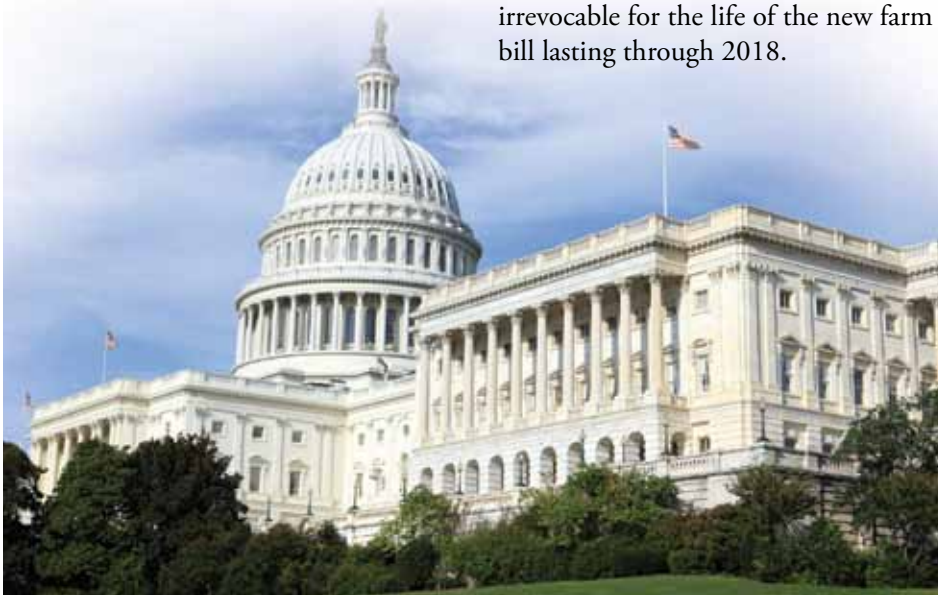
water is used in the Sacramento Valley where surface water is comparatively abundant even in dry years. Educating people that water moves from the top of the valley and reservoirs in the Sierra and then flows through rice fields, tree crops, wetlands and eventually into the delta is the first challenge. In a world where the only good irrigation is drip irrigation, flooded fields cause people to raise an eyebrow.

We are also emphasizing the many values of water use in the Sacramento Valley supporting the economies of small towns, productive agriculture and vast habitat for hundreds of species. We also emphasize that public and private wetlands benefit from the water that leaves our fields. We also talk about the millions of ducks and geese that migrate along the Pacific Flyway and note shorebird habitat directly supported by flooded rice fields.

Obviously, we also note that rice does not use the amount of water commonly cited. With a water depth of only five inches and precision leveling of fields, water use in rice is equivalent to other more familiar crops like oranges or broccoli.

Finally, we are emphasizing that solutions to the states water challenges need to include Sites Reservoir and other surface storage. We point out that Sites has been part of the discussion in the Sacramento Valley for over 30 years. It is a solution today that can offer huge benefits for the decades ahead.

Of greatest importance, we are using real people to talk to our neighbors about water – farmers, water district managers and community leaders in our small Sacramento Valley towns. This issue is replete with talking heads. People want to hear from those that are affected and those that can make a difference.



Regional Conservation Partnership Program provides a new opportunity for California Rice

With the passage of the new Farm Bill comes an interesting new conservation program called the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). We have been discussing the CRC's interest in this program on Capitol Hill for about three years now and are hopeful that it can be good for rice growers.

The RCPP will establish priority conservation areas across the country based upon both resource issues and the presence of partner organizations, such as the CRC, that are willing to coordinate and bring farmers together for common conservation goals. This is one of the reasons why the program seems so well suited for California rice. Through the development of the Waterbird Habitat Enhancement Program (WHEP), the CRC has demonstrated its interest and ability to bring its members to the table and advance conservation benefits to waterbirds.

The RCPP will reserve seven percent of the funding from three major conservation programs, plus an additional \$100 million per year for the life of the new Farm Bill. The Natural Resources Conservation Service will allocate this funding to focused areas. Given the significance of rice fields to the Pacific Flyway, we will be working to see if rice might continue its success with WHEP within the framework of this new program.

