

Monthly Briefing

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

ANNUAL MEETING

Register Now For Conference's Super Savings

Now is a great time to register for the 15th Family Farm Alliance Annual Meeting and Conference.

By signing up by December 31, you will be enjoying the greatest possible registration savings for the sessions that will take place Thursday and Friday, March 6-7.

SUPER SAVER REGISTRATION is \$275. From January 1-29, early bird registration will cost \$295. Full registration (after January 29) will be priced at \$315. Registration includes all materials and meals.

Complete registration information is available on the Family Farm Alliance's informative web page, <http://www.familyfarmalliance.org>.

January 29 is also the deadline to reserve rooms at the 2003 Alliance Annual Meeting and Conference venue, the



"The Monte Carlo Resort and Casino is a great hotel, right on the strip in Las Vegas," said Alliance Executive Director Craig Smith. "Our room rate, \$95 per night, is the best we have offered in four years."

THE CONFERENCE PROGRAM is quickly taking shape and promises to again be timely, informative and provocative, bringing water users and contractors face to face with federal water policy makers.

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Raley Asks Alliance For Its Views On Wheeling Concept

By CRAIG SMITH

Family Farm Alliance Executive Director

Assistant Secretary of Interior Bennett Raley is proposing to develop new guidelines for the use of Reclamation project facilities to move non-project water.

The purpose of the initiative will be "to maximize the use of existing authorities to allow the wheeling of non-project through facilities with excess capacity, thereby maximizing the benefit to society of existing project facilities."

In November, Raley approached the Family Farm Alliance and asked us to give him input and advice on the formation of this policy. The Alliance Board responded by appointing an eight member task force, representative of the broad Alliance membership. That task force met with Raley and Reclamation Commissioner John Keys via teleconference during the second week of November.

At that meeting, Raley said that doing nothing was not an option. He outlined these eight points that would guide policy development:

1. Current project beneficiaries will be protected. Any conveyance or storage of non-project water will be secondary to project needs.
2. Entities utilizing the project facility to wheel water will pay operation and maintenance (O&M) costs.
3. Entities utilizing the project facility to wheel water will pay appropriate (to be determined) costs for capital investment, commensurate with the benefit received under the contract.

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Alliance 'Grassroots' Will Be Her Focus

The Family Farm Alliance has always been a members-oriented, grassroots organization and now it has staff focusing on that mission.

Kristina Smith has joined the Alliance as Director of Grassroots Communication.

"Kristina is going to be a big help to every Alliance member," said Executive Director Craig Smith. "Her job will be 100% devoted

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GREAT PROGRAM IS BEING LINED UP FOR ANNUAL MEETING

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U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner John Keys and the Bureau's regional directors will take part in a panel discussion that has become a unique Alliance tradition.

There will also be presentations on specific topics and issues under the Annual Meeting theme "View to the Future":

- One of the nation's leading agricultural meteorologists, Mark Russo of Salomon Smith Barney, will address drought,

water supplies and the world's weather.

- Alliance Washington representative Joe Raeder will lead a panel of key Congressional staffers and lobbyists and will provide an inside look at what to expect from the new Congress.
- A panel of experts will discuss Western groundwater issues.
- Panelists will be discussing unprecedented court decisions that in the past several months

have put water users in serious jeopardy. Key cases will be reviewed and panelists will take a hard look at the future of Endangered Species Act and Clean Water Act litigation.

Other speakers have been invited. As always, each Alliance session will be informal and interactive.

"Any way you look at it, this is going to be a great Annual Meeting at a great facility," Smith said.

ASSISTANT INTERIOR SECRETARY SEEKS ALLIANCE'S INPUT

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4. Wheeling agreements will be limited to the project area to avoid using project facilities for wheeling contracts that move water outside the projects boundaries. Contractors will not have veto authority over use of the facility for these purposes.
5. Existing authorities will be used to implement this policy. No legislation is planned.
6. The policy will contain appropriate recognition of local differences. It will not be a cookie cutter approach West-wide.
7. The policy should address how revenues are credited to projects, but that should not be a factor that holds up implementation.

In its comments to Raley and Keys, the Alliance focused on these points:

- Project contractors must be involved in any wheeling arrangements that impact or utilize their facilities. A no-veto concept is not acceptable.

- We encourage the Administration to craft a "basis of authority" for the decisions it wants to make on the use of excess capacity. Utilizing authorities beyond the Warren Act is a creative approach, but the authority needs to be clearly defined.
- The term "wheeling" should be clearly defined to include storage as well as conveyance.
- With the above changes and clarifications, the Alliance believes that this approach could be very positive. We suggest that Interior look for one or two pilot projects to test its assumptions and legal authority.

Alliance members are now being asked for their input. This is a potentially controversial proposal. If you have comments or suggestions for changes in the policy outlined, we need to hear from you.

Please contact Alliance Executive Director Craig Smith at (503) 371-3123 or e-mail to craig@familyfarmalliance.org.

KRISTINA SMITH WILL SERVE ALLIANCE 'GRASSROOTS'

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to supporting our grassroots network, the factor that has made the Alliance such an effective organization in representing federal water project users and operators in the West."

Her duties will include improving and maintaining the Alliance's channels of communication, and work with the Board of Directors. She will also focus on expanding Alliance membership.

Kristina is a native Oregonian and now lives in Salem where the Family Farm Alliance office is located. She is a graduate of Oregon State University and is completing work on a master's degree in training and development.

Prior to joining the Alliance, Kristina was a field director for the

Oregon gubernatorial campaign of Kevin Mannix.

She is also involved in business development training, including communication and conflict management.

FAMILY FARM ALLIANCE

P.O. Box 3937
Salem, Oregon 97302

Her first Alliance activity has been directed toward getting acquainted with the organization's directors and Advisory Committee members, while beginning the task of familiarizing herself with the West's water issues.