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CONVERSATION WITH NEWLY APPOINTED ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF AG DIRECTOR: PAUL BRIERLEY

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Strategic Communications

Paul Brierley, Arizona Department of Agriculture's recently appointed director, as the maxim says, really needs no introduction. If you've been engaged in the network that comprises Arizona agriculture, you've at least heard of him. Certainly, if you are an Arizona Farm Bureau agriculture member, you know who he is and where he's recently landed.

My first question in this conversation article will lay out some interesting facts about his background in his answer to me.

So, I'll tell you a story about Paul that I would like to share since it personifies his character. After about a year at the Arizona Farm Bureau, I sold my home in Ahwatukee and purchased one in Gilbert. Soliciting the required help in packing boxes to be ready for the moving truck, a few volunteers peeled away so that I was left with only my older brother, Brent, and Paul. I think when they showed up and saw how little I'd gotten done, after all, I was dusting off each book or breakable item and gingerly packing it into a box, they speedily whipped through every room and had boxes filled just as the movers rolled up to the front of my house. If I'd gone at my pace, I may still be in Ahwatukee packing. Sometimes you just need others to help move you forward.

And because our family and agriculture network help in more ways than one, we must stick together and rise above differences.

Today, it's a pleasure working with Paul in his new role and the Arizona Farm Bureau is excited to give our new director a platform to inform and envision.

Arizona Agriculture: Congratulations on your appointment! What do you hope to bring to the agency including your vision for supporting the regulatory role of the Arizona Department of Agriculture?

Brierley: I hope to bring my lifelong experience in various facets of production agriculture to the role. I'm an Ag guy, not a bureaucrat. I grew up farming, took a detour into the technology world by becoming an electrical engineer/computer scientist and working in telecommunications research, and then was back in production agriculture in a Graham County hay business with my dad. While there I got active in the Farm Bureau and grassroots politics. I also went through the Project CENTRL rural leadership program during that time, and it was life-changing. I ended up going to work for the Arizona Farm Bureau as a Field Services Manager covering the Eastern counties, and then as Director of Organization. In those roles, I learned a lot about both animal and crop production -- the people, the methods, and the issues they face.

I was then recruited as the inaugural Executive Director of the Yuma Center of Excellence for Desert Agriculture, a public-private partnership between the Ag industry and the University of Arizona. We focused on solving the pressing problems faced by production agriculture, including irrigation management, plant disease, soil health, food safety, and Ag Tech. I've spent over 30 years in the trenches of Arizona agriculture, and I know the people and the challenges, as well as the opportunities.

In my new role leading the Arizona Department of Agriculture (AZDA), I believe



Says Paul Brierley, "To me, the first part of sustainable Ag is that the farmer must be able to make a living, meaning continuing to be productive over the long term, over multiple generations, rather than running a race to the bottom over the next few years and then calling it quits."

my background of working in and with the agriculture industry is very important. Something that former Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Director Joe Sigg used to tell me about the Arizona Department of Agriculture is that they do the good kind of regulation. Indeed, we are mostly regulatory. We do lots of licensing and inspection for everything from food safety to pesticide applicators to pest control companies. But our inspections are the kind that allows commerce to happen. It is thanks to our inspections and certifications that other states and countries allow Arizona agricultural products to be sold in their jurisdictions. My message to our inspectors and regulators is to always work with industry as much as possible, to be a facilitator, not a barrier.

Arizona Agriculture: You've already been all over the state speaking to various stakeholders. You've done a really good job of explaining the role of the AZDA. For this audience, as if at the podium again, explain what you've explained on the road and what the Arizona Department of Agriculture is responsible for. And share some of the fascinating aspects that people don't often think about.

Brierley: We have about 300 people across the state in seven different divisions that make up the Arizona Department of Agriculture: Animal Services; Environmental and Plant Services; Citrus, Fruit and Vegetable; Agriculture Consultation and Training; Pest Management; Weights and Measures; and Licensing. Our mission is to protect the health and safety of Arizona consumers, advance and support Arizona agriculture, and safeguard commerce. We do that both domestically and internationally through a variety of inspection and certification programs involving plants, livestock, meat, dairy, vegetables, citrus, fruit, eggs, feed, fertilizer, seed, agricultural and non-agricultural pesticides, packaged consumer goods, retail pricing and commercial weighing and measuring devices. AZDA protects and guards against the risks associated with the entry and spread of plant and livestock pests and diseases. AZDA implements education and training programs regarding pesticide use and on-farm food safety and assists in attaining air quality standards. AZDA also provides extensive agricultural and metrological (not weather - look it up!) laboratory services.

We license, regulate and inspect not just farm pesticide use but also that of home pest and weed applicators. Our Weights and Measures Division inspects each and every gasoline pump in the state every three years, as well as 15 other types of commercial devices. These include scales from jewelry scales to truck scales to make sure consumers are getting the right quantity, and price scanners at your local retailer to make sure they are charging you properly. Our metrology lab certifies what an ounce is, what a kilogram is, and what a gallon is so that those who are testing are testing accurately, so accurately that even temperature and vibration can nullify their results. Our metrology lab is one of the best in the nation, and we provide services to many other states that don't have the same capabilities. These are compensated services, so we return much more to the general fund than we take for Weights and

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AN UPDATE COVERING A MENAGERIE OF FEDERAL ISSUES

By Chad Smith, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Government Relations

A mix of federal issues is keeping us on our toes with some seeming to slip in subtly, yet if enacted or enforced as a rule could have a sledgehammer impact.

