

Monthly Briefing

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

National Levee Committee Holds Firm: Canals Will Be Included in New Program

A national levee committee commissioned to develop new flood control standards in the wake of the Hurricane Katrina flood disaster in New Orleans is sticking to its recommendations that water delivery canals will be included in a proposed national levee safety program. Three national organizations representing Western irrigation districts were told by the National Committee on Levee Safety (NCLS) earlier this month that "there is honest disagreement" between Western water managers, the Bureau of Reclamation and the NCLS as to the intent of Congress on including water delivery canals in the new program.

In recent months, Western water managers have become aware of and are becoming increasingly concerned with actions undertaken by the NCLS. This group, authorized in the Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) of 2007 includes the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) and FEMA as the only federal agencies represented on the Committee. The NCLS was established to deal with post- Katrina flood risk issues, with an emphasis on Corps levees. However, the Committee has



The National Committee on Levee Safety has developed recommendations to help prevent failures like the 17th Street Canal breach which flooded parts of New Orleans during Hurricane Katrina (above). Western water managers question the applicability of such standards to canals that delivery irrigation water only during certain times of the year (below).



developed a plan that essentially would apply Corps-level engineering specifications and standards to levees and canal embankments throughout the country, with little to no coordination with the Bureau of Reclamation and Western water managers.

The draft report and presentation are available on the "Documents" link on the main NCLS web page (www.nfrmp.us/ncls/docs).

The Committee is now considering legislation that would implement this plan, and thus far, concerns raised by Reclamation and Western irrigation interests do not appear to be gaining traction with the Corps and FEMA.

In October 2010, the Family Farm Alliance crafted a letter to NCLS co-signed by the National Water Resources Association (NWRA) and the Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA). This letter outlined the concerns Western water users have with the direction the NCLS is taking. Water users and Reclamation do not believe that the provisions of the Levee Safety Act

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NCLS Responds to Water Users (Cont'd from P. 1)

(Act) apply to facilities operated by Reclamation or entities responsible for managing works transferred from Reclamation.

“Clearly, the Act applies to levees, which it defines as embankments that provide protection relating to seasonal high water and other weather events,” said Alliance Executive Director Dan Keppen. “This is in contrast to Reclamation canals which are designed to deliver water under site-specific conditions.”

Western water users and Reclamation officials maintain that the nation-wide inspection program and new project condition and maintenance standards required by the proposed legislation would be duplicative of existing federal law, and would increase federal and non-federal costs without a corresponding increase in public safety or assurances of financial support.

“It would also open up the potential for greater liability to water project operators,” said Keppen.

NCLS recently responded to the Alliance/ACWA/NWRA contention that the new program should not bind Reclamation conveyance facilities and that response has not been encouraging. Overall, the response indicated NCLS and Reclamation maintain an “honest disagreement” about whether water delivery canals should be subjected to the requirements of the proposed levee safety program. While Reclamation believes Congress did not intend for water delivery canals to be subjected to new requirements administered by the Army Corps of Engineers, NCLS contends Congress believed all canals should be included (subject to certain potential exemptions).

The Alliance, ACWA and NWRA recently co-signed and transmitted another letter to key Congressional water committees objecting to the application of Levee Safety Act proposed levee standards to Reclamation canals and ditches.

“The NCLS approach is too broad,” said Keppen. “It mandates new engineering and design standards that would apply to Corps levees, but would also apply to many existing Bureau of Reclamation water delivery facilities as well. The focus of the NCLS should be on those flood control facilities on natural rivers that pose an actual risk to urbanized areas.”

“While there clearly is a need to address the deterioration of aging flood control facilities, preventing failures like the one in New Orleans should be the immediate priority here,” said NWRA Executive Vice-President Tom Donnelly.

Donnelly, Keppen and ACWA Executive Director Tim Quinn’s letter to the Congressional committees calls for oversight hearings on this matter, with an opportunity for the committees to hear concerns expressed by the Bureau of Reclamation and water users.

Meanwhile, NCLS has scheduled a public workshop for February 10th in Boise (IDAHO) on their program and have invited stakeholders from around the region to participate.

