



**Butte County  
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**Butte County Water  
Commission**

George Barber, Chair  
DC Jones, Vice-Chair  
Larry Grundmann  
Mark Kimmelshue  
John Lane  
Brad Mattson  
Ryan Schohr  
David Skinner  
Ernie Washington



**Our Mission:**

*“To manage and  
conserve water and  
other resources for  
the citizens of Butte  
County”*

**WaterSolutions**

December 2012

**Butte County’s  
2012 Farm City  
Celebration Tour**

By Vickie Newlin

Each year, the citizens of Butte County are invited to join in the commemoration of agriculture through the Farm City Celebration. This year observed their 32<sup>nd</sup> year of “sowing seeds of understanding” between urbanites and life on the farm.

One of the many programs provided during the week-long event is a guided bus tour that highlights a few Ag operations from within the county. This year the bus tour sold enough tickets to fill five full size buses with folks eager to learn about various agriculture productions.

Stops on the tour included a visit to Bertagna

Son Kissed Vineyards; the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex; Westgate Hardwoods, Inc.; PM Dusters; and Darling Veterinary Clinic as they cared for the large animals owned by Berton and Carol Bertagna.

The Bertagna’s welcomed us to their home on Hegan Lane which also serves as the headquarters for their vineyard and other farming operations. Berton Bertagna explained that he and his wife took the family’s winemaking, which began centuries ago in Italy, and turned it from a hobby to an expanded organic wine production. Their wine is offered for sale locally at Raley’s and other fine stores.

The Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex begins along the Sacramento River about 90 miles north of Sacra-

mento. The Complex consists of five national wildlife refuges and three wildlife management areas that comprise over 35,000 acres of wetlands and uplands in the Sacramento Valley.

The bus tour took us to the Llano Seco Unit Public Use Area, which is home to many species of waterfowl including pairings of sand hill



cranes and bald eagles.

Westgate Hardwoods is located in Durham and they specialize in architectural millwork creating custom cabinetry, wood flooring and other custom furniture pieces. They use many types of

*(Continued on page 3)*



***Merry Christmas, Happy New Year And Seasons Greetings***

***From Paul, Vickie, Christina and Lynne***

## **Butte Basin Water Users Association**

By Paul Gosselin

In 2012, the Butte Basin Water Users Association (BBWUA) quietly went out of existence after twenty years of serving the region. We honor the legacy of the BBWUA. The BBWUA was formed by local groundwater users, water districts, water purveyors, and local governments. The BBWUA was formed during the 1986-1992 drought to help address adverse impacts from water transfers within and outside the basin. Butte County was an original member of the BBWUA. The BBWUA filled an important leadership role in water resource education, outreach and programs. Over the years, the BBWUA addressed water resource planning and management related to protecting groundwater resources, and managing the Basin's surface water and groundwater resources.

A key achievement of the

BBWUA was the development of the Butte Basin groundwater model. The Butte Basin groundwater model is a regional groundwater resource model that continues to be a valuable analytical tool. The BBWUA played an important technical and leadership role in assessing Butte County's groundwater conditions. The Groundwater Conservation Ordinance, Chapter 33 of the Butte County Code, called upon the BBWUA to report annually to the Board of Supervisors on groundwater conditions. The BBWUA fulfilled this obligation through the Annual Groundwater Status Report. Over the years, the Department assumed more responsibility for producing the Annual Groundwater Status Report and formally was designated as the reporting agency in 2010. Throughout its existence, the BBWUA provided a forum for members to stay informed and coordinate on water resource issues.

