

Annual Report

Monterey County-*Watershed Programs*

January-December 2005

Prepared: March 2006

This Report provides a summary of the work that has been done between January 2005 and December 2005 by growers from Monterey County with the support of the Farm Bureaus in each county and the Agricultural Water Quality Coalition. Financial support has been provided by the State and Regional Water Quality Control Boards, the Monterey Sanctuary Foundation, the taxpayers of California for their support of Propositions 13 and 50, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Santa Clara Valley Water District. Technical support has been provided by the University of California Cooperative Extension, the Natural Resources Conservation Service, the Resource Conservation Districts, and University of California researchers.

County Level Summary Statistics											
Top 5 Crops ^c	<table border="1" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>1. Leaf Lettuce</td> <td>\$544,313,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Head Lettuce</td> <td>\$406,221,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Strawberries</td> <td>\$317,072,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. Broccoli</td> <td>\$273,327,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5. Nursery</td> <td>\$270,209,000</td> </tr> </table>	1. Leaf Lettuce	\$544,313,000	2. Head Lettuce	\$406,221,000	3. Strawberries	\$317,072,000	4. Broccoli	\$273,327,000	5. Nursery	\$270,209,000
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Number Farmers in the County	489 ^a										
# Farms involved in Program	316 ^b										
% Participation (by operation)	64.62%										
Total ag acreage in the county	240,000 ^c										
Total ag acreage involved in program											
% Participation (by acreage)											
Short Courses^d											
1. Salinas, January 2001	15										
<i>Number of operations attended</i>	13										
2. Salinas, November 2003	43										
<i>Number of operations attended</i>	24										
3. King City, January 2004	69										
<i>Number of operations attended</i>	44										
4. Salinas, March 2004	62										
<i>Number of operations attended</i>	45										
<i>Number of plans complete (Jan'01-March '04)</i>	120										
5. Salinas, September 2004	17										
<i>Number of operations attended</i>	12										
6. King City, December 2004	49										

<i>Number of operations attended</i>	40
7. Salinas, January 2005	41
<i>Number of operations attended</i>	25
<i>Number of water quality plans complete</i>	30
<i>Number of water quality plans near complete</i>	11
8. Salinas, September 2005	21
<i>Number of operations attended</i>	19
<i>Number of water quality plans complete</i>	16
<i>Number of water quality plans near complete</i>	4
9. Prunedale, December 2005	14
<i>Number of operations attended</i>	4
Total number of participants	316
Total number of operations	226
Total short courses offered	9

(a) Derived from Regional Board, Aprox. Number

(b) Determined by Short Course Participation, actual number may be higher

(c) Ag Commissioner 2004 Crop Report

(d) UCCE Farm Water Quality Planning Short Courses

Chualar/Quail Watershed Grower Profile

Grower A is a 4th generation farmer whose family has been farming in the Salinas area since the 1860's. This grower has been involved in the family farming business for the past 37 years and has seen many changes since then. This business grows vegetable and strawberry crops for about seven different packers/shippers.

Throughout his farming expertise he has seen the benefits of implementing new technologies, participating in cost share programs and utilizing technical resources. Stewardship of the farm land is a prime objective of the family farming business and utilizing each of these resources has allowed the farming business to achieve the goal all while maintaining it's bottom line.

In 2005 he participated in the NRCS's EQIP program by installing three drip filter stations and purchasing drip tape. Two of the filter stations were paid through EQIP funds and the other was covered by the operation. These filter stations facilitate the use of drip irrigation. He has also participated with his landlords by replacing the older, sometimes leaky, concrete mainlines with underground plastic mainlines creating a circular irrigation system. This project has allowed this grower to save water, reduce sediment runoff, decrease fertilizer usage, and has allowed for more efficient fertigation practices. All of these improvements from this EQIP project have created a system that reduces the possibility for nitrate runoff. Overall, this grower is taking positive steps to improving the water quality and farming practices within his watershed. The EQIP program deemed so helpful that the grower is participating in another similar project in 2006 for a different ranch.

Overall, water quality is important to this grower has been able to implement various projects on other operations. 60% of his vegetable crops are grown with drip irrigation and 100% of the strawberry crop is drip irrigated. He conducts soil and nutrient tests, installs cover crops, plants grassed roadways and stream beds, and has built sediment retention basins on a few of his properties. One of the retention basins utilizes the technology of having three outflow levels with a filter system built around it to ensure proper drainage. These filter systems are then cleaned out every time the water level falls below them.

The grower has implemented good management by planting cover crops during the winter on some of his parcels. Not only is the land precariously sloped but there are creeks and waterways nearby. The early planting of cover crops has allowed sediment to be retained on the field so that the grower can maximize his fertile soil all while reducing winter storm runoff into the waterways.

Currently the grower sees utilizing technical resources as a huge advantage to improving the watershed and on farm practices. He is active in his watershed and encourages others to utilize resources such as the Farm Bureau, NRCS, RCD and the Ag Mobil Lab. Participation in programs such as the Ag Mobil Lab can give a grower solid results regarding how management practices are affecting water quality. This grower is a participant in the 2006 program and is looking forward to comparing the results from the nutrient and irrigation tests to his current practices. The results from test such as these can help a grower develop an efficient irrigation budget which will possibly help them reduce the use of fertilizers. This grower utilizes irrigation and nutrient budgets because it is a necessity in maintaining a safe product and a productive business.

