



VALLEY LAND ALLIANCE NEWSLETTER

**OUR MISSION IS TO EDUCATE AND BUILD ALLIANCES TO PROTECT OUR UNIQUELY
PRODUCTIVE CALIFORNIA CENTRAL VALLEY FARMLAND**

SUMMER 2019

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ALTERNATIVE MANURE MANAGEMENT PLAN ON MAGNESON DAIRY by Jake Magneson



Magneson's Dairy



Jake (left) and Scott (right) Magneson

Smaller dairies are disappearing. My dad, and now myself, need to be ready to tackle any assistance to modernize and update our business' operation and waste management; assistance we have used to complete projects that support our business and the environment. In 2017, though, the first round of the alternative manure management plan, or AMMP, grant took everyone by surprise. To apply and reach the initial deadline you needed to form a plan and estimated costs for the project within about a month. To be competitive with our grant my dad and I decided to put forward the idea of a holistic pasture based system for manure management.

As an organic dairy cattle need to spend 120 days out on pasture each year, and receive 30% of their dry-matter intake from grazing. Our AMMP project's goal was to increase the amount of greenhouse gas (GHG) we keep out of the air and in doing so increase the quality of our community's air and water. Further, we wanted to do so in a way that could keep our dairy in

business; with these goals in mind our project has a few interconnected parts. First, we installed new manure separators to filter and keep solid waste from entering our lagoons. Second, we needed space to begin composting the filtered waste. This took the form of a large cement composting slab, as well as a new pack barn for our animals. Our grant also helped us purchase manure spreaders to get our compost to our pastures, and a composter for the operation. The goal of this system was to create an intuitive long term manure management plan for our dairy site, and we were successful.

Our project reduces GHG emissions by putting carbon back in the soil that, before, would just go back into our lagoons. Our compost is keeping our cows out on pasture longer, and if we need to, we can sell compost to neighboring farms. We're happy to say that we have just finished implementing the last component of the grant, and the entire project is up and running.

ALTERNATIVE MANURE MANAGEMENT PLAN ON MAGNESON DAIRY Cont...

We've worked with CDFA in the past, and we've been happy to be able to work with them again for the AMMP program. It's grants like these that keep smaller dairies in business in a market more and more dominated by massive dairies. Alternative manure management has been a lot more realistic of an undertaking for our dairy, since, at our size, we simply aren't of a scale to make participation in digesters (another large means of managing GHG emissions on dairies) feasible or cost-effective. Because we are able to produce our own compost our business is more secure; we have more sources of income than just unstable milk prices. We can say with more assurance to our employees that we will be in business for years to come; we can be more assured that our way of life is more secure.

We had help to get this far though. To get this grant written and approved we attended several workshops put on by the UC extension, California Dairy Campaign, and CDFA itself, all of which gave us valuable insight and vision for the project as a whole. We also owe our thanks to Valley Land Alliance, California Dairy Campaign, and California Farmer's Union for their letters of support.

VALLEY LAND ALLIANCE IN ACTION



*Jean Okuye, VLA President, boothing at the
2019 Merced County Fair*

The Merced County fair was an opportunity to tell people who we are and the importance of taking care of our land, water and air. This year we developed a color book to hand out which illustrates our own area with Merced River, the land we farm and the waterways. Our booth gave us an opportunity to partner with the Natural Resource Conservation District, a federal agency which started after the dust bowl as a soil conservation district. Presently stakeholders including us are meeting to develop a plan to manage our groundwater. We continue to meet with elected officials to discuss ways we can protect our resources and our food security.

5th Annual Peter and Rochelle Koch Scholarship Presented by Valley Land Alliance Recipient Goes to Local Veteran



Jacob Nesslage (Center), surrounded by VLA board members and community residents at UC Merced's Vernal Pools (14 April 2019).

This year's Peter and Rochelle Koch Scholarship, presented by Valley Land Alliance, was awarded to Jacob Nesslage. Nesslage is a University of California, Merced senior who is studying environmental engineering. In his scholarship application, he speaks about growing up in the Central Valley. After serving in the military, he returned to the Central Valley and to UC Merced, in part, because of a concern with water and environmental issues.

