

Monthly Briefing

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

SPECIAL REPORT

Water 2025

What the Family Farm Alliance
Believes Must Be Done If We Are To Meet
The Next Two Decades' Water Challenges In The West

Interior Department officials on June 6 in Denver are kicking off a series of consulting conferences in the West aimed at developing a dialog on means of preventing chronic water supply problems facing many communities in the coming decades. The Family Farm Alliance is pleased and honored to have been invited to participate. Interior Secretary Gale Norton's Water 2025 proposal is a commitment to work with and support western governors and local communities as they carry out realistic, community-based solutions developed through these consultations. In this expanded issue of our newsletter *Monthly Briefing*, Executive Director Craig Smith summarizes how the Family Farm Alliance views the future of Western water.

Looking Beyond Crisis Management

By Craig Smith

Family Farm Alliance Executive Director

Water is the key to the American West. No other commodity holds so much power, so much promise and has the potential to cause so much conflict.

As the Family Farm Alliance has pointed out in its *Western Water Policy – A New Vision*, the West's growth has been accompanied by increasingly polarized water issues. Some argue that society no longer needs irrigated agriculture in the West, and that we should simply reallocate the water historically used by farmers and give it

to cities and the environment. Others insist that agricultural water users have no responsibility for addressing allocation issues, and that any changes in existing water use or management threaten their existence.

THE FAMILY FARM ALLIANCE believes that solutions exist in the middle of these two extremes. It is possible for the West to continue to lead the world in agricultural production while finding ways to accommodate exploding urban growth and environmental needs. The solutions will not come easily. They will require visionary leadership and a firm commitment to a balanced, workable policy. But opportunities exist, if we are prepared to seize them. *(Continued on Page 2)*

Alliance Policy Recommendations

These policy recommendations are drawn from the Family Farm Alliance's *Western Water Policy – A New Vision*, which forms the basis for Executive Director Craig Smith's presentation in Denver to the Water 2025 conference.

1. The overriding goal of federal water policy must be to provide certainty to all water users; agricultural, tribal, municipal, industrial and environmental, who are dependent on commitments made by the government.
2. When water laws and environmental laws conflict, balanced solutions that respect treaty and contractual obligations must be the goal.
3. 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.
4. Renewed and continued support for the development of new, environmentally sound, sources of water supply is essential. New water supplies must be developed if we want to solve environmental problems, allow for population growth and protect the economic vitality of the West.

THE ALLIANCE'S 'NEW VISION' FOR WESTERN WATER

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What 'Water 2025' Is All About

The Interior Department and U.S. Bureau of Reclamation are attempting to head off future Western water crises through the process that begins June 6.

"Water 2025: Preventing Crisis and Conflict in the West" is to flesh out the broadly drawn "Western Water Initiative" that Interior sent to Congress in February as part of the Bureau's fiscal 2004 budget request. The budget seeks \$11 million to get the plan under way.

The plan seeks to focus public attention on problems that cause water conflicts in the West and establish a framework for addressing problems and conflicts before they reach the crisis point. The plan seeks to manage Western water supplies for the next quarter century.

THERE ARE FIVE "REALITIES" driving Western water conflicts, the plan says. They include explosive population growth, water shortages, shortages leading to conflict, options limited by aging facilities and ineffective crisis management. The plan lists six principles for addressing water problems as well as four tools for better managing scarce supplies – conservation, efficiency and markets; collaboration; technology; and removing institutional barriers and increasing cooperation.

The plan may be found at www.doi.gov/water2025.

The Family Farm Alliance continues to believe a consistent and thoughtful federal water policy can emerge, one that looks to meet all needs. The Alliance believes the recommendations listed above, which it developed three years ago, as part of its *New Vision*, can form the basis for that policy.

WHAT INSPIRED the Alliance to develop its *New Vision*? It sprang from realization that far too many individuals and organizations have come to believe it is "politically correct" to attack irrigated agriculture and traditional Western water policy.

Their line of reasoning would conclude that the policies of the past, the very ones that allowed and sustain Western settlement, have somehow outlived their usefulness and practicality. This same belief holds that our nation no longer need to manage Western water resources to encourage agricultural production investment. Even more commonly, this mindset asserts that continued development and use of Western water resources for agriculture is inconsistent with environmental protection goals.

THE FACTS DO NOT SUPPORT such a line of reasoning. Irrigated agriculture and the water projects that made it possible are the very reason the Western region of the United States is the fastest growing part of the nation.

Take a look at the real West and its historical context before trying to reshape the past with all-new and radically contradictory contemporary standards. Expectations must be grounded in reality and we must learn lessons from experiences to date. Future decisions must respect prior commitments and existing obligations.

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TIME FOR A 'NEW VISION'

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The fact is that Western water policy over the past 100 years, particularly within the Reclamation program, is one of the modern era's great success stories. Millions of acres of arid Western desert have been transformed into the most efficient and productive agricultural system in the world.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation operates some 180 projects in 17 Western states. These projects provide agricultural, municipal and industrial water to nearly one-third of the American West's population. About 5% of the West's land area is irrigated. The Bureau provides water to about one-fifth of that acreage, (about nine million acres), while also serving as a major electrical energy provider. All of this has been done for a total federal investment of \$11 billion.

WHAT HAS THE U.S. RECEIVED for its investment in Reclamation projects?

