



Lodi District Grape Growers Association *Update*

December 2017

Update: Groundwater Management in San Joaquin County

By Russell Frink, Esq. Spaletta Law PC

In 2014, the California Legislature passed the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) to require that all groundwater basins within the state are sustainably managed by the year 2040. The law sets a series of deadlines that must be met, otherwise the state can take control of groundwater management in the delinquent basin. Three years after SGMA became law, certain deadlines have already passed and others are fast approaching. This article explains those deadlines and how SGMA might affect groundwater pumping in the Lodi Region.

SGMA 101: Under SGMA, local agencies such as cities or water districts may form Groundwater Sustainability Agencies (GSAs) that have authority to manage groundwater within their legal boundary. Once a GSA has been established, it must perform extensive studies of the groundwater basin and create a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (Plan) that describes how the basin will be managed to prevent the amount of water leaving the basin from exceeding the amount entering the basin (a concept called “overdraft”). Examples of management actions that GSAs may include in a Plan are requiring that all wells be equipped with meters, preventing new wells from being drilled, or limiting groundwater pumping to a fixed amount per year.

SGMA Implementation in SJ County Most of San Joaquin County overlies the Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Basin, which includes the eastern two-thirds of the county and western portions of Calaveras County. The Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Basin has been declared critically over-drafted by the Dept. of Water
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The 2017 Growing Season: A Year in Review

By Paul Verdegaal, UCCE Farm Advisor

As the 2017 year comes to a close, my 31st as Viticulture Advisor since Jim Kissler retired, I present a review of the season. It can help to begin the process to make plans for next year as the successes and challenges of the 2017 are still in mind. It was a challenging year to say the least.

The positive aspect of weather this year is that the heavy rains refilled reservoirs and also the soil profile, for the first time in five years. The fall and winter months from October through March brought record level rainfall, not seen since 1997. This helped to recharge the lower root zone and to alleviate some vine stress, at least early in the season, but at some cost of physical damage from flooding, delayed vineyard operations and inundated low lying blocks along rivers and creeks. Several levee and overflows breaks inundated many vineyards well into the spring, some as late as June. The Oroville Dam emergency reminded us that California is always a year away from drought or from flood.

The 2017 season did start out about average on March 12, with respect to Chardonnay budbreak. The warm April and May encouraged strong vine growth. Very rapid shoot growth and very warm tem-

peratures may have been part of the reason for variable berry maturity and smaller than expected clusters, which resulted in yields coming in on the light side of average for most sites and most varieties at harvest. The competition between vegetative growth and fruit development along with environmental conditions may have been enough to lower expected yields; and as always the vines don't read the literature. A surprise hailstorm (similar to 2016) caused some concentrated and severe damage in the area between Armstrong and Eight Mile Road south west of downtown Lodi. A few small areas of damage also occurred outside this affected zone.

As wet as the season started, the soil profile did dry out very quickly; possibly from the combination of strong vine growth and canopy development, warm temperatures, many windy days and very low relative humidity. During the year (as was the case last season) I counted less than a handful of days when there was morning dew present on my truck windshield. Maybe as evidence the wild fires that burned statewide caused so much destruction and smoky conditions again this year.

June started out about average,
Continued on page 5



The President's Message

Jason Eells,
LDGGA President

The 12 Months of Farming...

On the first month of farming my true love gave to me: **More regulations and fees.**

On the second month of farming my true love gave to me: **2 broken levees;** And more regulations and fees!

On the third month of farming my true love gave to me: **3 less labor crews;** 2 broken levees; And more regulations and fees!

On the fourth month of farming my true love gave to me: **4 busted tractors;** 3 less labor crews; 2 broken levees; And more regulations and fees!

On the fifth month of farming my true love gave to me: **5 mealy bugs;** 4 busted tractors; 3 less labor crews; 2 broken levees; And more regulations and fees!

On the sixth month of farming my true love gave to me: **6 spray rigs a running;** 5 mealy bugs; 4 busted tractors; 3 less labor crews; 2 broken levees; And

more regulations and fees!

On the seventh month of farming my true love gave to me: **7 chewed up drip lines;** 6 spray rigs a running; 5 mealy bugs; 4 busted tractors; 3 less labor crews; 2 broken levees; And more regulations and fees!

