



Yolo cattlemen hear about water at annual 'Fall Tour'

By WALT LUCAS/Special to The Democrat

Article Created: 08/24/2008 08:45:17 AM PDT

The Yolo County Cattlemen and Wool Growers Association held its annual Fall Tour this past Thursday in Esparto.

One of the main functions of the association is education, aimed primarily at its members but also for the public. This year's educational program included two hot topics that will affect most rural residents: the proposed Yolo County Groundwater Ordinance and our current water situation.

Speaking to the assembled farmers, ranchers and rural landowners was Rick Landon, Yolo County's agricultural commissioner. Landon talked about how the draft ordinance came about, primarily due to the concern of County Supervisor Mike McGowan's over water transfers outside of the county.

The draft ordinance developed into three main areas: A groundwater and well monitoring program, a water transfer component and the establishment of a new county water agency.

Landon went on to say the draft in its current form has been described as defective. The County has now hired a consultant to gather input from all sides and to rewrite the ordinance.

As this process goes forward, Landon emphasized, public input will be crucial. Many in attendance stressed their concern over the ordinance as a solution looking for a problem. A very expensive solution whose budget, they fear will come from new

permits and usage and monitoring fees.

The county is in a two-year drought and the question of surface water and the health of the main underground aquifer are on the minds of area farmers.

Max Stevenson, Water Resource Associate from the Yolo County Flood Control & Water Conservation District gave an informative presentation on the current well and groundwater monitoring program.

The number of private and public wells currently monitored dotted his map of the county. YCFC&CD monitors 160 wells, and along with other agencies and districts, a total of 550 wells in Yolo County are monitored and that data is sent to the State.

Stevenson drew a diagram of the Cache Creek aquifer, showing the historic levels of groundwater and how they fluctuate during drought conditions. He also explained the districts ability to maintain water delivery to farmers in dry years was greatly enhanced by the building of Indian Valley Reservoir in the late 1970s.

A bit of information that most water users didn't know was the unlined canal system the district uses allows 25 percent of the water flowing through the system to recharge the underground aquifer.

The last speaker of the program was Matt Byrne of the California Cattlemen's Association. Byrne spoke on current topics and pending legislation that affect the livestock industry, both statewide as well as here in Yolo County.

With the program over, the crowd of about 60 sat down to a rib-eye steak dinner prepared by the YCCWGA members.

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