From a very important Supreme Court case that would have landmark outcomes to a very quiet Security Exchange Commission rule that appeared to be under the radar until just a short time ago, the Farm Bureau continues to vigilantly watch and pursue corrective action when needed.

Chevron Deference

Unless you are a lawyer most would not know what "Chevron Deference" is, however, in the agriculture advocacy world this was a game changer. Let me first preface this with I am not a lawyer and so will try and put this in layman's terms. Chevron deference allows federal agencies instead of courts to decide the meaning of federal laws. Forty years ago, in a supreme court case the "Chevron doctrine" was created. The doctrine shifted power away from our

legislative and judicial branches to the executive branches of government. Thus, allowing government agencies, many that regulate agriculture, to interpret laws that might be otherwise ambiguous or silent and enforce them as such.



The doctrine centralizes power to our government agencies which is in direct violation of the "separation of powers doctrine" which refers to the division of governmental powers and responsibilities among different branches to prevent the abuse of authority by any single branch. The three branches include legislative, executive, and judicial. Each has distinct authority as it relates to laws:

Legislative Branch: Responsible for making laws. In most systems, this branch is usually a bicameral legislature, such as a parliament or congress.

Executive Branch: Responsible for implementing and enforcing laws. This branch is headed by the head

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PARTNERING TO HELP GROWERS CONSERVE WATER, INCREASE CROP YIELDS, FEED ARIZONA

By Dr. Ethan Orr, University of Arizona Cooperative Extension

With the help of the Arizona Farm Bureau and individual farmers in the state, the University of Arizona grew a \$30 million grant into a \$63 million program that is working directly with farmers to save over 36,400 water acre feet (twelve times the size of Tempe Town Lake) every year. Known as the UA Water Irrigation Efficiency Program, the effort has quickly produced some exciting results.

In February 2023, the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension received a \$30 million grant from the Arizona Governor's Office to research how to reduce on-farm water usage while maintaining soil health and crop yields. \$23 million was set aside to directly support Arizona farmers by reimbursing growers and farmers up to \$1,500 per acre to change to a more efficient watering system. The UA Water Irrigation Efficiency Program will reimburse the grower or vendor for creating 20% or more water efficiency savings. The Arizona Farm Bureau was a vital outreach organization, hosting two in-depth seminars for growers, and coordinating informational meetings and outreach to vendors, irrigation districts, and growers. Overall, the educational campaign reached over 2,000 people, including over 150 on-farm site visits by Cooperative Extension faculty and staff.

Between February and August 2023, The Water Irrigation Efficiency Board approved 62 applications to applicants in 11 of Arizona's 15 counties. These projects will help our state conserve 36,418 water acre feet (WAF) annually, equal to over 12 times the size of Tempe Town Lake. Additionally, farmers invested their funds matching the \$23 million in public sector money with \$16,515,088 in private sector money. Ultimately, over 42% of the water savings program funding came directly from farmers. Because of support from farmers and growers, the public cost per water acre foot conserved was a mere \$631, approximately 1/3 of the cost of desalination. Over the next three years, this translates into an estimated savings of \$109,254 WAF.

With the support of the Arizona Farm Bureau and other agricultural advocacy organizations during the 2023 legislative session, Arizona funded this program an additional \$15.2 million next year; \$14 million will be set aside to directly support farmers and \$1.2 million will be used for irrigation and crop research. Additionally, Rep. Tim Dunn (R-Yuma) introduced legislation to fund this amazing program with an additional \$30 million for the 2024 legislative session. The Arizona Cooperative Extension's goal is to support Arizona growers with research, education, and programming. Next year, the University of Arizona On-farm Water Irrigation Team will continue to partner with growers and work to conserve even more water for Arizona. Investing in Arizona's growers is the most cost-effective way to save water.

The table below summarizes the current water savings this program has generated so far.

Applications by county	Applications Approved	Funding Approved	Acres Funded by the Project	Additional Acres funded by Participant	Participant Match	Estimated Water Savings - Annual Acre-Feet
Apache	1	\$315,000	210		\$85,000	1,000
Cochise	2	\$144,000	96		\$364,564	208
Graham	1	\$180,015	120		\$179,985	363
La Paz	5	\$4,371,000	2,914			6,413
Maricopa	8	\$4,346,170	2,897	2,836	\$4,736,433	6,602
Mojave	1	\$999,000	666	134	\$71,000	2,850
Navajo	1	\$375,000	250			500
Pinal	10	\$4,584,557	3,056			4,920
Santa Cruz	1	\$199,200	133			105
Yavapai	2	\$303,600	202		\$303,404	1,364
Yuma	30	\$7,182,458	4,795	204	\$6,452,732	12,093
Total	62	\$23,000,000	15,339	3,174	\$16,515,088	36,418

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THE LEGISLATIVE YEAR PREVIEW IN ONE WORD: BUSY

By Daniel Harris, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Manager

As we look forward to a productive legislative session in 2024, Water is at the top of everyone's mind when it comes to new legislation. At the end of the first week in session over 750 bills were introduced.

