

# Monthly Briefing

*A Summary of the Alliance's Recent and Upcoming Activities and Important Water News*

## Alliance Engages in White House Drought Symposium

The Family Farm Alliance was one of nearly 40 diverse stakeholder groups invited to discuss the federal government's role in building drought resilience into water management systems and the steps that federal agencies should take to forestall future drought crises. Alliance Executive Director Dan Keppen (OREGON) participated in the day-long White House Drought Symposium that was held at the U.S. Department of Interior in Washington, D.C. on July 15.

"During the open discussion periods, I tried to stress the importance of developing locally-driven, diverse alliances in watershed management, infusing additional flexibility into federal water management activities and streamlining existing permitting processes," said Mr. Keppen, who was also one of eight presenters at the forum.

Organized through the National Drought Resilience Partnership (NDRP) the symposium brought together a small group of high-level experts on water and drought issues at all levels of government, academia, the

agricultural sector, conservation organizations, and the private sector. Participants discussed possible strategies to build long term drought resilience through watershed community drought planning and leveraging public and private innovation and investment.

Two white papers were the focus of discussion at the Symposium, both of them crafted by Stanford University professors. The first dealt with watershed community drought planning and was presented by Leon Szeptycki. Following his presentation, three "discussants" – Tony Willardson (Western States Water Council), Laura Ziemer (Trout Unlimited) and Roger Wolf (Iowa Soybean Association) – responded with their perspectives, intended to help stimulate discussion amongst the larger group.



*Symposium participants gather at the White House Drought Symposium on July 15, 2015, to discuss the federal role in building drought resiliency. Source: Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership*

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# White House Drought Symposium (Continued from Page 1)

## Leverage and Coordination of Innovation and Investments in Water

The afternoon discourse focused on the second discussion paper, “Leveraging and Coordination of Public, Non Profit and Private Innovation and Investments”. Mr. Keppen joined Margaret Bowman (Walton Family Foundation) and David LaFrance (Executive Director, American Water Works Association) on the team of “discussants” chosen for this panel.

“Buzz Thompson of Stanford University was the author of the paper we discussed,” said Mr. Keppen. “Prior to the Symposium, he urged the discussants to include our own views about particularly successful federal activities, gaps in federal programs or funding, needs for future actions, or any other relevant issue”.

Mr. Keppen opened up his comments responding to a reference that was made by a White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) official earlier in the day, inferring that the current drought would provide a means of “learning lessons” regarding water management.

“Our farmers and ranchers in California’s Central Valley are already paying a significant personal and professional price while others far removed are apparently ‘learning lessons’”, he told the symposium participants. “Creating long-term policy in the middle of a drought or right after a massive flood is generally not a good idea.”

Mr. Keppen predicted that any short-term legislative fix to the drought crafted in the absence of federal dollars will instead have to focus on policy and financing alternatives. On the policy end, he emphasized the need to provide streamlining to allow repair of aging water infrastructure and construction of new water infrastructure. However, the majority of his comments focused on Dr. Thompson’s discussion paper.

“We fully understand that the federal funding mechanisms used in the past to build Bureau of Reclamation water infrastructure many be long gone, as Congress grapples with

the enormous fiscal challenges of the Nation,” said Mr. Keppen. “We view the future of water infrastructure as one where local districts work to plan, design, finance, construct, operate and maintain new water facilities, sometimes on federally-owned lands, to be integrated into federal project operations.”

Innovative infrastructure financing ideas currently being explored include long-term leases of federally owned property, full or partial title transfers of federal property to project beneficiaries, and privately constructed facilities using sale and leaseback or finance and repayment mechanisms to ultimately transfer the facility into local district operation and ownership. Mr. Keppen also described a loan guarantee program that remains stalled at the Office of Management and Budget, renewable green project pass-through provisions, tax code flexibility for mutual ditch companies, and the success of the recent low-head hydropower permit streamlining law, which provides a means of generating a new cash flow stream to address infrastructure and conservation needs.

## Potential Outcomes

The NDRP intends to produce a summary of the Symposium, including listing the barriers to and opportunities for federal action so identified by symposium participants, distinguishing between opportunities that exist strictly within the federal government and those that require partnership with non-federal stakeholders.

Event organizers – including the two Stanford University presenters - characterized the “take aways” from this meeting in terms that focused on the need to better integrate federal

drought management activities and to “re-think” infrastructure needs. Many speakers also commented that existing systems are “not well designed” and there is not enough money to tackle the challenging infrastructure problems our nation faces.

“I was encouraged by the high level of energetic discussion that took place at the symposium,” said Mr. Keppen. “It also appears that White House CEQ is committed to advance some of the ideas put forward during the course of the day’s discussions.”