Five-year Referendum Passes

We are pleased to announce that the vote of rice growers and handlers to continue operations of the CRC passed overwhelmingly, with 92 percent each of voting growers and voting handlers casting a ballot to continue operations of the Commission for another five years.

Statute requires that a vote of all growers and handlers affected by the marketing order vote to determine if the activities of the Commission will continue or be wrapped up.

“We are pleased at the strong voter response,” commented CRC President & CEO Tim Johnson. “Every day we strive to address the key issues facing the industry and do so efficiently. We take the charge to use our resources to the greatest effect very seriously.”

Key programs of the Commission on the horizon include implementation of the Rice Waste Discharge Requirement (WDR), Farm Bill implementation and Proposition 65 challenges.



Rice to receive a waste discharge requirement

After years of meetings and a long period of discussion, approval of the Rice Waste Discharge Requirement (WDR) Order will take place in late March. Implementation at the farm level starts in March 2015. The reporting of nutrients begins in March 2016.

Background

The Rice WDR Order is a permanent regulatory process where the CRC has commented on the Existing Conditions Report and the Program Environmental Impact Report under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The CRC will provide additional comments through the Administrative Record posted by Region 5 of the Central Valley Water Quality Control Board (CVWQCB).

We have been working on behalf of the California rice growers to craft a program most suitable for rice production in the Sacramento River Basin. Our process was similar to the approach we used in development of the conditional waiver under the current Irrigated Lands Regulatory Program (ILRP). We created the ILRP from the monitoring and reporting program (MRP) developed in advance of the conditional waiver approval. The MRP was an accumulation of existing surface water data, which provided the basis for a technically defensible rice specific waiver.

Using a similar concept, we did an analysis of the existing groundwater

data in the Sacramento River Basin. The Groundwater Assessment Report (GAR) is a requirement of the WDR Order, one year after adoption. We believed that rice growers would benefit from an analysis of the existing groundwater data in advance of an adopted Rice WDR Order. The GAR was used to provide justification for the scope of monitoring under a groundwater program specific to rice. Through this process we developed a technically defensible rice specific program utilizing the expertise of CH2M Hill, PlanTierra, Somach Simmons & Dunn and CRC staff.

Proposed program

The Rice WDR Order includes surface and groundwater monitoring programs, farm evaluations and management plans.

The rice-specific conceptual site model resulted in high quality groundwater in the Sacramento River Basin where rice is grown. The resulting GAR analysis provided the basis for trend monitoring. From an analysis of over 90 wells, we developed a list of 21 wells to monitor on a three-year rotation - a program much less onerous than the broad representative monitoring when vulnerability is determined from negatively impacted groundwater due to high nitrate levels.

Our surface water program will maintain the same sites with monitoring for pesticides, toxicity and other constituents of concern.

Current work

We will develop templates for Farm Evaluations and Nutrient Management Plans by November 30, 2014. Work begins now to develop a format for reporting information to the rice commission. Through our process, we will work on a format that maintains confidentiality of our member information as specified in the rice commission statute.

Grower responsibility

Notification of landowners is essential with this program. You need to provide verification in the Farm Evaluations with reporting beginning March 2015. The reporting of fertilizers starts with Nutrient Management Plans in March 2016. Basically, growers will need to report what you use, how much you apply, your management practices, and where water leaves your field. We are working to make the reporting a streamlined, electronic process.

Summary

The process for developing WDR Orders for agriculture in the CVRWQCB Region 5 began in 2007. We will continue to focus on positioning ourselves to move forward with the most comprehensive and technically defensible Rice WDR Order in the region for the ultimate benefit of the rice industry.