The BBWUA was formed prior to the establishment of the county Water and Resource Conservation Department. Over time, the department developed water re-

source programs including advisory committees. In Butte County, the Water Commission and the Technical Advisory Committee provide the governance structure to address water resource issues. At the regional level, the Northern Sacramento Valley Integrated Regional Water Management Governing Board and Technical Advisory Committee are tackling the development of an integrated regional water management plan. Recently participation in BBWUA has declined substantially and in 2012, the BBWUA members voted to dissolve the organization. The decision to bring the BBWUA to an end was not an easy one to make. But the members did so with the acknowledgement and deepest appreciation to those who formed and were part of it. The local, grass roots leadership paved a pathway that brought us to where we are today. The region owes a debt of gratitude to the Butte Basin Water Users Association.

wood, including oak and walnut that has been salvaged from various sites throughout the north state. They dry and cure the wood to perfection prior to making their end products. Each piece is stunningly crafted to display the wood's unique hues and



grain patterns.

PM Dusters is a local crop-dusting operation that includes seeding, fertilizing, and pest control and frost control for various



types of crops and orchards. Owner Wade Porter explained the advantages of using helicopters and planes for the application of specific products to aid in growing quality crops such as rice, row crops and nuts over seven counties in Northern California.

The group was treated to a visit with local veterinarian Gary Darling as he cared for the Bertagna's large animal livestock. Dr. Darling travels from farm to

farm as Darling Veterinary Mobile Clinic and offers horse and livestock owners a full service animal facility on wheels.

The Farm City Celebration is held every year in the fall. I highly recommend taking the tour next year. To receive more information in that regard contact the Butte County Farm Bureau and ask to get on next year's distribution list.



### Fall Groundwater Level Measurements

The 2012 fall groundwater level measurements for Butte County were taken the third week of October by the Department of Water Resources (DWR). By early November this data was available online from CASGEM (<http://www.water.ca.gov/groundwater/casgem/>). Historical water level data (fall 2011 and before) is still accessible from the Water Data Library until it is transferred over into the CASGEM system. Groundwater levels for wells in the Basin Management Objective (BMO) program are summarized in a spreadsheet with 2008-2012 data and comparisons to BMO alert levels (available on the Department's website under BMO>Current Data Summary). Fall 2012 levels are also compared to Fall 2011 levels.

Thanks to DWR for doing the data collection and also to Cal Water for providing data for a number of their wells in the North Yuba and Chico Urban Area sub-inventory units.

The 2012 water year (WY is October 2011-September 2012), turned out to be 'below normal' in the Sacramento Valley with 83% of average precipitation according to the Sac Valley 8-Station Index. Water levels continue to partially reflect these relatively drier conditions. Like the spring levels, water levels have decreased in some areas and increased in others compared to 2011 fall levels. Of the 87 or so wells measured in 2011 and 2012, 27 of them had a higher 2012 fall level than their 2011 fall measurement. However, the average increase was only 1.3 feet. Of the 2012 measurements that were low-

er, they average a decrease of 5.8 feet. The overall average change in fall groundwater level from 2011 to 2012 was a decrease of 3.5 feet.

Sub-inventory units (SIUs) with lower groundwater levels this fall compared to fall 2011 include Esquon, Pentz, Chico Urban Area, Durham Dayton, M&T, and most wells in Vina and Ilano Seco. The areas with the largest declines are Esquon, Pentz, Chico Urban Area, and Durham Dayton. Groundwater levels in these areas dropped as much as 16 feet and as little as 1 foot. Compared to fall 2010, (2010 WY was also a below normal year after the three year drought) 2012 levels are higher or lower by an average of about 3 feet or less in each SIU. In other words, a recov-

*(Continued on page 4)*



**Meeting  
Schedules**

**Butte County Water  
Commission**

12/5/12, 1:30 p.m.  
Board of Supervisors  
Chambers  
25 County Center Drive  
Oroville, CA 95965

1/2/13, 1:30 p.m.  
Board of Supervisors  
Chambers

**Water Advisory  
Committee/Technical  
Advisory Committee**

TBA 2:00-4:00 p.m.  
HR Training Room  
2279 Del Oro Av Ste G  
Oroville, CA 95965

