

# VALLEY LAND ALLIANCE

Our Mission is to Educate and Build Alliances to protect our uniquely productive California Central Valley farmland.



FALL - WINTER 2018

## And We All Live Downstream



Pictured above: River management located in Northern Italy.

### HIGHLIGHTS

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My worst nightmare: no it was real! The loud roar jarred me out of bed and moved me quickly to the deck where I could see the burned canyon and the small creek below. Then I turned upstream where the noise was coming from to see a vertical wall of mud 15 to 20 feet high picking up everything in its path...first thought: it is going to take me and the house, but it spared me as I was just above it.

The 1965 Coyote Fire in Santa Barbara, flamed by the Santa Ana winds which destroyed at least 200 homes, pouring over the Riviera into the city is nothing compared to what we are experi-

encing today. Fires as we are experiencing will be followed by storms, many as I experienced. The flooding bringing water mixed with soil and debris are inevitable in these burned areas. And we all live downstream.

Years later, traveling along the Panama Canal and learning that only because they have the lake to use to fill the canal locks, I thought back to that horrific day I saw the mud wall coming toward me. Just like Panama, without our forests we can not have the water, our life blood. Times are changing. We want the water but not the mud which made our rich soil years ago.

The alluvial fan we, on the eastside of the Valley, farm on was once soil made of ground up rock and decayed plants and animals which came down from the mountains. We have built dams, channeled our water, changed the quality of the course of nature. Our aquifers are not recharged, our watershed is eroding, our weather is becoming extreme, but we must not just look at the problem but how to solve the problem to protect our land, water and air. Valley Land Alliance continues to be at the table in finding solutions. We all live downstream.

Jean Okuye, President

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## Valley Land Alliance in Action

This has been possible because of people like YOU. Thank you! Below you will see what VLA has been up to the past year and also provide you with some places to explore more information about our Central Valley. VLA has partnered with several organizations such as The Nature Conservancy, TNC, East Merced Resource Conservation District, Merced County Farm Bureau, California Climate & Agriculture Network, CALCAN, working on policies and action to protect our valuable agriculture land in our valley.

We have also met with supervisors, and local agencies such as the Merced County Association of Governments, MCAG, and Merced County Local Agency Formation Commission, LAFCo, and the American Farmland Trust, AFT, regarding policies for land use and managing our resources.

As we can see, and as we

shout out, there is a threat to losing our high-quality farmland to urbanization with many people working on the coast but not being able to afford housing there. This, coupled with insufficient water our farmers and farmland need, is drying up our ability to produce crops.

Recently reported by AFT, almost half of the valley's high-quality agricultural land is subject to high water stress and/or high development risk. AFT also reports most of the high-quality ag land in the valley is found along Hwy 99 where it is most vulnerable to development. This is also where underground water supplies can be most readily replenished, many acres are near cities along Hwy 99.

### Resources to consider:

Water & Power: A California Heist, a movie on Netflix by National Geographic, Valleylandalliance.org, Country-ventures.org, eastmercedrcd.org, farmland.org/California, thenatureconservancy.org, lafcomerced.org, pcl.org, mavensnotebook.com, Groundwaterexchange.org, theguardian.com, <https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/terraccount/documents/> (many maps including maps in the study: Resilient Merced: A County Guide to Advance Climate Change Mitigation and Complementary Benefits through Land Management and Conservation.)

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## *Protect Foundation of all our Feasts*

*We are thankful for the bounty we share. The massive harvest, especially from California, would have overwhelmed our Pilgrim predecessors. Billions of servings of food products make their way to tables around the world with ever increasing efficiency. Weather, land and water compliment the ongoing efforts by millions of people working to grow, process and distribute food for our Thanksgiving Day feasts and for everyday life.*

*During and beyond this Thanksgiving season we hold the opportunity to secure and enhance our moral responsibility as food providers for the world. As we grow together, we can also grow smarter. We must avoid allowing masses of humanity to sprawl onto and over the very land used to nourish us. We can plan better, grow better and be better. We can choose to protect our best soils for growing food, providing a legacy for future generations.*

*Every California city and county is required to develop land-use plans. Let's tell our elected officials that our continuing bounty of food products depends on wise use of California's land and water resources. We can't all live in the garden, but thanks to farming in our region all of us have a seat at our nation's abundant Thanksgiving Day table. Happy Thanksgiving Day American!*



Denny Jackman, Modesto

Gratitude for all we have is on our minds, especially this time of year. Thanks, Denny, for your continued, endless efforts to save our farmland in the central valley.

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## VIA ANNUAL DINNER



Brian Martin-Gutierrez (right), a Mechanical Engineering student at UC Merced was awarded the 2018 Peter & Rochelle Koch Scholarship.

Nancy Cassidy, singer-songwriter, gave a special performance at the 2018 Valley Land Alliance Annual Dinner. Her songs often reflect on how we can nurture our environment.



Joshua Davis (left), NRCS employee, gives a healthy soils presentation at the 2018 Valley Land Alliance Annual Dinner!

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## Thank you to our supporters!!

We would like to give thanks to all the people who have supported us throughout the years!

Thank you to everyone who attended and participated in the Valley Land Alliance Annual Dinner!

We would like to give a special thanks to the ***John and Nancy Cassidy family foundation*** and advised funds of **Silicon Valley Community foundation** for their donations!

## Statistics in the San Joaquin Valley

*July 2018 study by American Farmland Trust in partnership with Conservation Biology Institute: **San Joaquin Land and Water Strategy** [farmland.org/California](http://farmland.org/California) [sjvp.databasin.org](http://sjvp.databasin.org)*

“Less than 1 of 10 acres of agricultural land in the valley is of high quality with low water stress.”

“Almost half of the valley’s high quality agricultural land is subject to high water stress and/or high development risk.”

“High quality agricultural land, especially with low water stress, is at greater risk of development than any other land.”

“Most of the high quality agricultural land in the valley is found along the Hwy 99 corridor where it is most vulnerable to development.”

“Given the likelihood of change, the sustainability of valley agriculture will depend on actively managing land and water resources, not just on an individual farm basis, but from a system-wide perspective with a view to optimizing the combination of land quality and water security.”

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**HAPPY HOLIDAYS!!**

**Feel Free to Cut Out**

*Become a member of Valley Land Alliance today!*

*Membership donations are:*

*\_\_\_\_\_ \$15 Student*

*\_\_\_\_\_ \$50 Family*

*\_\_\_\_\_ \$25 Individual*

*\$\_\_\_\_\_ (other)*

*Checks can be mailed to:*

*Valley Land Alliance*

*P.O. Box 102*

*Cressey, CA 95312*

*Or at [www.valleylandalliance.org](http://www.valleylandalliance.org)*