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New delta tunnel plan revives calls of a water grab by ag

The state held its first public hearing in Sacramento on Monday for a proposed 30-mile tunnel to deliver water south under the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta. The opportunity to comment drew a mix of environmentalists and tribal members, who called the tunnel unnecessary and a water grab by wealthy agricultural interests in the Central Valley.

SIVE THE DELTA

Nearly a year ago, Gov. Gavin Newsom announced in his first State of the State address he planned to trim former Gov. Jerry Brown's twin tunnels project down to a smaller single tunnel. The Department of

Water Resources then withdrew its approval and permits for Brown's "Water Fix" project, halted a decade-worth of environmental reviews and began renegotiating with water contractors over funding a revised plan.

The meeting Monday was a chance for the public to see <u>the early direction</u> of the project. The final environmental permits are expected to be completed at the end of 2022.

"This is a lengthy process and we are at the very beginning," cautioned Carrie Buckman, a DWR environmental program manager, during the meeting.

The biggest difference between the two plans is capacity. The twin tunnels would have delivered 9,000 cubic feet per second (cfs) of water from three pumping stations. The single tunnel will provide up to 6,000 cfs from two pumps. The environmental reviews could limit the actual deliveries, however, to 3,000 cfs or even bump them as high as 7,500 cfs. The cost will also be about 40% less than the \$19-billion Water Fix. The objectives for the two projects, however, remain largely the same.

The proposed tunnel project follows the release of Newsom's draft Water Resilience Portfolio in January (which is <u>open for comment</u> until Friday). The administration has been framing the

tunnel as protecting the reliability of water deliveries against sea level rise, floods and earthquakes.

"This project would help safeguard a vital source of affordable water for millions of Californians," said DWR Director Karla Nemeth, in a recent <u>news release</u>.

Each of those threats could disable for months a source of drinking water that supplies more than half the state's population. The tunnel is also touted as benefiting ecosystems and adding flexibility for capturing more water during peak flow vents, which will help to fill reservoirs, recharge aquifers and facilitate water transfers in the Central Valley, in line with <u>the portfolio's recommendations</u> and DWR's new long-term operating plan for the State Water Project.

The workshop on Monday served as a listening session for DWR as it switches gears to embark on a new environmental impact study for the proposal. Along with the amount of water the tunnel will pull from the Sacramento River, the review will dictate to DWR which of the two proposed corridors will be the optimal path of the tunnel. Some of the criticisms of the plan were recycled from Brown's administration, as several groups wanted no tunnel at all.



Henrich Albert of Friends of the River

Facilitating the stakeholder outreach was the consulting group Ag Innovations. The Department of Pesticide Regulation <u>also hired this group</u> to facilitate the Chlorpyrifos Alternatives Work Group.

During her public testimony, Berkeley resident Charlene Woodcock declared that "agricultural corporations have had significant influence on California water policy." Others called the project "a subsidy for big ag" and a conspiracy by billionaire Stewart Resnick, the founder and president of The Wonderful Company.

Molly Culton, a conservation organizer for Sierra Club California, said DWR should instead consider stronger delta protections and "fully assess" a no-tunnel alternative in its environmental review.

Fishing and conservation groups have long opposed a tunnel project over concerns that reducing water levels in the delta would harm native fish populations. Barbara Barrigan-Parrilla, the director of Restore the Delta, was "extremely pleased" following Newsom's 2019 announcement.

"A year ago, we said we would keep an open mind regarding moving forward with a singletunnel project," said Barrigan-Parrilla at the meeting Monday. "Sadly, we're seeing the exact same mistakes being made."

Along similar lines, the editorial board for the Bay Area's *Mercury News* <u>warned</u> the tunnel would "doom the long-term health of the delta for future generations." The administration, it argued, is "backing the Trump administration's faulty science" in the new <u>biological opinions</u> regarding water flows for two endangered fish species in the delta.

For many critics, the Water Portfolio's more holistic approach to the state's deeply entrenched issues did not provide enough concrete details to trust that the administration is doing its best to protect the environment.

While no farm groups spoke at the meeting, many will likely be <u>submitting comments</u>, which are being accepted on this part of the scoping process until Mar. 20.

