



# The Cotton Chronicle

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March 2024

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## Industry Calendar

**Train-the-Trainer Workshops**  
March 19, 21, 25, 27, 2024

**Lockout/Tagout Webinar**  
March 18, 2024

**CCGGA Annual Meeting**  
May 14, 2024

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## NCGA Recognizes Ashley, Whitelock as Distinguished Service Award Recipients

Last month, the National Cotton Council held their Annual Meeting in Orlando, Florida. The event provides the opportunity to honor representatives who have gone above and beyond for the cotton industry.

During the National Cotton Ginners Association Board of Directors and Annual Meeting portion of the event, two well-deserving representatives were awarded the NCGA Distinguished Services Award. This year, Dr. Derek Whitelock, Research Leader at the USDA Cotton Ginning Research Lab in Las Cruces, New Mexico was awarded with the first Distinguished Service Award. Dr. Whitelock has been instrumental in assisting the western region with critical research in areas such as air quality, roller ginning efficiency and sticky cotton among various other projects the Association demands his help on. In a surprise move, a second Distinguished Honor Award was then presented to Harrison Ashley, Vice President of ginners services for the National Cotton Council and the Executive Vice President for the National Cotton Ginners Association. Harrison has been a staunch advocate for the cotton industry in the federal arena, tackling various regulatory efforts proposed by government agencies, and providing support for research needs for the various cotton growing regions throughout the nation. We would like to congratulate Dr. Derek Whitelock and Harrison Ashley on their well-deserved NCGA Distinguished Service Award recognition.

## Bureau of Reclamation Announces Initial Water Allocations

The Bureau of Reclamation has announced initial 2024 water supply allocations for Central Valley Project water users. Water supply allocations are based on an

estimate of water available for delivery to Central Valley Project water users and reflect current reservoir storage, precipitation, and snowpack in the Sierra Nevada. "The wet hydrologic conditions we experienced during the 2023 water year left most of our reservoirs in good shape as we progressed to the 2024 water year," said California-Great Basin Regional Director Karl Stock. "Precipitation totals this water year started off slowly, evidenced by the fact we were well below average at the time of the Feb. 1 water supply forecast. Since that time, several storms have boosted the Sierra Nevada snowpack, bringing us to near normal conditions for Northern California. It is likely we will see the water supply benefits from these storms in the March 1 forecast update. At the same time, we must be prepared for and respond accordingly to the possible re-emergence of drier conditions."



## EPA Finalizes New PM2.5 Air Quality Standard

The Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized a significantly stronger air quality standard for fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) from a level of 12 micrograms per cubic meter to 9 micrograms per cubic meter. "This final air quality standard will save lives and make all people healthier, especially within America's most vulnerable and overburdened communities," said EPA Administrator Michael S. Regan. Along with strengthening the primary annual PM<sub>2.5</sub> standard, EPA is modifying the PM<sub>2.5</sub> monitoring network design criteria to include a factor that accounts for proximity of populations at increased risk of PM<sub>2.5</sub>-related health effects to sources of air pollution. In June 2021, EPA announced it would reconsider the December 2020 decision to retain the 2012 standards because the available scientific evidence and technical information indicated that the standards may not be adequate to protect public health and welfare. EPA considered the available science and technical information, as well as the recommendations of the independent advisors

comprising the Clean Air Scientific Advisory Committee and CASAC PM expert panel when making the decision on whether to strengthen the PM standards. Association President/CEO Roger A. Isom commented, “For many areas in California, this is devastating news. Already facing the toughest air quality regulations on agriculture in the world, this change to the PM2.5 standard will require an even further regulatory noose on agriculture’s neck. We are concerned that 9 micrograms may not be achievable in the San Joaquin Valley.”



Figure 1: Based on 2020-2022 air monitoring data, the dark green areas on the map indicate counties that do not meet the annual PM2.5 standard of 9 ug/m3. View the data (pdf). (courtesy U.S. EPA)

### **California Slams Door on Another Tool for Cotton**

**Nichino America, Inc.** has officially withdrawn the proposed label for PQZ, the highly effective and safe pesticide that is used throughout the country on cotton to control aphid and whitefly. That’s the fifth chemical that every cotton grower can use in the United States except California. Nichino submitted the label to the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (CDPR) in January of 2019. The review process was held up by the Groundwater Protection Program within CDPR due to potential risk to groundwater. Despite being registered federal with the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and passing federal EPA groundwater standards, PQZ could not pass the California water quality standard. Nichino tried to offer far reaching mitigation measures including applying only every other year, reducing label usage to a single crop, or even imposing specific restrictions in high leaching zones. CDPR would not budge. Nichino and the Association met with CDPR on numerous occasions, but CDPR still would not budge. Consequently, Nichino’s withdrawal of the registration ends the five plus year struggle, and now joins aldicarb, dicrotophos, chlorpyrifos and sulfoxaflor as tools that are available to every other cotton grower in the country, but us.

