

Cuts to Cooperative Extension and UC research dominate discussions at President's Advisory Commission meeting

By *Steve Nation*

The spring 2003 meeting of the President's Advisory Commission on Agriculture and Natural Resources (PAC) took place April 3-4 in Berkeley. A major discussion topic during this meeting of agricultural, natural resources and conservation leaders was the state budget crisis and deep cuts proposed next year for UC Cooperative Extension and state-funded research.

President *Atkinson* told the commissioners he was surprised to learn in January

that the Governor's budget proposal for 2003-04 contained a 25 percent cut for UCCE. *Atkinson* said he had hoped that Cooperative Extension and research, which absorbed larger spending cuts than other UC programs in the early '90s, would be spared further reductions in next year's budget. The outcome was disappointing, he noted.

The commissioners, led by commission chairman *John De Luca* and vice chairs *Pam Marrone* and *Jack Pandol*, observed that the cuts would decimate county-based CE and seriously undermine UC

agricultural research programs. The commissioners agreed to work together, and with industry and public interest groups, take the message to legislative leaders in Sacramento that the proposed cuts to CE and state-funded research need to be reduced.

Vice President *Gomes* commented that time was of the essence in delivering this message, as the University's budget is now before the Senate Committee on Budget and Fiscal Review and the Assembly Committee on Budget. The commissioners indicated that this will be a

high priority.

Other business at the meeting included adoption of a recommendation that UC take the lead in developing a strategic vision for California agriculture. Introduced by commissioner *Ralph Grossi*, the recommendation asks UC to establish a Center for Strategic California as a permanent initiative to be funded from private and public sources.

The initiative would focus on issues such as competition for land, water management, air and water quality, infrastructure, the role of government, economic cycles and globalization, and environmental considerations.

Atkinson agreed to provide seed money to support a planning effort involving major stakeholders and UC.

Assistant Vice President *Lanny Lund* briefed the commissioners on the UC Delivers project and distributed examples of these one-page success stories. The PAC members agreed that UC Delivers will be an important tool in raising awareness in Sacramento and elsewhere about the benefits and value of ANR programs.

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New brochure shows spectrum of ANR research, extension and outreach programs

The Division has published "ANR at a glance," a 4-color brochure describing the variety of ways that Californians benefit from ANR activities.

Many of the Division's clientele are familiar with one aspect of ANR. They may have contact with their local farm advisor and the specialist for the commodity they grow, the 4-H Youth Development Program, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), or master gardeners. But many people are unaware of the broad spectrum of research, extension and outreach programs that are delivered by UC Cooperative Extension, the Agricultural Experiment Station, and the Natural Reserve System.

The brochure, designed by *Davis Krauter* and *Peggy O'Brien* and written by *Pam Kan-Rice* and *Steve Nation*, is intended to show Californians, through photos and brief text, how the people and programs of ANR serve their communities.

"We hope you will distribute the brochures widely to educate clientele, policy makers and the general public about UC and the resources they risk losing to state budget cuts," said Vice President *Gomes*.

Brochures have been distributed to regional and county directors. If you would like to order copies of the brochure, [click here](#).

To view pictures of the brochure, [click here](#).



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PAC's spring meeting *(from p. 1)*

PAC meetings also provide an opportunity to brief commissioners on a major issue and the contributions of ANR research and extension. Topics covered in past meetings have included water quality and supply, agricultural sustainability, competition for land, agricultural genomics and international trade.

The focus topic for the spring meeting was air quality and agriculture: challenges in the San Joaquin Valley. Presenters included *David Crow*, executive director for the San Joaquin Valley Unified Air Pollution Control District; *Robert Flocchini*, professor of meteorology and resource science at UC Davis; and *Randal Southard*, professor of soil genesis and morphology at UC Davis.