When Newsom made his single-tunnel announcement last year, David Strecker, a delta farmer and president of the San Joaquin Farm Bureau, said the state should instead be looking at projects with more tangible benefits to the delta, such as adding more water storage, a through-delta conveyance or dredging. Delta farmers have argued pulling more water from the delta would increase the salinity of its freshwater, which they use for irrigation.

The largest single beneficiary of the tunnel, the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California, strongly supported the governor's



Carrie Buckman, DWR environmental program manager

decision in 2019. District General Manager Jeffrey Kightlinger said it was "imperative that we move forward rapidly" because "having no delta fix imperils all of California." He added that the district was pleased the administration had "reaffirmed a strong commitment to modernize the state's water delivery infrastructure."

Soon after Newsom announced his decision, a <u>poll</u> by the Public Policy Institute of California found that a slim majority of Californians favored scaling back the tunnels, as well as the controversial high-speed rail project. WaterFix was also plagued by funding issues. The Westlands Water District <u>dealt a major blow</u> to the project when its board voted in 2017 not to participate in WaterFix.

For the new single-tunnel plan, DWR notes that a cost analysis will come later in the process.

Eight questions for DPR's Val Dolcini

Val Dolcini, the director of the Department of Pesticide Regulation, spoke with *Agri-Pulse* this week on the 2020 regulatory outlook for the department. Dolcini shared his perspective on what farmers can expect to see with neonics, air monitoring and chlorpyrifos alternatives, among others.

The conversation has been edited for brevity and clarity.



1. A recent lawsuit by the Pesticide Action Network targeted DPR's environmental review process. How is the department adjusting?

My thoughts on lawsuits in general is that to a certain degree, it's just something we deal with on various issues here.

This one in particular, hasn't, in my view, slowed down the registration processes for anything. In fact, we're trying to streamline the process for approving new active ingredients. We've seen in 2019, for example, more biopesticides were approved. We're trying to make some internal changes.

Lawsuits like these don't really impact the way we do business on a daily basis.

2. What are the top things farmers should be paying attention to this year?



DPR Assistant Director Karen Morrison, during a workshop on chlorpyrifos

My focus on sustainable pest management practices is certainly number one on my list. It's what I talk about whenever I travel around the state.

Just in the last couple of months, I've done half a dozen or so Spray Safe events from one corner of the state to the other. I've spoken at Farm Bureaus. I've been to environmental justice conferences. I'm going to do the Small Farm Conference. I really take every opportunity to get out and talk to people about responsible pest management.

And to me that includes chemical pesticides. That's

certainly a part of the toolbox, along with biopesticides and biological controls. I saw, for example, a really interesting demonstration of the use of drones dropping beneficial insects over vineyards in San Joaquin County. There are all kinds of creative ways to manage pests that use safer alternatives.

3. What can we expect with DPR's review of four neonicotinoids this year?

This is a really challenging one, of course, because neonicotinoids are used throughout California for a variety of different crops. We have been in reevaluation for some time now.

2020 is the year where we'll be able to do some public workshops, hopefully later this spring, to talk with Californians, commodity organizations and others about neonics and what we may do going forward on those.

4. What is on the schedule for 1,3-D this year?

1,3-D, in terms of agricultural fumigants, has been something we have spent a lot of time on at DPR over the last several years.

It is another one of those widely used ag chemicals that is used on the coast for strawberries, but also in the Central Valley for vineyards and almond orchards. We've recorded some exceedances

in the Central Valley areas of Shafter, for example, and Parlier. We're going to go back and explore what we can do to mitigate the health impacts of those exceedances.

5. Will there be anything different this year for the partnership with CARB on the AB 617 air monitoring network?

We are continuing to work closely with CARB on air monitoring issues in the valley through the network of AB 617. We've been working a lot with our sister agencies and others on that.

The air monitoring work that we do around the state through our current network of eight air monitors is really important, not only in communities like those in the Central Valley, but on the coast as well. It adds to the scientific work we're able to do in those communities and elsewhere. It gives communities a good sense that DPR is working hard to protect human health, bystander health and worker health in those communities and elsewhere.



DPR Air Program Manager Edgar Vidrio explains findings on 1,3-D.

My hope is we're going to continue and certainly build on the work we do with CARB to address issues in other areas.

