



Rick Shade

Planning for the Future

One of the duties of the chair is to write this column every quarter. I find that my best motivation is a deadline. Once I realize I'm up against a deadline, I start to figure out what to write about.

First things first: I will admit I was wrong. In my last column, during the summer, I predicted that California fruit would be out of the market by mid-July. My predictions aside, some stalwart California growers have held on to enough fruit to still be putting two million pounds into the market here in mid-August. I point this out not so much to say that I was wrong (I was), but to illustrate that good communication between the growers and the handlers have made this possible, and everybody is reaping the rewards. No matter the size of the crop, constant communication from the grower to the handler and back is critical to the continued success of the California avocado grower.

In other California Avocado Commission news and updates, your elected commissioners have been hard at work planning for the future of the Commission. Like every well-run business, the Commission has had a succession plan in place for top staff in case of emergency. As we looked around however,

we realized that in the not-too-distant future some of our key people will be seriously considering retirement. In order to keep operations running at peak efficiency and at the high level that we have come to expect, it was decided to start planning for the eventuality of staff retiring. Bright minds in the group realized that we needed to have some type of forecast of what the California industry would be like and what the market might look like in the future. Once we had an idea of what the future might bring, it was reasoned that we could then figure out what kind of leaders we would need.

The commissioners broke into two groups, forming one task force to forecast the future markets, and another task force to work out and put in place a reasonable, ordered succession plan for our top staff. With work that took several meetings over the summer to complete, the succession group has come up with a good, solid document. The forecasting group, too, has come up with a strong draft document. Instead of trying to cobble together a plan in a crazed frenzy when one of our key staff announces retirement, we have a plan that was thought out, discussed, debated and put in place with the luxury of

the time to do it right.

There is another side of the coin however. One that is not quite so easy to plan for. We also need to continue surfacing new commissioners. A fair number of us on the board have been around for a long time and are reaching legal term limits. If you have younger people in your operation, please start having them come to the meetings and become familiar with the Commission. Encourage them to run for seats on the board. They can start as alternates so they learn their way around the Commission and the personalities. Have them come to the meetings, listen, ask questions, learn, make suggestions. Very soon it will be their Commission and their business — it is never too early to start.

And just to make sure that everybody knows that the Commission is not all work and no play, I encourage you to come out and meet your fellow growers this fall. Our growers in the Morro Bay area have a wonderful Avocado and Margarita Festival in September. Additionally our growers in Carpinteria have the California Avocado Festival in early October. Both events are fun times that celebrate the wonderful crop that we produce. 🥑