Armstrong & Getty get firsthand look at industry operations

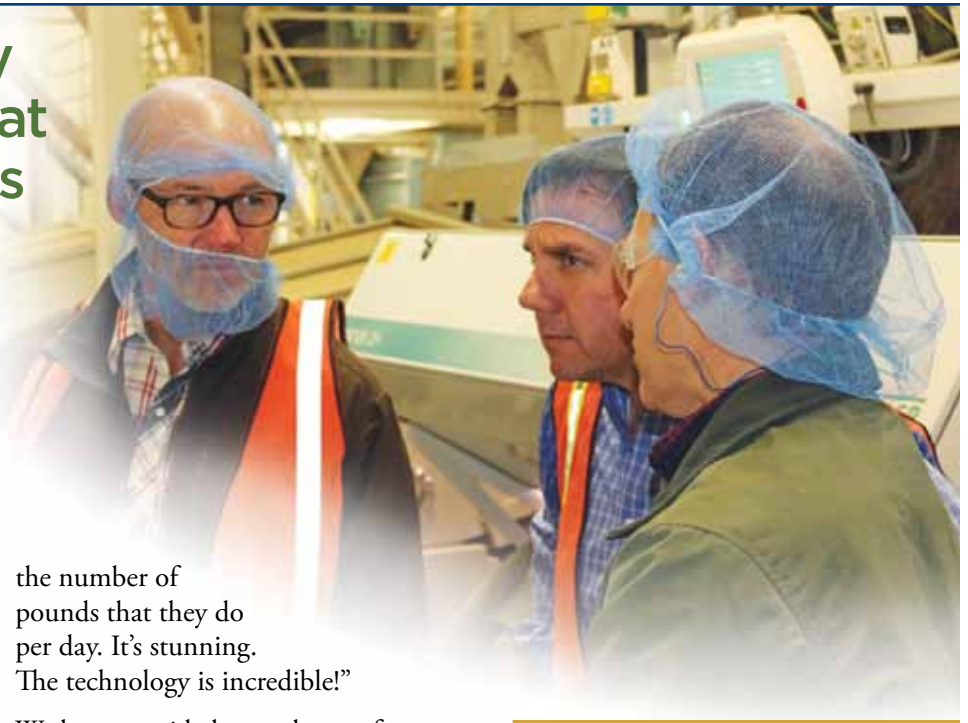
As part of our ongoing partnership with radio hosts Jack Armstrong and Joe Getty, we provided them a tour of the Port of West Sacramento and the Farmers' Rice Cooperative Mill in West Sacramento.

The radio hosts watched as a ship was expertly loaded with California Rice bound for Japan.

“It’s interesting to see the farm product turned into money, turned into jobs and being sent overseas,” Getty said.

While at the mill, the two learned about the highly sophisticated machinery needed to deliver local rice to destinations across the globe.

“It is quite amazing,” Armstrong remarked. “The equipment we saw and



the number of pounds that they do per day. It’s stunning. The technology is incredible!”

We have provided several tours for Armstrong and Getty, which help provide excellent subject matter for their live testimonials. This is the third year for California Rice commercials on their program, providing a tremendous

Armstrong (left) and Getty (center) learn about rice milling from David Baffoni, FRC’s General Manager of Operations.

boost to the visibility of our industry in the Capital Region.



Select Crop Protection Materials 2014 Update

Planting season is coming soon, making this a good time to review the timing and availability of your crop protection materials. Always read the label for specific conditions, water holding requirements, pre-harvest intervals (PHI), and contact your county agricultural commissioners (CACs) for additional restrictions in the counties where you grow rice. Several counties impose additional permit conditions to non-restricted rice pesticides in response to reports of drift.

Please watch the product name when reporting pesticide use. California uses an alpha code, so you can easily default to the first product on the list. Pesticides not registered for use on rice show up on the Department of Pesticide Regulation, Pesticide Use Report. You do not want to pay for monitoring these pesticides in a water quality program.

Thiobencarb (Bolero/Abolish) – rice specific herbicide

Bolero UltraMax has a 30-day water hold and Abolish has a 19-day water holding requirement with allowances for early/emergency release of these products through permit conditions. We receive a high level of scrutiny on thiobencarb due to exceedances of the performance goal in the drains regardless whether the results at the city intakes are below the level of concern for the maximum contaminant level.

Propanil – rice specific herbicide

The management plan brochure will be available at www.calrice.org during the use season. Propanil stewardship

includes the Propanil Regulations, the seven-day water holding requirement, and maintenance of aerial and ground spray equipment in good condition. Stam 80EDF will be packaged in 30-pound containers, and no longer manufactured in bags. All Stam 80EDF bags remaining in inventory must be used consistent with the labeling.

Clomazone (Cerano and Bombard) – rice specific herbicide

The increase in use and reports of white weeds in the drains has brought attention to clomazone. Please observe the 14-day water holding requirement and label requirements to keep applications from drifting outside the fields.