6. Where does DPR stand on glyphosate?

It's not one we have under review or have plans to review at this point. Glyphosate is one of those tools that's widely used by both backyard gardeners and farmers around the state. It's an effective weed control device.

There are certainly options you can use in lieu of glyphosate, or Roundup in the household setting, including hand weeding and even bringing goats onto the property – that's been a good way to keep fire fuel down as well.

In my former life, coming from the Pollinator Partnership, we talked a lot about the overuse of tools like glyphosate in the backyard context and really encouraged backyard gardeners to focus more on planting native flowers and vegetables to minimize the need for chemical tools generally, and glyphosate in particular. But it's not on any lists at DPR these days.

7. What should farmers expect with chlorpyrifos, both with the cancellation and the work with alternatives?

The goal is to have the work by the Alternatives Work Group completed in the spring. We're hopeful we can get a report completed by April or May.

It's been a very successful process. We've just completed the trio of public input sessions, in Sacramento, Fresno, and Oxnard. They were well attended. We had about 300 or so folks at all of those sessions. There was clearly a lot of interest in California and hearing more about the work of the Work Group. The meetings of the work group itself in Sacramento have also been

quite productive. We're really in a good place with regards to what we will ultimately see from that group.

The governor included some additional funds in his January budget for a Work Group 2.0. It's going to continue to look carefully and closely at sustainable alternatives to chemical use.

8. Any other messages to share with the ag community?

Our friends in agriculture are really important stakeholders for the department. The work we've done over the years and certainly the experiences I bring from my career are important for the department.

They're important for all the commodity groups that meet with us on a regular basis and provide new insights, observations, science in some cases, experiences, problems, pests, issues related to resistance, issues related to biological controls and biopesticides.

Ag is really at the tip of the spear in terms of innovation, and it's a very important constituency for us. I look forward to continuing to deepen our ties with agriculture throughout California, at every level, from the big farms in the valley to small operations on the coast and everything in between.

Trump touts 'Great American Comeback,' says tariff strategy 'worked'

President Donald Trump served notice though his State of the Union address Tuesday night that his new trade deals are going to be a major part of his case for reelection.

Calling his economic record the "Great American Comeback" that had produced a "blue-collar boom," he said the nation was "moving forward at a pace that was unimaginable just a short time ago, and we are never, ever going back."

He made no mention of his impeachment in December by the Democratic-controlled House; the Republican-controlled Senate is expected to vote to acquit him Wednesday afternoon.

Trump didn't back away from his use of tariffs as a negotiating tool, even though they have

resulted in retaliation that has disrupted major agricultural commodity markets.

Citing the new "phase one" trade agreement with China, he declared that he had fulfilled a campaign promise to "impose tariffs to confront China's massive theft of American jobs. Our strategy worked."

It's not clear yet how much impact the agreement with China will have on the economy. His chief economic adviser, Larry Kudlow, <u>acknowledged earlier</u>



President Donald Trump delivered his annual State of the Union speech last night, flanked by Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Vice President Mike Pence.

<u>Tuesday that the coronavirus outbreak will likely delay</u> the surge in purchases of U.S. agricultural commodities to which China committed in the agreement.

But Trump described the trade pact as "groundbreaking" and said it "will defend our workers, protect our intellectual property, bring billions of dollars into our treasury, and open vast new markets for products made and grown right here in the U.S.A."

He asserted that the United States now has "perhaps the best relationship we have ever had with China, including with President Xi."

Trump also boasted about the new U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement that makes revisions to the North American Free Trade Agreement, a favorite target of his in the 2016 campaign.

The implementing bill passed overwhelmingly after Trump's top trade negotiator, Robert Lighthizer, negotiated with House Democrats and Mexico on provisions to toughen enforcement of labor and environmental standards. Canada is expected to approve its implementing bill in coming months.

"One of the single biggest promises I made to the American people was to replace the disastrous NAFTA trade deal," he said. "In fact, unfair trade is perhaps the single biggest reason that I decided to run for President."

He went on, "Many politicians came and went, pledging to change or replace NAFTA ... and then absolutely nothing happened. But unlike so many who came before me, I keep my promises."

He said it was the first major trade deal to win support from labor unions.

