



The Cotton Chronicle

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September 2025

Volume 35, Issue 09

Industry Calendar

CA Cotton Research
Meeting
Sept. 9, 2025

CCGGA Board
Meeting
Sept. 10, 2025

Association Keeps Industry Issues at the Forefront

Both Congress and the State Legislature may have been on recess recently, but that didn't stop the Association from making sure our issues remain front and center. On the Federal side, the Association held or attended meetings with **Congressman Adam Gray, Congressman David Valadao, and Congressman Vince Fong**. Issues discussed included water, federal agency staffing at USDA and its numerous agencies, air quality, and immigration. On the state side, the Association hosted or met with **Senator Melissa Hurtado, Senator Monique Limon, Assemblyman Heath Flora, Assemblyman Jeff Gonzalez, Assemblywoman Dr. Darshana Patel and Assemblywoman Esmeralda Soria**. Issues discussed included water, immigration, future year elections, and in meetings that were not fundraisers, we discussed the three bills currently sponsored or co-sponsored by the Association including **AB 732 (Macedo)** on abandoned orchards and vineyards, **AB 1046 (Bains)** on agricultural waste reporting, and **SB 279**

(McNerney) on composting, as well as the critical issue of Cap & Trade reauthorization and the need for inclusion of FARMER funding.

Sites Reservoir Advances

The Sites Project Authority (Authority) announced two major advancements that move the Sites Reservoir Project (Project) closer to construction. Significant contractor outreach progress and two key environmental permitting milestones indicate that the Authority's goal of breaking ground on Sites Reservoir by the end of 2026 is within reach. The Authority is reviewing a short list of qualified applicants for the Construction Manager at Risk (CMAR) contract to construct the reservoir and roads portion of the Project. The CMAR procurement process began earlier this year, and the Authority is now requesting detailed proposals from the short list applicants and anticipates selecting a CMAR contractor later this year. "The CMAR selection process, which is done through a qualifications based competitive procure-

ment, ensures we select the highest ranked team that will provide the best value for the Project and local community," said **Jerry Brown, Executive Director of the Sites Project Authority**. "The first phase shortlisted from a group of premier internationally recognized contractors, while this second phase allows the Authority to dive deeper into each firm's approach to efficiency, cost

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certainty, local community compatibility, and project management for a project of this magnitude.” Additionally, on Wednesday, the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) issued the biological opinion for the construction of the Project, a key permit that analyzes potential impacts of the Project on federally listed endangered and threatened species. The biological opinion also addresses the Project’s construction effects on three species listed as candidates, should they become listed under the Federal Endangered Species Act. In addition, on July 7, the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) issued the Master Streambed Alteration Agreement for the construction of the Project. This is a key permit required to modify local waterways in the construction site during Project construction. USFWS’s biological opinion and the CDFW Master Streambed Alteration Agreement represent two of a handful of key permitting milestones that further authorize the construction of the Project by state and federal resource agencies. In late 2024, the Project received two Incidental Take Permits (ITPs) from CDFW, authorizing the Authority to build and operate Sites Reservoir in compliance with California’s comprehensive endangered species laws. The ITPs ensure the Authority will fully mitigate any potential impacts to the state’s endangered and threatened species throughout construction and operation. Sites Reservoir will increase water supply throughout California and provide, for the first time, environmental benefits by storing water specifically to support native wildlife and their habitat during drought periods. The Project will provide an additional 1.5 million acre-feet of storage capacity, substantially improving the state’s water flexibility, reliability, and resiliency in drier years.

The Cotton Board Approves Cotton Incorporated’s 2026 \$85.1 Million Budget

The Cotton Board recently held its 2025 Annual Meeting in Austin, Texas along with Cotton Incorporated’s Board of Directors. During this meeting, board members serving the Cotton Research and Promotion Program (the Program) reviewed, analyzed, and voted to recommend Cotton Incorporated’s 2026 budget of \$85.1 million to the Secretary of Agriculture. The recommended budget for 2026 reflects a four percent decrease from the 2025 budget. Even with reduced funding, Cotton Incorporated unveiled a bold new strategy designed to grow global cotton demand, strengthen market share, and enhance grower profitability. Addressing both Boards in the General Session, **Cotton Incorporated President & CEO, William Kim-**

brell, said the 2026 plan and budget includes initiatives that reflect a major strategic shift for the Program. One notable shift is the merger of Cotton Incorporated’s Consumer Marketing and Global Supply Chain Marketing divisions into a single Marketing Division. “Streamlining these divisions into a single Marketing division puts the cotton brand first and allows us to focus our marketing efforts on the brands, retailers, and manufacturers most influential in cotton purchasing decisions,” said Kimbrell. The plan also includes continued commitment to innovation through Agricultural Research, and Research & Development to accelerate opportunities for cotton in the market across the value chain.