This topic will also be the subject of a panel discussion at the upcoming Family Farm Alliance annual conference in Las Vegas on February 25. Eric Halperin, the Vice-Chair of the NCLS, will provide a 30-minute briefing, followed by presentations made by Dave Murillo (Deputy Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation) and Gary Esslinger, who will represent the concerns of the Alliance and his organization, Elephant Butte Irrigation District. The Alliance representative in Washington, D.C., Mark Limbaugh, will moderate the panel.

California Water Management Conference Planned

On March 3-4 in San Jose, Calif., FC Business Intelligence will bring together major California stakeholders to put the spotlight on the strategies needed to increase yields and better utilize water resources. The On-Farm Integrated Water Management Conference 2011 will feature:

- **How integrated water management can help improve your bottom-line.**
- **Information technology solutions for improved decision-making in water management.**
- **Implementing new irrigation technologies.**
- **Essential information on hidden water resources.**
- **New water legislation & overcoming legal obstacles.**
- **Water marketing and water transfers.**

To download the free event brochure please visit:
<http://www.agricultureupdate.com/watermanagement>

Representatives from USDA, Bolt House farms, Syngenta, University of California Davis, Ag Innovations Network, CA Board of Food and Agriculture and many more will be exploring practical solutions for delivering sustainable and cost effective on-farm water management.

Register here:

<https://secure.firstconf.com/agricultureupdate/integrated-strategic-water-management/register.htm>

For more details please contact George Kiley at gekiley@agricultureupdate.com or at +44(0)207 375 7545.

Patrick O'Toole to Speak at National Water Conference

Alliance President Pat O'Toole will participate in the 2011 Land Grant and Sea Grant National Water Conference to be held January 31- February 1, 2011, in Washington, D.C.

This is a national conference of Land Grant University faculty, extension and agency partners that work on agricultural water-related problems.

The conference will be held in Washington this year in order to reach out to agency partners and congressional members. O'Toole will be the sole industry spokesperson on the food and water security panel. He will be joined by Kathy Jacobs, White House Office of Science and Technology Policy's Assistant Director for Climate Adaptation and Assessment, and Land and Sea Grant scientists from national universities.

O'Toole will focus on the importance of applying realistic, on-the-ground solutions to mitigate for climate change impacts that are expected to alter Western water resource supplies in the coming decades. He will also explain how many federal water resources policies and regulatory practices are undermining the economic foundations of rural Western communities by making farming and ranching increasingly difficult.

"Many Western farmers and ranchers are convinced the federal government no longer values them or their livelihoods," said O'Toole. "We're losing the ability to produce food in this country."

Among the many challenges posed by climate change, those associated with water resources will have the most profound and wide-spread consequences for society and the environment. Conference organizers believe climatic variability is a constant threat to our food production system, with drought, flooding and climatic extremes among the greatest risks to crop, livestock and aquaculture. Surprises and unexpected changes such as the loss of pollinators, new pests, increased invasive species, and others must be anticipated to ensure resilient food systems, as are the unknowns regarding extreme events.

Providing food security to 9 billion people using less fresh water will be essential for preserving globally critical ecosystems and international stability. USDA has recently restructured its competitive grant programs to address the problems facing our food production capacity due to climate change, but the food/water interface has yet to receive adequate attention from federal research programs.

The conference is expected to draw about 500 attendees, including Congressional committee staff and high-level Obama Administration appointees.



Alliance President Patrick O'Toole, shown here (second from left) at Ladder Ranch (WYOMING) with members of his family, is a featured speaker at this year's National Water Conference. Pat's father-in-law—George Salisbury (right) - passed away on Christmas day, 2010 at the age of 89. George served his community and state in many capacities, including 20 years as a county commissioner and 13 years in the Wyoming Legislature. He helped craft landmark legislation, including the severance taxes which fund Wyoming government today, and rural health care legislation. He was a proud water buffalo, and his efforts were key in the development of the High Savery Dam, which delivers water to Little Snake River irrigators in Wyoming. He was one of only four honorary lifetime members of the Wyoming Stock Growers Association. Donations in George's memory may be made to the Carbon County 4-H Foundation, Box 280, Rawlins, WY 82301; St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Box 60, Dixon, WY 82323; or the Noyes Clinic Home Health Service, Box 307, Baggs, WY, 82321. Photo Courtesy of Ladder Ranch.