As our 2024 Policy Priorities outline, water is also at the top of our list when it comes to pieces of legislation we are actively tracking. Below are a few key pieces of legislation that we are currently tracking. Of course, we have been actively engaged in developing legislation with Senator Kerr, and we expect that proposal to attract significant attention this legislative session.

WATER

HB2182: (Kolodin) Permits the long-term augmentation fund to be used for projects that create new water sources within Arizona and to purchase new water or rights to use new water created in Arizona. Prohibits monies issued for the latter purpose to be used to purchase existing water or rights unless said purchases are related to the creation of new water or rights. Requires at least 75% of monies remaining in the long-term augmentation fund as of the effective date of the amendment to be used to fund water supply development projects that supply imported or new water to end users located within the Phoenix, Pinal, or Tucson Active Management Areas.

HB2016: (Griffin) A person claiming the right to withdraw or receive and use groundwater in the Douglas Active Management Area (AMA) under a grandfathered right is required to file an application for a certificate of grandfathered right with the Arizona Department of Water Resources no later than 21 months after the date of the designation of the AMA. Emergency clause.

HB2018: (Griffin) Changes requirements relating to the review and removal of subsequent irrigation non-expansion areas. Orders the Director of the Arizona Department of Water Resources to periodically review all areas that are currently included within a subsequent irrigation non-expansion area to determine whether those areas still meet the criteria for inclusion in an irrigation non-expansion area as prescribed in statute. If the Director of the Arizona Department of Water Resources determines that the area no longer meets the criteria required in statute, the Director may remove the subsequent irrigation non-expansion area designation by making and filing an order designating the area as outside of an irrigation non-expansion area. Changes requirements related to local initiatives to add and remove subsequent irrigation non-expansion area designations to require ten percent of registered voters who receive their drinking water from the subbasin in question to sign onto the petition for addition or removal of the designation.

HB2019: (Griffin) The Arizona Department of Water Resources shall make available at no cost for public inspection See [LEGISLATIVE YEAR IN PREVIEW](#) Page 5



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The Voice of Arizona Agriculture

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2024 AG FEST HIGHLIGHTS

By Ana Otto, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Manager

Arizona Farm Bureau’s Legislative Ag Fest took place on Thursday, January 11. Despite a cold and windy day 200 Farm Bureau members, Arizona legislators, and guests braved the weather and participated in the event.



Gila County Farm Bureau President Angie Newbold hosting Representative Marcelino Quinonez (LD 11).

the Farm Bureau Financial Services Grill Team and homemade desserts provided by the

Arizona Farm Bureau members from across the state were on hand and hosted 47 legislators or their assistants throughout the event site. Legislators were able to visit county Farm Bureau booths to learn about our priority issues relevant to the current legislative session. Everyone was also treated to a delicious BBQ meal provided by

Women’s Leadership Committee.

Additionally, this year we were able to spread out onto 17th Avenue west of the Capitol and included an equipment display that featured several modern tractors and a baler. A special thank you to Dykstra Machinery and Empire-CAT for providing the tractors for our Ag Fest equipment display. The tractors also provided a great backdrop for our photos with state legislators!

Thank you to all our members for taking the time to leave your farm or ranch to share the importance of agriculture with our legislators. This event would not have been possible without you. We look forward to another great event next year!



Yavapai County Farm Bureau President and member Sharla Mortimer hosting Senator Ken Bennet (LD 1)

TAKE A JOURNEY WITH PROJECT CENTRL

By Scott Koenig, Project CENTRL’s Executive Director

If you take a look through the Arizona Farm Bureau family from county board volunteers to the staff team and members in elected offices, several of them have walked along the leadership path with others known as Project CENTRL. Now is the time



Julie Murphree, Class 7 captures a member of Class 32’s conversation with an interviewer from KAZTV studios in Prescott during the Effective Communication seminar.

to encourage the next generation to take the journey with new people to sharpen skills and learn things from different perspectives to strengthen our agricultural industry by applying for Project CENTRL’s Class 33 by Friday 3/15/24. Current Arizona Farm Bureau member, Kirk Dunn is a part of the Arizona Center for Rural Leadership’s flagship program: Project CENTRL Class 32. His participation is helping others without a background in production agriculture learn about precision agriculture, entrepreneurship, and natural resource stewardship done by our farming and ranching families. He also is learning more about other parts of rural Arizona’s economy, people and places.

Project CENTRL is a competitively se-

lected and tuition-free experiential-learning leadership development program for 16 people connected to rural Arizona. Over the course of nine seminars across Arizona, Washington, D.C., and Sonora, Mexico participants build personal leadership skills, learn about the issues facing rural Arizona, and connect with leaders and experts.

“I had Farm Bureau members in my Class 9,” shares the Center’s Board Chair, Glenna McCollum-Could a consultant and Past President of The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. “And as I’ve stayed involved with CENTRL as a volunteer and trainer, I’ve seen Farm Bureau members both teach others about the importance of production agriculture and learn new perspectives from their classmates who are involved with other parts of the rural economy.”

As a public-private partnership between the non-profit Center and the University of Arizona Division of Agriculture, Life and Veterinary Sciences and Cooperative Extension participants and alumni are backed by organizations invested in and committed to rural Arizona.

