DATE: May 2, 2011

TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Lew C. Bauman
County Administrative Officer

SUBJECT: County Administrative Officer’s Report for the week of May 2, 2011

This is the weekly report by the County Administrative Officer.

This Week’s Topics: The Water Resources Agency marks the first anniversary of the Salinas Valley Water Project, the Monterey County Scholarship Fund announces its latest recipients and the Health Department goes on the road and into the fields to improve food choices for farm employees.

Water Resources Agency
The Water Resources Agency (Agency) is proud to report a successful first year of operation for the Salinas Valley Water Project (SVWP). The SVWP, which was fully operational April 2010, is a culmination of many years of planning and hard work to make the project a reality, and the benefits are apparent after one year of operation.

The SVWP has two major components, a Spillway Modification at Nacimiento Dam and a Salinas River Diversion Facility (SRDF). The modification of the spillway allows for more water to be stored in Nacimiento Reservoir throughout the winter storm period, and with the modification in place, the Agency was able to capture more water than historically allowed, resulting in a full reservoir by late March. This additional water will be utilized for environmental, water conservation, and recreational interests.
Water is released from both Agency reservoirs (Nacimiento and San Antonio) to replenish the Salinas Groundwater Basin (Basin) during the time of most intensive use, April to October annually. Releases are diverted at the SRDF (near Marina) and the water is used on crops, replacing the pumping of groundwater, which in turn halts the movement of seawater intrusion into the Basin.

“During the last growing season, the SVWP provided enough water to the Castroville area to reduce groundwater pumping by 85% percent,” says Agency General Manager Curtis Weeks. “We are looking forward to another year of successful operation.”

Administration – Department Heads Council
The Monterey County Department Heads Council is pleased to announce the Spring 2011 Monterey County Scholarship Fund recipients. They are:

Danielle Gutierrez (California State University, Chico) - $700
Rasheed Alhadi (accepted at Santa Clara University) - $150
Amanda Musones (Monterey Peninsula College) - $150

The Monterey County Scholarship Fund was established in 2000 by the Monterey County Department Heads to benefit dependents of Monterey County government employees who seek higher education. The scholarship is funded by donations of Monterey County employees. To date, over $35,000 in scholarship awards have been made to more than 50 students. For eligibility requirements, please consult the Monterey County Scholarship Fund website: http://www.co.monterey.ca.us/scholarship/

Many thanks to selection committee members who worked tirelessly reviewing applications and deliberating to select scholarship recipients: Sonje Dayries, Bertha Gonzalez, Angelita Partido and Cheryl Pirozzoli.

You too can donate to the Scholarship fund easily and painlessly through the payroll deduction plan. Please contact your department HR representative for more information.

Health
Thanks to a Community Grant awarded by the California Obesity Prevention Program, the Monterey County Health Department (MCHD) is seeing success in improving access by farm employees to healthier foods.

The grant work is being accomplished in a 9-month time period which will end this coming June, and the project involves working with local mobile food vendors (loncheras and fayucas) and a large agricultural employer and berry supplier, Reiter Affiliated Companies.

The overall goal is to limit access to energy dense foods and sugar sweetened beverages and increase the availability of healthy food options for Reiter Affiliated Companies employees through the mobile food vendors that sell foods and beverages in the fields. Using Reiter employee input from surveys and focus groups, MCHD will also make
recommendations regarding company food and beverage policies that promote employee health.

Reiter berry fields are often in geographically isolated locations, and employees are forced to either bring food with them or buy food, snacks, and beverages from the variety of mobile vendors that visit the fields.

Vendors are either full-service lunch trucks serving a variety of prepared foods, or small snack trucks that generally carry sodas, packaged snacks, and pre-packaged meals from local restaurants. Healthier food options are either absent or inadequately advertised, and cheap snacks high in calories, sugar, and fat (such as fried chips or packaged cakes) are popular. Sugar-sweetened beverages and energy drinks are also common employee purchases, but are generally discouraged by employers because of their potential to cause worker dehydration and illness.

Although most vendors already offer a variety of healthy food options and beverages on their loncheras and fayucas, MCHD found that they need assistance identifying what these options are and how to advertise them adequately to employees.

Vendors participating in this project are being given free training, advice on product placement and advertising, and free signage to promote their participation in the program and the healthy options they develop. Vendors that qualify are recommended by the program for a “Gold Seal” Award through the County Health Department’s Environmental Health Bureau Consumer Protection Unit, a distinction given to vendors whose businesses meet a number of requirements related to health and safety.

MCHD is also promoting a “Farm to Work” program with ALBA, an educational and business program for aspiring farmers in Salinas, to link small farmers with Mobile Food Vendors to provide a market for local, organic produce.