2011 Annual Conference Agenda Set

The 2011 Family Farm Alliance annual conference will feature diverse, high profile speakers and panel discussions that will focus on the innovative ways and new partnerships that Western farmers and ranchers are developing to tackle old challenges. The 23rd Annual Meeting and Conference theme is “Solving the Puzzle – New Approaches to Old Challenges”. The Monte Carlo Resort and Casino in Las Vegas (NEVADA) will once again host the annual event.

Growing urbanization and increased public demand for available supplies to provide recreational and environmental benefits are placing heavy demands on Western water, the key ingredient in the production of agricultural products. Farmers and ranchers are exposed to overlapping and inconsistent mandates from different regulatory agencies that are piled on year after year.

“Facing complicated challenges is a daily routine for Western agricultural water users,” said Alliance President Patrick O’Toole. “Pressure is building on farmers to give up the lifestyle and preserve the remaining equity in their property for their families, or move farming operations to other countries where labor is plentiful, environmental concerns relaxed and economic development is welcomed.”

Despite these complications, creative solutions can be developed to ensure continued, locally-driven success. Water managers throughout the West have expanded opportunities to partner with new entities to improve infrastructure, flood control, and water management and take the lead in implementing holistic watershed solutions.

“Water managers, ranchers and farmers are resourceful and creative individuals, and they should be viewed as such by policy makers looking to resolve the water conflicts of the West,” said O’Toole. “Our conference this year will highlight these leaders and the new coalitions and partners they are working with.” Key conference highlights include:

Colorado River Roundtable. A work group of diverse interests-agricultural, environmental, and urban-that has been funded by the Walton Foundation to seek the most

effective and innovative ways water can be shared for mutual benefit, without damaging agriculture or rural communities; to pinpoint obstacles to sharing; and to develop strategies to alleviate obstacles. Though the initiative is aimed at finding solutions for the Colorado River Basin, the work group is investigating transfers and infrastructure challenges throughout the West in an attempt to uncover best ideas for the Basin. This effort also seeks to tie-in to the Colorado River Basin study authorized by Congress in 2009 and currently being implemented by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.



The day before the start of the Annual Conference general session provides one of the few times each year that the Family Farm Alliance board of directors and Advisory Committee can see each other face-to-face. Because Alliance membership spans 17 Western states, most organization business is conducted on teleconference calls.

“Charting New Waters: A Call to Action to Address U.S. Freshwater Challenges.” Citing a looming freshwater crisis that could affect the nation’s economy, the livability of our communities and the health of our ecosystems, a diverse coalition of businesses, farmers, environmental not-for-profits and government agencies issued a landmark call to action aimed at ensuring the quality and abundance of our freshwater. “Charting New Waters: A Call to Action to Address U.S. Freshwater Challenges,” is the result of an intensive two-year collaboration exploring solutions to U.S. freshwater challenges. Panelists include participants in this process from

academia, agriculture and the conservation community. Lynn Broadus (Director, Environmental Programs, The Johnson Foundation at Wingspread) will moderate this panel.

Inside Washington - A Look at DC from The Hill. Mark Limbaugh of The Ferguson Group (Washington, D.C.) will moderate this annual conference tradition, which features staff from key congressional water committees.

Priming for the New Farm Bill. The Farm Bill is increasing being viewed as a mechanism that can provide volunteer, incentive-driven conservation program tools. This approach may help avoid the types of train wrecks that can occur when a heavy-handed federal regulatory approach

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2011 Annual Conference Agenda Set (Cont'd from Page 4)

is taken. This discussion will touch on the Agricultural Watershed Enhancement Program (AWEP), low impact hydro-power generation opportunities, partnerships, and opportunities to improve conservation project coordination between the Departments of Agriculture and Interior, and young farmer programs. High-level officials with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the Bureau of Reclamation will join House Agriculture Committee staff and Western water users for a discussion on these topics and other issues relevant to the developing Farm Bill.

