

Monthly Briefing

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

Dam Safety Bill Passes - An Alliance Victory!

House passage November 17 of S.1727, the Safety of Dams Act, is being viewed as a big victory for Reclamation contractors and their water customers.

"We are enormously pleased with the bill's unanimous passage, first in the Senate and then in the House," said Craig Smith, Family Farm Alliance Executive Director.

"The Alliance has fought hard for five years to assure that Reclamation customers have a say in the design and construction of Safety of Dams projects," he said. "This bill makes that happen. It is a significant milestone for the Alliance and a huge victory for irrigators in the West and came about as a result of a bipartisan effort in Congress.

The Alliance also believes the new law will result in significant cost savings for the federal treasury and local irrigation and water districts.

ALLIANCE LEADERS expressed thanks to Senator Gordon Smith (R-OREGON) for sponsoring the Alliance's proposed language; and Rep. Ken Calvert (R-CALIFORNIA) and Rep. Grace Napolitano (D-CALIFORNIA), the chair and ranking member of the House Water and Power Subcommittee for their excellent help in getting the bill passed.

"We also want to thank Commissioner John Keys and Deputy Commissioner Mark Limbaugh for their tenacious support in the House," Smith said. "It was calls to the House leadership from the Interior Department that helped push the bill onto the House floor for final passage."

The bill had been stuck in a procedural rut before the unanimous House vote for approval and there had been concerns it might not survive the lame duck session of Congress.

"A huge thank you also goes to the Alliance's Advisory Committee and specifically the members who worked so hard to craft the bill language," Smith said.

THE BILL INCREASES the Safety of Dams program funding authorization by \$540 million and should be sufficient to extend the important program for a decade. The U.S. Bur-

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Registration Begins For Annual Meet

Early registration has opened for what is promising to be an interesting and provocative Family Farm Alliance 17th Annual Meeting and Conference.

"The Time Is Now!" is this year's conference theme. The Annual Meeting will examine what to expect during President Bush's second term and many other critical issues.

The event will be held for a third consecutive year at the Monte Carlo Resort and Casino in Las Vegas Thursday and Friday, March 10-11, 2005.

OREGON REPUBLICAN SENATOR Gordon Smith has been invited as the keynote speaker.

"We have asked Senator Smith to come to Las Vegas and outline the Senate's plans for the 109th Congress and to allow us to discuss our desired outcomes as well," said Alliance Executive Director Craig Smith. "Senator Smith is an outstanding speaker, a solid supporter of agriculture and a champion of our issues."

THE PROGRAM will again spotlight three highly popular panels. They include a water policy group that will discuss such issues as the drought, increasing water supplies and Endangered Species Act reform.

Another always interesting panel is the Washington Insiders group, chaired by the Alliance's Washington representative, Joe Raeder.

Also returning is the Reclamation Round Table, headed by Commissioner of Reclamation John Keys and featuring the Bureau of Reclamation's regional directors.

REGISTRATION packets have been sent out. Forms are available at www.familyfarmalliance.org. Hurry! Super saver registration of \$299 ends January 5. Hotel reservation forms are also available on line. The special Alliance room rate of \$90 per night closes February 2, 2005.

Bureau Funding Increased By Congress

For the fourth year in a row, Congress has turned aside Administration proposals to reduce funding for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's core programs and instead provided a small increase in fiscal year 2005 funding as compared to the current level.

Congress appropriated \$859.4 million for the Bureau's water and related resources account, which funds the Bureau's main functions, including project construction, operation and maintenance.

The figure is \$31 million more than requested by the administration and \$7 million above the current level of funding.

Congress also rejected – for now – the administration's proposal to make reimbursable some of the costs of increased security at Bureau projects. After the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, Congress directed that the costs of

increasing security at Bureau facilities should be a fully federal expense without reimbursement by project beneficiaries.

The administration this year proposed making some security costs – guards and surveillance – reimbursable as regular operations and maintenance expenses. A number of Western senators objected to this approach.

In the Bureau's fiscal 2005 package, Congress included language acknowledging that "project beneficiaries benefit from enhance security," but also noting that concerns remain about making all security expenses reimbursable.

The language directs the Bureau to give congressional Appropriations Committees a region-by-region, project-by-project breakout of planned reimbursable and nonreimbursable security costs by May 1, 2005. In the meantime, the Bureau is "not to begin the reimbursement process until Congress provides direct instruction to do so."

DAM SAFETY BILL GIVES PROJECT USERS A SEAT AT THE TABLE

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eau of Reclamation had feared it might run out of funds within a year without Congressional action.

It requires the Bureau to:

- Provide project beneficiaries with the opportunity to consult with the Bureau on the planning, design and construction of a proposed dam safety modification.
- Provide project beneficiaries with a written description of the need for the proposed dam safety

improvement and the process for identifying and implementing the improvement.

- Consider and provide a written response to any alternatives plans suggested by project beneficiaries, and include the written response in the project planning report that the Bureau is already required to submit to Congress prior to construction of a dam safety modification.

- Consider cost-containment measures suggested by project beneficiaries during construction.

- Provide project beneficiaries with periodic reports on the status and costs of a dam safety modification project.

"We look forward to working with the Bureau of Reclamation as it implements this new law," Smith said.

The law's text may be viewed on the Alliance's website: www.familyfarmalliance.org.

Job Opportunity

The Heart Mountain Irrigation District is accepting applications for the position of General Manager. This position is responsible for the distribution of irrigation water within the boundaries of the district that encompasses 31,120 irrigated acres, and employs 10 full time employees with an annual operations budget of \$600,000. Applicant must have knowledge of pipeline and concrete construction. Salary range is \$40,000 and is DOE. Resume with references and cover letter outlining salary requirements will be taken until January 15, 2005. Tentative start date is March 1, 2005. Send to Heart Mountain Irrigation District, 1206 Road 18, Powell, WY 82435.

Learn all about the Alliance
and how you can become a member
by visiting our website at

familyfarmalliance.org

FAMILY FARM ALLIANCE

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