Association Hosts Assemblywoman Soria

The Association hosted **Assemblywoman Esmeralda Soria (D-27)** at the office as the legislature is about to reconvene to finish the 2025 legislative session. The Association has made an all-out push to incorporate funding allocations specifically for tractor and equipment replacement related programs administered by the San Joaquin Valley Air District (SJVAPCD). Attendees in-



cluded **Association President/CEO Roger Isom, Assistant Vice President of Technical Services Chris McGlothlin, Air District Executive Director/APCO Samir Sheikh, Morgan Lambert – Deputy APCO of the Air District, Mark Montelongo – Director of Policy and Government Affairs for the District**, as well as **Manuel Cunha** from the **Nisei Farmers League**. The Association also discussed the ongoing efforts to find solutions for rat infestation in the westside of the Valley.

It was announced late last month that the Air District would be pausing the application process of their FARMER program due to the already existing backlog of projects, and the limited funding that is currently allocated for 2025. The fight for additional FARMER funding has been looped into the ongoing Cap & Trade reauthorization discussion, and the Association has been working to keep the funding request in the forefront of the legislature’s mind. With only one month left in this year’s legislative session, it’s time to put the pedal to the metal. Stay tuned for updates.

2025 Preliminary Mapped California Cotton Acreage

The Pink Bollworm Program under the California Department of Food and Agriculture has released their preliminary mapped numbers for 2025, including the Pima and Upland acreage splits. Final acreage numbers for California put Pima at 91,012 acres and Upland at 15,968 acres for a total of 106,968 acres statewide. This represents a 38% decrease in pima acreage and a 30% increase in California upland as compared to last year. Overall, California cotton acreage is down 33% compared to 2024 production.

CALIFORNIA COTTON ACREAGE			
2025			
<u>San Joaquin Valley</u>	Pima	Upland	TOTAL
Kern	6,289	145	6,434
Kings	44,158	3,595	47,753
Tulare	76	1,917	1,993
Fresno	19,992	1,621	21,613
Madera	0	198	198
Merced	20,459	886	21,345
San Joaquin	0	0	0
Subtotal =	90,974	8,362	99,336
<u>Sacramento Valley</u>			
Glenn	0	1,757	1,757
Subtotal =	0	1,757	1,757
<u>Southern California</u>			
Imperial	38	878	916
Riverside	0	4,971	4,971
Subtotal =	38	5,849	5,887
Overall Totals =	91,012	15,968	106,980

CDPR Identifies Potential Chemicals of Regulatory Concern

Over the past couple of years, the California Department of Pesticide Regulation (CDPR) has worked on its new effort to regulate pesticides under the auspices of an effort known as Sustainable Pest Management (SPM). According to CDPR, SPM is “a holistic, whole system approach to managing pests in agriculture and other managed ecosystems and urban and rural communities that builds on the concept of integrated pest management (IPM) with broader consideration of human health and social equity, environmental protections and economic vitality.” CDPR developed the SPM Roadmap to guide the agency for the next 20 years to achieve sustainable pest management. In the roadmap CDPR states as their number one goal “by 2050 California has eliminated the use of Priority

Pesticides by transitioning to sustainable pest management practices”. What are “priority pesticides? According to the SPM Roadmap, “priority pesticides” are pesticide products, active ingredients, and groups of related products within the context of specific product uses or pest/location use combinations that have been deemed to be of greatest concern and warrant heightened attention, planning, and support to expedite their replacement and eventual elimination. Now CDPR has identified a list of pesticides of regulatory concern. We believe this to be the initial list of chemicals for SPM, as it meets their criteria presented in the SPM Roadmap. The Association has cross referenced with products used on cotton that we will have to fight to protect and keep available.