## 2015 White House Drought Symposium Participants

Josh Barnes (National Security Council)  
 Phil Barnett (Consultant)  
 Robert Bonnie (USDA Undersecretary)  
 Margaret Bowman (Walton Family Foundation)  
 Scott Bryan (Imagine H2O)  
 Peter Culp (Squire Patton Boggs)  
 Veva Deheza (NOAA, NIDIS Coordinator)  
 Tammy Dickinson (OSTP, Principal Assistant Director)  
 Daniel Ferguson (University of Arizona)  
 Whit Fosburg (Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership)  
 Jon Freedman (GE Global Government Affairs Leader)  
 Nick Goesser (National Corn Growers Association)  
 Christy Goldfuss (CEQ Managing Director)  
 Michael Grimm (FEMA/DHS Assistant Administrator)  
 Mike Hayes (U of Nebraska, Nat’l Drought Mitigation Center)  
 Patrick Holmes (USDA)  
 Erin Huston (California Farm Bureau Federation)  
 Bob Johnson (NWRA)  
 Melinda Kassen (WaterJamin Legal and Policy Consulting)  
 Dan Keppen (Family Farm Alliance)  
 David LaFrance (American Water Works Assoc. Exec. Dir.)  
 John Larson (American Farmland Trust)  
 Noah Matson (US Fish and Wildlife Service)  
 Jonathan Mawdsley (Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies)  
 Shaun McGrath (EPA Regional Administrator)  
 Tom Melton (Encourage Capital)  
 Beverly Paul (American Soybean Association)  
 Jeremy Peters (National Association of Conservation Districts)  
 Jonathan Radtke (Coca Cola Company)  
 David Raff (TNC, Colorado Water Project Director)  
 Lester Snow (Resources Legacy Fund, Cal. Water Foundation)  
 Melanie Stansbury (Senate Energy & Natural Resources Cmtte.)  
 Frank Sturges (OMB)  
 Kevin Tilden (California American Water)  
 Joel Williams (Native American Rights Fund)  
 David Yargas (National Fish and Wildlife Foundation)  
 Laura Ziemer (Trout Unlimited)

## Colorado River Basin Water Policy Paper Released *18-Month Effort Driven by Agricultural Water Users in 7 States*

After 18 months of drafting, redrafting and coordinating with its members in seven states, the Family Farm Alliance has completed an important water policy report intended to guide water policy planning efforts in the Colorado River Basin. The 20-page report, titled “Colorado River Water Management – Principles & Recommendations” was shared earlier this month with water policy leaders representing agriculture and municipal water users, conservation groups, and power interests in the 7 Basin states. The report will form the basis for Alliance President Patrick O’Toole’s presentation to the Water Education Foundation’s Colorado River Symposium on September 17, 2015 in Santa Fe (NEW MEXICO).

“Leaders in the Colorado River Basin can and will successfully work through future droughts and water shortages in a collaborative and effective way,” said Mr. O’Toole, a sheep and cattle rancher from Wyoming. “The future of millions of people and millions of acres of farms and ranches and the food and fiber they produce in the Basin rest on this belief.”

Predicted near-term Colorado River water supply scenarios are dire enough that drought contingency planning has been initiated in the Colorado River Basin. If dry conditions continue, diminishing reservoir levels in Lakes Powell and Mead will have extremely negative consequences for water and power users throughout the watershed, including urban areas outside of the Basin that rely on Colorado River trans-basin diversions.

“We have crafted this paper articulating our principles for smart, effective management of water resources in the

Colorado River Basin,” said Alliance board member Don Schwindt, a farmer from southwestern Colorado. “Our goal is to help decision-makers in the Basin deal with the harsh realities of current and future water shortages due to drought and over-allocation of water.”

Colorado River water – like all Western water resources – is a finite resource subject to competing demands. Demands for water can already exceed available supplies in normal years, let alone during times of drought-induced shortages. Often times, agricultural irrigation water has become the default “reservoir” to meet growing municipal, industrial, environmental, recreational and energy sector demands.

“We must go beyond these perceived easy answers that focus on paying farmers to fallow their land in order to funnel their irrigation supplies to other competing uses,” said Mr. Schwindt, a former member of the Colorado Water Conservation Board. “It’s time to start seeking the real but challenging solutions that will address the long-term supply-demand imbalance.”

Continuing to look to irrigated agriculture as a new “source” of water to solve growing urban and environmental problems can carry enormous consequences and costs to society.

“The erosion and degradation of the West’s rural agricultural communities and the reduction in the number of domestic food producing farms and ranches will incrementally impact the currently affordable cost of food and fiber upon

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### Family Farm Alliance Colorado River Basin Principles

- State water laws, compacts and decrees must be the foundation for dealing with shortages.
- Water use and related beneficial use data must be accurately measured and portrayed.
- Benefits of water use must reflect all economic / societal / environmental impacts.
- True costs of transferring water away from irrigated farms in a managed system like the Colorado River through land fallowing must be accurately accounted for, including unintended consequences and third-party impacts. Understanding these costs will assist in determining the fair value of any land fallowing proposal.
- Agricultural water conservation can help stretch water supplies, but has its limits.
- Public sentiment supports water remaining with irrigated agriculture, and developing strategic water storage opportunities as insurance against shortages.
- Technologies for water reuse and recycling are proven effective in stretching existing supplies for urban, environmental and other uses.
- Urban growth should not be permitted in the future without locking in sustainable and diverse water supplies, and using irrigated agriculture as the reservoir of water for municipal growth is not sustainable in the long run.



