

Monthly Briefing

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

A Great Alliance Lineup

New Commissioner, Other Officials Will Address Annual Meeting



Hoover Dam spans Boulder Canyon, its arching concrete gravity face flanked by a pair of massive power plants. Those attending the Family Farm Alliance Annual Meeting and Conference can take part in a free special tour of the huge facility February 23. (USBR photo)

Free Hoover Dam Tour To Close Session

The best may well turn out to be last as the Family Farm Alliance extends and concludes its 19th Annual Meeting and Conference with a behind-the-scenes tour of massive Hoover Dam.

It will take place beginning at 1 p.m. Friday, February 23, and is free of charge for all attending the February 22-23 Alliance sessions at the Monte Carlo Resort and Casino in Las Vegas (NEVADA). (Please see box on Page 4 on how to register.)

“This is a great opportunity to see what many believe is the most significant structure ever built in the United States,” Alliance Executive Director Dan Keppen says.

Transportation from and back to the Monte Carlo will be provided. All you have to

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The Family Farm Alliance Annual Conference always features strong participation from U.S. Interior Department officials, particularly leaders from the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation). On February 22-23, the Family Farm Alliance is aiming to bring in high-profile officials from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The Alliance's 19th Annual Meeting's Friday, February 23, sessions at the Monte Carlo in Las Vegas will be an all-Reclamation program that will include the new Commissioner of Reclamation, Robert Johnson, as well as all five Reclamation regional directors.

CONFERENCE planners are coordinating with the Department of the Interior to see if Secretary Dirk Kempthorne will be able to partici-

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Alliance Speaker Aims For Win-Win Solutions To Environmental Rifts

Sharing interests, finding common ground, building consensus, win-win.

Are these more than noble or naïve aspirations? Can the 21st century American West really be “won” through collaboration? Can the water wars of the past be resolved through civil discourse in the future?

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The Rural-Urban Divide And Security

Colorado State Wildlife Professor Will Speak About 'New West' Concerns

Today America stands at an impasse. The historic covenant that bound rural and urban communities has been severed; as much out of indifference as from our globalizing economy. Americans, a nation composed mostly of suburbanites, believe their water comes from a tap, their food from a grocery store, and the concept of soil is as alien to them as the geography of Mars.

On Thursday, February 22 in Las Vegas, noted wildlife conservation professor Richard L. Knight (COLORADO) will address the 19th Family Farm Alliance Annual Meeting and Conference with a presentation entitled "Crossing the Great Divide: Home, Land, and Security."

DR. KNIGHT, who teaches in the Department of Forest, Rangeland, and Watershed Stewardship at Colorado State University believes this disconnect not only fuels the rural-urban divide but also has security implications.

"The year 2004 saw America importing more food than exporting; the first time in our history," said Knight. "Was there any mention in the 2004 presidential election about agricultural jobs going offshore? Nary a word was uttered."

Encouragingly, Knight believes this situation is not static and there is abundant evidence of changing sentiments over our relationships to rural people, food, water, and land.

"These are not front-page stories; they are on the back cover, but watershed by watershed, they are spreading across America," said Knight. "Increasingly, urban people are

recognizing that farmers and ranchers produce food but that they also steward land and tie down open space from the developer's gluttony."

HIS TALK at the Alliance conference will examine these issues and point to encouraging signs that we are rediscovering our inter-relationships with those who husband food and steward land.

"Richard Knight is interested in the ecological effects associated with the conversion of the Old West to a New West," said Patrick O'Toole (WYOMING), President of the Family Farm Alliance. "His background is perfect for this year's conference theme – 'Farming is National Security'. And this is a critical security issue that not many others are talking about. Because Western irrigated agriculture has been so adaptive and successful at providing plentiful, safe and affordable food, it is now jeopardized – nobody believes there can be a problem."

Dr. Knight received his graduate degrees from the University of Washington and the University of Wisconsin. While at Wisconsin he was an Aldo Leopold Fellow and conducted his research at Aldo Leopold's farm, living in "The Shack." Before becoming an academic he worked for the Washington Department of Game developing the non-game wildlife program. He sits on a number of boards including the Colorado Cattlemen's Agricultural Land Trust, The Quivira Coalition, the Science Board of the Malpai Borderlands

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Resolving Environmental Conflicts Is Speaker's Work

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At this year's Family Farm Alliance Annual Meeting and Conference, Kirk Emerson (ARIZONA), Director of the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution, will talk about the potential and pitfalls of collaborative approaches to environmental decision-making, and share some of her experiences in resolving Western environmental conflicts.

