



# CENTRAL VALLEY FARMLAND TRUST LEGACY

## ON THE ROAD TO MADERA A Q&A with CVFT Executive Director Bill Martin



**Q: What’s this we are hearing about CVFT expanding its work to include Madera County? Why now? And why not before now?**

A: CVFT has been asked to assist in the effort to mitigate for the loss of valuable farmland resulting from the completion of the high speed rail.

**Q: How is Madera different from or similar to other valley counties CVFT works in and how will this impact the success of farmland conservation there?**

A: There is money readily available to fund ag conservation easements (ACE) for willing landowners who voluntarily wish to preserve their farm for future generations. Funding is problematic in other counties.

**Q: What does CVFT have to offer Madera County that the county was lacking before this expansion in your territory?**

A: The ability to work closely with the Madera County Farm Bureau, available funding, and a seasoned and nationally accredited agricultural land trust to act as another tool in the farmland conservation tool box.

**Q: What do landowners in Madera County need to know to explore working with CVFT?**

A: The most important aspect in deciding whether or not to place an ACE on one’s property is having full and complete information on the implications and process. ACEs are not for everyone or every property. We meet directly with each landowner and make a deliberate and

concerted effort to impart comprehensive information and provide timely and accurate responses to their questions. The final decision rests with the landowner. CVFT assists in the decision process, but will NEVER pressure a landowner if it is not the right decision for all parties.

**Q: How do ACEs serve as a ‘tool’ for farmers?**

A: 1. The landowner can preserve the land as a testimonial to his or her ancestors who originally settled the land and would want it to remain in agriculture. 2. The proceeds from the sale of an ACE can be used to pay down debt and or acquire additional property. 3. As an estate planning tool enabling the transfer of assets among siblings prior to the death of the landowner. 4. As a tax planning tool by donating all or a portion of an ACE.

**Q: Is working in Madera County a forecast of the future? Does CVFT have plans to continue expanding its geographic service area? Why or why not?**

A: We do not have definitive plans to expand beyond the current five service area counties. Having said that, we are most interested in helping preserve prime irrigated farmland in the Central San Joaquin Valley for future generations. If we are asked to assist in that effort and it includes areas beyond our current service area, we will give it full consideration.

**Learn more: visit our [www.valleyfarmland.org](http://www.valleyfarmland.org) or call us (916) 687-3178**

## PROTECTING FARMS THAT FEED YOUR FAMILY

### SAVE THE DATE!

- Big Day of Giving: May 3 (24-hour online event)
- Bokisch Vineyards – Thank You Event: June 5
- Sacramento County Farmer’s Market Booth: TBD
- An Evening at the Carnegie Event: October 1

### CURRENTLY SERVING

San Joaquin, Sacramento, Stanislaus, Merced, and Madera Counties

### OUR MISSION

The mission of the Central Valley Farmland Trust is to work with landowners and conservation partners to preserve agricultural lands in the California Central Valley for future generations.



# EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Bill Martin



## When you put a Herculean effort into

building something (like CVFT) and you've established a date certain to "retire," an interesting philosophical and emotional dynamic prevails. Make no mistake, this a unique situation for which I've concluded must be dealt with in a deliberate and proactive manner.

I actually announced my retirement in February 2015. Why two years in advance? I concluded that we needed a forward thinking plan to effectively deal with my transition, as well as the transition of CVFT Associate Director Susan Hooper. How often does a thriving concern replace 100 percent of its full-time employees? Not very often! Add to that the fact Susan and I have been here since the beginning of CVFT. I therefore submit we are not normal "employees." We both hold a strong sense of ownership and pride.

Conventional wisdom suggests that if you've announced your retirement, you've already retired. Trust me when I say that couldn't be further from the truth. Susan and I agreed that if CVFT will survive and thrive after we depart, we must first ensure its "drive train" is operating at optimal performance levels. This process commenced in earnest at last year's board planning retreat and will continue through this year. We have made significant enhancements and with the board's clear and deliberate direction will complete the remaining upgrades by year end.

I am flattered by some of your comments suggesting they will not be able to replace me. Ostensibly you are correct. But in fact the process we've adopted to find a replacement was never intended to replace me. It is intended to find someone who will take CVFT to a whole new level.