## Colorado River Basin Water Policy Paper (Cont'd from Pg. 3)

which this Nation's economy is built," said Mr. O'Toole.

The Basin has reached the full use of its finite water supply and its users must come to grips with how water will be allocated between the competing demands – agriculture, energy, municipal and industrial, the environment, and recreation.

Even with all of the various water users' perspectives on demand management and other issues in the Colorado River Basin, there is support for the main drivers behind the Alliance's policy thrust summarized in the eight principles (see inset box, Pg. 3).

Based on these principles, there are four common recommendations that the Alliance believes will be critical to successful drought and water shortage management efforts in the Colorado River Basin (see inset box, right).

"We believe that principles and recommendations in this paper can guide policy leaders to solutions that do not pit one user against another in resolving differences and complex water problems," said Alliance board member Ron Rayner, a rancher from Arizona. "The Alliance looks forward to working with the many agricultural, urban, energy and environmental water users in finding these solutions so critical to the future of the Colorado River Basin."

### Colorado River Basin Water Policy Recommendations

- Planning for water shortage in the Basin must look to the long-term in meeting the goals of agriculture, energy, urbanization and the environment.
- A successful water shortage strategy must include a "portfolio" of water supply enhancements and improvements, such as water reuse, recycling, conservation, desalination, water-sensitive land-use planning, and water system improvements. New infrastructure and technologies can help stretch water for all uses.
- Temporary fallowing proposals should be approached in a thoughtful, thorough manner only after urban, energy and environmental users of water demonstrate a better management of their share of the finite supply and only for temporary shortfalls caused by droughts or emergency situations.
- Unintended consequences associated with reducing productive agricultural land/ groundwater recharge/ riparian habitat benefits should be avoided and, if unavoidable, minimized and fully mitigated.

## California Fish Predation Bill Clears Another Hurdle

Important California state legislation intended to address predation of Bay-Delta fish species protected under the Endangered Species Act by non-native species cleared another important hurdle earlier this month when it was approved by the California Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee.

The Family Farm Alliance board of directors in June 2015 formally supported AB 1201, a California state bill that directs the Department of Fish and Wildlife to develop a science-based approach that helps address predation of listed species by non-native species in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

Among the "stressors" in the Delta environment are non—native fish species that prey on endangered species such as Delta smelt and Chinook salmon. It is also esti-

mated that there are nearly one million striped bass in the Delta and the watershed, and the catch of large-mouth bass has quadrupled since the 1980s. Both are non-native fish that prey on young salmon and delta smelt.

To date, there is not even a pilot program in place to begin trying to further understand this critical stressor.

AB 1201 previously passed the Assembly floor on a 74-1 vote before unanimously passing the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee. The bill has now been referred to the Senate Appropriations committee.

"Hopefully it will soon go to the Senate floor and then to Governor Brown for his signature," said Martin McIntyre, with the San Luis Water District. "This is potentially a big deal, a break in years of bad



**Non-native stripers and largemouth bass consume large numbers of threatened and endangered fish each year in the Delta. Photo Source: California Farm Water Coalition**

## Outside Activists Sue Reclamation Over Oregon Frog

The Center for Biological Diversity (Center) - an environmental group specializing in litigation - has filed a 60-day notice of intent to file litigation against the federal government regarding the Oregon spotted frog, which is protected by the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Agricultural water users in Oregon's Deschutes River Basin - the poster child for a watershed that perhaps best demonstrates how diverse stakeholders can work together to address challenging water resources issues - are puzzled by the Center's unexpected appearance.

"We understand the Center for Biological Diversity has submitted a formal notice of intent to sue the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation regarding the Oregon spotted frog," said Mike Britton, president of the Deschutes Basin Board of Control, an association of seven irrigation districts. "We are unaware of the Center's underlying intentions because the Center has never been involved in the Deschutes Basin's collaborative restoration efforts with agricultural, business, tribal, and conservation interests."

The Center earlier this month submitted a formal notice of intent to sue the Bureau of Reclamation over operation and maintenance of the Crane Prairie and Wickiup dams, which they claim are harming the Oregon spotted frog on the Deschutes River. In accordance with a settlement agreement with the Center, the frog was protected in August 2014 as a threatened species under the ESA. The Center claims this protection triggered a duty for the Bureau to consult with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and adjust dam management to ensure it is not jeopardizing the survival of the frog, neither of which it has done.