The theme of this year's conference is "Farming is National Security".

"If assuring Western irrigated agriculture is indeed a national security issue, then surely peace must begin at home," said Emerson.

"More constructive approaches are needed to resolve the growing conflicts over Western water allocation and use."

EMERSON WILL SPEAK to the conference on Thursday, February 22, the first day of the public session.

Her talk will focus on the potential and pitfalls of collaborative approaches to environmental decision-making, and she will share some of her experiences in resolving Western environmental conflicts.

She will address some of the challenges landowners, irrigators, and family farmers face when coming to the table to negotiate their interests.

"**DR. EMERSON** will provide conference goers with a great sense of when and how to participate effectively in environmental mediation or other collaborative problem solving processes," said Alliance Executive Director Dan Keppen. "We are pleased to have her on the program."

Kirk Emerson has been the Director of the U.S. Institute for Environmental Conflict Resolution (U.S. Institute) of the Morris K. Udall Foundation since its inception in 1998.

IN ITS ROLE as an independent federal institution, the U.S. Institute promotes effective use of environmental conflict resolution and collaborative problem solving (ECR) through case assistance, training and leadership.

The U.S. Institute staff partners with other federal and state programs and draws on the expertise of more than 250 experienced ECR professionals on its national roster.

Over the years, Dr. Emerson's work has focused on interagency and intergovernmental natural resource conflicts.

Most recently, she has been working on developing national ECR policy, dovetailing ECR with the objectives of the National Environmental Policy Act, and assessing ECR outcomes and cost effectiveness.

Bush Signs Rural Water Supply Bill

President George W. Bush on December 27 signed bi-partisan legislation to establish a new loan guarantee and technical assistance program that will help rural Western communities meet their critical water supply challenges.

The bill, S. 895, addresses a serious water crisis in the Western part of the United States, particularly among rural areas that by themselves don't have the financial and technical resources to establish and maintain municipal water supplies. The bill signed by the President included amendments suggested by the Family Farm Alliance.

THE NEW LAW will authorize the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) to build rural domestic water supply projects that meet certain engineering and feasibility criteria. The Bush Administration strongly supported the bill because it believes the measure would help Reclamation keep resources focused on the USBR's core missions.

"This initiative is yet another example of the Administration's continuing commitment to work cooperatively with communities to find innovative approaches and creative solutions to the West's water needs," said Mark Limbaugh, the Department of Interior's Assistant Secretary for Water and Science.

"The legislation establishes a much-needed program in the department's Bureau of Reclamation for prioritizing and funding projects that have, in the past, been authorized and managed on an

ad hoc basis," Limbaugh said.

Of perhaps greater importance to Western irrigators are the bill's provisions to authorize a new federal loan guarantee program to help irrigation districts finance major operation and maintenance costs.

The alternative financing mechanism proposed in the new law provides a government loan guarantee to allow local entities to amortize expensive operation, maintenance and replacement projects.

"THE LOAN GUARANTEE program will be helpful to some local agencies struggling to afford repairs to federally owned facilities," said Alliance Executive Director Dan Keppen. "By making it easier for local agencies to meet their financial responsibilities, this bill will make it easier to protect the federal investment in the West's water supply infrastructure."

Amendments included in the bill passed by Congress were specifically intended to address the concerns and recommendations that the Alliance raised in letters and testimony during the past year.

These include concerns about the expansion of Reclamation's mission during a time of tight funding and the need for close scrutiny of any new



President Bush

spending and allocation of personnel to the new Rural Water Supply program.

THE ALLIANCE further recommended expansion of the bill's federal loan guarantee program to help irrigation districts improve the operation and efficiency of their own infrastructures.

The revised bill also takes a step toward addressing an issue raised by the Alliance repeatedly over several years: the slow and costly process

for transferring title to Reclamation facilities to local authorities.

"We truly appreciate that staffers from the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee and the House Resources Committee were willing to work with us to address concerns raised by irrigators and the districts that serve them," said Keppen.

