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Merced area businesses recognized for green efforts

Foster Farms, Livingston; Joseph Gallo Farms, Atwater; and Memorial Hospital, Los Banos were among more than 250 California businesses and nonprofit organizations recognized for their innovative, environmentally friendly programs and policies.

All three were named recipients of the 2009 Waste Reduction Awards Program (WRAP). The program, now in its 16th year, is sponsored by the California Integrated Waste Management Board.

This year's WRAP honorees have diverted more than 2 million tons of materials annually from local landfills through aggressive resource management and recycling programs, and their voluntary waste reduction efforts have improved their balance sheets through savings of \$150 million in operating costs, WRAP said in a news release.

"A healthy business community is indispensable to our economy, and the steps these WRAP winners have taken toward resource management, recycling, and waste reduction are impressive," said Board Chair Margo Reid Brown. "All these businesses have managed to make their bottom line greener while helping preserve our environment."

About half the 93 million tons of solid waste generated annually in California comes from the business sector. The WRAP awards honor California companies and nonprofits for workplace solutions to cut their waste output and reduce the amount of waste being sent to landfills.

This year, according to WRAP, 263 businesses were honored for their commitment to a range of environmentally preferable business practices, including innovative reuse and recycling achievements, resource conservation, donating usable goods to nonprofit organizations, conducting employee education programs, buying recycled-content supplies for the workplace and managing electronic waste responsibly.

All WRAP awardees will receive a certificate of recognition from the board, as well as the right to use the WRAP logo for promotional advertising and publicity about their accomplishments. Applicants were selected based on a set of standards that included waste prevention, materials reuse, recycling, recycled-product purchases and employee education.

The WRAP awards were initiated in 1993 to recognize California businesses and private, nonprofit organizations that are making outstanding efforts to reduce nonhazardous waste.

The winners represent 35 of California's 58 counties, affirming a growing statewide acceptance of businesses' commitment to "green" practices, WRAP's news release said. Descriptions of the winners' successful waste reduction strategies are included online at www.ciwmb.ca.gov/WRAP/Winners.

-- Staff reports