The agreement includes revisions that would have been part of the Trans-Pacific Partnership had not Trump withdrawn the United States from that pact, but the USMCA also includes new provisions to address barriers to U.S. dairy products and wheat in Canada.

Ticking off a list of economic accomplishments, including the lowest unemployment rate in half a century, he said that participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program had fallen by 7 million, a reduction that comes before the administration implements a series of new regulations designed to tighten work requirements and income eligibility limits in many states.

Trump made only a passing reference to infrastructure, which has long been a major priority for farm groups and agribusiness. He called on lawmakers to support a Senate surface transportation bill and said he was "committed to ensuring that every citizen can have access to high-speed internet, including rural America."

He went on at length about sanctuary cities, illegal immigration and his administration's efforts to combat it, calling attention to a guest in the House gallery who was the brother of a man allegedly killed by someone in the country illegally.

He said his administration was working on legislation "to replace our outdated and randomized immigration system with one based on merit, welcoming those who follow the rules, contribute to our economy, support themselves financially, and uphold our values." But Trump didn't

mention agricultural labor issues or his administration's proposal to overhaul the H-2A visa program.

Despite the upbeat economic message, Trump's third state of the union address also will be remembered for House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's role. Trump didn't shake her hand before the speech, and in full view of the camera she ripped the text in half as he completed the address.

Roger Johnson, president of the National Farmers Union, said that Trump's "rosy" description of the economy "is not just inaccurate, it's insensitive to the millions of rural Americans who are struggling every day just to scrape by."

"Despite trade assistance payments, many farmers haven't been able to withstand the financial pressures: nearly 600 farmers filed for Chapter 12 bankruptcy last year, a shocking 20 percent spike, while thousands more decided to leave the business entirely," Johnson said.

Bloomberg brings record as free trader, obesity fighter

Mike Bloomberg, the billionaire former mayor of New York City, is becoming a significant factor in the Democratic presidential campaign. He's self-funding a flood of national advertising and under new rules should qualify for the televised debates soon after next week's New Hampshire primary.

He skipped the campaign for the Iowa caucuses, which traditionally forces candidates to take stands on agriculture and food policy. But there are still some clues to his approach to ag issues.



Michael Bloomberg (Photo: Gage Skidmore)

He has a long record of being pro-trade, he's a one-time critic of federal biofuel policy, and as mayor he undertook a war on obesity by trying to discourage the consumption of sugary drinks.

He's rising swiftly in national political polls and running fourth — behind Joe Biden, Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren — among the Democratic candidates nationally, according to the <u>RealClearPolitics average of polls</u>. Some <u>polls</u> also put him ahead of President Donald Trump in a head-to-head matchup.

Bloomberg's public statements and <u>campaign website</u> are sketchy on agricultural and rural policies. He turns 78 on Feb. 14, was a Democrat most of his life but a Republican and an independent in his 12 years as a mayor between 2002-2013. **His campaign policy advisor who agreed to share information on background, said Tuesday that, though he has ''not yet rolled out his ag policy, we expect it in the coming weeks.''**

Farm groups say they know little about his ag policy views, yet he's "perhaps the strongest supporter of free trade among the various Democratic candidates," according to <u>a study</u> of the 2020 presidential candidates co-authored by former USDA Chief Economist Joe Glauber and published by the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank. The report says Trump's trade policy is a personal "confrontational exercise" that causes "collateral damage" to farm markets.

The advisor says Bloomberg insists "it was a mistake to walk away" from the negotiated Trans-Pacific Partnership in 2017, and that action was "a setback for US farmers. The US has lost a great opportunity to shape global trade rules." Bloomberg wants to join in "an improved version of TPP, but by promoting other high-standard trade pacts," the advisor says.

In line with the other leading 2020 Democratic presidential hopefuls, Bloomberg also calls for accelerated investments in transportation infrastructure. He points to Trump's quickly discarded <u>pledge</u> two years ago to "spur the biggest and boldest infrastructure investment in American history." He <u>proposes</u> "a national capital budget specifically dedicated to major, long-term infrastructure projects ... (to) repair 240,000 miles of roads and 16,000 bridges by 2025, and allocate \$850 billion over 10 years" for such work.