Cotton
2,4-DICHLOROPHENOXYACETIC ACID, CHOLINE SALT
ABAMECTIN
ACEPHATE
ALUMINUM PHOSPHIDE
COCONUT DIETHANOLAMIDE
DIMETHOATE
DIURON
ETHEPHON
MALATHION
METHOMYL
MYCLOBUTANIL
NALED
OXAMYL
PHORATE
PROPARGITE
PYMETROZINE
S,S,S-TRIBUTYL PHOSPHOTRITHIOATE
SEDAXANE
TRIFLURALIN

Court Finds in Favor of Agriculture in Latest Ruling

In early 2024, the Association joined with other ag groups in filing an amici curiae in the *Pacific Coast Federation of Fishermen’s Association, et al., v. Nickels, et al.*, case regarding the scope of the irrigated agriculture exemption in the Clean Water Act from NPDES permitting requirements. The lawsuit specifically targeted the Grasslands Bypass project jointly operated by the US Bureau of Reclamation, San Luis Delta-Mendota Water Authority and the Grassland Water District. Drainage water from the area enters the Grassland Bypass Channel and conveys the water into the San Luis Drain. It then travels through the drain to the Mud Slough.

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We are happy to report we have received the Ninth Circuit's opinion in this case, and it was a complete win for agriculture. The following is a summary of the Court's Opinion provided by our legal counsel, **Ms. Tess Denham of Kahn, Soares & Conway:**

- The Court rejected PCFFA's reading of the exemption for irrigation return flows as applying only to flows that are entirely from irrigated agriculture and that any commingling of return flows with pollutants from other sources would negate the exemption and require an NPDES permit.
- The Court found that PCFFA's reading, as a practical matter, would render the exemption "a dead letter."
- The Court upheld the district court's conclusions and finding that the exemption applies to irrigation return flows that do not contain additional "point source discharges from activities unrelated to crop production."
- The opinion contains important analysis of Congress' intent with respect to the CWA and the inclusion of this exemption in the CWA. In short, the exemption "exempts" point source discharges from irrigated agriculture (e.g., discharge from the San Luis Drain to Mud Slough) if other "point source" discharges are not commingled. It does not mean that there can't be other sources of pollutants from non-point sources commingled in the drain, and nonpoint source discharges are not regulated under the Clean Water Act.
- After establishing the scope of the irrigation return flow exemption, the Court then evaluated Plaintiff's alleged sources of commingled pollutants. The Court found all these sources to be nonpoint sources thus the commingling of these sources did not negate the irrigation return flow exemption.

Holding of the Court: "We hold that the irrigated agricultural exemption applies when return flows do not contain additional point source discharges from activities unrelated to crop production."

As a practical matter, this means that irrigation return flows discharged to waters of the United States through a point source are exempt from Clean Water Act NPDES permitting requirements if other non-ag point source discharges of pollutants are not commingled. Nonpoint sources such as groundwater seepage and road runoff continue to be exempt as nonpoint sources. However, if an agricultural drain accepts discharges/pollutants from another point source (e.g., wastewater effluent, municipal stormwater discharged through an outfall, industrial point source discharge), the exemption will not apply and an NPDES permit would be required for the commingled discharge. Accordingly, entities that manage and operate agri-

cultural drains need be sure that other sources are not authorized to discharge to agricultural drains.

Participants in the filing of the amici curiae were **Association of California Water Agencies, California Cotton Ginners and Growers Association, California Farm Bureau Federation, California Fresh Fruit Association, California Rice Commission, East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition, East San Joaquin Water Quality Coalition, Family Farms Alliance, Kern River Watershed Coalition Authority, Kings River Conservation District, Kings River Water Quality Coalition, Western Tree Nut Association, Western Growers Association, and Westside Water Quality Coalition**

Cotton Jassid: A New Threat to U.S. Cotton

According to the National Cotton Council (NCC), the cotton jassid (*Amrasca biguttula*), also known as the two-spot cotton leafhopper, has recently emerged as a serious pest in U.S. cotton production. This insect, native to Asia, feeds on the undersides of leaves and causes "hopperburn" – yellowing, curling, and browning of leaves. Severe infestations can reduce yields by up to 50% in cotton, okra, eggplant, and other crops. It was first found in Florida last December, but now has been detected in Georgia, Alabama, and South Carolina. While it is unknown exactly how it got to the US, it has been found on nursery stock on infested hibiscus plants at big box retail outlets in Florida, Louisiana, and Texas.

Why Should Producers Be Concerned?

- Cotton jassid is small and hard to detect directly; plant injury is often noticed first.
- It has already spread rapidly across the Southeast cotton belt.
- Once established, it can be difficult to manage, particularly given its ability to survive on a wide range of host plants.

The National Cotton Council, in coordination with USDA APHIS, university entomologists, and state/regional producer organizations, is actively working on monitoring, identification, and management strategies.

What Should Producers Do?

- Scout fields weekly for symptoms of hopperburn.
- Report suspected infestations immediately to your state department of agriculture.
- Be cautious with nursery plants that could harbor the pest.
- Stay updated through your local Extension office.