"The Oregon spotted frog is one of the most imperiled amphibians in the world," intoned Noah Greenwald, endangered species director at the Center. "The Bureau of Reclamation needs to step up and ensure that management of these two Deschutes River dams doesn't drive the Oregon spotted frog to extinction."

According to the Center, the frog was "once common" from British Columbia to Northern California along "numerous rivers and lakes", including the Deschutes and Willamette, but has undergone massive declines mostly because of loss of its wetland habitats.

The settlement agreement referenced by the Center is one of a pair approved by a federal judge in 2011 that require the federal government to accelerate the consideration of proposed endangered protections for more than 800 animal and plant species. These two settlement agreements - with the blessing of the Obama Administration - are the culmination of what is known as the "ESA multidistrict litigation". This case was formed in 2010 by combining 13 federal court cas-

es filed by either the WildEarth Guardians or the Center - two of the most litigious environmental activist organizations in the West - regarding 113 species, including the Oregon spotted frog.

"The Western producers we represent have seen firsthand the economic impacts that can accompany ESA single species management, and they have been very wary and concerned about this massive settlement from the day it was announced," said Dan Keppen, Alliance Executive Director. "Litigation that often surrounds ESA listings and federal agency management decisions adds a whole new level of costs and uncertainty for farmers and ranchers who rely on federal water projects located in areas where ESA-protected fish and wildlife live. I can assure you that the tactics being employed by the Center in the Deschutes Basin under this settlement will be replicated throughout the West in the coming years."

The Family Farm Alliance has long maintained that certain environmental groups - particularly the Center for Biological Diversity - have greatly abused

the original intent of environmental statutes.

"These groups have a proven track record in the courts," said Mr. Keppen. "They know how to dig out and expose minor procedural flaws in agency actions, jump on those and use them as a basis to sue the government, and then pull in millions of federal taxpayer dollars in attorney fees for settling or winning these cases."

Ironically, this additional funding source allows them to continue litigating against the government. Unfortunately, accurate statistics have not been kept by the Justice Department or the federal agencies; thus there is no accounting for the total amount of tax dollars paid.

Back in Central Oregon, constructive and diverse parties in the Deschutes River Basin continue to work together, regardless of the Center's latest litigious action.

According to Mr. Britton, a member of the Family Farm Alliance's Advisory Committee, the irrigation districts in the Deschutes Basin have been and are continuing to work closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, local, state and federal agencies, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, and conservation groups to better understand this species and implement real, practical steps to improve the frog's habitat, as well as that of other species such as bull trout and steelhead.

"Despite the Center's notice of its intent to sue, we plan to continue our work, including the development of our pending Habitat Conservation Plan, for the betterment of the Deschutes Basin," said Mr. Britton.



*The enigmatic Oregon spotted frog.*  
U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

# Alliance Drought Article Published in Scientific Journal

## Journal Article's Theme Still Remains Relevant in 2015

An article prepared on behalf of the Family Farm Alliance on the regulatory nature of the California drought was published recently in the Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences (JESS) Online First page. Alliance Executive Director Dan Keppen and Tricia Dutcher, a post-doctorate researcher from the University of Nevada Las Vegas, co-authored "*The 2014 drought and water management policy impacts on California's Central Valley food production*". The article has been published at the Journal's Online First page and will remain there until it is packaged into the "Symposium on American Food Resilience (JESS, Volume 5, Issue 3) in September 2015.

Mr. Keppen presented the article in San Diego (CALIFORNIA) at the June 2015 Association for Environmental Studies and Sciences (AESS) annual conference. Among the nearly 400 participants, 76 percent were faculty, deans, and directors, while 24 percent were both graduate and undergraduate students.

"This was definitely not an opportunity to preach to the choir, but overall, I think it went very well," said Mr. Keppen.

Next year's AESS conference will be June 8-11, 2016, at American University in Washington, DC. You can download a PDF version of the published journal article on the Family Farm Alliance website: [www.familyfarmalliance.org](http://www.familyfarmalliance.org).

### The Regulatory Nature of the California Drought

The topic of the journal article remains relevant this year,

as one million acres in the Central Valley Project export service area have seen their average supply reliability drop from 90 to 40 % over the last 20 years.

"We've only had a full supply in three of those years," said Jason Peltier, with Westlands Water District. "This is being driven primarily by agency implementation of the En-

dangered Species Act. In the second year of a zero supply for 2 million acres, almost 500,000 acre-feet have been dedicated to fish protected by the ESA. Even with normal precipitation, we expect to start with a zero water allocation next year because of ESA concerns."

