



January 2010

California AgTour Connections Agritourism News & Notes

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Greetings!

Happy New Year!

It's raining today, which must be a good sign. New growth and buds promise a strong start to 2010. In this issue: Cowboys and cowgirls in Potter Valley are creating a new rodeo site together. An herb farmer discovered that including lunch helps keep the tours booked. A Delta agritourism meeting is planned. The California Department of Food and Agriculture has just released a call for proposals that could fund new regional marketing and education work. And it's conference season, with lots of educational events.

Here at the [Small Farm Program](#), we have a few empty desks. We lost Brenda, our awesome webmistress and communications expert, to budget cuts. Linda, the office manager of many years, will retire in April. We're working out the many new details, and hoping some grant proposals get funded so we'll be able to keep the [agritourism](#) work going with more workshops and projects beyond April of this year.

I hope to see many of you at some of the upcoming workshops and conferences. Please stay in touch and share your stories.

Sincerely,
Penny Leff, UC Small Farm Program Agritourism Coordinator

Small Farm Program Update

SFP may affiliate with UC Agricultural Sustainability Institute



Since the University of California's Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) [announced](#) its intentions on Oct 2, 2009 to close the [Small Farm Program](#), farmers, agricultural organizations, farmers market managers and others have contacted ANR appealing the closure.

"The restructuring of the Small Farm Program office has been seen by some as a retreat from the issues that face

California's small-scale farmers. That assertion is not true," wrote Barbara Allen-Diaz, ANR associate vice president in response to many of the letters. "UC is committed to serving small and large farms."

The program is currently discussing the possibility of becoming an affiliate program within the [Agricultural Sustainability Institute](#), part of the UC Davis College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences. "Part of the institute's vision is to promote prosperity and equity for

people working in agriculture and the food system," said Tom Tomich, director of ASI. "Small farms are a vital and integral part of that vision. We look forward to looking at what opportunities there might be for the Small Farm Program and ASI."

No matter the outcome of the affiliation discussion, we will continue to work with UC Cooperative Extension farm advisors and others throughout California to promote profitable agritourism enterprises and communication and collaboration among all those involved, for as long as we are able to secure funding to do so.

Cowboy Community seeks 300,000 donations Raising funds "one buck at a time"

Ranchers in Northern California's rural Potter Valley are preserving their working cowboy lifestyle with the creation of a new rodeo arena and community center for recreation and cowboy skill-building, and are raising funds by asking supporters to [mail them a dollar](#) (or more) to help out.



Potter Valley is a true cattle ranching community, dating back to the 1880s. Most of the community either owns or works on ranches. The roping, team penning and other ranching skills honed and showcased at the many events to be held at the arena are used by local and visiting cowboys and cowgirls in their daily activities on working ranches.

The annual rodeo had been hosted on local ranches since it started in the 1940s, but due to development pressure a new site was needed. Local farming and ranching families have worked under the auspices of the Potter Valley Community Parks & Recreation organization to purchase a 23-acre parcel of land, create a master plan and break ground on the new arena.

They are making a call for donations to be used for the purchase of covered seating for spectators at the numerous events to be held annually at its new rodeo grounds. So far the "one buck at a time" campaign has been successful, resulting in hundreds of envelopes containing donations of a dollar or more. They hope to have the seating installed in time for the 2010 [Potter Valley Spring Festival & Rodeo](#), to be held over Memorial Weekend (May 29 - 31, 2010). The Festival Rodeo is a CCPRA (California Cowboys Pro Rodeo Association) sanctioned event, and is the valley's major fundraiser for local organizations including 4H, the volunteer fire department, and other groups.

Bring on the bus tour!

Selling your agricultural tour to tour groups

"You are taking care of someone else's customers. 110 percent of the tour must shine! If something goes wrong, I didn't just lose that senior group, I lost the confidence of the tour company for the next three years."

Denise Skidmore, director of education and public relations for [Hilmar Cheese Company](#), spoke to the Merced County Ag/Art/Nature Tourism group last month about marketing to tour group organizers, and to the tour companies who offer the tours to groups. She markets Hilmar Cheese Visitors Center educational tours, packaged with an olive oil



tasting and a stop at one or two other agritourism operations, to tour companies who offer the tours to groups of seniors and other potential visitors. Visitors to Hilmar Cheese learn about the cheese-making process by touring the processing operations, enjoying hands-on educational displays that Denise has created and tasting

samples, shopping and eating lunch in the gift shop/deli. Right now, she hosts about eight to ten groups per year. Denise offered a few tips to others thinking of attracting bus tours of visitors to their operations:

- Make sure everything is well planned, that all facilities are extra neat, clean and attractive and that all staff are ready and attentive to the visitors' needs.
- If you are offering packaged tours with stops at several operations, set one price for the tour company and arrange among the operators how to split the fee among the different operations on the tour.
- Host free tours for group leaders who book tours, such as leaders of senior groups, so they can see what is offered.
- Have enough restrooms for a busload of people who all want to go at once. Ten toilets may be right for a bus carrying 40 people. Be sure some of the toilets are handicapped accessible and that all facilities meet accessibility codes.
- The visit is often short, so there may be a time crunch. Make the itinerary of the tour pretty short. You may want to have a driving tour for seniors, on the bus they came on. It takes 10 to 15 minutes to tour the 40 acres of Hilmar's operations on a bus.
- Be aware of steps and walking hazards, particularly when hosting seniors. Don't expect seniors to do much walking for the tour; think of riding options.
- Take them on the tour before you feed them, so they don't fall asleep while you're talking to them.
- Set up different itineraries for different seasons or different months of the year, featuring seasonal harvests and activities, and be clear about the available dates and prices for each different tour.

