

# Grants to help counties implement Calif. groundwater regs

By **TIM HEARDEN**  
Capital Press

SACRAMENTO — Local agencies trying to implement California's new groundwater regulations are receiving \$6.7 million in state funds for their efforts.

The state Department of Water Resources has announced grants to 21 counties for planning projects that will benefit disadvantaged communities, address critically overdrafted and stressed basins and develop ordinances to preserve groundwater levels.

While matching funds were required, the grants addressed concerns among local officials that the 2014 Sustainable Groundwater Management Act would amount to another unfunded state mandate on counties.

"That's a lot of the concern that we've heard," DWR spokeswoman Lauren Bisnett



Willows, Calif., rice farmer Larry Maben prepares to check water levels in his well in this 2014 file photo. Glenn County is one of 21 that are receiving grants from the state Department of Water Resources to plan for administering new groundwater regulations.

Tim Hearden/Capital Press

said. She added that Proposition 1, the \$7.5 billion water bond passed by voters in 2014, sets aside \$100 million for groundwater management.

"Proposition 1 will be really one of the major mechanisms for funding those efforts," she said. "This is just the tip of the spear in terms of

financial assistance."

The planning grants to counties with high and medium priority groundwater basins included \$500,000 apiece

for Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera and Tulare counties, whose aquifers have receded at alarming rates as reductions in surface water supplies have forced growers to rely on wells.

A National Aeronautics and Space Administration study last summer showed land in the San Joaquin Valley is sinking by nearly 2 inches per month in some places. A "great majority" of the subsidence is caused by agriculture, DWR director Mark Cowin said at the time.

Other grants will include: \$499,942 to Merced County; \$250,000 each to Colusa, Humboldt, Monterey, San Diego, San Luis Obispo, Sonoma, Stanislaus and Ventura counties; just under \$250,000 apiece for Butte, Glenn, Placer, Santa Barbara, San Joaquin and Santa Cruz counties; and \$200,000 for Mendocino County.

The grants come as local

governments face deadlines of mid-2017 to set up groundwater management agencies and 2020 for the 21 most critically overdrafted or important basins to have sustainability plans in place.

Plans for other high- and medium-priority basins must be established by 2022 and sustainability in all high- and medium-priority basins must be achieved by 2040. The state has designated 127 of California's 515 groundwater basins and sub-basins as high or medium priority.

The funding announced March 23 will help counties with long-term planning and to better understand "what's coming in and going out of their aquifers," state senior engineering geologist Laura McLean said in a news release. More funding will go out as groundwater sustainability agencies move forward with their plans, she said.

## Kansas State president tapped to lead WSU

By **MATTHEW WEAVER**  
Capital Press

Kirk Schulz, the president of Kansas State University, has been chosen as the next president of Washington State University.

Schulz was announced as the new president during a March 25 meeting of the WSU board of regents in the Tri-Cities.

Schulz replaces Elson Floyd, who died of colon cancer in June 2015. Floyd was well-regarded by farmers for his commitment to agricultural research.

Representatives of Washington's agriculture industry said they were happy with the regents' choice.

"This is a win for WSU, for the state of Washington and agriculture," said Glen Squires, CEO of the Washington Grain Commission. "He's extremely well-qualified, good leadership experience. (He) will be able to carry on what President Floyd started and really help to build WSU in many ways."

Schulz is coming from the nation's first land-grant university, according to Kansas State.

Squires believes Floyd's emphasis on agricultural research will continue under Schulz.

"I'm sure he understands the land-grant mission, coming from a land-grant school," Squires said. "We're excited to have him."

"It's good to see the university moving forward with its leadership transition," said Jon DeVaney, president of the Washington State Tree Fruit Association. "We are pleased to see it's someone familiar with the land-grant university environment."

DeVaney's organization, the Washington Apple Commission, Washington Fruit Commission and Northwest Horticulture Council spoke out in October to ensure that their industry's voice would be considered in the selection process.

DeVaney said the organizations urged the search committee to select someone who would reach out to key agricultural stakeholders in a manner similar to Floyd to maintain WSU's services and partnerships.

"We're looking forward to meeting with him and building that same kind of relationship," DeVaney said. "We are optimistic we will be able to work with President Schulz in his new position."

"The agricultural community could not have done any better on the search," said WSU interim president Dan Bernardo, provost for the university and former dean of WSU's College of Agricultural, Human and Natural Resource Sciences. "He certainly has a great reputation as a transformational leader at Kansas State University."

Bernardo previously worked at KSU, and said he was hearing "impeccable" reports on Schulz from contacts at the university in Manhattan, Kan.

"Coming from Kansas State, where agriculture is the number one industry in the state, I'm sure he has great rapport with agriculture, and I'm sure he understands agricultural research and its importance to any state and the land-grant university's



Schulz

role in providing research and information to agricultural producers," Bernardo said.

Justin Gilpin, CEO of the Kansas Wheat Commission in Manhattan, Kan., said Schulz has been a "good friend and supporter" of production agriculture and research initiatives to benefit stakeholders, while working to find funding for research.

"President Schulz was willing to be creative when we needed to find ways to fill positions that were very depended upon by wheat farmers of Kansas," Gilpin said. "I believe (Washington wheat farmers) are going to get a strong leader. I hope we are able to replace him with somebody who supports agriculture research like he did."

WSU entomology associate professor Richard Zack was the representative for CAHNRS on the advisory committee for the presidential search.

## Amalgamated hires communications specialist

By **JOHN O'CONNELL**  
Capital Press

BOISE — As Amalgamated Sugar Co.'s new communications specialist, Jessica McAnally will use social media to represent the sugar industry and to respond to what the company sees as misinformation about agriculture.

Amalgamated President and CEO John McCreedy said the company had considered creating the position for the past couple of years, but recently opted to go forward with the plan to give members more input in the public dialogue about their industry.

"We've seen so many people take positions on issues important to us on social media and we're not seeing our voice represented accurately and consistently," McCreedy said. "People are having conversations about us, and we're not participating."

Duane Grant, chairman of the board of Snake River Sugar Cooperative, which runs Amalgamated, considers social media to be "the new morning paper and the way communities talk now." He believes McAnally will help the company educate consumers with scientific argu-



Photo submitted

Jessica McAnally, the new communications specialist at Amalgamated Sugar, Co., holds a container of sugar March 24 on her second day on the job. She'll help provide her company with an increased social media presence and will help with other aspects of community outreach.

ments.

"They're talking about us and they're talking about whether our product, sugar, is good or not, whether we're mistreating the environment by planting biotech seeds, and in general, they don't understand who we are, what we do and even the fundamentals about what sugar does in the diet," Grant said.

McAnally will also help manage the company's revamped website, attend job fairs on behalf of the company, assist in drafting the company magazine and newsletter, take promotional photographs and videos and assist in community relations.

"I think it's important for businesses to guide the story

that's being told about them in the public," McAnally said.

McCreedy said the company sends confidential communications to growers on a password-protected site, and McAnally will be responsible only for updating content on the public site. She'll also improve Amalgamated's Facebook presence, and will gradually help the company expand into other social media outlets.

"We'll have appropriate links to national organizations and updates on what we consider the truth about sugar and the role of biotechnology in feeding the world and reducing our environmental footprint," McCreedy said.

He said she'll also represent the company at state fairs and other functions, explore opportunities to offer scholarships and internships and will "work closely with our human resources department to make sure we have the right presence in the right places."

McAnally has a bachelor's degree in communications from Boise State University and grew up on a Canyon County sugar beet farm. She's eager to work with 4-H and FFA chapters in her new role.

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