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California

State to hand out nearly \$7M in grants for soil health

By **TIM HEARDEN**
Capital Press



Tim Hearden/Capital Press

Chrissy Freeman of the University of California Cooperative Extension's master gardeners program discusses the benefits of composting for healthier soils during a presentation Aug. 12 at the Nevada County Fair in Grass Valley, Calif. The state is giving out money to growers for measures to maintain healthy soils, including composting.

have asked for," said Jeanne Merrill, policy director for the

California Climate and Agriculture Network, which pro-

On the Web

Online: <https://www.cdfa.ca.gov/oe/healthysoils/> . Applications must be made through the State Water Resources Control Board's Financial Assistance Submittal Tool at <https://faast.waterboards.ca.gov/> .

California Climate and Agriculture Network: <http://calclimateag.org/>

Soil Health Partnership: <http://www.soilhealthpartnership.org/>

motes sustainable agriculture. "They see the value (of healthy soils), not only for reducing greenhouse gas emissions but also improving crop yield and holding more water," Merrill said. "There are economic benefits as well as climate benefits."

The state will provide competitive grants to projects that reduce greenhouse gases and sequester soil carbon. Eligible activities could include the use of compost, mulch and cover crops; reduced tillage;

and planting trees and shrubs as windbreaks, according to CalCAN.

The program was proposed by Gov. Jerry Brown in 2015 but didn't get its first funding until late in 2016, when the Legislature allocated the money from California's cap-and-trade auction revenue.

Brown's recent signing of a bill to extend the cap-and-trade program to 2030 provided some certainty about the grants program, which

has captured the attention of many of the state's organic and conventional farmers, CalCAN officials said.

The grants come as the Soils Health Partnership, a farmer-led nationwide initiative, has endorsed a set of 19 soil health measurements that will help growers determine the effectiveness of their activities.

The group's "Tier 1" measurements include organic carbon, soil texture, penetration resistance, nitrogen levels, base saturation, bulk density, water-holding capacity and infiltration rate, according to the partnership's website.

"I think it's something we've known for a long time — if you increase your soil organic matter, you'll not only help the climate but you'll help soil fertility and improve crop yields," Merrill said.

Panel to fund several water projects under Proposition 1

By **TIM HEARDEN**
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deadline for funding for storage projects under Proposition 1, the \$7.5 billion water bond passed by voters in 2014.

That's fewer than the commission had expected earlier this year, having received 44 separate "concept papers" from groups considering seeking funds for everything from large reservoirs to local groundwater recharge projects.

"Originally we thought we might get upwards of 20 to 25," panel spokesman Chris Orrock said. "But as the process continued on and we got more toward the end of the application period, we saw that only 12 organizations had started the process. So two or three weeks ago we understood that this was going to be about the number we'd get."

Some commissioners have

expressed a desire for "funding as many projects as we can," Orrock said, adding that the number will be determined when the panel gets through a technical review next spring.

The commission expects to make final determinations in June 2018.

"It's not a beauty pageant," Orrock said. "We're going to be looking at the public benefits that projects say they

provide and ensure that the public benefits are tangible and able to be realized. Then we're going to look at what the public benefits ratio is to the overall project."

Overall, the commission received nearly \$6.8 billion in requests for projects that would cost a combined \$13.1 billion. The largest request was for \$1.66 billion for Sites Reservoir west of Maxwell,

Calif., a planned \$5.2 billion project to create as much as 1.8 million acre-feet of off-stream surface water storage.

The Sites Project Authority and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation are taking comments through Nov. 13 on environmental documents for the proposed reservoir, and two public meetings are scheduled to provide more information.



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Participants in Fuel Your Future got an upclose view of college life.

Fuel Your Future: College Readiness Camp For Military Youth

By Gary F. Varrella, Ph.D.,
WSU Associate Professor of Extension Education in 4-H

Fuel Your Future, a 4-H/Air Force Youth Camping Program, is supported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture; National Institute of Food and Agriculture; 4-H National Headquarters; U.S. Air Force Child and Youth Programs; and Washington State University Extension 4-H Program through grant funding through Kansas State University.

The competitive grant that funded Fuel Your Future was awarded to the WSU Spokane County 4-H Extension Program. The 141st Air Wing Air National Guard Family Readiness Center from Fairchild Air Force Base was the Spokane 4-H Program's military partner.

Youth from military families across the state attended the camp.

This camp was named "Fuel your Future!" in reference to the Fairchild AFB, which is home of the KC-135 Air Refueling Mission in the Northwest. This program engaged the campers in hands-on STEM and college preparedness opportunities at public and private universities and a local community college. Eastern Washington University was the program home, with the military family youth and chaperones staying in the dorms at EWU, dining in the commons, and enjoying recreational opportunities in the evenings.

Gonzaga University and the Spokane Falls Community College hosted educational and informational programs as an important part of the campers' experiences.

The teens learned about opportunities and requirements to enter each of the institutions. They met and discussed college life with former 4-H members attending these institutions, engaged in hands-on experiences in natural and physical science, engineering, worked in college laboratories on all the campuses and participated in an ornithology study at Turnbull National Wildlife refuge.

The camp enhanced the resiliency of the military youth, encouraging more informed career choices and the chance to make new friends through evening sports and games. Participants engaged in goal setting, team work, and critical thinking abilities as they collaborated with the EWU ROTC program faculty and students in challenge activities and through seminars.



Fuel Your Future participants work in a lab as part of many activities.



Students work with Fuel Your Future participants.



Field work was part of the program for Fuel Your Future participants.



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