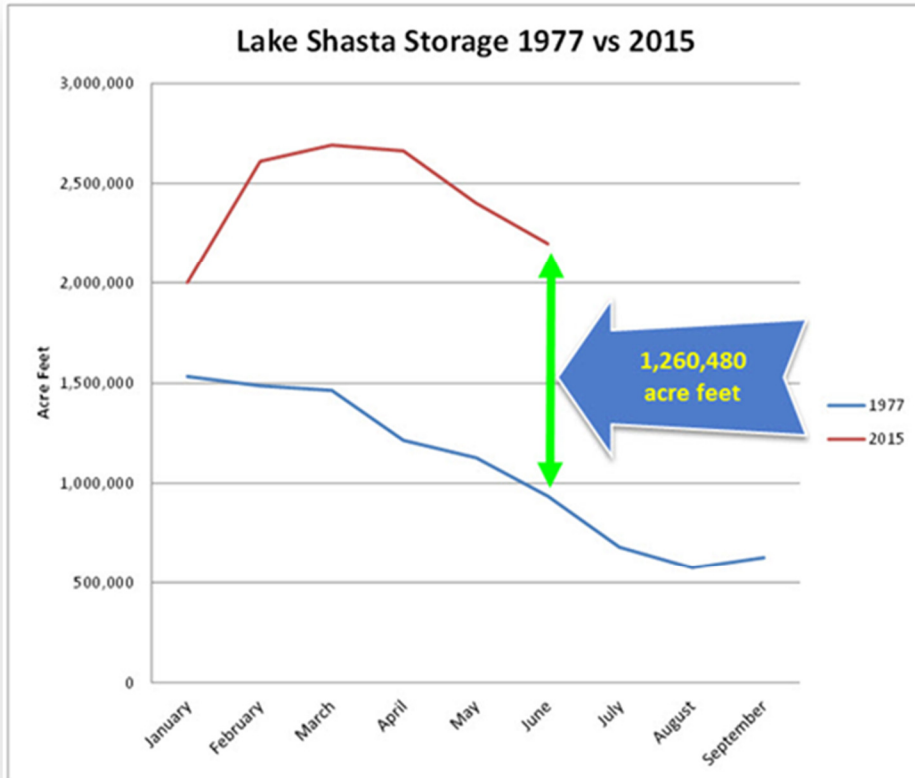
Mr. Peltier, a long-time member of the Family Farm Alliance Advisory Committee, shares the concern underscored in the Alliance journal article that ESA-listed fish species in the Bay-Delta have not responded to what amounts to a massive reallocation of about two million acre feet of water per year.

### Water Rights, Waterfowl & El Nino

Meanwhile, as

some senior water rights holders have had their supplies curtailed in California, a state judge has ruled that other farmers' rights were violated by California regulators who directed them to stop diverting from rivers and streams.

Water rights have been a hot topic in the media this summer, especially in California. A judge ruled earlier this month that California regulators violated some farmers' rights by demanding mandatory water cutbacks without giving them a prior hearing. The state maintains that it can still punish those who illegally take water during the drought. The system of water rights employed in California and in other parts of the Western U.S. has been critically scrutinized in recent months



*It is highly likely in the proclaimed "worst drought in history" that there will actually be more water in Lake Shasta at the end of this water year than what was available at the beginning of the 1977 drought year. Central Valley Project operations in 1977 were quite different than 2015, a strong indication that regulation plays a big role in current drought management practices.*

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## House Passes Western U.S. / California Drought Bill

### California Senators Introduce California Drought Package

On July 16, the House passed, by a vote of 245-176, the "Western Water and American Food Security Act of 2015" (H.R. 2898). The legislation would modify rules governing water rights and use, endangered species management, and water infrastructure projects in order to facilitate increased storage and availability. Less than two weeks later, California's two U.S. Senators introduced the "California Emergency Drought Relief Act", a bill with both short- and longterm provisions designed to help communities cope with the ongoing drought and combat future droughts. Notably, the Senate bill includes a storage component, a Reclamation Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act loan program, and WaterSMART grant improvements.

"I'm hopeful the bill we're introducing today will serve as a template for the kinds of short-term and long-term solutions California needs to address this devastating drought," Senator Feinstein said.

#### "Western Water and American Food Security Act"

While H.R. 2898 primarily deals with California water use and species management to address a severe multiyear drought in the state, it also would provide additional oversight authority to the Interior Department's Bureau of Reclamation to accelerate the review and approval process of Western water projects. Specifically, the bill would designate the Bureau of Reclamation as the lead agency for the purpose of approving surface water storage projects; limit the amount of time and money that can be spent on a water project review; allow local water districts and local governments to repay construction costs early; and require the completion of a number of project feasibility studies to ensure their eligibility for funding under a California referendum.

The bill would modify the criteria used when evaluating the health of the delta smelt and other salmonid species in California. It also would bar the federal government from making federal permits or other approvals contingent on the transfer of water rights.

Most California Democrats in the House voted against the bill.

"It's another bill that's going nowhere," predicted Rep.