Title Transfers. Given tight federal budgets, the Bureau of Reclamation is looking harder at title transfer as a tool for addressing aging infrastructure issues. This tool can provide additional flexibility to water contractors when they actually own the asset(s) for dealing with both major maintenance issues and other contemporary needs. Learn how title transfers can be work and be made to work better by representatives of Reclamation, Congress and local water purveyors.

Western Levee and Canal Safety in the Post-Katrina Era. The National Committee on Levee Safety (NCLS) is in the process of recommending federal legislation that would include Bureau of Reclamation owned canals and ditches as subject to the new levee standards recommended and adopted by the Committee. The NCLS is made up of non-federal representatives and flood control professionals from various organizations and local and state governmental entities, as well as the Corps of Engineers and FEMA. Hear from federal experts and Western water users about what this means for local water managers and the customers

they serve.

"Managing for Excellence" (M4E) Update. M4E was the Bureau of Reclamation's response to Managing Construction and Infrastructure in the 21st Century Bureau of Reclamation, a comprehensive report completed by the National Research Council. Executing the action plan was a primary initiative for Reclamation during the latter years of the Bush Administration. Find out how M4E is being implemented throughout Reclamation now, over two years after the process wrapped up.

Reclamation Roundtable. The Commissioner of Reclamation and the five regional directors of Reclamation will discuss hot Western water issues in this time-honored Alliance conference tradition.

Other brief presentations will be made on continuing advances in drought forecasting (Mark Deutschman, Houston Engineering, Inc.) and Pacific Legal Foundation activities (Bob Vice).

"The Family Farm Alliance's 23rd Annual Conference will challenge everyone in irrigated agriculture to consider new and unusual solutions and strategies in dealing with old and frustrating problems," said Keppen.

The Annual Meeting and Conference will be held Thursday and Friday, February 24-25 at the Monte Carlo Resort & Casino in Las Vegas.

"It is no secret that irrigated agriculture has never faced more challenges," said O'Toole. "How we deal with these many issues and questions will determine the future of farming in the West."

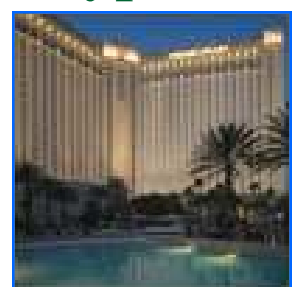
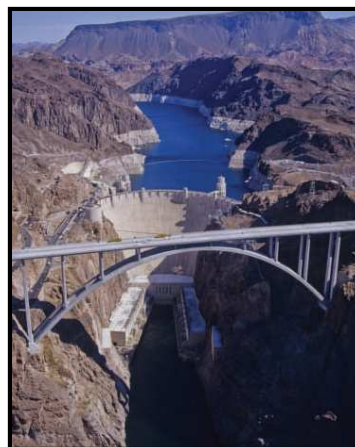
TOUR: Newly Opened Hoover Dam Bypass

Construction of the Colorado River Bridge is now complete! The Colorado River Bridge is the central portion of the Hoover Dam Bypass Project. Construction on the nearly 2,000 foot long bridge began in late January 2005 and traffic began using the Hoover Dam Bypass on October 19, 2010. This signature bridge spans the Black Canyon connecting the Arizona and Nevada Approach highways nearly 900-feet above the Colorado River.

A representative from the Project Management Team (PMT) will serve as our guide for the tour of this \$240 million project.

Join us for this FREE tour on February 25.

Transportation will be provided.



Transportation for the tour will depart the Monte Carlo Resort (above) for the Colorado River Bridge (L) on Friday afternoon, Feb. 24

23rd Annual Meeting & Conference.