Acetolactate Synthase (ALS) Inhibitors

The herbicides, bensulfuron-methyl (Londax), bispyribac-sodium (Regiment), halosulfuron-methyl (Sanda), penoxsulam (Granite), and orthosulfamuron (Strada) all share a common mode of action, so it is best to use only one ALS inhibitor per year to prevent resistance. The UC Cooperative Extension and UC Davis researchers compiled an herbicide management chart found at: <http://cecolusa.ucdavis.edu/files/65329.pdf> or:

http://ucanr.edu/sites/UCRiceProject/Fact_Sheets/ and click on Herbicide resistance stewardship.

The ALS herbicides can cause spotting on non-rice crops. Please adhere

to label requirements and permit conditions when using these herbicides.

Cyhalofop-butyl (rice specific) and Bispyribac-sodium

Two non-restricted herbicides, cyhalofop-butyl (Clincher) and bispyribac-sodium (Regiment), continue with permit conditions for mandatory ground applications and buffer zones. Those applying Clincher by ground must attend one of the Dow AgroSciences stewardship meetings for certification, or view the video at your local CAC office.

Additional Regiment permit conditions exist in counties where plantings of young walnuts occur.

Azoxystrobin (Quadris)

Many of the Quadris applications take place late in the season. Please remember the label requirements include a 14-day water holding requirement and 28-day pre-harvest interval (PHI).

Extract of Reynoutria sachalinensis (Regalia)

An organic certified fungicide from Marrone Bio Innovations. Regalia is either used alone or in combination with azoxystrobin, trifloxystrobin or propiconazole: <http://www.marronebioinnovations.com/products/brand/regalia/>

Clothianidin (Belay)

A new insecticide registered by Valent. Belay will be available for Rice Water Weevil control in 2014.

Rice Fields subject of new artwork



Artist Phil Gross (right) meets with grower Gary Stone near a painting location in Richvale.

The beauty of area rice fields in summer and winter will be featured in two new artworks commissioned on behalf of this industry.

The CRC has been working for months with Artist Phil Gross on paintings that will be part of our annual Legislative outreach. Gross is finalizing a painting depicting a low-level aerial view of a rice field in the Grimes area during the summer. A second painting focuses on a shallowly flooded rice field in Richvale during the winter.

The paintings will be featured on this

year's California Rice Box, which will be delivered to our key audiences including Legislators, regulators, decision makers, opinion leaders and media just prior to the CRC's Legislative Day on June 4. The original artwork will be used to further promote California Rice. The artistry will also be made into limited-edition giclee prints for our outreach.

The scenery has provided great inspiration to the artist. "The Sacramento Valley is amazing," Gross said. "The colors you get here are unlike any other landscape. It's beautiful land."

Californian named to new Rice Leadership Class



Congratulations to Jon Munger of Montna Farms, who has been named to the 2014 Rice Leadership Development Program.

Jon is among seven participants in the two-year program, which features personal development, communications training and a comprehensive education about the U.S. Rice industry.



New CRC Chairman elected

Congratulations to Rob Paschoal (right) of Farmers' Rice Cooperative, elected new chairman of the California Rice Commission. Paschoal presented outgoing chairman Charley Mathews Jr. with artwork during the November CRC Board Meeting as a thank you for his service to the industry.



CALIFORNIA RICE COMMISSION

Phone 916/387-2264
Fax 916/387-2265

E-mail calrice@calrice.org
www.calrice.org

1231 I Street, Suite 205
Sacramento, CA 95814 - 2933

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Revamped California Rice Website nearly ready

After several months of work, updates are nearly complete on the newest version of the California Rice Commission Website, CalRice.org.

The website will include streamlined features and updated artwork, better capturing the new California Rice Brand of real places, authentic people and the prolific wildlife of Sacramento Valley rice fields.

The CalRice.org Website continues to be the main communications vehicle for our messaging. Total activity on the site last year reached 5.5 million hits, up 8 percent from 2012, while the number of unique visitors grew 25 percent to 85,000. The most popular part of the CalRice.org Website is the blogs from industry members.

CalRice.org is the largest part of our social media outreach that includes pages on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

