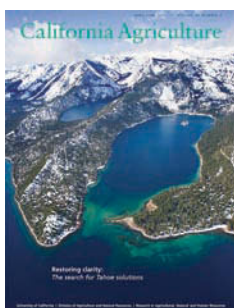


WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The editorial staff of *California Agriculture* welcomes your letters, comments and suggestions. Please write to us at calag@ucop.edu or 1111 Franklin St., 6th floor, Oakland, CA 94607. Include your full name and address. Letters may be edited for space and clarity.



April-June 2006 issue

Assessing the health of forests

Regarding the April-June 2006 issue ("Restoring clarity: The search for Tahoe solutions"): "Nutrients flow from runoff at burned forest site in Lake Tahoe Basin" (page 65) uses the standard "unhealthy forest" examples — either composed of crowded, small trees or clogged with dead matter. Both examples are seral stages, which, if left to their own devices, would become mature forest, the crowded forest through competition and the over-littered forest through decomposition and reincorporation into new growth. Due to fire potential, humans proscribe both types; both arise mainly after logging or human-caused fires. We have scant knowledge of prehuman forest dynamics, but there are "old growth" examples where fire is not a factor for hundreds of years at a time.

The next article ("Erosion control reduces fine particles in runoff to Lake Tahoe," page 72), suggests that controlled burning has unacceptable erosion problems and mechanical clearing is expensive, terrain-limited and less suited to the individual property owner. Block isolation, fire prevention and selective harvest with attention to forest floor detail all address the "unhealthy" forest issue.

A modified mechanical mastication ("Mechanical mastication thins Lake Tahoe Forest with few adverse impacts," page 77) of fuel-loaded forests is to put all dead and thinned matter on the ground, where it decomposes most quickly to mulch and retains some moisture so as to be less flammable.

Stephen Diliberto
Graustark Agricultural Institute
Miama, Okla.

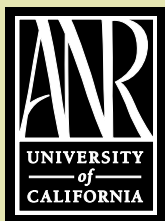
Stunned by Tahoe issue

I am stunned by the April-June 2006 issue of *California Agriculture* ("Restoring clarity: The search for Tahoe solutions"). Where is the agriculture? Lake Tahoe is a beautiful place, and there are certainly issues surrounding the mixed use of the basin, but what is the relationship of Lake Tahoe to production agriculture in California?

Last time I checked, there weren't many crops grown in the Tahoe Basin, yet 38 pages and the cover are donated to the topic. As a UC graduate, and one who has spent most of my life in production agriculture, I look to *California Agriculture* as a resource to help me increase production, lower costs, and be a better steward of a precious natural resource. Isn't there a more appropriate place to put the issues surrounding Lake Tahoe than a publication whose title suggests its emphasis is on agriculture?

Chuck Nichols
Nichols Farms, Hanford

Editor's response: California Agriculture's subtitle (at the bottom of the cover of each issue) is "Research in Agricultural, Natural and Human Resources." Our published manuscripts reflect these three major branches of the UC Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources. In the 60 years that the journal has been publishing, California has seen vast growth and diversification, and ANR has grown and diversified in response to the needs of the state. Today the articles in the magazine include natural resources and human resources research. However, agricultural research is still a major, and highly important, component.



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