If building new skills, gaining new knowledge and meeting new people to benefit rural Arizona sounds interesting to you, consider applying for **Class 33 by March 15, 2024**. All the details and application materials are found at www.centrl.org/apply

There are several opportunities to connect with the organization in person during events open to all to learn more from the people in the program now or some of the 700+ graduates since Class 1 in 1983. Calendar and complimentary registration available at www.centrl.org/events

MENTOR PROTÉGÉ CAMP CLASS 3, PROFILE 2: NANCY CAYWOOD AND JAMES FELIX

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Strategic Communications

The CAMP mentor/protégé 2024 series continues for Class 3 with Pinal County farmer Nancy Caywood and NRCS employee, James Felix. The Caywood/Felix team has met several times already including attending Arizona Farm Bureau’s November Annual Meeting in Tempe last year. Protégé Felix’s enthusiasm for the program is quite evident.



Nancy Caywood’s protégé James Felix, joined the Pinal County Farm Bureau board meeting in January to learn how the county Farm Bureaus operate at the county level. He’s flanked by Pinal County Farm Bureau President Richie Kennedy and Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Manager Elizabeth Rico.

The Conservation Agricultural Mentoring Program (CAMP) in Arizona, in partnership with the Arizona Farm Bureau, has now been at it for three years. This program, unique in its regard, has a double dose of uniqueness as the Arizona NRCS team approached the Farm Bureau to partner with them in the effort.

The Caywood Felix partnership, along with all the mentor protégé partnerships for Class 3, works to understand Arizona agriculture and conservation opportunities, joining forces to provide firsthand experience of the conservation practices and agricultural happenings.

Mentor: Nancy Caywood

Talk about your first meeting: I first met James at the Great Wolf Lodge when I attended the mentor/protégé graduation on October 19, 2023. James grew up in Pinal County and is very familiar with the issues and challenges farmers face. We began planning our future meetings so that we have a game plan that would hopefully be beneficial to James.

What about the subsequent meetings?

James attended our monthly West Pinal Natural Resource Conservation District Meetings in November and December allowing him to experience the link between the Conservation Districts and the NRCS. The West Pinal NRCD Board feels this mentorship program is very important and beneficial to NRCS employees and provided him the opportunity to discuss his role at NRCS.

James is very interested in policy development and attended the State Farm Bureau Annual Meeting in Tempe in November. On January 17, James attended the Pinal County Farm Bureau Board Meeting which allowed him to meet our local county Farm Bureau Board member leaders.

Share specifics about what you got out of it as the farmer: As a mentor, I can get to know NRCS Employees. I find it so refreshing that the proteges I have worked with are very enthusiastic and allow me to share my passion for agriculture, knowledge, and experience. Introducing proteges to Pinal County farmers and providing them the opportunity to interact at the ground level may help to create a positive working relationship to resolve conservation issues they are experiencing on their land.

For the remaining time with the program, what do you also hope to help with? On February 29, James, myself, Kelly Dugan, See MENTOR PROTEGE CAMP CLASS 3 Page 8

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LEGISLATIVE YEAR IN PREVIEW

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any hydraulic modeling that the department uses to determine projected groundwater levels for the purposes of evaluating an application for a certificate or designation of assured water supply, including the hydraulic model's findings, conclusions, methods and assumptions. The Director of the Arizona Department of Water Resources shall establish a process for a party to challenge any hydraulic model that the department makes available for public inspection.

- HB2060:** (Griffin) Allows an owner of acreage in an irrigation non-expansion area to permanently retire acreage that may legally be irrigated and substitute that acreage's associated water for any end use, provided the owner demonstrates that the use of that water does not result in a net increase of groundwater withdrawal in the non-expansion area. The Director of the Arizona Department of Water Resources may not require a net groundwater usage reduction as a requirement of approval of an application to make the substitution of acreage.
- HB2061:** (Griffin) Requires the Arizona Department of Water Resources to periodically review areas included in the Subsequent Active Management Area to determine continued eligibility for inclusion in said area. Allows the ADWR to remove those areas that no longer meet the criteria for inclusion as a Subsequent Active Management Area. Requires a public hearing before removal to consider removing an area from the Subsequent Active Management Area or modifying its boundaries. Sets requirements for public notice of public hearings for removal from the Subsequent Active Management Area, and its subbasins. Requires the ADWR to file an order to remove an area from a Subsequent Active Management Area and to adhere to all existing reporting requirements under current law for inclusion into a Subsequent Active Management Area. Allows registered voters to petition to be included or removed from a Subsequent Active Management Area provided they live within the boundaries of the area and receive their drinking water from that groundwater basin. Sets election requirements to put the inclusion or removal before voters, requires that petitions adhere to existing format for petitions, and that applicants for petitions adhere to the previously stated requirements. Sets mapping requirements for areas affected by petitions. Allows voters to participate in a related election if their drinking water comes from the area in question and stipulates the wording for any ballot measure.
- HB2063:** (Griffin) Limits an exempt well registered with the Department of Water Resources to withdraw no more than 35 gallons per minute and requires the Director of the department to issue each groundwater user that registers an exempt well a certificate of water rights. Stipulates that a groundwater user may not appropriate sub-flow or surface water and that withdrawn water is not exempt from a general stream adjudication.
- HB2099:** (Griffin) Restricts what water duties the Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) can grant an area that the ADWR or voters of the district designated an Active Management Area that was designated an Irrigation Non-Expansion Area immediately prior to no more than the highest annual groundwater withdrawal since the area was designated an Irrigation

Non-Expansion Area. Mandates owners of land in the Irrigation Non-Expansion Area be granted water duties consistent with their highest annual withdrawal since the area in question was designated as an Irrigation Non-Expansion Area. Requires the ADWR to notify owners of its assessment of the owner's estimated farm units and provides that the owner can accept the assessment without fees or contest the Department's assessment following the state-prescribed process and file a new or amended application for Determination of Acres Entitled to Irrigation free of cost. Mandates that on the effective date, the Department shall grant Douglas Active Management Area users irrigation duties consistent with the bill. The effective date is immediately as an emergency measure. Contains an emergency clause.