When I started in 2005, CVFT was merely a name. Since that time we (a collective WE) have put CVFT firmly on the map and built a solid reputation in the land trust community. The transition process we are following has been deliberate and proactive. A very capable executive search firm has been engaged to facilitate a high-level search for the new and improved executive director (ED).

With specific purpose in mind, the new ED will be presented with a robust and aggressive vision to move CVFT to the upper echelons of the land trust world. This will create a strong sense of ownership, essential for the new ED to become fully immersed in what will ultimately be the next success story of CVFT. I plan on being around to hear it told and thank you for allowing me to be around to tell the old story.

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# INTRODUCTION TO CONSERVATION TILLAGE

Jeffrey Mitchell Ph.D., UC Davis



No-till seeding of corn into wheat stubble. Five Points, CA

**A quiet, almost imperceptible revolution** has been taking place in recent years at a growing number of farms in California's Central Valley. This revolution – known as conservation agriculture – began over 40 years ago throughout much of the Midwest, Great Plains and Southeastern parts of the United States; across Canada; and in very large parts of the South American countries of Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay. It has now come to California and is doing nothing short of completely transforming farming practices having been used during much of the past 80 years throughout the region with so much success.

The three fundamental principles of conservation agriculture include:

- 1) A deliberate reduction in soil disturbance that is achieved by no-till seeding.
- 2) The goal of preserving crop residues on the soil surface to reduce soil water evaporation.
- 3) An emphasis on enhancing biological diversity in the overall production system.

Making changes in traditional production practices to achieve these goals also saves farmers money – typically on the order of \$50 to \$150 per acre per crop. Over the past 10 years, the use of conservation agriculture principles in dairy silage production systems has increased from about 1 percent to over 40 percent today, with increases in these core practices also occurring in processing tomatoes.

Conservation agriculture also has the added benefits of performing a number of what are called “ecosystem services” to farmers, and in a broader context, to society. It provides the ability to store or sequester more carbon in the soil, to improve overall soil function or quality, and to

reduce dust and emissions from diesel fuel use. Research that has been conducted by the University of California's Cooperative Extension in the San Joaquin Valley has also recently shown that soil water evaporation during a summer crop growing season can be reduced by about 16 percent – or about 4 inches – when high residue, reduced disturbance conservation agriculture practices are used. This research has also shown that long-term use of the conservation agriculture practices of no-tillage and cover cropping can more than double soil carbon levels.

California farmers who've adopted conservation agriculture techniques often talk about making large, wholesale changes in their overall farming approaches when they transitioned to the new system. They point out that it is not just a shift in the technical aspects of farming,

**“Making [these] changes... saves farmers money – typically on the order of \$50 to \$150 per acre crop.”**

but that they also spend a lot more time in the fields working to understand the new system than they have done with their prior, traditional practices. They add that they now have to be involved in parts of the operation that normally fell under the responsibility of their employees and that they find themselves spending a lot of time in the field observing and getting opinions and advice from...

*Continued on Page 6*

# INDUSTRY INSIGHT – THE CALIFORNIA DROUGHT

A Q&A WITH INDUSTRY EXPERTS



Dorene "Dee Dee" D'Adamo  
State Water Resources  
Control Board Member

How can we educate the common citizen on what drought really means?

The drought affects all water users, whether residential, agricultural, commercial, industrial, or fish and wildlife. These past four years of drought have steeled all of us. During one of the worst water years in recent history in 2015, many junior water rights holders had little or no water supplies, resulting in hundreds of thousands of acres being fallowed. The environment suffered, particularly threatened and endangered species. The Department of Water Resources has an excellent portal ([saveourwater.com](http://saveourwater.com)) with tips on water conservation. The impacts of drought and climate change are here to stay. We need to work together to plan for and accommodate these changes to ensure a reliable water supply for our state.

Do we have the right political structure in place to adequately deal with water in the future?

California has thousands of local water agencies that have jurisdiction over a wide swath of water issues that range from ground water management, supply, and delivery of surface waters, to wastewater treatment, production of recycled water and the delivery of safe drinking water to communities across the state. We have seen local, state and national entities increasingly working together, rather than at cross purposes, collaborating on water management solutions on a regional scale that increase self-reliance.

What are the top management strategies that California should focus on to successfully manage water in the future?