The PAC members (and their affiliation) are:

- *Charles Ahlem*, Hilmar Cheese Company
- *Don Bransford*, California Rice Commission*
- *Frieda Rapoport Caplan*, Frieda's, Inc.
- *C. William Chandler*, Chandler Farms
- *Graham Chisholm*, The Nature Conservancy of California
- *Ralph De Leon*, Samco, Inc.
- *John De Luca* (PAC chair), Wine Institute
- *Daniel Dooley*, Dooley & Herr, LLP
- *Mark Emmerson*, Sierra Pacific Industries*
- *Robert Gallo*, E & J Gallo Winery
- *Donald Gordon Jr.*, Agricultural Council of California
- *Ralph Grossi*, American Farmland Trust
- *Jeri Hansen*, Napa Valley Vintners
- *Edward (Ted) Horton*, CGCS, THC-Ted Horton Consulting
- *John Kautz*, John Kautz Farms
- *John Lacey*, Lacey Livestock
- *Pamela Marrone* (PAC co-vice chair), AgraQuest, Inc.
- *Ken McCorkle*, Agricultural Industries Group, Wells Fargo Bank*
- *Karen Miller*, Royal Oak Farms
- *Jack Pandol Jr.* (PAC co-vice chair), Grapery
- *Len Richardson*, California Farmer magazine
- *Richard Rominger*, A.H. Rominger and Sons
- *Fred Ruiz*, Ruiz Products, Inc.
- *Rita Schmidt Sudman*, Water Education Foundation
- *Bob Vice*, BLV Agribusiness Consultants, Inc.
- *Paul Wenger*, California Farm Bureau Federation*

*New commissioners appointed Jan. 1.

ANR welcomes ...

Darren Haver has been appointed watershed management advisor for Orange and San Diego counties.

Haver is not new to CE—he's been the water quality program rep for Orange County for the past four years. In that role, he assisted

row-crop and nursery growers in the San Diego Creek/Newport Bay Watershed (Orange County) with an agricultural nutrient management program. He recently also began working with the County of Orange in developing water-quality programs for publicly owned landscapes.

"The past few years have enabled me to realize the significant impacts that both agriculture and urban landscape systems have on Orange County's vast natural resources," he said. "To reduce or eliminate the impacts on natural resources, we must proactively work on identifying sources of pollution while at the same time developing effective mitigation strategies."

Haver earned a PhD in botany and plant sciences at UC Riverside in 1998 and a bachelor's in ornamental horticulture at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona, in 1993. His dissertation focused on the ethylene-releasing compound, ethephon, and its effects on hormones controlling apical dominance in petunia. While at UCR, he also conducted research on the production of a flowering greenhouse crop utilizing tension-based computer-controlled irrigation to minimize leaching, thereby reducing runoff.

Haver is based in Orange County and can be reached at 714/708-1613 or dlhaver@ucdavis.edu.



Darren Haver

Call for proposals

Desert Research and Extension Center is soliciting proposals for new and continuing research for July 1, 2003, to June 30, 2004.

Proposals are due May 16. For more information and proposal forms, contact *Debra Driskill* (760/356-3061; email: dldriskill@ucdavis.edu). Or visit http://danrrec.ucdavis.edu/desert/home_page.html.

Did you know...

From 1997 to 2001, master gardeners trained by UC experts in home horticulture and pest management donated 890,238 hours of service to the public, according to a study by Fresno County environmental horticulture advisor *Pam Geisel* and master gardener coordinator *Leslie Feathers*.

If these knowledgeable volunteers had been paid \$12 an hour, their contributions to their fellow Californians would add up to more than \$10.6 million, Geisel says.



Here are edited samples of county-based UC Delivers stories posted on ANR's website. Stories from campuses in the next issue.

Rangeland Watershed Program

UC helps ranchers develop water quality protection practices for over one million acres of rangeland

More than 350 ranchers have attended UC-developed workshops to learn how to create water quality plans for over one million acres of rangeland and help protect the quality of the state's water resources.