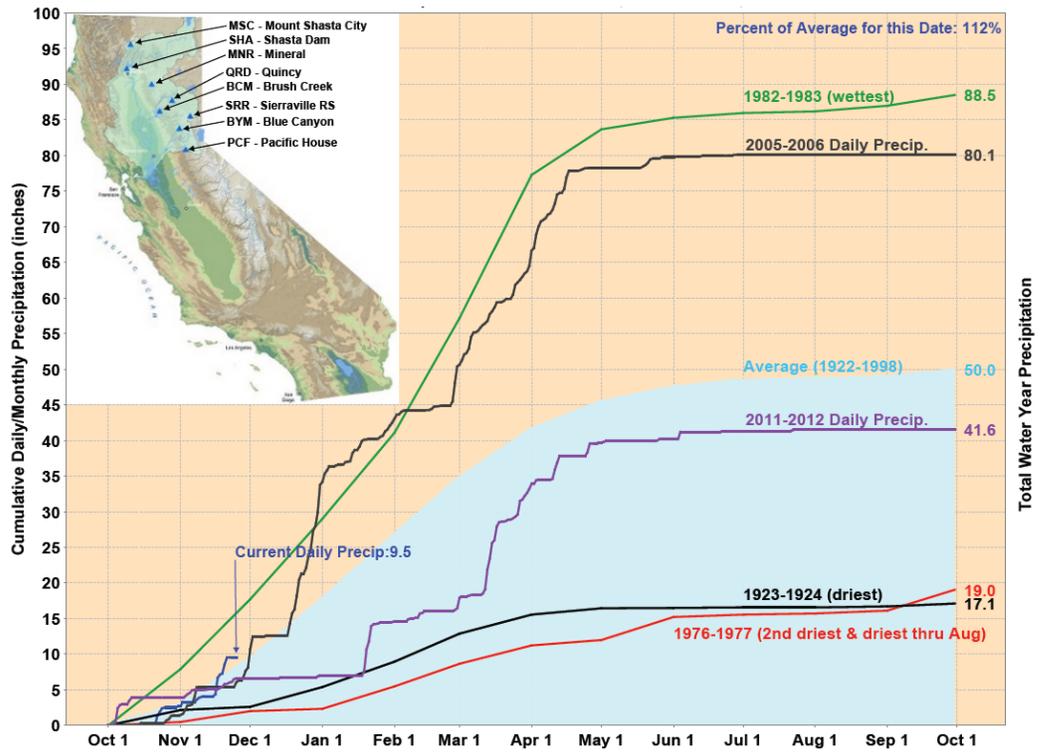
**Drought Task Force**

TBA

**Butte County Board of  
Supervisors**

12/11/12, 9:00 a.m.  
Board of Supervisors  
Chambers

1/8/13, 9:00 a.m.  
Board of Supervisors  
Chambers



(Continued from page 3)

ery from the series of drier years has not yet happened. The wet 2011 helped rebound water levels but groundwater responds more slowly to variable hydrology than surface water systems so a few wetter years are needed for full recovery to take place. Also, an analysis of basin-wide water demands is needed to better assess what changing land and water use effects may be having on groundwater levels. The DWR is close to publishing its 2011 land

use survey which will aid efforts to estimate crop water demands and quantify changing land use trends. There will be a presentation of this information by DWR at the January 2013 Water Commission meeting. Using this data to update Water Supply and Demand Inventory and Analysis is on the Department's list of priorities.

In the meantime, a number of Stage 1 Alerts occurred this fall and during the past four years (Table 1). Many of the wells at Alert Stage 1 have been there

since at least fall 2008. The number of wells at Stage 2 Alert is up, with a total of 5. At press time, the Technical Advisory Committee meeting was only a few days away (November 29). These fall measurements as well as the spring data will be reviewed by the TAC and recommendations made as needed. Sub-inventory unit (SIU) representatives will also have provided some input as to possible changes in their SIUs that may be affecting groundwater levels.

**Table 1. Number of Fall Level Measurements at Alert Stage 1 and 2 for 2008-2012 Using Current BMOs**

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
<b>Alert 1</b>	29	31	23	10	23
<b>Alert 2</b>	2	1	1	2	5