### **Cal/OSHA Considering 4<sup>th</sup> Draft of Walking/Working Surfaces Regulation**

This month the Cal/OSHA Standards Board will convene an Advisory Committee to consider the 4<sup>th</sup> draft of its Walking/Working Surfaces Regulation. These revisions are necessary to meet Fed-

eral OSHA requirements and prevent falls. The **Association’s President/CEO Roger A. Isom** was asked by Cal/OSHA to sit on the committee and will be participating. Walking/Working Surfaces include but are not limited to:

The draft proposal would revise and update several safety orders,

- Floors
- Stairways
- Steps
- Roofs
- Ramps
- Runways
- Aisles
- Scaffolds
- Dock plates
- Step bolts

including definitions, guardrails and toeboards, guard rails and fall protection at elevated levels, personal fall protection systems, falling object protection, fall protection training requirements, roof and floor openings, service pits, and yard surface openings, stair railings and handrails, and stairways. Agricultural buildings including cotton gins, tree nut hullers and processors, and packing houses all will be affected by the proposed changes. The latest FedOSHA requirements were adopted in 2017 and Cal/OSHA must adopt these changes.

### **USDA to Issue Final Emergency Relief Payments**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is issuing final Emergency Relief Program (ERP) payments totaling approximately \$306 million to eligible commodity and specialty crop producers who incurred losses due to natural disasters in 2020 and 2021. USDA’s Farm Service Agency (FSA) will begin issuing these additional payments to eligible producers this month. “In the natural disaster recovery process, every little bit of available assistance helps offset the financial toll that these catastrophic events have taken on agricultural producers, their families, and their operations,” said FSA Administrator Zach Ducheneaux. “With remaining funds after initial factoring, USDA was able to put additional money back in the hands of the producers as we strive for the most fair and equitable distribution of available funds to as many producers as possible.” Recipients of the additional payment are limited to those producers who received ERP Phase One payments from FSA that were calculated based on crop insurance indemnities. Initially, ERP Phase One payments to producers who were indemnified through Federal crop insurance, were subject to a 75% payment factor. FSA has since determined that adequate funding exists to provide an additional 3.5% ERP Phase One payment to producers who had crop insurance increasing the overall payment factor to 78.5%. These additional ERP Phase One payments are subject to FSA payment limitation provisions as outlined in the ERP Phase One fact sheet. Because ERP Phase One payments to producers of noninsured crops covered by FSA NAP policies were originally paid at 100%, there will be no additional payments issued to these producers for 2020 and 2021 losses. The *Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act, 2021* provided \$10 billion in assistance to agricultural producers impacted by wildfires, droughts, hurricanes, winter storms and other eligible disasters experienced during cal-

endar years 2020 and 2021. In 2022, FSA implemented ERP Phase One, which delivered \$7.5 billion in payments to commodity and specialty crop producers. For Phase One, ERP used a streamlined process with pre-filled application forms, leveraging crop insurance indemnities or Noninsured Crop Disaster Assistance Program (NAP) payments on file with USDA. Separately, through the Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2023 Congress allocated approximately \$3.2 billion in funding to cover necessary expenses related to losses of revenue, quality or production losses of crops. Enrollment is ongoing for ERP 2022, which covers losses to crops, trees, bushes and vines due to qualifying, calendar year 2022 natural disaster events including wildfires, hurricanes, floods, derechos, excessive heat, tornadoes, winter storms, freeze (including a polar vortex), smoke exposure, excessive moisture, qualifying drought and related conditions.

**Status of Major Central Valley Project Reservoirs (as of Feb. 19)**

Reservoir	Storage Percent of Capacity	Storage (acre-feet)	Percent of 15-Year Average
Trinity	70	1,709	116
Shasta	87	3,946	128
Folsom	62	607	120
New Melones	82	1,977	138
Millerton	63	330	110
San Luis (federal share)	93	896	137

Based on current hydrology and forecasting, Reclamation is announcing the following initial Central Valley Project water supply allocations for the San Joaquin Valley:

**South-of-Delta Contractors**

- Irrigation water service and repayment contractors south-of-Delta are allocated 15% of their contract total.
- M&I water service and repayment contractors south-of-Delta are allocated 65% of their historical use, or public health and safety needs, whichever is greater.
- San Joaquin River Settlement Contractors and San Joaquin Exchange Contractors’ water supply is based upon settlement/exchange of claimed senior water rights. The 2024 water year is determined as non-critical, as defined in their contracts, which allows for 100% of their contract supply.
- In addition to this allocation, Central Valley Project contractors south-of-Delta have been approved to reschedule approximately 184,000 acre-feet of unused allocated water from 2023 for use in 2024.

