

# Issue Alert

## *USDA Seeks Input on Conservation Policy Alliance Encourages Participation at Regional Meetings*

Members of the Family Farm Alliance and partners in the conservation community will play a strong role in upcoming regional meetings set to take place next week in Oregon and Arizona.

Regional meetings seeking public input on natural resource policy issues will take place Tuesday, March 15 at the Polytechnic Campus, Arizona State University in Mesa and Friday, March 18, at the Smith Memorial Student Union on the campus of Portland State University, Portland, Ore. The meetings are scheduled from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and are open to anyone with an interest in natural resource conservation policy issues.

Several Family Farm Alliance representatives – Dick Moss (CALIFORNIA), Dan Thelander and Brian Betcher (ARIZONA), Marc Thalacker (OREGON) and Executive Director Dan Keppen (OREGON) - will be featured panelists at the regional workshops.

As required by Congress in the Soil and Water Resources Conservation Act (RCA), the U.S. Department of Agriculture is to gather public input on natural resource conservation policy issues. The overall goal of this effort is to improve delivery of conservation services to landowners and communities, as well as to expand participation in conservation programs.

At each regional forum, discussion will focus on three broad topic areas: water security, climate variability and landscape integrity. A panel of invited speakers will present comments, followed by open discussion with forum participants.

Panelists confirmed to provide perspectives on water security at the Portland meeting are Joe Whitworth of The Freshwater Trust; Marc Thalacker of Three Sisters Irrigation

District; and Dick Moss of Provost & Pritchard. Discussing climate variability will be Dan Keppen of the Family Farm Alliance, and David Ervin of Portland State University. Landscape integrity issues will be the topic for Jennifer Allen of Portland State University and Michael Powellson of The Nature Conservancy. Also invited to discuss landscape integrity issues is Michael Jim Stone, a Montana farmer.

There is no fee to attend the regional meetings but registration is requested. To register, go to [www.farmfoundation.org](http://www.farmfoundation.org) and follow the link from the item on the home page.

Input is sought on specific natural resource conservation issues and economic and public policy issues related to agriculture and rural America, including: 1) natural resource status and trends; 2) emerging challenges; 3) emerging opportunities; and 4) long-term impacts on natural resource conditions and food, fuel, and fiber production.

Family Farm Alliance President Patrick O'Toole (WYOMING) serves on a Blue Ribbon Panel of nationally-recognized thought leaders in soil and water conservation and agricultural landscapes to contribute to the regional and national meetings.

“We will be joined by some of key conservation partners, including The Nature Conservancy and Freshwater Trust, and I believe the collective message will one of support for incen-

tive-driven conservation programs, more local and state control, and streamlined implementation on on-the-ground activities,” said O’Toole.

Information from the six regional forums will feed into a national agricultural landscapes conference planned April 7-8, 2011, at the Marriott Metro Center, Washington, D.C. Forums have already been conducted in Rock Island (ILLINOIS), Cobleskill (NEW YORK), and Ft. Collins (COLORADO).

Details on each of the forums are available on the Farm Foundation Web site, [www.farmfoundation.org](http://www.farmfoundation.org). This project is organized by USDA in collaboration with Farm Foundation, NFP and American Farmland Trust.

### *For more information :*

Sheldon Jones  
[sheldon@farmfoundation.org](mailto:sheldon@farmfoundation.org)

Mary Thompson  
[mary@farmfoundation.org](mailto:mary@farmfoundation.org)

Patrick O’Toole  
[h2otoole@gmail.com](mailto:h2otoole@gmail.com)

Dan Keppen  
[dankeppen@charter.net](mailto:dankeppen@charter.net)