OTHER AG-RELATED BILLS

- HB2056:** (Dunn) Appropriates \$30,000,000 from the general fund in FY2024-25 to the on-farm irrigation efficiency fund.
- SB1055:** (Kerr) Establishes the extension of the Arizona Off-Highway Vehicle Study Committee to meet to collect and study information regarding off-highway vehicle issues. Requires the committee to create and submit a report by January 1 of each year to the Governor and Legislature that details committee activities, findings, and recommendations. Stipulates the committee is repealed after May 31, 2025
- HB2188:** (Dunn) Includes Agricultural seed among the list of seeds that the Department of Agriculture shall develop reasonable standards of germination.
- HB2611:** (Dunn) Appropriates \$1,198,585.00 from the state's General Fund to the Department of Education for the Agricultural Education Grant Program. This program makes funding available to school districts to support extended-hour activities that Ag teachers spend outside of regular school hours for Agricultural education.

Of course, with more time comes more legislation, and while we are expecting the draft of the bill that has come from the conclusion of the discussions with the governor's water policy council, we are also expecting a more viable solution coming from Senator Sine Kerr's office and we will update as the session develops.



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Measures. At the U.S.-Mexico border, we inspect the quality of literally millions of boxes of grapes, tomatoes, dates, and other products that are imported from other countries. One of the most surprising roles we play is that of emergency management: We have an emergency command center in our office and a mobile command center, and we play a key role in the state’s response to emergency situations such as wildfires or foreign animal diseases impacting livestock.

Arizona Agriculture: There are important strategic connections with all stakeholders in agriculture and outside of agriculture that suit the AZDA’s role. Talk about this a bit.

Brierley: Assuring a safe and reliable food supply is definitely a huge team effort! Several collaborators that come to mind are industry groups like the Farm Bureau, universities like the Land Grant University of Arizona, the USDA and other federal agencies, and even other Arizona state agencies like the Department of Water Resources and the Arizona State Land Department. I rely heavily on producers themselves, and the organizations that represent them, to keep me informed about the issues that are most concerning to them, and the talking points that are most effective in helping me find partners to solve the issue.

During my time at the University, I learned how valuable the researchers and the Cooperative Extension agents are to creating new knowledge and distributing it to the folks in the country who use it to make such a big impact. Federal government agencies, especially the USDA, are great partners.

We are at a unique time in history when there is a lot of federal and state funding available to help production agriculture adjust to climate change and water challenges. We need to be sure that Arizona agriculture takes advantage of that, and one way is through the Arizona Department of Agriculture being an on-the-ground partner for these federal and state programs.

We administer grant funding received from the USDA for the benefit of producers in Arizona. Much of your audience is aware of the Specialty Crop Block Grant program which has provided over \$1 million a year for many years to research, marketing, and other efforts to make our specialty crops more competitive. We are just starting a new program called the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure program which brings \$4.6 million to Arizona to build up the middle of the supply chain, allowing more opportunity for small and medium-size producers to sell into our local markets. We also administer the Livestock Operators Fire and Flood Assistance Program funded by the state to help ranchers rebuild after they’ve had damage from a fire and then a flood.

It’s important to me to stay connected to actual producers, so I’ve made it a priority of mine to get out to different counties and see firsthand the different types of agriculture that we have. Seeing the variety of products that we produce, and hearing firsthand from the producers about their challenges and how they think they can be solved is an important part of my ability to impact the industry. When I work with an industry group like the Farm Bureau or the Arizona Food Marketers Association or the Arizona Pest Professionals Organization, I know I’m hearing the key concerns that need to be addressed. Again, my goal is that we are the good kind of regulation that promotes a level playing field, assures the safety of our public, and leads to a thriving agricultural economy that is so important - critical, really - to the rural areas of our state. Not to mention the 7.25 million of us Arizonans who like to eat three meals a day.

Arizona Agriculture: And speaking of the power of networked connections, share a few stories of what important opportunities have come your way and agriculture’s way simply because of connections.

Brierley: My favorite quote is, “The world is run by those who show up.” I’ve seen it proven time and time again. Being involved over many years builds a network you can learn from, and that supports you. The diversity of voices that supported me for this position was truly humbling and amazing, and I am so thankful to all those people, including Governor Hobbs, who have placed their trust in me.