A 1998 study by Dr. Darryl Olsen and Dr. Houshmand Ziari, estimates the impact of irrigated agriculture in the West to be \$60 billion annually (in direct and indirect income).

Using Reclamation's estimate that 20% of irrigated agriculture receives water from Reclamation projects, the annual return to the economy from the \$11 billion investment in the federal system is \$12 billion annually.

In other words, the economy of the United States receives a greater than 100% return each year on this investment.

Irrigated agriculture isn't a good investment. It is an incredible investment. It continues to be a leading economic driver in the West.

NOW IS NOT the time to retreat from our investment. Now is the time to enact sound policies that encourage continued investment in irrigated agriculture.

Of course there are challenges, and enormous ones at that.

It has been inevitable that massive population growth and modifications made to natural streams to sustain and protect that growth has affected the environment. So have some agricultural practices.

That does not suggest, however, that agriculture should be thrown out in our search for solutions. In fact, just the opposite is true.

It does mean that attitudes must change. Facing these challenges will require cooperation, not continued confrontation. No resolution will be found unless we find a way to balance all competing needs.

THE TIME HAS COME for a new vision for Western water policy. It must be:

- A vision that mandates strong leadership and a spirit of mutual respect.
- A vision that sees solutions where today we see only problems.
- A vision that rejects the easy but devastating politics of blame and division.

This new vision will build upon the successes of the past, while addressing the realities of today. It is a vision that sees irrigated agriculture as an integral part of the solution to many of today's most vexing issues.



Who We Are

We're well known as a powerful grassroots advocate for family farmers, ranchers, irrigation districts and allied industries in 17 Western states.

The Alliance is focused on one mission – to ensure the availability of reliable, affordable irrigation water supplies to Western farmers and ranchers.

The Family Farm Alliance is recognized as an authority on critical issues dealing with Western water policy. Our targeted focus enables us to be extremely effective.

To support our mission, we seek to:

- Impact key issues in Congress and federal and state regulatory agencies on irrigated agriculture issues.
- Build coalitions and create powerful alliances to advocate for irrigated agriculture.
- Facilitate the delivery of accurate and timely information to Congress, regulatory agencies and our members on issues that impact Western irrigators.
- Communicate with the media and the public on critical issues impacting Western irrigated agriculture.

Please Join Us!

It's easy! Just visit our website at www.familyfarmalliance.org

Click on "Join Us" and fill out the simple form. Or to learn more, call

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WESTERN WATER

Drought Recovery Aid Is Provided By USDA

Drought assistance is on the way to many farmers and ranchers hit hard by the Western drought. Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman said 17 states would receive a total of \$53 million to help implement technologies and practices to conserve water and mitigate long-term drought impacts. The funding is available from USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service as authorized in the 2002 Farm Bill. States that receive these funds will provide cost-share and incentive payments to producers who undertake eligible water conservation activities, including irrigation improvements, conversion to less water intensive crops and dryland farming

Agreement Is Reached Over Release Of Pecos River Water

A New Mexico water issue that had for a time threatened to boil into a water release confrontation has apparently been resolved. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation announced it had reached an agreement with the Fort Sumner Irrigation District that will allow farmers in the Carlsbad Irrigation District to get water for summer irrigation while providing Pecos River flows for an endangered species, the bluntnose shiner. The arrangement is to cover three years with one-fifth of the FSID's farmers to be paid for forgoing their water. The Bureau listed the payments as \$400 per acre-foot of water this year, \$350 an acre-foot next year and \$300 an acre-foot the third year. The agreement's implementation hinges on a timely issuance of a Fish and Wildlife Service court-ordered biological opinion. Carlsbad officials had previously planned to release water to which Carlsbad farmers have rights from Fort Sumner Reservoir in June no matter what federal officials said.

Friant And NRDC Head Back To Court

Central California's Friant Water Users Authority and an environmental coalition headed by the Natural Resources Defense Council are resuming litigation after settlement talks in the San Joaquin River dispute were broken off by NRDC. The effort had focused on river environmental enhancement studies.

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EPA's Whitman Is Stepping Down

The resignation of Christine Todd Whitman as Environmental Protection Agency Administrator is prompting speculation over the agency's future course during the remaining Bush administration.

Whitman, former New Jersey Governor, plans to step down this month after two and a half often-stormy years as EPA head.

WHITMAN HAD FREQUENTLY been at odds with the Bush White House but was frequently the target of savage attacks from Democrats and environmentalists.

"Our work has been guided by the strong belief that environmental protection and economic prosperity can and must go hand-in-hand," Whitman said. "The EPA has built an enviable record of success that will result in significant improvements to the state of our nation's treasured environment."

The Associated Press suggested President Bush would be face pressure find a replacement who would be accepted by Republican supporters without alienating swing voters.

California Resources Chief Tries to Blame Fish Die-Off On Klamath

California Resources Secretary Mary Nichols has leveled a third round of criticism at the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation regarding the 2002-2012 Klamath Project Operations Plan and last year's fish die-off.

Nichols asked the Bureau to use all available data to develop a new 2003 Klamath operations plan, consider the entire Klamath River ecosystem and consult with California leaders in planning.

DAN KEPPEN, Klamath Water Users Association Executive Director, responded with a letter that stated, "Your letter is, of course, addressed to policy officials at the Department of the Interior. It's ultimate target, however, is hard-working families in the real world."