Jared Huffman (D-CALIFORNIA), who noted that "when exposed to public scrutiny, it simply falls apart."

Members of the Congressional Western Caucus who secured numerous provisions in the legislation and helped ensure its passage through the House praised the passage of the bill.

"We've acted on a bipartisan bill to send more water to

Western homes and farms this year, protect state water laws, improve protection of endangered species, and plan for the future by advancing new water storage infrastructure," said Rep. Doug LaMalfa (R-CALIFORNIA). "With mandatory water rationing already in place, California can't wait any longer. It's time for the Senate to work with us to send this measure to the President's desk."

"By passing this needed legislation, we have taken a critical step forward toward protecting private water rights from federal takings, putting science at the center of our nation's water management decisions, updating and expanding critical water infrastructure and allowing regulatory flexibility to respond to emergency drought situations," added Rep. Scott Tipton (R-COLORADO).

Water users on the west side of California's San Joaquin Valley also expressed hope over the House passage of the bill.

"H.R. 2898 is a product of the efforts of Members of the House and Senate, and it demonstrates that it is possible to advance legislation that can balance the needs of people and the environment," said Westlands Water District in a press statement. "It has been observed by many Members of Congress that government cannot make it rain, but it can ensure that any future rainfall will benefit the interests that need it most--our cities, communities, schools, farms, farm workers, as well as the environment."

The White House sees things differently, however, and issued a Statement of Administration Policy threatening to veto H.R. 2898, "because it fails to address critical elements of California's complex water challenges and will, if enacted, impede an effective and timely response to the continuing drought while providing no additional water to hard hit communities."

The White House veto threat was immediately criticized



*California Congressman David Valadao (center) discusses the drought situation in early 2014 with Family Farm Alliance farmer lobbyists Clinton Pline (IDAHO), Chris Hurd (CALIFORNIA), Dan Errotabere (CALIFORNIA), Ara Azhderian (CALIFORNIA), Valadao legislative director Chris Marklund, and Ron Jacobsma (CALIFORNIA), from left to right.*

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## **Western Drought Legislation** **(Cont'd from Page 8)**

by Rep. Rob Bishop (R-UTAH), Chairman of the House Committee on Natural Resources and Rep. David Valadao (R-CALIFORNIA), the bill's sponsor.

"More blind threats and stale political messaging from the White House will not save those suffering in California and the West," said Rep. Bishop. "The House drought relief package tackles a range of highly complicated and politically charged issues in a balanced and creative way, and is a foundation for political and practical compromise. Unless action is taken, all Americans will suffer from higher food prices caused by exacerbated drought conditions."

"My bill is a balanced approach that would actually increase water delivery to the Western regions most in need," added Rep. Valadao. "I am extremely disappointed that the Administration refuses to work across the aisle to provide relief to those suffering."

### **California Emergency Drought Relief Act**

The Senate bill introduced late this month by Senators Boxer and Feinstein is intended to help communities affected by drought, protect the environment, and adhere to law and biological opinions. It includes programs and funding intended to support long-term projects such as desalination, water recycling, and storage.

"I've introduced a lot of bills over the years, and this one may be the most difficult, and a warming climate will only make things worse," said Senator Feinstein. "For months now my staff and I have held meetings with many interested parties. My state staff has visited almost 50 water agencies, and my Washington staff has consulted closely with federal agencies to ensure the bill adheres to environmental laws. I think the bill we're introducing today can achieve broad congressional and public support and will be a great help to California."

Senator Feinstein noted that next steps for this bill will include a public committee hearing in the fall, after which she expects California-specific language to be folded into a broader Western drought bill in the Energy Committee.

"In the meantime, my staff will continue to collect feedback on ways to improve and build on the bill," she said.

### **Family Farm Alliance Engagement**

The Family Farm Alliance in June was represented by California farmer Cannon Michael at a Western drought oversight hearing conducted by the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

The Alliance's written testimony and responses to over 15 questions posed by Members of the Committee can be downloaded in PDF format on the Family Farm Alliance website: [www.familyfarmalliance.org](http://www.familyfarmalliance.org).

## **Peltier to Succeed Nelson as Authority Executive Director**

Mike Stearns, Chairman of the San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority, announced that Jason Peltier will take over as Executive Director of the organization, replacing Dan Nelson who will retire at the end of 2015. Stearns indicated that Mr. Peltier – a member of the Family Farm Alliance Advisory Committee – was named the successor to Nelson as part of a Succession Plan that was developed after Nelson announced his intention to retire earlier this year. The Plan calls for Mr. Peltier to begin his employment with the Authority in mid-August as a Deputy to Mr. Nelson, then taking over the reins on Jan. 1, 2016.

Mr. Nelson will leave after 24 years as the Executive Director of the Authority and has been the only Executive Director for the Authority since its formation in 1992.