Lunch and lectures keep tours full

Squaw Valley Herb Gardens offers Garden Theater Tours



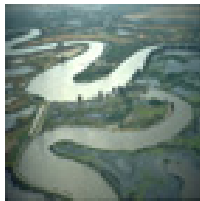
Rosemary Nightingale, owner of the five acre [Squaw Valley Herb Gardens](#), offers visitors a mix of story telling, herbal use history, gardening tips, herb garden tour, demonstrations of herbal uses, and a light meal. The tour package lasts about two hours, costs \$20, and is available on Saturdays or Sundays by prepaid reservation.

The January version, Spice Journey Lunch with Garden Theater, Tour & Tastings, was inspired by Rosemary's recent trip to Bali. She combines seasonal locally produced food with spices and herbs from her farm for the meals, and demonstrates some of the preparation. In summertime, a lavender-inspired breakfast, lavender history and folklore and a hands-on gift creation project are part of the tour.

The tours started at \$5, but Rosemary found that she needed to charge \$15 to pay for her time. When she added a light meal and raised the price to \$20, the events began to fill up. Rosemary used to try to book bus tour groups to visit her five acre herb farm, but found that market elusive. Lately she has been putting her flyers in neighboring farms' CSA boxes, and now the tours are booked most of the time, filled by individual pre-paid reservations. She also finds that CSA customers tend to spend more in the gift shop, which offers soaps, oils, jams and other herbal products.

This year, Rosemary has decided to sell the farm. For more information, contact [Rosemary](#) at 559.332.2909.

Delta agritourism planning Upcoming introductory growers' meeting



The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta encompasses regions of five counties, including some of the most valuable agricultural land in each county. This beautiful land is unknown to most of the millions of urban residents who live within a couple of hours drive of the Delta.

We are collaborating with the [Delta Protection Commission](#), county officials and local agritourism operators to organize a meeting to talk about developing and promoting Delta agritourism. All growers in the five-county delta region will be invited to the introductory meeting and workshop to take place the second or third week of February. For more information, contact [Penny](#) from the UC Small Farm Program at 530-752-7779, or [Alex](#) of the Delta Protection Commission at 916-776-2290.

News from here and there

Please send in your news or opinions for the next issue

Gizdich Ranch, Watsonville

Nita Gizdich reports that a couple of new growers are now on the [Country Crossroads](#) map put out by the Santa Cruz County Farm Bureau. She says families still came out to her [U-pick apple ranch](#) in 2009, in spite of the poor economy, and bought "anything they could put in their bellies", although sales at the gift store and antique store were down. She's happy to see more families bringing Dad along too, rather than just Mom and kids picking apples and berries.

Trinity County

Carol Fell of UC Cooperative Extension reports, "I'd have to say tourism stinks in Trinity County - we had forest fires everywhere in 2008 and a recession in 2009, so the only place to go is up! I'm working on a historic Weaverville website now using a grant from the Preserve America program. Once we get that online, I'll go back to updating and expanding [Trinity Roots](#)."

Lake County

Terre Logsdon of [Lake County](#) Marketing and Economic Development sends this news (and [more](#), but not enough room to print it all):

The Health Leadership Network, a collaboration of organizations, hospitals, providers and more was awarded funds from CDFA for "a growing movement to seed healthy eating" from the Specialty Crop Block Grant (see just below for this year's grant application info),

with the goal of helping to implement an online ordering system to connect farmers with institutions more easily, expand the farm-to-school program, and connect other "eat local" campaigns together.

Many Lake County wineries now offer [vineyard and winery tours](#), including two new tours in 2009. the "Vines, Mines, and Wines" tour at Six Sigma Ranch and Winery, and personal vineyard and winery tours by "winegrower" Gregory Graham; both end their tours with wine tasting.

Lake Added-Value Agricultural Center (LAVA Center), a licensed commercial facility to process private label items, opened.

CDFA Specialty Crop Block Grants available Concept Proposals due February 1

The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) has announced a competitive solicitation process to award [Specialty Crop Block Grant Program](#) (SCBGP) funds for projects that enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops. Specialty crops are defined by USDA as fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, horticulture and nursery crops (including floriculture).



Possible funding areas include Research (plant health, pest challenges, environmental concerns and conservation, food safety), Marketing (agriculture education/outreach, international trade, market enhancement and promotion), and Nutrition (food security, healthy eating). This funding could be used to support regional marketing efforts, educating consumers, reconnecting communities with specialty crop food production, school education projects, cooperative marketing, and more.