Probably my biggest return on investment has been participating in leadership programs like Project CENTRL and the Flinn-Brown Civic Leadership Academy. They were both life-changing for me, more because of the networks I became a part of rather than the information or skills that I learned. When I started Project CENTRL, we had to stand up and say why we were there. I said I was there for the knowledge I would gain at the seminars. The guy next to me stood up and said he was there to get to know 30 people from around the state. I thought he was nuts but looking back 20 years on all that has happened, I realize that he was correct. The network of rural leaders from across the state that I became a part of has been invaluable. Just as the network of state-level leaders I gained as part of the Flinn-Brown Civic Leadership Academy has been.

Thirty years after being in Project CENTRL when I was from Graham County, my relationship with a classmate from Yuma County enabled the Yuma Center of Excellence for Desert Agriculture (YCEDA)’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Because of the trust we had built up, he steered COVID relief funding to us from the county Board of Supervisors to implement a wastewater testing lab in Yuma that helped keep the Ag workforce safe from COVID outbreaks. He also connected us with the Governor’s office, which eventually provided millions of dollars for testing of municipal water systems throughout Yuma County and beyond. The funding enabled us to not only do the testing but to hire national experts as visiting researchers to push the envelope of utilizing wastewater testing for the public good. And now YCEDA has a fully functioning modern laboratory that can help with food safety and plant disease research.

Arizona Agriculture: We know water is a top issue within agriculture. What do you hope for in this arena?

Brierley: What drives me is trying to keep Arizona agriculture a productive and profitable part of Arizona’s future, even if that future provides less water to agriculture. Agriculture is a needed part of our future both for our food supply and for our rural economies. In my role at YCEDA, our biggest project was to quantify crop water use for all major crops in the area, and the impact on soil salinity levels. From that data, we developed a mobile app that will tell farmers when and how much to water, as well as track salt balance in the soil and recommend any needed leaching to correct an imbalance.

The last thing I did at the University of Arizona was to chair the Presidential Advisory Commission on the Future of Agriculture and Food in a Drying Climate. We produced a report which lays out recommendations to focus the resources of the university on this problem.

Water is truly the lifeblood of agriculture, especially in the desert. We are often at the mercy of policymakers who may not understand the efficiency and productivity of desert agriculture. I like to say that we farm here not in “spite” of the desert, but “because” of the desert. The year-round growing weather and the fact that we control our inputs make desert agriculture among the most productive growing systems anywhere in the world.

Water policy is difficult to deal with because it is such a key part of every bit of desert life. Farmers need it to grow their crops. Factories need it to make their goods. People need it to live their lives. The environment depends on it. It is a limited resource, and as our population grows and the climate changes, those limits are being tested.

Governor Hobbs, to her credit, is not willing to bury her head in the sand and is addressing the problem. Everyone, including agriculture, will need to share in the pain. I hope that the efforts being undertaken to manage rural groundwater will truly allow rural Arizona and agriculture to be sustainable. To me, the first part of sustainable Ag is that the farmer must be able to make a living, meaning continuing to be productive over the long term, over multiple generations, rather than running a race to the bottom over the next few years and then calling it quits.

Arizona Agriculture: A recent report conducted by ASU suggests that AZDA needs more resources including people resources. Arizona Farm Bureau has advocated along these lines for some time. In the meantime, how can/does AZDA compensate for this?

Brierley: Our agency workforce was slashed after the 2008 recession, and we’ve never really been built back up since. Our 300 employees are an incredibly devoted team of passionate professionals who believe in our mission.

One of my roles is to explain to government decision-makers how important AZDA’s work is to protect not just agriculture and the rural economies, but also public health and safety. There are areas we could expand to better support the agriculture industry, and we appreciate the support of our stakeholders in that. However, in the face of large state deficits, we are not likely to receive funding for that in the next year or two.

In the meantime, our dedicated workforce manages to get the job done, but not without a toll. We have had a very high turnover in the past, partially due to low wages. One solution that combines my Ag and Tech backgrounds is implementing technology to provide better service to our customers with less paper pushing required of our employees. This year we converted our Nogales inspections to tablets rather than paper. Two IT modernization projects are currently underway - one to automate some of our livestock inspection processes and one to automate our licensing processes. These are being undertaken with lots of stakeholder input to make sure that the new systems work well for them as well as us.

Arizona Agriculture: And on this point, talk about the importance of the AZDA employee force currently part of the agency.

Brierley: We recently had a livestock inspector retire after 30 years of service to AZDA. I did a ride along with him in Willcox, and at the end of the day, I asked him why he stayed for those 30 years given that he had shared many reasons he might have left. He said it was the people. He couldn’t imagine not being out in the countryside with the good people he worked alongside and worked to help. He is not alone in that sentiment.

My focus is for 2024 within the agency has the acronym EAT, which is apropos for a Department of Agriculture. It stands for excellence through accountability and teamwork. I am working to instill these values across the workforce and believe they will have a good impact on our workplace and our results.

Arizona Agriculture: What other challenges and opportunities face AZDA that our farmer/rancher audience should know about?

Brierley: Food safety is a huge challenge for our food producers, especially the fresh produce industry which Yuma and other areas play such a large role. During the 2018 E. coli outbreak in Romaine lettuce, AZDA did not have legal jurisdiction, nor the capabilities needed to be the responding agency. The federal government response was slow and heavy-handed. In the 5 years since, AZDA has gotten statutory jurisdiction, built up on-farm food safety training programs, built incredible lab capacity to monitor and test during an outbreak, and was recently awarded FDA funding for a Rapid Response Team. If God forbid, we have another food safety outbreak like that, AZDA will be a quickly responding agency with the intent of figuring out what happened, how to rapidly mitigate it, and how to prevent it from happening again.