"THE BUSH Administration, and in particular, Mr. Limbaugh, also deserve kudos for hard work on this matter. This is a great win for water users and their projects."

In addition to getting support from the Alliance, the Rural Water Supply Act was also endorsed by the National Rural Water Association, the Western Governors' Association, the Western States Water Council, and the National Water Resources Association.

Growing Rural-Urban Division Will Be Alliance Session Topic

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Project, and The Nature Conservancy's Colorado Council. He is on the Board of Editors for both *Conservation Biology*, and for *Ecological Applications*. He was selected by the Ecological Society of America for the first cohort of Aldo Leopold Leadership Fellows which focus on leadership in the scientific community, communicating with the media, and interacting with the business and corporate sectors.

His books include: *A New Century for Natural Resources*

Management, Stewardship Across Boundaries, Ranching West of the 100th Meridian, Aldo Leopold and the Ecological Conscience, Ecosystem Management: An Adaptive, Community-Based Approach, and Home Land: Ranching and a West That Works.

With his wife Heather, he works with his neighbors in Livermore Valley (COLORADO) on stewardship and community-based activities.

Annual Meeting Features Free Hoover Dam Tour

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do is sign up in advance when filling out your Annual Meeting and Conference registration, which is available on line at www.familyfarmalliance.org.

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation staff members from the Lower Colorado Region will act as tour guides to lead Alliance Annual Meeting attendees through what is probably the world's most recognizable concrete gravity arch dam.

Hoover Dam, located in Boulder Canyon and bisected by the Arizona-Nevada border, controls Colorado River flows to

form Lake Mead and create water storage that has been essential in supporting agriculture and growth in Arizona, Nevada and California while helping meet the Southwest's electrical energy needs.

The dam is 726 feet in height from bedrock to the roadway, and 1,244 feet between the canyon walls at its widest point. There is enough concrete in the dam to pave a three-inch thick, 18-foot wide highway from San Francisco to New York City.

The Hoover Dam complex is considered to be one of the seven civil engineering wonders of the world.

Bureau Issues Will Be In Alliance's Friday Spotlight

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participate via live interactive video-conference from Washington.

Nearly three hours of Friday's session will be dedicated to "Managing for Excellence", Reclamation's high priority response to *Managing Construction and Infrastructure in the 21st Century Bureau of Reclamation*.

That comprehensive report was completed one year ago by the National Research Council (NRC) of the National Academy of Sciences.

Brenda Burman, Deputy Commissioner of Reclamation, is putting together a small panel of Reclamation team leaders to address items of particular interest to the Family Farm Alliance membership.

"So far, we know that Reclamation speakers will focus on engineering and

design services and title transfers," said Dan Keppen, Alliance Executive Director.

"In the past year, our membership has also consistently expressed interest in asset sustainment and major repair challenges, so these are other issues that Reclamation officials may address in Las Vegas."

A panel of Reclamation customers will then provide their perspective on how Reclamation is "managing for excellence."

Three leaders in the Western water and power policy arena will explain whether or not implementation of Reclamation's action plan is moving in the right direction. They are:

- Leslie James (ARIZONA), Colorado River Energy Distributors Association.

- Bennett Raley (COLORADO), The Law Firm of Trout, Raley, Montano, Witwer & Freeman, P.C.
- Norm Semanko (IDAHO), Executive Director, Idaho Water Users Association, Inc.

All three of these panelists have worked closely with the Family Farm Alliance in the past year as Reclamation has moved its action plan forward.

IN ADDITION to the providing for the traditionally strong Reclamation presence, this year's conference planners are also currently working with U.S. Department of Agriculture appointees to address agriculture's role in national security issues.

Tentatively, a high-level USDA official will speak to the conference on the afternoon of Thursday, February 22.

To Register

Family Farm Alliance Annual Meeting registration has never been easier.

To join us February 22-23 at the Monte Carlo in Las Vegas, please register by using the form on our website:

familyfarmalliance.org

Then mail or fax: Family Farm Alliance,
P.O. Box 1705, Clearlake Oaks, CA 95423.
Fax: (707) 998-9987.

If you need more information, please contact us at (707) 998-9487 or ffameeting@aol.com

Be sure to read and follow instructions to make room reservations by January 20 directly with the Monte Carlo at a special low rate.

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