



## News from the California Climate & Agriculture Network

July 14, 2014

### California Drought Update

With summer officially begun, we took a look at the U.S. Drought Monitor again to check the status of California's ongoing historic drought. As of July 8th, over one-third (36%) of the state's area is officially in an 'Exceptional Drought' — the highest category of drought there is. Another 43% of the state is under 'Extreme Drought' conditions. Meteorologists say their dire categorization of over three-quarters of California's land is due to the cumulative effects of three consecutive years of dryness and drought. The largest contiguous swath of the state under 'Exceptional' drought conditions stretches from Merced to Santa Barbara and encompasses practically all of the agriculture-rich San Joaquin Valley.



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CalCAN is a coalition of organic and sustainable agriculture organizations that advances policies to provide resources for climate-friendly farming practices.



## California Cherry Crop Down 63% Lowest Since '98

We've known for a while that this year's California cherry harvest would be light, but numbers released this week by USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service are still stunning. According to the NASS survey conducted in the first two weeks of June, California sweet cherry production will be down 63% from last year, with the smallest harvest since 1998. The culprit? A warm, dry winter, with reduced chilling hours. Poor pollination is also believed to have played a role. Scientists have been saying for a while that cherries will be particularly hard-hit by climate change impacts, with average annual crop loss close to 20% projected by 2050. This year's devastating crop failure may, unfortunately, become a more common experience for the state's cherry growers.



## Prime Farmland Lost to Land Idling, Habitat Conversion, Urbanization

With California's final cap-and-trade budget including funding for agricultural land conservation, it is increasingly important to understand the dynamics of farmland trends in the state. The more we know about land use trends, the more we can work to ensure that threatened farmland is adequately protected through the most appropriate tools and policies.

The Farmland Conservation Strategy Act, AB 1961, aimed to do just that. Co-sponsored by CalCAN, the Community

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Alliance with Family Farmers, and American Farmland Trust, the bill would have required counties with significant agricultural resources to inventory their farmland, define their goals and policies to conserve farmland and mitigate for its loss, and publish that information on the county website. However, heavy opposition from the California Building Industry Association led to AB 1961's failure to get out of the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

Despite this setback, a state program provides critical data on the status of farmland in the state. The California Department of Conservation (DoC) recently released the [2008–2010 Farmland Conversion Report](#). This report collects data from the [Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program](#) (FMMP), which uses geographic information systems (GIS) mapping to document changes in the location and extent of California's farmland.

Here, we summarize some of the report's findings and consider their implications for California agriculture.

[Read more...](#)



## **Climate Leader Profile: McEvoy Ranch**

*Many thanks to Courtney White for giving permission to post this excerpt. The full version is available [here](#). Courtney's new book—*Grass, Soil, Hope*—contains many such stories and is available as described under Resources below.*

Can the carbon content of soil double in less than ten years? It has on McEvoy Ranch—a 500-acre organic olive operation—with benefits including increased soil fertility, water holding capacity and carbon sequestration.

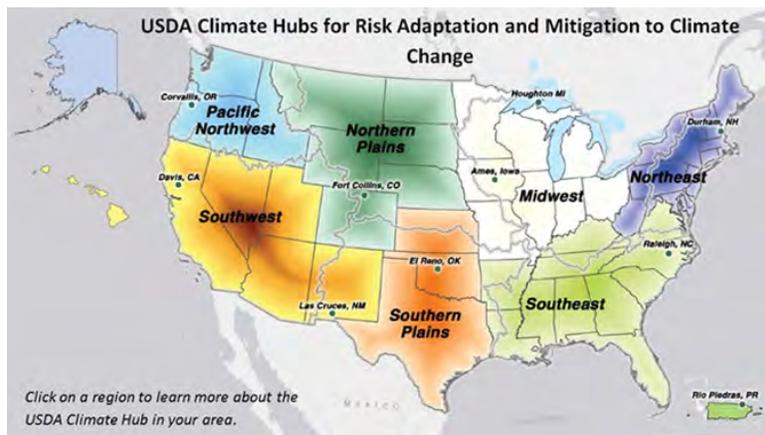
When Mrs. Nan T. McEvoy purchased the ranch in 1991, the infrastructure of the dairy was rundown, but the land itself was in good shape. The abundant water, extensive stands of native perennial grasses and mature woodlands that

characterize the landscape were in good condition. Mrs. McEvoy, an Italian cuisine maven, soon decided that rather than continue with livestock production, her goal would be to produce one of the finest olive oils in the world. With a commitment not to remove any of the trees on the property, she planted olive trees on about 80 acres of the less-steep areas of the ranch.

Dr. Jeffrey Creque came to the project in 1997 to address the question of what to do with the waste products from the ranch's new olive oil mill. With a Ph.D. in rangeland ecology and decades of experience as an organic farmer, he set out to help Mrs. McEvoy accomplish her goal with a goal of his own: raise the carbon content of the soil from less than 2 percent to 4 percent.

Creque and his co-workers embarked on a soil-building strategy that included 1) applying lots of compost, made on the ranch from olive mill waste, livestock manures and landscaping debris harvested on the ranch, 2) no-till cultivation made possible by the maintenance of a permanent cover crop beneath the olive trees, 3) seasonal rotational grazing of sheep through the orchard and 4) riparian area restoration to address downcutting gullies on the property.