Productivity isn’t growing as fast

See **ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF AG** Page 7



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ARIZONA DEPARTMENT OF AG *continued from Page 6*

as the population is, and the resources such as land, water and labor available to agriculture are dwindling as population displaces us. I believe that we are in an unparalleled time of federal and state funding being directed to solve agriculture's challenges. The government is pouring money into water conservation, Ag Tech, and climate-smart agriculture. Arizona is "the" place where those challenges should be solved. Some state departments of agriculture have whole divisions to address some of these challenges. I hope that AZDA gets the support it needs to grow its capabilities to assist the industry in these areas.

Agriculture feeds the world, a rapidly growing world. People need us, even if they don't often think beyond the store shelf. With all the new production methods and technologies being developed for agriculture, it's an exciting time to be in this industry. Especially for young people, who need to carry the mantle into the future. Agriculture will look different in the future - that I can guarantee you. But I also guarantee you that people will need agriculture then just as much as they do now. And I know that Ag producers will be there to feed their neighbors - because that's just what they do! Know that AZDA will always be a partner in that effort - providing the "good" kind of regulation. 

AN UPDATE COVERING A MENAGERIE OF FEDERAL ISSUES *continued from Page 1*

of state or government, such as the president or prime minister.

Judicial Branch: Responsible for interpreting laws and ensuring that they align with the Constitution. This branch is usually composed of courts and judges."

The separation of powers was to create a system of checks and balances and prevent a concentration of power. However, this was long abandoned by the Chevron doctrine created by the Supreme Court ruling. Once again before the Supreme Court are two cases that seek to overturn the Chevron deference. The cases before the courts involve the National Marine Fisheries Service and a regulation that allows the agency to require federal observers to ride along with them during their fishing operations to observe their fishing practices. The governing statute articulates that the agency can require observers on these fishing vessels, however, the agency is interpreting regulation to require the fishing operations to pay the salaries of these federally employed observers. The lower courts upheld the regulation based on the Chevron doctrine and now on January 17, 2024, before the Supreme Court the cases will be argued.

American Farm Bureau has been engaged while Arizona Farm Bureau pays close attention to this case and the outcome. This will be another landmark decision if the Court overturns the Chevron deference, restoring the separation of powers doctrine, and giving all agencies less discretion to impose regulations on agriculture that Congress did not authorize.

FASFA Simplification Act

In a move that was to streamline the application for Federal Student Aid and make it easier for families and students to apply has proven to make it more difficult for farm and ranch families to qualify for federal student aid. The Act passed in 2020 changed the needs analysis formula and the Expected Family Contribution which will require families to report the net worth of their family farm or small business as assets. The original formula was adopted in 1992, and the change in the requirement to include the net worth of the family farm or ranch as an asset will lead to fewer students qualifying or significantly reduce the amount of federal aid one might be awarded. Now families with an adjusted gross income over \$60,000 will be subject to the asset test. According to Dustin Sherer, Director of Government Affairs for the American Farm Bureau Federation, "under these new rules, a farm that is valued at about a million dollars would have been expected to pay about \$7,600.00" and now under the new rule, the same family would have to pay nearly 6 times that amount once the assets are disclosed.

To combat this, Representative Mann and Panetta in the House and Senator Ernst and Tester in the Senate have introduced respectively, H.R. 1250/S. 1237, the Family


Farm and Small Business Exemption Act that would restore exemptions for family farms and small businesses under the FAFSA.

Security Exchange Commission

The SEC currently has two rules that are of concern to the Arizona Farm Bureau. One is the Climate Disclosure Rule, which if passed, mandates climate disclosures for all publicly traded companies. You might think that this does not impact you or your operations because you are not publicly traded, however, there are three scopes to this rule and Scope 3 applies to all indirect emissions that occur in the value chain of the reporting company. Thus, requiring all entities within that value chain of the publicly traded company to report emissions. According to the American Farm Bureau Federation, there are an estimated 63,485 companies listed on the SEC website that have some form of registrant reporting requirement and 2,400 agriculture-related companies registered with the SEC that would be required to report scope 3 emissions from its farm suppliers. Lawmakers are currently being lobbied to ask the SEC to roll back scope 3 from the rule. After lobbying both of our U.S. Senators, Sinema signed onto a letter circulated by Senator Tester asking the SEC to remove scope 3 from the rule. There have also been requests and efforts asking for an exemption for agriculture.

In another rulemaking, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) was considering whether it should approve a proposal by the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) to adopt a new listing standard for Natural Asset Companies (NACs) to be listed on the exchange. The NAC definition is "a corporation whose primary purpose is to actively manage, maintain, restore (as applicable), and grow the value of natural assets and their production of ecosystem services.

The proposal suggests the establishment of Natural Asset Companies (NACs) that would obtain licenses from private or public landowners for a minimum of 10 years. These licenses would grant NACs the right to manage natural or working areas, such as national reserves or farmlands, for conservation, restoration, or sustainable management. NACs would be prohibited from engaging in unsustainable activities, defined as those causing material adverse impacts on natural assets or involving resource extraction without replenishment. The licenses would be publicly available, and negotiations with landowners would determine the terms. The license includes an Equitable Benefit Sharing Policy, requiring the distribution of NAC's common stock shares to local communities, with a minimum of 50% for public lands and 5% for private lands.