Gabilan Watershed Grower Profile

Jose Politron is the farm manager for Grower's Transplanting, a greenhouse operation that focuses on vegetable transplants and ornamentals. Jose graduated from the University of Mexico City with his degree in Agronomy. Upon moving to the United States he became the farm manager for the company. He currently manages multiple ranches which have locations in Salinas and Santa Maria.

Jose attended the Farm Water Quality Planning Short Course in 2005 and became knowledgeable about water quality concerns. He immediately took action and pinpointed locations on one of his operations where projects can be implemented to improve the overall water quality of the operation and the watershed.

The Farm Bureau staff assisted Jose with his Farm Plan and was sure to outline strategies and steps for the coming few years. Reviewing existing strategies indicated that there are already many good water quality practices in place. All beds have an underground conveyance system which leads into lined collection basins. These basins flow into a ditch at the edge of the ranch. From following the flow of water off the farm it was determined that this particular waterway is

the best location to implement a vegetated treatment system. The first step of this process was to contact the Resource Conservation District (RCD) and discuss the possibility of introducing a grassed waterway on this ditch bank.

Jose met with the RCD and discussed general ideas, vegetation options and watershed concerns. After multiple follow-up meetings, plans were developed and were presented to the grower. The Farm Bureau and Jose have been working with the other growers in the area on this proposal. The ditch runs between Grower's Transplanting and another operation which has been active in the project management discussion. The neighboring farm is excited that his neighbors are interested in continuing to be good stewards of the land and the watershed. So much so that they are looking into implementing these same management practices and are interested in expanding the project to include his portion of the ditch.

In addition to working with the RCD, Jose signed up to participate in the Regional Ag Mobil Lab for 2006 services. These services include nutrient management, irrigation management and pump testing which is being funded through a grant from the Santa Clara Valley Water District. Jose feels that getting results from current practices will help him in the future once his ditch project is complete.

This is not a project that will benefit only one grower but is a water quality practice that has manifested itself to include multiple operations and benefit the watershed as a whole. The collaboration of the partners is a prime example of how technical assistance, outreach coordinators and growers can work together to improve the water quality of a watershed.

Blanco Drain Watershed Grower Profile

Two growers in this watershed group have stepped up to the plate to help the group learn more about water quality in this watershed. Specifically, Jim Manassero and Chris Bunn worked over the past year with the Resource Conservation District to begin to determine if there is a difference in water quality with existing vegetation compared to no vegetation along drainage ditches. The RCD found that, in some sections along the Blanco Drain ag drainage ditch, vegetation may already be helping to clean up water as it flows downstream. The RCD, in partnership with these growers and contributions of time and effort from Marc Los Huertos, UC Santa Cruz, put together a small scale monitoring program to compare different conditions within sections of the Blanco Drain ditch.

The Resource Conservation District prepared a detailed and very useful description of the goals and objectives they had in working with the growers. Following that work, on December 7th, 2005 Chris Bunn hosted and provided a barbeque lunch for a Vegetated Treatment Systems Workshop specifically designed by Farm Bureau

Coordinators for the Blanco Drain/Alisal Slough Watershed group. See the agenda with speakers and topics below. The Regional Water Quality Control Board reviewed the workshop agenda in advance and granted 2 water quality education hours. Farm Bureau Coordinators provided growers with Certificates for 2 hours on the day of the workshop.

Chris Bunn, Jim Manassero, and all the other growers in this watershed have helped to keep the dialogue focused on what may be practical and feasible means of improving the water quality of the Blanco Drain. Water treatment systems can come in many different shapes, sizes, and address different water quality concerns. There is some discussion in the group about how to make the Blanco Drain water available for re-use in the areas where seawater intrusion is a concern. The group will continue to meet with representatives of organizations, agencies and others to hear information on the challenges and opportunities in this watershed.

Jim Manassero is the Assistant to the General Manager for D'Arrigo Brothers, a respected name in growing & shipping for more than 75 years. The next generation is very important to this family owned and operated business. The company was founded by Stephen and Andrew D'Arrigo, two immigrants from Messina, Sicily. Now a third generation D'Arrigo family member runs both East and West Coast operations. They have become nationally known by their Andy Boy label and are continuously involved in agricultural research as well as efforts to promote health and nutrition.

The website is www.andyboy.com/index.html

Chris Bunn is the manager of another family farming business. Crown Packing has been a name in farming in the Salinas Valley since the 1930's. The company now has a fourth generation family member in the business. Chris Bunn's family also operates The Farm, a unique agricultural showcase located in Salinas. The Farm consists of an agricultural education center, demonstration farm, produce stand and recreation destination. The Farm is designed to tell the story of contemporary farming amidst the majestic surroundings of California's Central Coast. After years of shipping vegetables out of the Central Coast, the family realized that county residents have few opportunities to buy fresh local produce even though the best crops in the world were grown right at their doorstep. County residents and visitors have even fewer opportunities to learn about agriculture from those who know it best, those who work in the fields. The Farm was born to create a place where families, school groups, senior citizens, tourists, and others can meet agriculture. The Farm website is www.thefarm-salinasvalley.com/.