Livestock grazing and other ranch management practices may cause soil erosion and pollution from waste that can affect vital natural resources such as nearby streams and lakes, aquatic habitats and even waterways miles downstream.

Water quality plans help ranchers identify potential environmental problems, consider alternative management practices, analyze costs, set timetables for implementing new solutions and select monitoring tools. UC's workshop, developed by Cooperative Extension specialists and advisors, has become a model for addressing water quality on California's central coast and elsewhere. Contact *Mel George* (530/752-1720).

El Dorado County

UC research and extension show landowners how to wage war on yellow starthistle, a noxious weed

CE advisors have teamed with local groups to teach landowners and land managers how to control the invasive and noxious yellow starthistle weed.

These efforts, using findings derived from UC research, have improved forage production, boosted biodiversity, protected wildlife habitat and increased recreational opportunities on more than 12,000 acres of range and forest land in El Dorado County. Yellow starthistle, a serious problem for ranchers and suburban homeowners, can grow to a height of 5 feet and produce 150,000 seeds per plant. It is poisonous to horses, its spine can injure animals and humans, and it crowds out native plants. Contact *Bill Frost* (530/621-5509).

Sonoma County

CE ergonomic project lowers risk of winegrape pickers getting on-the-job back injuries and losing income

With the help of a team of UCCE scientists based at UC Davis and in Napa and Sonoma counties, many winegrape harvest workers will soon be at far less risk of getting a back injury that keeps them off the job.

Investigating how to reduce pickers' ergonomic risks, the team tested smaller picking tubs designed to lighten workers' loads. The payoff: reported pain and symptoms for back injuries and other musculo-skeletal problems were reduced five-fold. Growers are benefitting as well, since the costs associated with these injuries total \$2.3 million annually.

Several vineyard companies already use the smaller tub and because of its popularity with workers and managers, its use is likely to spread throughout vineyards in the counties. Contact *Rhonda Smith* (707/565-2621).

UC Consumer Economics Extension

Money Talks teaches teens how to manage their finances and avoid having their dreams derailed by debt

With youngsters getting access to credit at a much earlier age than their parents did, learning basic personal finance skills can help them avoid unwise decisions that may take years to overcome, financial experts say. But few schools offer this instruction. A team of UCCE advisors created an appealing curriculum that lets teens gain the knowledge they need to improve their money management skills. *Money Talks: Should I Be Listening?* addresses the issues teens indicated were most important: simple ways to save, car buying and car insurance, spending personality and smart shopping. The curriculum includes a bilingual website where they can get hands-on experience in financial management and ask questions online. Contact *Paula Rene Fitch* (760/352-9474).

Riverside County

UCCE helps low-income families with young children plan more nutritious meals and stretch food dollars

Healthy eating habits and exercise are essential for kids to grow physically and mentally. Diet and exercise can also help adults lower their risks for chronic illness. Yet many low-income families don't have access to information about the relationship between diet, physical activity and health.

CE's Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program tailored a curriculum based on current nutrition research for low-income families with young children. Last year in Riverside County, over 600 of these families completed the six-hour course. They learned how to plan meals, shop wisely, comparison shop to get more out of their food dollars, read food labels, use less salt and eat more nutritiously. Contact *Chutima Ganthavorn* (909/683-6491, ext. 223).

Kern County

UC research shows that pistachios provide West Side growers with a profitable option for managing salinity

Thanks to nine years of UCCE research on pistachios, West Side growers grappling with salty soils and drainwater have a new, profitable crop alternative to cotton, wheat and sudan-grass hay: salt-tolerant pistachios. The salt tolerance threshold for California's high-yielding pistachios was previously unknown. Research has revealed that pistachios can be irrigated with drainwater as salty as that tolerated by cotton without losing yield.

Growers now have the option of selecting a permanent crop to grow on land previously suitable only for rotations of lower-value field crops. This option also benefits statewide water conservation and helps growers maintain sustainable farming operations by recycling drainage water. Contact *Louise Ferguson* (559/646-6541) or *Blake Sanden* (661/868-6218).

