

## Associate vice president for ANR and vice provost for UCCE visit to Desert Research Extension Center and the Imperial County Cooperative Extension

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Recently, Wendy Powers, the new associate vice president of the University of California, Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, made her first visit to Imperial County. She was accompanied by Chris Greer, vice provost for the University of California Cooperative Extension system.

The day started with a light breakfast and introductions of the University of California Cooperative Extension staff and the University of California Desert Research and Extension staff.

After introductory presentations from Oli Bachie (UCCE Imperial County director) and Jairo Diaz (UC DREC director), Powers spoke to the group. She talked about her journey through college and how she got into the agriculture industry, and her passion for her work. She expressed appreciation for UC staffs' work, and offered support and encouragement to continue to fill the needs of Imperial County. Following breakfast, Powers and Greer were accompanied by some of our staff for a tour of the farm and the immediate area.

They toured CE and DREC offices, laboratory facilities and the water treatment plant, DREC feedlot research and DREC projects in the field. During this tour, Bachie and Diaz highlighted the various agronomy, pest management, irrigation management, variety trials and biochar research projects being conducted at the Desert Research and Extension Center. Dr. Richard Zinn provided highlights of his research on nutrition, health and management of feedlot cattle. Powers and Greer also spent some time interacting with the staffs of UCCE and DREC. The tour provided an excellent opportunity to showcase the research



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Imperial County Board of Supervisor Ray Castillo (top left); Wendy's note to the guests at the luncheon (bottom left); visit to wetlands restoration project (top and bottom right). Courtesy Photos

and extension activities of both UCCE and DREC. The briefings also highlighted some of the constraints of implementing research and extension programs to the attention of the AVP and the VP for their future consideration.

Following the tour, lunch was served at the granary of the Farm Smart Center at DREC. Together with Imperial County Supervisor Ray Castillo of District 5 (to which our office belongs), growers, allied industries and other stakeholders, Powers had the chance to interact with the visitors, staff and invited guests. During lunch, Powers spoke to the crowd about the UC ANR mission and five-year strategic plan for research and extension. She also highlighted the recently signed a memorandum of understanding between UC ANR and the Mexico government of Baja California to extend the 4-H Youth Development program into Mexicali and to look for ways to collaborate on future agricultural developments and issues. Among the special invited guests were Supervisor Castillo, officials from the government of Baja California and Universidad Autonoma de Baja California (UABC), and members of the Imperial Irrigation District, Farm Bureau, Imperial Valley Vegetable Growers Association, USDA, Rubin Seeds, El Toro LLC, Imperial Valley College and local growers.

Along with Bachie, Diaz and new Low Desert weed science adviser, Pratap Devkota, Powers and Greer started the afternoon by visiting a nearby organic grower's field, surrounding feedlots and a hay press. Organic farmer Scott Howington gave them a tour of his farm and provided detailed information on organic farming and harvesting issues. He also remarked that the UCCE and local growers work closely together to enhance agricultural productivity in Imperial County. Jeff Plourd of El Toro LLC and president of the Imperial County Farm Bureau, briefed the group about El Toro's feedlot facility, and hay processing and pressing facilities. El Toro LLC presses hay into high-density bales for shipment to China, Korea and Japan.

Late in the afternoon, David Bradshaw of the Imperial Irrigation District provided a snapshot of the Imperial wetlands restoration project; a collaborative effort among federal, state, and local partners to restore the Salton Sea; problems associated with the Salton Sea, including the playa exposure and its impact on the health of residents of the Imperial and Coachella valleys. The tour concluded with a visit to a playa where the New River enters into the Salton Sea.

Powers and Greer wrapped up their visit with the associate vice president promising to return in the hot summer month of July or August.