*Note that Jeff Creque now devotes his time to directing the [Carbon Cycle Institute](#).*



## Federal Tools for Promoting Agricultural Climate Solutions

*Reposted from the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition.*

On June 25, the one-year anniversary of the President's Climate Action Plan, the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) announced the availability of a document that articulates principles and recommendations for the U.S.

Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to consider as it implements conservation programs under the 2014 Farm Bill that address the nexus between climate change and agriculture.

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## Resources

### **Using agroecological practices to enhance the resilience of organic farms to drought**

Webinar by Dr. Miguel Altieri, Professor of Agroecology, Department of Environmental Science, UC Berkeley. Click [here](#) to watch the 30-minute video.

### **Grass, Soil, Hope: A Journey Through Carbon Country**

This book tackles an increasingly crucial question: What can we do about the seemingly intractable challenges confronting all of humanity today, including climate change, global hunger, water scarcity, environmental stress, and economic instability? Click [here](#) for more information and to order the book.

### **Voices From The Drought**

*Thanks to the California Rangeland Conservation Coalition for this resource.*

Inspired by Caroline Henderson's "Letters from the Dust Bowl," researchers and farm advisors affiliated with the University of California are chronicling the oral stories of farming and ranching communities. The hope is to spread awareness of the impacts of this drought while recording this unprecedented moment in history. It's an easy way to share our stories – and more importantly, it's an easy way to leave a record of what this drought has meant to ranches, farms and families. Click [here](#) for more information.

## Funding

### **California State Water Efficiency and Enhancement Program (SWEEP)**

The California Department of Food and Agriculture is accepting applications for an estimated \$10 million in competitive grants. This is the [first funding](#) to be distributed to agriculture from cap-and-trade revenue.

Funding will assist agricultural operations in implementing water-conservation measures that result in increased water

efficiency and reduced greenhouse gas emissions.  
Applications are due by July 15, 2014.

Click [here](#) for more information and to apply.

## Events

### **Free Info Session on Net Metering Aggregation (NEMA) & Irrigation Efficiency July 24th, 9am-12pm • Fresno**

Net Metering Aggregation (NEMA) is a new electrical tariff that may save you money, whether you have already installed a renewable energy system or are just thinking about it. Attend this free expert panel on NEMA and irrigation efficiency. Click [here](#) for more details and to RSVP.

Also check out CalCAN's NEMA Fact Sheet [here](#).

### **Composting in the Vineyard Workshop July 31th, 8:30am to 12:30pm • Clos du Bois Winery**

This is a workshop on the composting process and monitoring, the use of compost, and its role in soil water conservation, building soil structure, nutrient management, and carbon sequestration. Participants will learn in-depth composting theory and will be provided with tools to help troubleshoot the composting process. It will include a vineyard composting demonstration in the field. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

### **California Adaptation Forum August 19-20, 2014 • Sacramento, CA**

The Local Government Commission and the State of California are organizing the first California Adaptation Forum. The Forum will engage a diverse mix of more than 600 California policymakers, practitioners and leaders. The audience will include elected officials, public and private sector leaders, nonprofits and researchers addressing public health, energy, water, emergency management, agriculture, biodiversity conservation and coastal management issues associated with climate change and adaptation.

CalCAN is organizing and facilitating a session on Aug. 19th from 3:30 – 5:00pm entitled “Growing Resilience: Policy and Practice for Agricultural Adaptation to Climate Change.” Click [here](#) for more information and registration.

### **Quivira Conference November 12-14, 2014 • Albuquerque, NM**

Registration is open for this year's conference entitled "Back to the Future: Celebrating the International Year of Family Farming and Ranching." Click [here](#) for more information.

## **Jobs**

### **Organic Farming Research Foundation (OFRF), Santa Cruz, CA Research Program Director**

OFRF is seeking a Research Program Director to lead the research grants initiatives, the development of analytical products, and overall educational efforts. This new, senior level position provides an exciting opportunity for the right candidate to build on OFRF's body of work, to develop programs that encourage more farmers to adopt organic practices and grow the sector, and strategically help guide the organization through its next phase of growth. The mission of OFRF is to foster the widespread adoption and improvement of organic farming systems. OFRF uses an integrated strategy of grant making and education to meet organic farmers' urgent needs combined with advocacy aimed at moving public policy toward greater investment in organic farming systems.

Click [here](#) for more information.

### **National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC), Washington DC Policy Intern**

NSAC is seeking a Policy Intern for the fall term beginning in mid August to early September, and lasting until December. This position is full time and is located at NSAC's DC office on Capitol Hill. Download the full position description [here](#).

### **California Association of Resource Conservation Districts (CARCD) Project Manager - Capacity Building**

CARCD is seeking a dynamic, creative conservation professional to assist in leading our capacity building effort to strengthen and support the RCDs in meeting the next generation of conservation challenges. This is an exciting time in the RCD world and we are seeking someone who is up for the challenge. The ideal candidate will have a working knowledge of RCDs and/ or locally led conservation and experience working on political, organizational, and/or training projects.

Click [here](#) for more information.