

Monthly Briefing

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

Alliance Convention Program Takes Shape

The Family Farm Alliance is working on what is shaping up to be an exciting program for its 17th Annual Meeting and Conference.

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*.

Mark your calendars now and watch the mail before Thanksgiving for the Annual Meeting's advance announcement and early registration offer.

Farmer Lobbyists Hold 10 Meetings In Washington

Four Family Farm Alliance Farmer Lobbyists held a total of 10 highly successful meetings with administration officials and legislative aides last month in Washington.

Traveling to the nation's capital were Alliance President Bill Kennedy (OREGON), Directors Chris Hurd (CALIFORNIA) and Pat O'Toole (WYOMING), and Executive Director Craig Smith (OREGON). Also participating was the Alliance's Washington representative, Joe Raeder.

"We covered many water issues and needs that are so important in the West and received an excellent reception," Smith said.

SOME OF THE TOPICS and issues covered included federal Safety of Dams legislation, Endangered Species Act reform, the Clean Water Act, Corps of Engineers activities, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Water 2025 plan and the Alliance's Water Supply Initiative.

The ESA, CWA and Corps were discussed with Susan Bodine, Staff Director and Senior Counsel for the House Water Resources Committee and the Environment Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

During a meeting with Valerie West, Natural Re-
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Dam Safety Bill Awaiting House Action

Fate Of Important Senate-Passed Measure Now Seen As Uncertain

A Senate-passed Safety of Dams bill has run up against a procedural roadblock in the House that delayed action as time drew short in the session.

H.R. 4893 (the Senate version is S. 1727) would increase the authorization ceiling for the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation's Safety of Dams program and give the beneficiaries of Bureau projects a voice in planning, construction and management of dam safety improvements.

"**WE BELIEVE THAT H.R. 4893** will ensure more efficient and effective dam safety projects while producing significant cost savings for the federal treasury and local irrigation and water districts," said Craig Smith, Family Farm Alliance Executive Dir-

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Congress Gives OK To CalFed Measure

Water and environmental legislation long in the making has been sent by Congress to President Bush.

The House on October 5 approved the bill authorizing federal participation in the CalFed Bay-Delta Program. House leaders accepted the Senate language and opted not to seek an "automatic authorization" provision for new water storage projects for which feasibility studies were approved.

CalFed is a cooperative state-federal program aimed at improving environmental conditions and habitat, water sup-

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FARMER LOBBYISTS HAVE WELL-RECEIVED MEETINGS IN D.C.

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sources Director for Senator Gordon Smith (R-OREGON), Safety of Dams, the Water 2005 plan and Alliance Water Supply Initiative were all addressed, as they were in meetings with Water and Power Subcommittee Majority Staff Director Josh Johnson and Minority Staff Steve Lanich.

THE WATER Supply Initiative was also discussed during a luncheon meeting with Jason Peltier, Deputy Assistant Interior Secretary for Water and Science, and in meetings with Lynn

Scarlett, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Policy and Budget, and Matt Byrne, Legislative Assistant to Rep. Greg Walden (R-OREGON). ESA reform was also a topic of the Byrne meeting.

Other meetings were held with two Western Caucus officials, Executive Director Cody Stewart and Policy Director Matthew Iandoli, as well as with Betsy Cody, Pervaze Sheikh and Stephen Vina of the Congressional Research Service in the Library of Congress.

The Farmer Lobbyists had a session

with Nate Gentry and Kellie Donnelly, both of whom are counsel to the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee.

THE ALLIANCE'S Farmer Lobbyist program is the organization's cornerstone activity. It brings family farmers and water professionals to Washington to meet with legislators and legislative and administration staff members and leaders on critical water issues. The Alliance believes that the most effective voice in Washington is that of the individual family farmer.

SENATE-PASSED DAM SAFETY LEGISLATION STALLS IN HOUSE

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ector. "The Senate agrees. That's what makes the current delay in the House so incredibly frustrating."

THE BILL IS CURRENTLY BEING "held at the desk," Smith said. "That means it has been released by the Resources Committee and is ready to go to the floor for a vote. It must find its way to the suspension calendar, which requires the approval of House leadership. We hope to see it on the suspension calendar early in the lame duck session." He said there is now talk of rolling the measure into an omnibus water bill. "That could spell doom in a lame duck session," said Smith.

The legislation that would require the Bureau to consult with project beneficiaries on dam safety projects. The measure passed the Senate without debate. The bill would raise the funding authorization for the Safety of Dams program by \$540 million. Bureau officials say the funds would extend the program, which otherwise could run out of money within a year, for a decade.

THE BILL WOULD PROVIDE beneficiaries with consultation opportunities, statements of need, possible alternatives, cost-containment measures and status reports. The provision to give Reclamation contractors "a place at the table" was proposed by Senator Gordon Smith (R-OREGON), who has worked closely with the Family Farm Alliance on this issue.

"The dam safety legislation currently pending in the House is the Family Farm Alliance's top priority for the 108th Congress," said Smith in a letter to House Resources Committee Chairman Richard Pombo (R-CALIFORNIA). "The legislation will allow the Bureau of Reclamation to continue to improve the safety and security of its facilities and to work in closer cooperation with the rural communities that rely on Bureau projects for flood control protection, power generation and irrigation and drinking water supplies."

THE HOUSE BILL is identical. It received Resources Committee approval September 15. During a September 9 hearing, Reclamation Commissioner John Keys told the House Water and Power Subcommittee that the Bush Administration "strongly supports" the bill.

"Local districts have a strong incentive to minimize the cost of dam safety improvements," said Smith. "Only a few of them have a real opportunity to affect those costs."

Since 1984, Smith said, "Project beneficiaries have had no formal role in designing or controlling the costs of Bureau dam safety modifications. In most cases, the Bureau alone determined the scope, design and cost of dam safety work. Some irrigation districts have received little more than a letter from the Bureau telling them what they owe for a safety modification they had no part in selecting."

CALFED PROGRAM

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ply and quality, and infrastructure in the estuary formed by the Sacramento and San Joaquin rivers.

Leading proponents were three California lawmakers, Senator Dianne Feinstein, House Resources Committee Chairman Richard Pombo and Water and Power Subcommittee Chairman Ken Calvert.

FAMILY FARM ALLIANCE

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