Registration information is available on-line at www.familyfarmalliance.org

Alliance Weighs in on RCA Blue Ribbon Panel

Family Farm Alliance President Pat O'Toole, a Wyoming rancher, has been asked to serve on a Blue Ribbon Panel that will provide leadership for a project to support the development of the Natural Resource Conservation Service's (NRCS) Program and Policy Statement as a part of the process mandated by the Resource Conservation Act (RCA). The plan is to develop a set of background papers which will examine critical resource conservation issues. A series of half-day regional roundtables will be scheduled that will bring together practitioners, agricultural and environmental interests together to discuss regional perspectives on potential policy approaches related to agriculture, climate change, water resources, and landscape integrity (fragmentation and farmland protection).

The regional roundtables will lead up to a national forum on agricultural landscapes to be held in Washington DC April 7-8, 2011.

The Blue Ribbon Panel will be actively engaged in the development of papers, setting the agenda for the national forum and potentially chairing a regional roundtable. This process will hold considerable weight in forming the policy platform the Obama Administration will stand on as it negotiates the new Farm Bill with Congress.

The first meeting of the Panel occurred earlier this month in Washington, D.C. O'Toole joined an impressive group that included Sara Wyant (Editor, Agri-Pulse), Charlie Stenholm (former Congressman), and AG Kawamura, Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture. "Water Security" is one of the objective themes being addressed by this panel.

"Some interesting cross-cutting themes have developed in the course of these proceedings," said O'Toole. "From the water security standpoint, a stark and honest assessment is needed to determine how much water we have and how much we need. This assessment could very well lead to a finding that shows we have already diverted too much water away from agriculture."

Thus far, the process has demonstrated that innovation, technology and the critical need for research will be needed to reach meaningful and sound solutions. Creative ways of looking to go beyond traditional jurisdictional authorities will be sought, and with an emphasis on developing policies that encourage agricultural producers to work together in a strategic, coordinated fashion.

"This will necessarily require a rebuilding of parts of the institutional structure we have in place now, so that water resources can be managed specifically, not generically," said O'Toole. "And, we must get a handle on changing weather patterns and assess how the agricultural landscape and water security will be impacted due to a changing climate."

The Alliance is developing a white paper for use in this

forum. The paper draws heavily from recent Alliance reports that address climate change (2007), water policy (2008), and on-the-ground case studies of projects undertaken by Western water users.

"We believe that within the policies outlined in this paper lay the foundation upon which to build for the future," said O'Toole. "It will be a foundation that allows for resolution of significant conflicts in a way that supports continued growth of irrigated agriculture."

The Alliance advocacy will be based on several key policy positions:

- **The United States must adopt an overriding national goal of remaining self-sufficient in food production.** Food security is homeland security. Policy decisions on a wide range of issues should then be evaluated to be sure they are consistent with that goal.
- **States and local governments must consider the impacts of continued growth that relies on water transfers from agriculture and rural areas and to identify feasible alternatives to those transfers.**
- **When water laws and environmental laws conflict, balanced solutions that respect the socioeconomic realities of the West must be found.**
- **State laws and institutions must be given deference in issues relating to water resource allocation, use, control and transfer.** The best decisions on water issues happen at the state and local level.
- **Aging water infrastructure must be addressed promptly and with priority commitments,** as failure do to so will create a failed legacy for the next generation.
- **A balanced mix of new water supply projects and continued water conservation actions should be implemented immediately.**
- **Western water research needs must be prioritized and coordinated.**
- **Real management is needed in the real "reservoir" of the West – our federally-owned forest lands in upper watershed areas.**

Six regional round table meetings will provide opportunities for the public to discuss major policy themes, areas of debate, and points of consensus and divergence. Panels of 3-4 members drawn from the region will provide brief perspectives on each policy theme followed by discussion. The Alliance will be working with its members to encourage participation at three Western workshops scheduled in Ft. Collins (COLORADO); Portland (OREGON); and Phoenix (ARIZONA).

THANK YOU

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Contributions can also be mailed directly to:
Family Farm Alliance
22895 S. Dickenson Avenue



www.familyfarmalliance.org