Dan Nelson was the 2015 recipient of the Family Farm Alliance John Keys III Award, in recognition of his extraordinary efforts to seek solutions to the challenges facing farming communities in the San Joaquin Valley.

"Dan was a major part of the formation and development of an agency that we are all proud of. He has led us through some pretty tough times, has held us together and has positioned us well for the challenges ahead. We are very grateful for his leadership and wish him the very best," noted Chairman Stearns.

Mr. Nelson added, "It has been an absolute honor working for the Authority, its member agencies and the water users in the region. The Authority is blessed with a great Board of Directors and an incredibly talented staff. Given the diversity of interests represented by the Authority, I've been amazed by their professionalism and ability to focus and to work together on common interests. Jason is a great fit for the organization and is the right person at the right time; the organization is in great hands."

"We have some major challenges in front of us and Jason brings a tremendous amount of experience in western water issues and more specifically all facets of the Central Valley Project. Jason is well known and well regarded within California and Western water circles. He will be a great leader for the future of the organization," said Stearns.

Mr. Peltier's experience includes a diversity of positions focusing on water issues. He served as Deputy Assistant Secretary for Water and Science at the United States Department of the Interior. Prior to that he was the manager of the Central Valley Project Water Association and is currently the Chief Deputy General Manager of the Westlands Water District. He has been a long-time member of the Family Farm Alliance Advisory Committee.

Mr. Peltier commented, "The confidence of the Board of Directors in my ability to lead this tremendously accomplished organization means everything to me. I salute Dan's 24 years of leadership in building a first rate outfit and creating a true family among its member agencies. I also must salute every one of the Authority employees as they have repeatedly demonstrated their resourcefulness and commitment to the mission of this organization."



## **Alliance-Backed Watershed Bill Passes U.S. House**

The U.S. House earlier this month passed H.R. 2647: *The Resilient Federal Forests Act of 2015*. This bipartisan legislation would improve federal forest management practices by restoring fundamental land management capabilities to the U.S. Forest Service, such as routine thinning practices to improve forest health and reduce wildfire threats. The bill also implements a fiscally responsible mechanism to treat catastrophic wildfires equitably with other federally-recognized natural disasters.

The Family Farm Alliance formally supported H.R. 2647 in June, and joined 14 other Western water organizations earlier this month in a letter of support that was circulated to key Western leaders in the House.

"Western farmers and ranchers are concerned with the state of these forests as they provide the water yields that fill our reservoirs and rivers for irrigation of crops," said Alliance Director Ron Rayner, an Arizona rancher. "By simply allowing these forests to burn out of control without the benefit of properly planned and implemented fuel reduction practices, will negatively impact our watersheds and our water supplies – and our way of life."

Bill sponsor Rep. Bruce Westerman (R-ARIZONA) was pleased that the Resilient Federal Forests Act passed the House.

"H.R. 2647 creates healthier forests, cleaner water, cleaner air, and protects the lives and property of Americans living in or near our national forests," said Rep. Westerman. "This bill came with bipartisan support in the House and the support of nearly 100 groups from California to Maine. I want to thank both Rep. Ryan Zinke (R-MONTANA) and Ann Kirkpatrick (D-ARIZONA) for their support, as well as Chairman Bishop for his leadership in moving this bill through the Committee on Natural Resources."

## **California Drought (Continued from Page 6)**

by some in academia and Western conservation circles.

The Family Farm Alliance is currently developing a white paper that explains the prior appropriations doctrine, identifies key criticisms of the doctrine and provides responses from the perspective of Western agricultural water users.

"The Family Farm Alliance position on this matter has long been one that the Western system of prior appropriation still fundamentally works," said Bill Kennedy, an Alliance board member who ranches in southern Oregon and northern California.

Farmers and their communities are not the only ones suffering from the drought. According to a recent survey completed by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife, breeding waterfowl populations have suffered a 19 percent drop in the Sacramento Valley this year and a steeper decline statewide due to the drought and poor habitat conditions.

Rice fields that are typically flooded in the Sacramento Valley provide key habitat for migrating waterfowl on the Pacific Flyway.

Perhaps the best news in California is that forecasters are predicting for this winter one of the strongest El Niño events to hit the Pacific Ocean in years.

El Niño is a disruption of the ocean-atmosphere system in the tropical Pacific having important consequences for weather and climate around the globe. Among these consequences are increased rainfall across the southern tier of the US, including California.

Forecasters believe the developing El Niño could be one of the strongest in the past 50 years.

