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RECENT GREENHOUSE TOUR HIGHLIGHTS SUCCESS

PVWMA Projects Critical to Coastal Agriculture

Watsonville, CA - The story of coastal agriculture is in part a story of the forward looking Kitayama Nursery, the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency, and the ongoing threat of seawater intrusion.

The Kitayama Brothers Nursery operation, now three generations strong, has been farming in the Watsonville area since 1970. They have grown along with their prized flowers to become one of the largest gerbera daisy growers in Northern California.

The threat this successful operation faces is tied to the perfect location they choose for their greenhouse, the coastal Pajaro Valley. Stuart Kitayama explains:

“At Kitayama Brothers Nursery, we know that our very existence is based on the availability of a safe, drought proof source of irrigation supply to keep our crops growing and blooming for our customer’s enjoyment.

In the Pajaro Valley, years of overpumping the groundwater aquifer beneath our feet has resulted in seawater intrusion which has encroached as much as 3 miles inland. Nearby wells have experienced this impact resulting in salty groundwater that is no longer usable for irrigation or drinking.”

The problem threatened to impact most coastal growers including the Kitayama Nursery.

To find a solution Kitayama and their neighbors turned to the Pajaro Valley Water Management Agency. The agency has implemented projects to bring a new, environmentally friendly, drought resistant supply of irrigation water to many of coastal users. Through development of a recycled water facility, in partnership with the City of Watsonville, wastewater that was previously discharged into the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary is now treated to a tertiary level and distributed through coastal pipelines and made available to about 7,000 acres of agricultural fields along the coast.

Kitayama concluded:

“At our nursery, use of this new water supply is evident by the purple distribution pipes used for blended recycled water supply. Purple pipes signify a new, safe, disinfected irrigation water supply that helps restore the over-pumped aquifers beneath the Pajaro Valley and maintain the vibrant agricultural economy that fuels the region.”

The PVWMA is a public agency whose mission is to protect and preserve the water resources within the agency’s jurisdiction, generally the greater coastal Pajaro Valley.



Sign at entrance to one of the Kitayama greenhouses. Full res version available by contacting writer.

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