On the eighth month of farming my true love gave to me: **8 days of scorching heat;** 7 chewed up drip lines; 6 spray rigs a running; 5 mealy bugs; 4 busted tractors; 3 less labor crews; 2 broken levees; And more regulations and fees!

On the ninth month of farming my true love gave to me: **9 harvesters a humming;** 8 days of scorching heat; 7 chewed up drip lines; 6 spray rigs a running; 5 mealy bugs; 4 busted tractors; 3 less labor crews; 2 broken levees; And more regulations and fees!

On the tenth month of farming my true love gave to me: **10 fires burning;** 9 harvesters a humming; 8 days of scorching heat; 7 chewed up drip lines; 6 spray rigs a running; 5 mealy bugs; 4 busted tractors; 3 less labor crews; 2 broken levees; And

more regulations and fees!

On the eleventh month of farming my true love gave to me: **11 Red-blotched vineyards;** 10 fires burning; 9 harvesters a humming; 8 days of scorching heat; 7 chewed up drip lines; 6 spray rigs a running; 5 mealy bugs; 4 busted tractors; 3 less labor crews; 2 broken levees; And more regulations and fees!

On the twelfth month of farming my true love gave to me: **12 Old Vine Zin pull outs;** 11 Red-blotched vineyards; 10 fires burning; 9 harvesters a humming; 8 days of scorching heat; 7 chewed up drip lines; 6 spray rigs a running; 5 mealy bugs; 4 busted tractors; 3 less labor crews; 2 broken levees; And more regulations and fees!

Merry Christmas to all us farmers, who do this job year after year because regardless of the struggles, we honestly love it!

Here's to the next 12 months,
Jason

Notes from the Executive Director

Amy Blagg, LDGGA Executive Director

This time of year always leads to reflection. While the 2017 growing season was a challenging year in the vineyard (thank you Mother Nature!), I feel it was a successful year for LDGGA. Thank you to all of our members and directors for your continued support and involvement throughout the year. Our membership numbers continue to grow and we have had great attendance and participation at Association events and grower meetings all year long.

Thank you to those that joined us at the Harvest Social last month. It was a great opportunity to enjoy some Lodi wine and check out the new agricultural exhibits at the San Joaquin Historical Society & Museum. We are very appreciative of the sponsors and wineries that make this event

possible each year.

Membership renewal invoices were mailed last month. Thank you to all who have already renewed for 2018. Membership applications are available at www.ldgga.org for any growers or businesses interested in joining LDGGA.

Watch your mail for invitations to the 65th Annual Meeting and Dinner to be held on February 22, 2018 at Hutchins Street Square. Notices for our upcoming Labor Law Seminar with Michael Saqui (January 18th) and a First Aid/CPR Training (January 30th) will also be out shortly. More information can be found on page 7 of this newsletter or at www.ldgga.org.

Feel free to contact me, or any of our board members, with suggested topics for grower meetings or employee trainings.

As issues and regulations change, we strive to meet the educational needs of our membership.

Applications for the Jim Kissler Memorial Scholarship and the Michael David Family Foundation Scholarship will be available on the LDGGA website (www.ldgga.org) after the first of the year. Please share with any high school or college students who may be eligible!

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. Enjoy your time with family and friends.

Cheers,
Amy



DPR Finalizes Rules on Ag Pesticide Use Near Schools & Day-Cares

The California Department of Pesticide Regulation has adopted new rules to regulate the use of agricultural pesticides near schools and licensed child day-care facilities. The rules will take effect on January 1, 2018.

The regulation prohibits many pesticide applications within a quarter mile of public K-12 schools and licensed child day-care facilities during school hours, Monday through Friday between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. This includes all applications by aircraft, sprinklers, air-blast sprayers, and all fumigant applications. In addition, most dust and powder pesticide applications, such as sulfur, will also be prohibited during this time.

The regulation also requires growers to provide annual notification to public

K-12 schools and licensed day-care facilities, as well as county agricultural commissioners, of the pesticides expected to be used within a quarter mile of these schools and facilities in the upcoming year.

The regulation and related documents can be found at www.cdpr.ca.gov.

SJ & Delta Water Coalition to Host Classes

The San Joaquin County and Delta Water Quality Coalition will be hosting a variety of classes this winter. Courses include Sediment Erosion Control Plan Self Certification Classes, Nitrogen Management Plan Self Certification Classes, Nitrogen Management Plan Self Certification Continuing Education, Water Coalition Annual Grower Meetings, as well as drop in workshops for assistance with Coalition paperwork. For information contact the Water Coalition (209) 851-4204 or visit www.sjdeltawatershed.org.