### **Dear Friends of the Family Farm Alliance:**

***Irrigation Leader* magazine is distributed to irrigation district managers and boards of directors in the 17 western states, Bureau of Reclamation officials, members of Congress and committee staff, and advertising sponsors.**

**We encourage Family Farm Alliance members to consider signing up for an electronic notice or having their names added to the hard copy mailing list of *Irrigation Leader* magazine.**



**Please contact Kris Polly at (703)-517-3962 or by e-mailing at: [IrrigationLeader@waterstrategies.com](mailto:IrrigationLeader@waterstrategies.com).**

## Save the Date! 2016 Annual Conference

The Family Farm Alliance recently entered into a contract with the Monte Carlo Resort and Casino, which will once again host the Alliance's annual meeting and conference in Las Vegas. Mark your calendars: the general session of the 2016 Family Farm Alliance Annual Conference is set for February 18-19. In 2016, the Monte Carlo room rates will actually be 9\$ lower than in 2015. We hope to see you there!



*Protecting Water for Western Irrigated Agriculture*

**February 18-19, 2016**

## DONOR SUPPORT

**Make your tax-deductible gift to the Alliance today! Grassroots membership is vital to our organization. Thank you in advance for your loyal support. If you would like further info, please contact Dan Keppen at [dankeppen@charter.net](mailto:dankeppen@charter.net), or visit our website: [www.familyfarmalliance.org](http://www.familyfarmalliance.org).**

Contributions can also be mailed directly to:

Family Farm Alliance  
22895 S. Dickenson Avenue  
Riverdale, CA 93656.

A Unique Collaboration of the Agribusiness & Water Council of Arizona & ASU's Morrison School of Agribusiness & Fulton School of Engineering

## Water Management Certificate Program

With a curriculum designed by distinguished practitioners of water resources and power management. The program provides professional training to persons who are or will be managers with the responsibility to develop, store, and deliver water resources to the people they serve. It is intended to prepare the next generation of leaders who require knowledge beyond just moving water from point to point. The class will be telecast which provides an option to participate in the class via live video conferencing for individuals outside of the Phoenix area.

Classes for the 2015/16 cohort will begin in September 2015. They will be held at the ASU Polytechnic Campus once a month on Friday afternoon and all day Saturday. It requires a nine month commitment. For more information contact:

Larry Olson (480) 727-1499, Kathy Rappleye (480) 558-5301 or online at [www.agribusinessarizona.org](http://www.agribusinessarizona.org)



## **A Big Thank You to Our New and Supporting Members!**

### ***MAY-JUNE 2015***

**CHAMPION (\$5,000 and Greater)**  
**Central California Irrigation District**  
**Imperial Irrigation District (CA)**  
**San Luis Water District (CA)**  
**Southwestern WCD (CO)**  
**Water District #1 (ID)**

### **ADVOCATE (\$1,000 -\$4,999)**

**Bruce Allbright Family Trust (CA) Bowles Farming Co., Inc. (CA) Buckeye WCDD (AZ)**  
**Garrison Diversion (ND) Houston Engineering (ND) Klamath Basin Improvement District (OR)**  
**LTRID & Pixley ID Operations (CA) Maricopa Water District (AZ)**  
**Paloma Irrigation & Drainage District (AZ) Panoche Creek Packing (CA)**  
**Roosevelt Irrigation District (AZ) San Luis Canal Company (CA) Solano Irrigation District (CA)**  
**Tulare Lake Basin WSD (CA) Twin Falls Canal Co. (ID)**

### **DEFENDER (\$500-\$999)**

**Animas- La Plata WCD (CO) Bartlett & West (ND) CALCOT, Ltd. (CA)**  
**Central District Water Users Assoc. (NE) Fresno First Bank (CA)**  
**Gering-Ft. Laramie ID (NE) Glide Water District (CA) Heart Mountain ID (WY)**  
**Hills Valley ID (CA) H-Four Farms (AZ) Kanawa Water District (CA) Kansas-Bostwick ID**  
**Kirwin-Webster ID (KS) MBK Engineers (CA) New Magma ID (AZ)**  
**North Fremont Canal Systems (ID) North Side Canal Company (ID) North Unit ID (OR)**  
**Owyhee ID (OR) PacificComm LLC (WA) Pine River ID (CO) Provident ID (CA)**  
**David Salopek Farms, Ltd. (NM) Stotz Equipment (AZ) Truckee-Carson ID (NV)**  
**Twin Loups Reclamation District (NE)**

### **PARTNER (\$250-\$499)**

**Applegate Group (CO) Davis & Weber Counties Canal Co. (UT) Del Puerto Water District (CA)**  
**Durham Pump, Inc. (CA) Farmers ID (NE) Flying R Farms (AZ) Mancos WCD (CO)**  
**Milner ID (ID) Harlan Family Foundation (CA) Mike and Leslie James (AZ)**  
**L&W LLC (WA) North Platte Valley Irrigators Association (NE) Paul Orme (AZ)**  
**Princeton-Codora-Glenn ID (CA) Royce Law Firm, PC (CA)**  
**Strawberry Water Users Association (UT)**  
**The Water Agency (CA) Thomason Tractor Co. (CA) Trinchera WCD (CO)**

### **SUPPORTER**

**Campbell Brothers Farming (CA) Enterprise ID (OR)**