He writes that his specific interests lie in "environmental remediation of contaminants, hydrology, and water and wastewater treatment" with an end goal is "to apply the principles of these subjects to the unique case of the Central Valley. This is the fifth year VLA has partnered with the University of California, Merced to award an undergraduate student whose interests align with that of VLA's mission and speak to the importance of agricultural land protection, environmental stability and water accessibility. He was presented the \$500 award during VLA's Vernal Pools Tour at UC Merced on Sunday, 14 April 2019. The Scholarship Committee would like to congratulate Nesslage and wish him the best of luck!

Introducing Ursula Stock VLA's new Board Member



Ursula Stock: VLA Board member

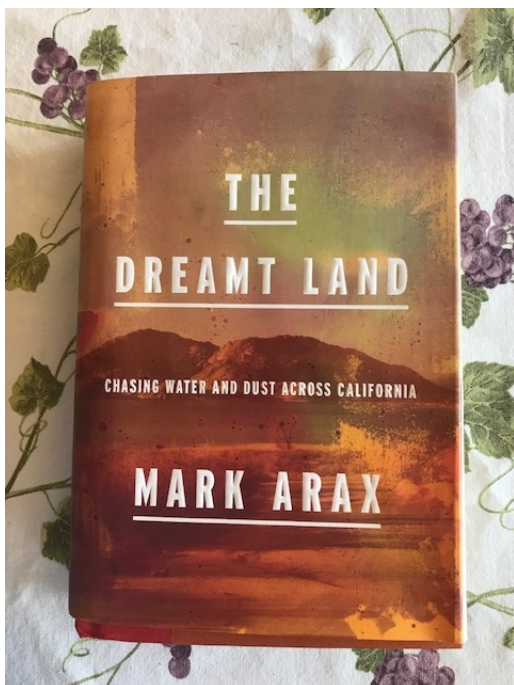
My husband accepted a position at the UC, and we sold our small business of 25 years (in Marquette, MI) to try a little California dreaming. I am new to the Merced area and interested in resource sustainability. My professional background includes biology, teaching, business, food service and production. It is that time in my life to give back, and Valley Land Alliance has a compelling and challenging mission that I support. Hopefully my skill set and energy will help VLA in its mission to preserve and protect premium farm land from development so we can all keep eating good, nutritious food.

Climate Change, Agriculture, and Carbon Farming by Ursula Stock

Dr. James Hansen, a climate scientist who worked for NASA and now teaches at Columbia, estimates that 2,000,000,000 (that's 2 billion) tons of carbon dioxide need to be removed from the atmosphere to cease and start reversing the effects of climate change. According to the EPA, our current practices in agriculture and forestry contribute at least 24% of global carbon emissions and 9% of US carbon emissions. Agriculture is one of the leading contributors to global carbon emissions right now, but we can transform our agricultural practices from a net carbon emitter to net carbon storage, also known as a sink. The technique includes a group of practices known as "carbon farming". Carbon farming removes carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and puts it into the soil, microorganisms and plant matter, where it can be stored for long periods of time. Rattan Lal, a soil scientist from OSU, believes agricultural soils of the globe can meet this challenge. In changing the way we grow food using carbon farming practices, we create a sink to address climate change.

REFERENCE: Green America, www.greenamerica.com

HOT READS



"A vivid, searching journey into California's capture of water and soil--an epic story of a people's defiance of nature and the wonders, and ruin, it has wrought.

.....This is a tale of politics and hubris in the arid West, of imported workers left behind in the sun and the fatigued earth that is made to give more even while it keeps sinking. But when drought turns to flood once again, all is forgotten as the farmers plant more nuts and the developers build more houses.....", quote taken from the inside front cover.

Interested in volunteering with the VLA? Tell us how you would like to help!



Valley Land Alliance

Yes, I share the vision and support the Alliance!

I'd like to help with:

Fundraising____

Letter Writing____

Graphic Design____

Attend Meetings____

Publicity____

Enlosed is my donation

Individual \$35____

Family \$100____

In Honor____

In Memory____

Name (print)_____

Address_____

City, State, Zip:_____

Email_____

Phone_____

Visit our website **valleylandalliance.org** today! We accept donations online through *Paypa*!!!

THE URBAN SPRAWL in MERCED COUNTY



One of the many dangers facing the central valley is the uncontrollable expansion of urban areas known as, the urban sprawl, on our farmland. Pictured above is an urban sprawl in Merced County.

"Most of the high-quality agricultural land in the valley is found along the Highway 99 corridor where it is most vulnerable to development."

-San Joaquin Land and Water Strategy report by American Farmland Trust and Conservation Biology Institute

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