Arizona Farm Bureau submitted comments raising concerns and opposing the proposed rulemaking and after broad opposition, the rule was quickly withdrawn. 

MENTOR PROTÉGÉ CAMP CLASS 3 *continued from Page 4*

and her Ag Ambassadors will be taking a trip to Coolidge Dam/San Carlos Lake, a very important water source for Pinal County farmers. On the way back to Casa Grande, we will stop at two San Carlos Canals. One of the canals will be lined with concrete and the other one will be unlined. This will let our group see why infrastructure money is so desperately needed to complete the lining process. We will also stop at a Central Arizona Project Canal so the group can observe two different water sources and learn how water is delivered to Pinal County. The final stop will be at our farm to see a short PowerPoint Presentation with maps of the canal systems and watersheds.

We also hope to visit Hoover Dam in the spring.
You’ve been a mentor from the beginning, why such a vested commitment? Agriculture is freedom. Our voices need to be heard as we face issues and challenges regarding conservation, including water. Through this mentorship program, the partnership with NRCS and Farm Bureau could bring solutions that could be possibly implemented in the future. By being a mentor, I am investing time and commitment because I feel it is important to see these issues addressed with possible solutions.

Protégé: James Felix
What’s been the biggest takeaway from your first gathering? Subsequent ones? My first gathering with my mentor Nancy was the West Pinal Natural Resource Conser-

vation District Meeting out at Caywood Farms. The biggest takeaway for me during that meeting was the love, passion, and pride all the board members have for Pinal County, from the discussions on conserving our water to helping our neighbors in times of need.

How do you see this helping a broader set of NRCS employees? What’s key for you? Spending time with my mentor Nancy has been a huge help for me and I know it will help other NRCS employees understand firsthand what our local farmers and ranchers are going through with all the water issues and why so many are reaching out to us to help better their productivity.

Why have you felt this program has been helpful? Personally, I feel like this program has helped me better understand and have more knowledge of what all our Arizona farmers and ranchers go through daily. Knowing that I can better focus on what our producers’ needs are when taking a survey or designing a plan to help their productivity.

What more do you hope to learn? I hope to continue attending our local and state events to network with our Farmers and Ranchers, letting them know we are here to help. I’d like to learn more about how different producers do things in different parts of Arizona as far as farming and ranching, knowing what might work in one area doesn’t necessarily mean it will work in another. 🚜

A RETIREMENT SALUTE TO BRUCE CAIN

By Staff Reports

While we see him more often in a ball cap, holding a spatula while leading a team of weekend chefs around the state (and will continue to do so), Farm Bureau Financial Services’ Arizona Business Center Director Bruce Cain retired in January with more than 32 years of service managing staff responsible for personal lines and agriculture claims and underwriting. Cain will be missed around the office; outdoor BBQs for ag groups still get the pleasure of his presence.
Cain has served as the lead of the Farm Bureau Goodwill Grill Team for several years, in-

work ethic, his love of family, friends, youth and more means he puts a lot of heart and soul into his cooking. After all, he’s from Louisiana so the bar was set high for him in the creative culinary arts.
The Arizona FFA Foundation selected Cain for their 2024 Blue & Gold Award, where he was recognized during the 8th annual Blue & Gold Gala last month at the Renaissance Phoenix Glendale. 🚜



Bruce’s menu for Arizona Farm Bureau’s Annual Racin’ for the Bacon

spired by former Arizona Farm Bureau President Kevin Rogers and others to initially connect with local communities after a fire but also to support general outreach. Cain takes on each food event with gusto: food preparations, schedule coordination, all-over-the-state travel, and Grill Team volunteer coordination.

The Farm Bureau Goodwill Grill Team has been all over the state serving at state and county fairs, Insurance events, and much more. The man is always busy.

“On just about any weekend you can find Bruce serving some of his famous BBQ at an event around the state,” said Arizona Farm Bureau CEO Phil Bashaw. “He doesn’t do it out of a sense of obligation but out of pure enjoyment in serving others. Whether he is contributing his time to support FFA, County Fair Livestock Auctions, or our Farm Bureau members, his dedication to service is always on full display. Bruce has helped thousands of people throughout Arizona, and I cannot thank him enough for his service. I am glad he is not going far and will still be there for us with his easy smile, quick joke, and delicious BBQ for many more years to come!”

Over the last 10 years, the Goodwill Grill has averaged 33 events per year (including two years where COVID significantly affected the number of events). Also, the average number of people served averages approximately 7,743 meals per year. The highest year was 11,410 in 2023 and the lowest was 2,505 in 2020. The total number of meals served over this period was 77,430.

Oh, and he had a regular job with Farm Bureau Financial Services too. With a central Louisiana farm production background and armed with a Bachelor of Science degree from Louisiana Tech University, Cain decided to go into the insurance business working in claims and underwriting. Beginning with the Texas Farm Bureau Insurance Company, he landed with Farm Bureau Financial Services in Arizona and has been with us ever since.

And we’re privileged to get to hang out with him at future BBQ events going forward. If you’ve never eaten his food, you’re missing out. Cain’s

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