AB 1008: "Ban the Box"

By Jizell Lopez, *The Saqui Law Group*

As of January 1, 2018, employers with five or more employees will be prohibited from asking about a job applicant's criminal history until a conditional offer of employment has been made. Additionally, it will be unlawful to consider or provide information about arrests not resulting in a conviction, referral to or participation in a diversion program, or convictions that have been sealed, dismissed, expunged, or eradicated by statute when conducting a criminal background check in connection with an application for employment.

Employers should update applications to remove inquiries related to conviction history (i.e. "ban the box"). Additionally, employers should train hiring managers and third-party investigators on the types of information that may be obtained during a background search for conviction history information by January 1, 2018.

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Resources (DWR) because long-term overdraft has led to significant reductions in groundwater levels throughout the basin. Because of this designation, the Eastern San Joaquin Basin is a “high priority” basin subject to the most aggressive SGMA deadlines.

County Meets GSA Formation Deadline: The first major deadline in SGMA came on June 1, 2017, when all areas overlying a groundwater basin were required to be managed by a GSA whose boundaries do not overlap with another GSA (agencies with shared boundaries, such as a city and the county, cannot act as a GSA for the same area). In San Joaquin County, seventeen different GSAs were successfully formed by the deadline and banded together to form a single management agency called the “Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Authority.” Because the 17 GSAs in the Authority will create a single Plan on behalf of all members, the Plan will be much less expensive than if each member created a separate Plan.

Developing a Plan to Manage Groundwater in San Joaquin County: The Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Authority has hired a consultant who is preparing a water budget model for the basin. The model will estimate all groundwater

use within the basin based on existing land uses. The model will then determine how much runoff enters the basin from sources such as river flows, precipitation, and imported surface water. Using that information, the consultant will estimate total overdraft in the basin.

Older studies of the subbasin have estimated the average annual overdraft at about 100,000 acre-feet. Some believe that the annual overdraft has been reduced due to conservation measures and water supply projects put in place in recent years. This will be flushed out in the new study. For reference, the North San Joaquin Water Conservation District covers about 20% of the subbasin. If the old studies are still correct, the share of annual overdraft in North San Joaquin Water Conservation District is about 20,000 acre-feet per year.

The Groundwater Authority will use the updated water budget model from the consultant as the starting point to create a management Plan. Each member of the Authority will be able to influence how the Plan is drafted and what actions their landowners will be required to take. For example, in areas where surface water is used, growers can likely avoid pumping restrictions by regularly irrigating with surface water and implementing conservation. However, because DWR reviews each Plan, areas with significant overdraft

will need to show that their management actions will reduce or eliminate overdraft over time. The plan will need to include monitoring and reporting to DWR to verify progress.

So far, studies have identified the total number of acres overlying the basin (772,377 acres), the total acres of each specific land use within the basin (for example: 341,907 acres of Irrigated land), and are beginning to create estimates of total demand. However, there is still a significant amount of work that needs to be done before the January 31, 2020 deadline when there must be Plan that has been approved by DWR for the entire basin. Landowners should expect to start hearing more about the details of the proposed plan in late 2018. Each GSA will need for formally approve the plan in 2019.

Understanding How SGMA Will Impact Your Property: The Plan that is developed by January 2020 will govern groundwater use in a large portion of San Joaquin County. To stay informed on Plan developments, visit the Eastern San Joaquin Groundwater Authority’s website or attend their meetings. Information on Plan development and meeting times can be found at: www.gbawater.org.



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then beginning mid-June until early September, there were 25 days with a maximum temperature at, or above 100°F; versus an average total of about 17 days for a season. These occurred in several heat waves through June, July and August.

Even with the heat, powdery mildew did cause some concern for susceptible varieties like Chardonnay across the District and especially into the Delta. Although problems were scattered, they sometimes were severe. Most growers were able to stay ahead of bad problems with the ongoing disease pressure, but extra applications and much sulfur was needed.

Mite problems flared with the severe heat spells of June, July and particularly August. But Vine Mealybug although still spreading, causing concerns, and requiring control, wasn't as widespread a problem as previous years. My amateur entomologist explanation might be the extremely wet soil conditions and intense rainfall did have an effect on overwintering populations and subsequent early season generation development.