The California Water Action Plan - lays out the state's challenges, goals and decisive actions needed to put California's water resources on a safer, more sustainable path. Updated in February 2016, it reflects the lessons learned from the prolonged drought and highlights the significant improvements made in the state, in areas such as establishing a groundwater management approach. The plan makes it clear that there are no silver bullets and we need to employ an 'all of the above' strategy. We have to make conservation a way of life, we need more storage, we must have more recycling, ecosystem protection, wetland restoration, stormwater capture and reuse projects, and desalination projects. All Californians should have access to safe, clean, affordable water.

What group, entity or person could affect the most change for California's water?

Gov. Edmund G. Brown Jr. has worked tirelessly to take on water issues and assert a vision on how water will be used, allocated, reused and prioritized to accommodate challenges brought on by both climate change and population growth over the next 50 years. Some highlights of his leadership: Water Bond – funding for water supply infrastructure projects; ecosystems and watershed protection and restoration; and drinking water protection. Groundwater Legislation – He signed bills creating a framework for sustainable, local groundwater management, the first in California's history. Drought Task Force – this interagency committee provides a coordinated assessment of the state's dry conditions and recommendations on current and future state actions. CalWaterFix Effort – The State Water Board is currently facilitating the California WaterFix Project (Water-Fix) water right change petition hearing to request changes in water rights to add points of diversion of water on the Sacramento River for the WaterFix.



**David Cehrs**  
Ph.D. Hydrology (retired)  
Citrus Farmer  
President, El Rio Reyes  
Conservation Trust  
Fresno County



**Breanne Ramos**  
Executive Director  
Merced County Farm Bureau

It is a very slow process but must start with: water is a finite resource, renewable annually, variable through time and space; it is also physically impossible to have infinite growth on a finite resource. The current drought is only one of these water variabilities we, as a society, will experience and endure in the future. But this information must come to the average Californian, first, through their water bills, either domestic or agricultural, and then any other news sources that are willing to explain this.

While we have received recent rains and some relief, it has not pulled us from the depths of this long-term drought we are facing. Educating our urban neighbors about the impacts of the drought will require an evolution as a community. Agriculture has done an exceptional job of adapting to produce more with less, so too should our citizens. The general population must build a connection between the drought and the cost/accessibility of their food & fiber as what is produced in the unique fields of California is a necessity.

Politicians typically react to crises and do not normally deal with long-term planning. But if California's politicians do not start planning for a future where water demand exceeds supply, which sadly has been happening since the 1950s, and figure out a way to reduce demand to match supply, California will be in a perpetual drought.

The Department of Water Resources and the more autonomous State Water Resources Control Board are the true governing bodies that wield extensive power. Each of these agencies are obligated to base the decisions on that of existing state and federal mandates, with regard to how surface and groundwater is used in the state. Board member and local representative DeeDee D'Adamo has worked hard to build consensus among local leadership to strengthen the voice and ultimately guide solid water management for the Central Valley, but much more can be done.

Because California's water demand exceeds its supply, the only true way to successfully manage water in the future is to lower demand to match supply. This will require using all available water management methods and tools including water: conservation, reuse, recycle, recharge, rainwater capture, direct potable reuse of waste water, desalinization and water pricing.

Building ample surface water storage is a key component to managing for future water use. Our most recent storage was built decades ago, yet our population has continued to grow exponentially. The only way this is possible is for local leadership to cohesively and openly work together to identify a centralized effort. Private investment is likely to be necessary, but with a centralized approach and a regional effort, we are more likely to progress towards more storage.

If each of us does several or many small things to reduce our water use it will have an overall large impact. It has to start at a personal level and expand from there.

The most change can easily be done by elected officials, State Water Board, California Fish and Wildlife and other such agencies and officials. We have to continue to educate individuals in these positions to ensure our way of life is continued in California as we are entrusted to feed the nation. This also means building coalitions at the local level to educate our elected officials and back up their statements with action when necessary. Farm Bureau continues to be a major uniting force. Participation in our activities to educate and respond on matters that effect all levels of agriculture.

# BOARD DIRECTOR MESSAGE

Mike Darnell



**As a reader of this newsletter you have** probably seen our tagline, “Preserving farms that feed the world.” While we still believe that is part of our mission, we also believe that our mission includes “Protecting farms that feed our families.”

In 2016, Central Valley Farmland Trust is taking steps to connect farms with the families they feed. We look forward to seeing you at local and regional events to bring together our supporters and the farms we protect. CVFT believes that participating in local events will increase regional support and help them understand how we help farmers permanently protect family farms from development while growing food that feeds our families and the world.

