

Monthly Briefing

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

FAMILY FARM ALLIANCE ANNUAL MEETING

Focus Will Be On Future Of West's Critical Issues

Members and friends of the Family Farm Alliance will be taking a "View to the Future" on several critical issues when they gather next month in Las Vegas (NEVADA) for their 15th Annual Meeting and Conference. The session will be held Thursday and Friday, March 6-7, at the Monte Carlo Resort and Casino.

"There are at least six distinct areas on which our speakers and panelists will be focusing," said Craig Smith, Family Farm Alliance Executive Director. "Each of these issues is already affecting Western water users and has the potential to create significant future impacts."

These crucial issues include:

- Drought conditions gripping much of the West.
- Wheeling of non-project water through Reclamation facilities.
- The Colorado River-California-Imperial Irrigation District situation.
- A host of groundwater issues.
- Extensive Endangered Species Act litigation.
- A variety of other Reclamation questions and problems, not the least of which involves the rapidly escalating federal budget deficit.

"As always, the Alliance will be looking beyond the problems in search of creative solutions that will help federal project water users meet the future with increased certainty," Smith said. "Every bit of this year's program will be interesting and exciting."

AS IS ITS CUSTOM, the Alliance has arranged a lineup of fascinating and provocative speakers.

One of the nation's top agricultural meteorologists, Mark Russo of Salomon Smith Barney, will talk about the deepening Western drought, water supplies and the world's weather.

Washington politics will get a thorough going over, including the Alliance's annual panel of Washington insiders chaired by lobbyist Joe Raeder.

Among the major speakers will be Assistant Interior

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Deadline Is January 29 For Signup Savings, Hotel Rooms

A January 29 deadline is looming for early-bird registration and hotel reservations at what promises to be an outstanding Family Farm Alliance Annual Meeting and Conference in Las Vegas.

Through January 29, early bird registration will cost \$295. Full registration (after January 29) will be priced at \$315 and includes materials and meals.

JANUARY 29 IS ALSO the deadline to reserve rooms at the special Family Farm Alliance Annual Meeting rate of just \$95 per night at the event's exciting new venue on the Strip, the



A limited number of weekend rooms at a special rate of only \$145 per night have also been made available by the Monte Carlo for those attending the Alliance Annual Meeting.

It's easy to register and make your hotel reservations. You will find complete information on the Family Farm Alliance's web site:

<http://www.familyfarmalliance.org>

Or contact the Family Farm Alliance office:

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Colorado River's California Cuts Are Now In Place

Federal officials have made good on their promise to end California's long-standing practice of using more than the Golden State's Colorado River entitlement.

The Interior Department reduced California's water deliveries January 1.

THE ORDER, signed by Norton in Las Vegas (NEVADA) December 15, followed rejection by the Imperial Irrigation District board of a 75-year deal to transfer nearly 500,000 acre-feet of water a year to Southern California. The biggest portion, up to 200,000 acre-feet, would have gone to the San Diego County Water Authority.

"As Secretary and river master, I must enforce the law of the river," Norton told the Colorado River Water Users Association after signing the order. "This means I will hold California to the express covenant it made in 1929 to limit its use of the Colorado River."

INTERIOR REDUCED Imperial's allotment by 205,000 acre-feet. The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California lost 415,000 acre-feet a year, enough for 830,000 households.

The transfer sale would have been a key piece of a seven-state agreement that would have given California up to 15 years to phase out its overuse of the Colorado River.

IID was under heavy pressure from the Bush administration and other agencies to approve the water sale. State legislation to "punish" IID was being proposed. In the Imperial Valley, however, there was much sentiment against the sale as well as concern over parallel impacts the transfer would have on the Salton Sea.

IID did eventually approve a transfer but modification of many provisions prompted MWD and other agencies to reject the action.

MWD initially said it has adequate reserves to meet all water needs for two years but later suggested conservation, storage and desalination plans might make it possible to cover the losses for 20 years.

California's Pombo Is New Chairman Of Resources Panel

Rep. Richard Pombo (R-CALIFORNIA), an outspoken property rights advocate, is the new House Resources Committee Chairman.

He replaces retired Rep. James Hansen (R-UTAH). Pombo has been invited to speak at the Family Farm Alliance's Annual Meeting and Conference March 6-7 in Las Vegas.

POMBO has been a vociferous critic of the Endangered Species Act and other federal programs since he was elected to Congress from Northern California's Tracy area in 1992.

Mike Hardiman, a former Pombo aide, was quoted in a published report as saying, "He believes in sound science, free enterprise and in an even-handed approach that benefits wildlife and people's constitutional rights."

SOME SAW his choice as something of a surprise but he had the backing of the Majority Leader, Tom De Lay (R-TEXAS).

Environmentalists had little good to say about the choice of Pombo.

There is no question that he will be a colorful Chairman. Pombo's official House portrait shows him wearing a cowboy hat and an open-necked striped shirt.

Clinton Era TMDL Rule Is Withdrawn

The Environmental Protection Agency plans to withdraw a 2½-year-old final rule that revised EPA's Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) program under the Clean Water Act.

EPA said the rule was determined to be unworkable based on thousands of comments. Dozens challenged the rule in court and Congress passed a law prohibiting its implementation by EPA.

States were required by the rule to prepare detailed plans to reduce runoff from storm water and agriculture. Many local and state officials had criticized the rule as expensive and inflexible.

ANNUAL MEETING

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Secretary Bennett Raley, who is expected to discuss new guidelines for the use of Reclamation project facilities to move non-project water.

Commissioner of Reclamation John Keys will also be back to lead the Alliance's Annual Meeting discussion by a panel made up of the Bureau of Reclamation's Regional Managers.

Groundwater, growing into a big issue in many areas, will be discussed, as will unprecedented court decisions that could have big impacts on farmers.

Other sessions are being finalized.

The Alliance, led by President Bill Kennedy (Oregon), will also conduct a business session.

AS FOR THE CONFERENCE'S new venue, Smith believes the meeting facilities in the Monte Carlo Resort and Casino will work well for Alliance presentations.

"It's going to be a great spot for us," he said.

FAMILY FARM ALLIANCE

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