

## **Gearing up for a New Administration**

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The organization I work for - the Family Farm Alliance- represents irrigators in 16 Western states. Earlier this year, we joined with other Western production and business interests to generate some name recognition and begin establishing political ties to best adjust to the shifting political winds that will be generated after the November election.

We co-sponsored luncheons that attracted political leaders at both the Democratic and Republican National Conventions. Both parties need to understand that Western irrigators want to be constructive, and that they want to have some level of access with the new Administration, whichever party that might be.

At both conventions, we met with Western political leaders and provided them with policy recommendations that will be further detailed in a white paper that will be publicly released later this fall. These recommendations are intended to provide the next Administration with guidance on Western agricultural, water resources and environmental matters.

We believe the West can find solutions to our water conflicts which assure that we continue to lead the world in agricultural production, while finding ways to accommodate urban growth, recreational demands, and environmental requirements.

Solutions will not come easily. They will require visionary leadership and a firm commitment to a balanced, workable policy. Our recommendations form the basis for such a policy:

1. The U.S. 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.
2. State and local governments must consider the impacts of continued growth that rely on water transfers from agriculture and rural areas and to identify feasible alternatives to those transfers.
3. When water laws and environmental laws conflict, balanced solutions that respect the socioeconomic realities of the West must be found.

4. 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.
5. 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.
6. New water supplies must be developed to provide for recreational and environmental needs, allow for population growth and protect the economic vitality of the West.
7. Western water research needs must be prioritized and coordinated.
8. Real management is needed in the real “reservoir” of the West – our federally-owned forest lands in upper watershed areas.

We believe society will reject a water management approach which leads to shuttering farming communities to meet urban growth, recreational demands and environmental requirements. Through thoughtful planning, the new Administration can play a truly important role in helping to solve water issues that today seem so insurmountable.