Some general observations (no data) come to mind after the record rainfall: 1) More weed problems. 2) Less apparent early and season long Vine Mealybug (VMB) activity. 3) More over all vine growth on vines both young and mature; fewer potassium "deficiencies." 4) Average budbreak start although season was dry (no morning dew), warm and windy.

Harvest began just slightly earlier than average, but later than last year. Some early programs and sparkling wine harvest

began in late July, but harvest began in earnest in around August 10. Some early varieties were mixed in delivery among Pinot grigio, Pinot noir Chardonnay and Sauvignon blanc. But the pace of harvest was moderate even with a light crop and warm temperatures. Mid-season varieties tended to be mixed and hit sugar on a close but relatively moderate pace, thankfully late varieties tended to slow down in ripening it seemed as the harvest progressed.

The quality appears to be good in general. A light rain in mid-October didn't even slow the harvest, as was the case in 2016. There was a slowdown in crop maturity as the harvest passed the halfway point, but by November 1, most late varieties and vineyards were harvested with wineries wrapping up programs.

Cluster counts were mostly average, in many cases, but cluster size and set varied, by variety and location. Some of this variability possibly depends on the erratic temperatures during a rapid bloom period, and from excessive shoot growth as mentioned. In addition research has shown growing conditions and crop load can have a two year carryover effect. Overall berry size was average or only slightly below and cluster size somewhat smaller this year. Little to no berry shrivel was apparent this year as harvest began, but some sunburn and raisining was seen. Sour (Summer Bunch) rot was more than average on thin skin and tight cluster varieties, especially so with Zinfandel. Again growing conditions and vine growth may have combined to exacerbate Sour Rot.

A new concern, or actually an old one that seems to be more of a problem as

grape varieties are now clean of most common Grape Leaf Roll associated Viruses (GLRaV), is Grape Red Blotch associated Virus (GRBaV). It seems to be more subtle in its effects than some of the traditional problem viruses, but in some varieties and some sites can inhibit sugar accumulation. The frustrating part of GRBaV is we don't know if there are pest vectors, where it came from, how long it has been around or if there are different strains

Vine Mealy bug is still spreading through the county, so be aware of any new infestations, often indicated by sooty (black) mold and honeydew staining on bark of the trunk or cordons, or excessive honeydew and waxy secretions in clusters, on spurs or along cordons. A high degree of ant activity in and around vines can also indicate problem spots. Good places to focus on a first look are where birds tend to perch or roost.

The planting of new vineyards and the replanting of old blocks has picked up after a brief lull following lots of activity a few years ago. Some of the activity is in Old Vine Zinfandel vineyards, which is of some concern. The general economy has improved since 2016, and may help market demand, as wine consumption is still growing. But there are weak sectors in variety demand.

For growers and most other businesses, labor and input costs along with the ongoing onslaught of rules, regulations and inflation. The good news is that Lodi is an excellent place to grow grapes for wines of quality and value, sustainably.

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Upcoming Events

Hot Topics in Labor Law

Michael Saqui of the Saqui Law Group will provide an update on new laws that will affect ag employers on Thursday, **January 18, 2018**. Registration will begin at 8:30 am, followed by the meeting at 9:00 am in Jackson Hall of the Lodi Grape Festival Grounds.

LDGGA 65th Annual Meeting & Dinner

The Lodi District Grape Growers 65th Annual Meeting and Dinner will be held on Thursday, **February 22, 2018** at Hutchins Street Square in Lodi. The evening will begin with a wine social at 5:30 pm, followed by dinner at 6:30 pm.

The event will include the annual

business meeting, and recognition of the Jim Kissler Memorial Scholarship recipients. Funds will be raised for future scholarships through the annual scholarship raffle. Dinner tickets are \$65 per person or \$520 for a reserved table of eight.

CPR & First Aid Class

LDGGA is offering a CPR, First Aid and AED (Automated External Defibrillator) course for members and their employees. on Tuesday, **January 30, 2018** at Burgundy Hall of the Lodi Grape Festival Grounds. The course will be held in Spanish (8:00 - noon) and English (12:30 - 4:30). Attendees will receive a comprehensive book of the training provided and a card valid for two years. Training provided by Pan American. Cost is \$40 per person. Snacks and beverages will be provided.

For more information on LDGGA events or to RSVP, call (209) 339-8246 or email info@ldgga.org

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