For example, he calls for expanding the <u>Surface Transportation Block Grant Program</u>, now \$12 billion a year, to \$30 billion and requiring "that states devote a quarter of their grants to fixing any local bridges in poor repair."

He calls for expanding broadband service to all households, for example, but hasn't publicly addressed other rural development or most major farm sector issues such as agribusiness consolidation, crop insurance, gene editing, or farm conservation incentives.

Bloomberg has switched his stance on biofuels. He criticized support for corn-based ethanol over the years while becoming an advocate for reducing global use of fossil fuels. But about a year ago he declared that ethanol should be a long-term transition fuel on the long path toward carbon-free energy sources. He now refers to corn-based ethanol as carbon-neutral, and his adviser said Tuesday "he would reform the Renewable Fuel Standard to make it a national Low Carbon Fuel Standard – to reduce emissions from the production, distribution, and use of transport fuels."

Bloomberg's focus in reducing greenhouse gas emissions is the electric power sector, where he wants to cut U.S. emissions by 80% by 2028. But along with many of the other Democratic candidates, he also strongly favors converting to electric vehicles, which would reduce demand for liquid fuels, including corn ethanol. He'd also like to "keep nuclear plants running," his campaign office says.

As mayor, Bloomberg also took on the beverage industry in an effort to cut consumption of sugary sodas and drinks. His administration tried to prohibit the sale of sugary drinks larger than 16 ounces in certain city venues, including restaurants, movie theaters and stadiums, but courts overturned the ban.

Bloomberg also <u>proposed to make sugary drinks ineligible</u> for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, but USDA rejected that idea in 2011 under former President Barack Obama.

Americans will be able to catch more of Bloomberg's views in the televised Democratic candidate debates Feb. 19 or Feb. 25 or after. He has been absent from those events so far but may soon qualify since the <u>rules were adjusted</u> for getting a podium to better accommodate a self-funded candidate.

News Briefs

California's "Big Bench" evolves for Seedless Lemons. Wonderful Citrus recently signed a long-term lease on 846 continuous acres within California's Central Coast region to grow their new brand of Non-GMO Wonderful Seedless Lemons. The land is being leased from the multigenerational landowners; the Bianchi Family based in Soledad. They are descendants of Jose Maria Soberanes, who first arrived in the Salinas Valley in 1776. "For decades the Big Bench served the Bianchi family well, grazing herds of cattle and dry farming hay through peril, bounty and drought. In the early 1990's, the decision was made to put the Bench into grapes and Robert Mondavi planted vines where cattle once roamed. Now, it's time for The Big Bench to go through yet another evolution!" stated Nicola Bianchi of the Bianchi Family. The Mendrin Group represented the Bianchi Family in offering the Bianchi Big Bench to a select group of prospective tenants through a confidential bid process. "We are very excited to be selected as the new long-term tenant for the Bianchi Family and produce our new Non-GMO Wonderful Seedless Lemons in this special citrus growing area," said Zak Laffite, President, Wonderful Citrus. "The unique micro-climates in the region provide optimum timing for lemon harvests to complement our year-round program of Wonderful Seedless Lemons. The Bianchi Big Bench property is a large single block of land along the Central Coast, a very rare find." Wonderful Seedless Lemons is a new variety of premium, naturally seedless, Non-GMO Project Verified branded lemons in the U.S. and Canada. Wonderful Citrus owns the exclusive rights to sell and market this seedless lemon variety in North America.

Looking for new produce industry leaders. If you are involved in the produce industry and interested in further developing your leadership skills, United Fresh has a program for you. The application period is now open for the twenty-sixth class of the United Fresh Produce Industry Leadership Program. Since its inception in 1995, more than 250 produce industry professionals have graduated from this exclusive program, thanks to the generous support of founding sponsor Corteva Agriscience. "This year, as we celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of this one-of-a-kind program, I invite our alumni and all those who have supported their journey to pay it forward," said Tom Stenzel, President & CEO, United Fresh Produce Association. "Encourage the next generation of industry leaders to apply to take part in Class 26 and become the first fellows of the next quarter-century." This is the only ongoing, fully paid leadership program for the produce industry. Each year, fellows are selected to participate in the program which is developed around four fundamental goals: leadership development; business relationships; government and public affairs; and media and public communications. During the year-long program, fellows will participate in a series of four curated trips, focusing on face-toface meetings, hands-on training with top industry experts and educators, interactive experiences with influential leaders in Washington, and more. The fellows of Class 26 will be named at United Fresh 2020 Convention & Expo, June 16-19 in San Diego. Participation in the program is limited to 12-15 fellows who are selected by an advisory committee. Candidates interested in applying for Class 26 can do so at www.unitedfresh.org. Applications must be submitted by March 31, 2020. For full details, including program eligibility, visit www.unitedfresh.org or contact Amanda Griffin, United Fresh's Vice President, Education & Program Management, at 202-303-3412.