UC Berkeley center co-hosts nation's largest childhood obesity conference

The number of kids who are seriously overweight is "increasing in every racial group, every age group, both sexes and all socioeconomic levels," according to *Pat Crawford*, CE nutrition specialist and co-director of the Center for Weight and Health at UC Berkeley. She calls it an epidemic.

"Childhood obesity is not a simple problem—it is multifaceted, and to think there is a simple solution is naive," notes Crawford. Current work in the field takes various approaches. (See sidebar below.) Not surprisingly, practitioners are finding it hard to keep up-to-date on all of the resources now available for treatment and prevention.

To fill that information gap, the Center for Weight and Health teamed up with the California Department of Health Services to organize the 2003 California Childhood Obesity Conference, held earlier this year in San Diego.

"We wanted to provide one place in which you could really find out what works and what doesn't work in the area of childhood obesity," Crawford says.

It turned out to be the largest conference on childhood obesity to date, attracting 1,100 people interested in research and prevention, education and treatment strategies for obesity in pre-school and school-aged children. The attendees came from California, other states, and a few from overseas.

Over three days in workshops and plenary sessions, 75 of the leading researchers and educators in childhood obesity shared their research, tools and practical experiences in a variety of environmental, family and clinical approaches.

Many of the presentations are on the center's newly redesigned, information-rich website: <http://www.CNR.Berkeley.EDU/cwh/index.html>.

U.S. Surgeon General *Richard Carmona*, one of four keynote speakers, explained his approach: "Government can do some things, particularly at the local school level, but not everything. So much of the solution to the obesity problem is up to each individual, each family and each community."

Presenters at the 30 workshops and mini-plenary sessions included Crawford and UCCE advisors *Cathi Lamp*, *Gloria Espinosa-Hall*, *Mary Fujii* and *Diane Metz*, who talked about CE activities to reverse trends in childhood obesity. CE specialist and Center for Weight and Health co-director *Joanne Ikeda* and Western Human Nutrition Research Center research chemist *Nancy Keim* discussed promoting positive body image and good eating habits in children of all sizes. EFNEP director *Barbara Sutherland* led a panel that included UC Davis specialist *Marilyn Townsend* and explored socioeconomic status, food security and obesity. UCB staff research associate *Rita Mitchell* led a session on family and parenting approaches to obesity prevention. UCD professor *Kathryn Dewey* spoke on breastfeeding as the first step in preventing overweight in children.

Other topics: the science and politics of sweetened beverages and childhood obesity, obesity prevention in schools, limiting TV viewing, and research, policy and community action to change the food and activity environment.

"People came up to us to let us know what an impact the conference was having on them," says *Gail Woodward-Lopez*, the center's associate director and a presenter at the conference. "This is not one of those conferences where people come and listen and then go back to the same old thing."

The Center for Weight and Health's academic staff are leaders nationally on issues related to weight, health and food security. The center is in the College of Natural Resources.

Regents tour postponed

Due to difficult budget times and the crush of budgetary decisions to be made in May, the UC Regents tour of San Joaquin Valley agriculture has been postponed to conserve resources. The tour was scheduled for May 28-30.

COMING UP



You can access information on hundreds of ANR-related events by visiting the online ANR calendar at <http://calendar.ucanr.org/>

ANR REPORT

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES: (ANR). Serving California through the creation, development and application of knowledge in agricultural, natural and human resources.

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Crawford: approaches to obesity have evolved

At first, nutritionists thought that if parents would work on feeding their children in a different way, that could solve the obesity problem, says the Center for Weight and Health's *Pat Crawford*. Research then expanded to include the influence of genes on body shape and size. The next thrust was an intensified drive to educate medical providers about the important role they can play in prevention and treatment. Current evidence points to the necessity of recognizing all of the above influences and changing environmental factors in communities to promote healthy food and activity choices, she says.