**Friant Division Contractors**

Friant Division contractors’ water supply is delivered from Millerton Reservoir on the upper San Joaquin River via the Madera and Friant-Kern canals. The first 800,000 acre-feet of available water supply is considered Class 1; Class 2 is considered the next amount of available water supply up to 1.4 million acre-feet. The Friant Division water supply allocation is 60% of Class 1 and 0% of

Class 2. In recognition of recent efforts to develop a south-of-Delta drought plan, Reclamation is reserving approximately 83,000 acre-feet of water currently in San Luis Reservoir that will contribute to a drought reserve pool and is not considered as a volume of water available for water supply allocations. As the water year progresses, changes in hydrology, actions that impact operations, and opportunities to deliver additional water will influence future allocations. Reclamation will continue to monitor hydrology and may adjust basin-specific allocations if conditions warrant an update.

**Association’s Priscilla Rodriguez Joins Water Blueprint Board**

At this past month’s Board of Directors Meeting for the **San Joaquin Valley Water Blueprint**, the Association’s Assistant Vice President **Priscilla Rodriguez** was elected to the Board. **Ms. Rodriguez** brings many years of water experience with her from the time she worked for the **Friant Water Authority and the Latino Water Coalition** to the many years she has worked here at the Association. The Water Blueprint commented in its press release that her expertise on water policy will be invaluable as the Blueprint continues its efforts to address the water challenges facing the San Joaquin Valley. She joins new elected board member **Daniel Hartwig** with the California Fresh Fruit Association. Newly elected Chairman **Eddie Ocampo** said “We are thrilled to welcome Daniel Hartwig and Priscilla Rodriguez to the board. Their insights and perspectives will be invaluable in guiding our work and shaping the future of water management in the San Joaquin Valley. The Water Blueprint for the San Joaquin Valley is a collaborative initiative bringing together stakeholders from agriculture, industry, government, and non-profit organizations to address the region’s water challenges. Through research, advocacy, and community engagement, the Water Blueprint works to develop sustainable water management solutions that support economic prosperity, environmental stewardship, and social equity in the San Joaquin Valley.



**DMV Placing Holds on Trucks Not Registered in Clean Truck Check Program**

Last month, the California Air Resources Board sent out a notice to fleet owners notifying them that a DMV hold has been placed on their fleet’s registrations if the fleet owner has not registered under CARB’s Clean Truck Check program. The Clean Truck Check program requires that fleet owners of heavy-duty trucks 14,000 GVWR and over to register their business and fleets into a new CARB database. For the agricultural industry, trucks will need to be inspected either through Periodic Smoke Inspection Program (PSIP) testing, or via On-Board Diagnostic systems within the truck already once per year. If a truck passes the compliance check, the fleet owner will be provided a certificate of compliance that must be uploaded or shown to DMV in order to

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renew that specific vehicle's registration for the new year. If the truck fails either of those tests, the fleet owner will be given 60 days to conduct maintenance on the failing components of the vehicle and retest. Additionally, each truck will be charged an additional \$30 per year by CARB in order to maintain compliance with the rule. The notice that was sent out earlier this week details that non-CARB Database registered vehicles now have a DMV hold on their equipment, and fleet owners should visit the Clean Truck Check database and report their fleet. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the Association's Chris McGlothlin ([chris@cggga.org](mailto:chris@cggga.org)) for more help.

## **2024 Regional Training Workshops**

The Association is conducting the 2024 regional Train-the-Trainer workshops! This year the California Cotton Growers Association, The Zenith, Fresno County Farm Bureau, Nisei Farmers League, California Fresh Fruit Association, and the Western Agricultural Processors Association are partnering to provide **Tractor Safety Train-the-Trainer**. Beginning in March, the trainings will be covered in English and Spanish and will hold seven on site tractor safety workshops in the following areas: Fresno, Tulare, Wasco, Madera, Turlock, Arbuckle, and Chico. The Lockout/Tagout, Fall Protection and PPE safety topics will be covered via webinar. These workshops are for owners, managers, supervisors, safety personnel or **those who are responsible for training**. Each workshop attendee will be provided with a binder that includes the information needed for understanding the rules, regulations and conducting effective safety training. Each attendee

will also receive a certificate of completion for those that participate in the full class. In addition, the association will be conducting **Lockout/Tagout, Fall Protection and Personal Protection Equipment** webinars in the spring. Details will follow on those special events. The cost per training is \$60 per person for members and \$80 for non-members. For information on registering for the workshops and/or webinars please see flyer or visit our website at <https://www.agprocessors.org/>

**Save the Date!**

**Tuesday, May 14, 2024**

**It is almost time for the 2024  
California Cotton Ginners and Growers  
Association Annual Meeting.  
Registration will soon be open.**