This is important in order for the organization to become sustainable. Our work doesn’t just protect farms through agricultural conservation easements (ACEs), but makes the connection that our work ensures that farmers will continue to grow food that feeds our families for the foreseeable future.

We also ask that you help promote local food by asking your produce manager at your local supermarket to see if they can get produce from local farmers in the region. Also, if you have a favorite local restaurant, you can ask if they source their ingredients locally.

If you are a current member, we thank you for your support. If not, and our mission resonates with you, we ask that you consider becoming a member today.

Our goal is to permanently protect 20,000 acres of agricultural land by 2020. We appreciate your support in reaching this goal. If you have any ideas or suggestions on how we can better communicate with you, please contact our office at (916) 687-3178.

*Continued from Page 3*

people who are more experienced in conservation agriculture systems.

One of the ways in which California farmers have been accessing information about conservation agriculture alternatives has been through the grassroots efforts of California’s Conservation Agriculture Systems Innovation (CASI). Formed in 1998, CASI has grown to over 2,300 members – farmers, private sector, Natural Resources Conservation Service, university, and diverse agency representatives – who work together to develop and provide information related to conservation agriculture principles, practices and systems.



Farmers and crop consultants examining soil in strip-till conservation agriculture corn field. Merced, CA

In close conjunction with its diverse partners, CASI is now working to create a statewide network of regional hubs of farm demonstration evaluations of conservation agriculture and improved agricultural water management systems that will further extend information and the growing experience base that may lead to broader successful adoption.

**“Formed in 1998,  
CASI has grown to  
over 2,300 members”**

Based on trends in the expansion of conservation agriculture production practices and systems in many other regions worldwide, as well as the intensifying constraints that farmers face with water, energy and labor shortages, it is inevitable that far wider use of these techniques is on the horizon in California.

Additional information about CASI and conservation agriculture is available at <http://casi.ucanr.edu/>.

TOTAL ASSETS:

\$5,584,115

# BIG DAY OF GIVING **MAY 3**

24 HOURS TO GIVE!  
MIDNIGHT MAY 3  
[BIGDAYOFGIVING.ORG](http://BIGDAYOFGIVING.ORG)

WITH YOUR SUPPORT,  
CENTRAL VALLEY  
FARMLAND TRUST  
PLANS TO RAISE  
\$10,000 DURING BIG  
DAY OF GIVING 2016  
TO HELP US PROTECT  
20,000 ACRES BY 2020.

## MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Starting at midnight (12AM) on May 3, the Sacramento region will come together for one BIG Day of Giving – a 24-hour giving challenge that lifts up lives and makes this the place we call home. In its third year, they have raised nearly \$9 million for nonprofits serving our region engaging over 23,000 donors in just one day!

**WITH YOUR SUPPORT, CENTRAL VALLEY FARMLAND TRUST PLANS TO RAISE \$10,000 DURING BIG DAY OF GIVING 2016 TO HELP US PROTECT 20,000 ACRES BY 2020.**

Visit [www.bigdayofgiving.org](http://www.bigdayofgiving.org) and make a tax-deductible gift of as little as \$25 to us or to any of the nearly 600 participating nonprofit organizations in our region. You can also help us win additional dollars by competing in Facebook prize challenges. You will have 24 hours to make your donation. All giving will end at 11:59 p.m. on May 3.

**BE SURE TO LIKE US ON FACEBOOK** 

*PLEASE SHARE THIS EVENT WITH YOUR NETWORK  
AND ASK YOUR FRIENDS TO DO THE SAME!*

## BIG DAY OF GIVING APPRECIATION EVENT

HOSTED BY BOKISCH WINERY  
SUNDAY, JUNE 5

For all of our members and friends who give \$300 or more on May 3 during our BIG Day of Giving, you will be invited to a special event just for you at Bokisch Vineyards. This luncheon event is our way of showing our appreciation for supporting us in our farmland protection efforts. Come enjoy award winning wine and a delicious meal with us – let's celebrate!



*In 2015, Bokisch Vineyards made the 101 Best Wineries in America list! You will not want to miss this exclusive event – plan to give BIG on May 3 and join us June 5 at Bokisch Vineyards. To learn more about Bokisch Vineyards, visit [valleyfarmland.org](http://valleyfarmland.org) & click on the Events tab.*



# CENTRAL VALLEY FARMLAND TRUST

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