Farm Hands West: Tryon elected president of CWA

Del Norte County native **Rose Tryon** is the new president of the California Women for Agriculture. This step up in leadership comes after a decade of involvement with both CWA and its parent organization American Agri-Women (<u>AAW</u>). As president, Tryon wants to focus on connecting members with the California State Women's legislative caucus to help bridge the gap between the agriculture industry and state legislators. She also plans to help educate urban neighbors about issues affecting agriculture, as well as continue to help CWA's mission to uplift women in agriculture. A retired District Attorney investigator, she currently resides in Paradise, California with her husband and two dogs and is working to rebuild her home after she lost it to the 2018 Camp Fire. Tryon joins 12 other women as part of the 2020 CWA Executive Team who are listed at <u>www.cawomen4ag.com</u>

Josh Rolph has left the California Farm Bureau Federation where he served as the director of federal policy division. Rolph has been with the organization for the past 11 years. He has started a new job with GovPredict as a senior account executive. Before joining CFBF, Rolph served as an associate director of the office of congressional relations at USDA.

Corinne Madison is also leaving the California Farm Bureau Federation where she worked the past three years as a legislative analyst. She has taken a new position with the United Dairy Families of California. Her last day at CFBF is Feb. 5.

Mark Heising has been tapped to serve as chairman-elect of the board of the Environmental Defense Fund. Heising is the founder and a managing director of Medley Partners, an investment firm based in San Francisco. Heising has served as a board member since 2011 and succeeds **Carl Ferenbach**, who has served as board chair since 2009.

The University of California, Davis, has tapped professors **Li Tian** and **Cameron Carter** as codirectors of the new Cannabis & Hemp Research Center. Tian is a plant sciences professor known for her research with phytonutrients, plant-based chemicals that can prevent diseases and bring other health benefits. Carter has a background in schizophrenia and mental health research, and was director of the UC Davis Center for Neuroscience from 2009 to 2016 and is now the director of the UC Davis Behavioral Health Center of Excellence.

Tricia Kovacs has been appointed to serve as the deputy administrator of the Agricultural Marketing Service's Transportation and Marketing program. Kovacs first joined AMS in 2016 as the local and regional food systems policy adviser. Before joining USDA, Kovacs managed regional market programs at the Washington State Department of Agriculture.

Andrew Jerome has joined the International Dairy Foods Association (IDFA) as director of external and member communications. Jerome joins IDFA from Michael Torrey Associates, where he served as a director. He provided policy, communications guidance, and representation to food companies, trade associations, farm groups, and universities. Before that, Jerome was previously the communications director for the National Farmers Union.

Michael Johnson has joined the staff of Sen. **Tom Udall**, D-N.M. as the new senior policy adviser covering the agriculture, public lands, animal welfare and environment portfolio. He takes the portfolio from **Ken Rooney** who left Udall's office as a legislative assistant.

Chelsea Glynn has moved from legislative aide to legislative assistant for Rep. **Pete Aguilar**, D-Calif., covering the environmental protection, natural resources, and telecommunications portfolio.

Jess Wysocky has been promoted to a legislative aide covering the small business and immigration portfolio for Rep. **Harley Rouda**, D-Calif.

The Western Caucus has added three new individuals to its leadership team for 2020. Rep. **Doug Lamborn**, R-Colo., has been selected to serve as vice chairman for defense and veteran affairs. Rep. **Garrett Graves**, R-La., has been tapped to serve as vice chairman for oceans and ocean energy; and Rep. **John Curtis**, R-Utah, will be vice chairman for federal lands and new energy opportunity. You can access the complete membership page <u>here</u>.

Best regards,

Sara Wyant Editor

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