All applicants must submit a short online Concept Proposal by February 1, 2010. More info: [Federal Funds Management Office](#) (916) 657-3231.

List your business on CalAgTour.org [Sign up now online](#)

The UC Small Farm Program hosts a searchable, [online directory](#) of California agricultural tourism operations, for use by visitors looking for a farm or ranch to visit. The directory is located at www.CalAgTour.org.



If you are a working farmer or rancher operating an agritourism business, we invite you to complete the [application online](#) so we can include your business in the directory. If you're already listed, please [check your listing](#), and update it if needed. (You can use the sign-up/application form for updates. We'll contact you if we have questions.) We are currently updating and planning new promotions for the directory and would love to include more California farms and ranches open to visitors.

California Small Farm Conference

Sign up today - Earlybird registration ends Jan 15

California Small Farm Conference
23rd Convening • February 28-March 2, 2010



The [California Small Farm Conference](#) is the state's premier gathering of small farmers and those who support them. The three-day educational conference includes on-farm tours, focused workshops, general educational sessions and opportunities for peer networking. A tour of San Diego agritourism operations will be one of the short/course tours on Sunday, Feb. 28 and an agritourism workshop will be part of the marketing track on Monday

March 1st.

The conference theme, "Sustaining our Bounty," reflects the incredible bounty of agricultural products that the state of California produces. The Small Farm Program is helping to organize this conference. We hope to see you there!

Pedro Ilic awards

Last call! Nominations due Friday January 15



Nominations are open for the [2010 Pedro Ilic Awards](#), which will honor a farmer and an educator who are dedicated to small-scale farming. The awards will be presented at the California Small Farm Conference, February 28 to March 2 in San Diego.

The awards are named for Fresno County small-scale farm advisor Pedro Ilic, whose untimely death in 1994 prompted the UC Small Farm Program to annually honor those who carry out his legacy of personal commitment to small-scale and family farming. Ilic was one of the original advisors when the Small Farm Program was established in 1979.

The annual awards honor an educator and a farmer who embody characteristics that helped make Ilic a success.

The deadline for nominations is Jan. 15, 2010. Nominations are reviewed by a committee from the UC Small Farm Program and UC Cooperative Extension in Fresno County, as well as associates of Pedro Ilic.

Nominations are [online](#). For questions, call (530) 752-8136 or e-mail [Linda Vieira](#).

Upcoming educational events

Take advantage of winter down-time to learn & network

[Cultural and Heritage Tourism Symposium](#)

January 27 - 29, 2010 in Chico, CA

Bringing together different perspectives - arts, language, museums, heritage, crafts, public lands, architecture, design, film and broadcasting, agriculture, as well as economic development and local government - to develop California cultural and heritage tourism.

More info: [Despina M. KREATSOULAS](#) (916) 319.5422



PlacerGROWN Food and Farm Conference

Saturday **January 30, 2010**, 8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.
An exciting day of food, fun and workshops on farming, agriculture and local food sustainability, in **Lincoln, CA** - 15th Annual conference
More Info: [Roger Ingram](#) (530) 889-7385

NAFDMA Convention

The North American Farmers' Direct Marketing Association, which is a 25-year-old networking association for farm direct marketing and agritourism, is holding its annual convention from **February 5 - 12, 2010 in Lancaster, PA.**



Farm Business Planning Class

Six Thursday evenings, **Feb 11 - March 18, 2010**
Auburn, CA - sponsored by UC Cooperative Extension, Placer/Nevada Counties

Find Answers to These & Many Other Questions:

- Is our business making any money?
- What are our resources and how do allocate them?
- What are our costs of production?
- What is our marketing plan?

More Info: [Roger Ingram](#) (530) 889-7385

Ag./Nature Tourism Small Business Development Workshops

sponsored by [Yosemite/Sequoia RC&D](#) (Workshops are free)
Meet one-on-one with a small business development advisor to discuss business opportunities and business planning for your new enterprise. Attend lecture series by those from the area who have successfully incorporated tourism into their farm operation. Coordinate with other local farmers in establishing an agriculture and nature tourism trail.

February 23 - 25, 2010 in Fresno, CA

Fresno County Ag. Commissioner's Office

March 6, 13 & 20 in Tulare County (location TBA)

More info: [Taylor Kornman](#) (559) 877-8664

North American Raspberry & Blackberry Conference

February 24-26, 2010 in Monterey, CA - Organized by the North American Raspberry & Blackberry Association ([NARBA](#))

Agriculture, Nature & Heritage Tourism Workshop

Sponsored by UC Cooperative Extension Humboldt County

April 2, 2010, 8:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. in Eureka, CA

More Info: [Deborah Giraud](#) (707) 445-7351

Thanks for reading and doing what you do. Please forward this newsletter to anyone who might find it useful (click on "forward email" below).

Sincerely,

Penny Leff
UC Small Farm Program
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