

# Monthly Briefing

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

## Alliance To Help Trim Water Lists

Family Farm Alliance members are beginning a project that they hope will assist the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation in trimming a list of potential water supply projects from past years.

The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation last year submitted a report to Congress that identifies nearly 1,000 potential hydroelectric and water supply projects in the Western United States that have been studied but not constructed.

**THE FAMILY** Farm Alliance Advisory Committee is working to reduce the list, since in its current state it is overwhelming and some of the projects are very old.

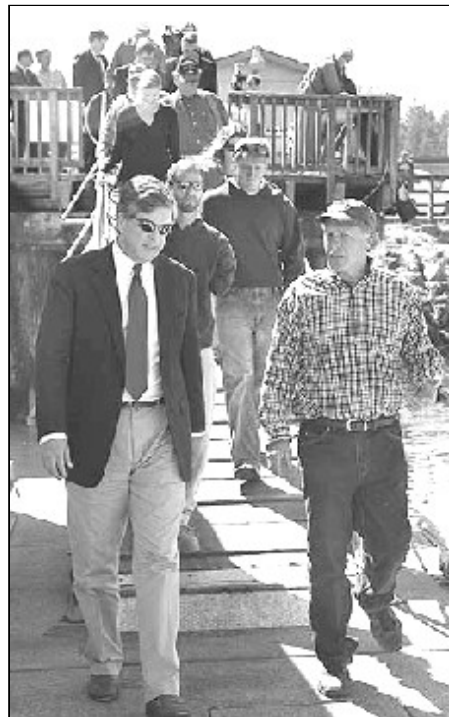
Alliance Executive Director Dan Keppen (OREGON) is compiling a state-by-state list for the Advisory Committee.

Committee members will be asked to rate each project as either "viable", "reasonably viable", or "not feasible".

**THE ALLIANCE** has already been involved with its own Western Water Supply Enhancement Study, which is

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## New Ties Bind Farmers And Commercial Anglers



World Photo by Susan Chambers

Sen. Gordon Smith, left, and salmon troller Jeff Reeves lead other fishermen, farmers and government officials down D-Dock in Charleston in August.

The Family Farm Alliance on August 10 stood by fishermen in an Oregon coastal port and thanked the Bush Administration and U.S. Senator Gordon Smith (OREGON) for efforts to declare a commercial fishery failure.

The Alliance was part of a small agricultural delegation from the Klamath Basin that was asked to participate in a press event and meeting in Charleston between fishermen, farmers, senior level Bush Administration officials, and elected officials.

Secretary of Commerce Carlos M. Gutierrez declared a commercial fishery failure for West Coast salmon fishermen this season from Cape Falcon (OREGON) to Point Sur (CALIFORNIA) due to low numbers of fish caused primarily by drought.

**THIS IS ONLY THE SECOND** time in U.S. history that the Commerce secretary has made such a declaration prior to the end of the fishing season. This declaration will pave the way for Congress to provide financial aid for West Coast salmon fishermen in Northern California and Oregon.

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## San Joaquin River Settlement Is Filed

A historic agreement to restore water flows for salmon in Central California's San Joaquin River below Friant Dam near Fresno while undertaking one of the West's largest river restoration efforts has been filed in a federal court.

The Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC), Friant Water Users Authority (FWUA) and U.S. Departments of the Interior and Commerce filed the settlement

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## AROUND THE ALLIANCE

### At The Monte Carlo Feb. 22-23

The Family Farm Alliance has finalized its contract with the Monte Carlo Resort and Casino in Las Vegas for next year's Annual Meeting and Conference, February 22-23, 2007, with Board of Directors and Advisory Committee meetings scheduled to take place on February 21.

### Executive Director On The Road

On September 19, Family Farm Alliance Executive Director Dan Keppen (OREGON) participated on a panel of the 2006 Northwest Water Policy and Law Symposium, hosted by the Montana Water Center in Bozeman (MONTANA). The panel was moderated by Bill Yellowtail, former director of the Environmental Protection Agency's Region VII. In August, Keppen traveled to North Dakota for a two-day tour of the Garrison Diversion and other key water features of the area. North Dakota is currently in the middle of one of the worst droughts in the country. The focus of the tour was a proposed project that would move Garrison Diversion water via a trans-basin diversion to the Red River, to help meeting growing demand in the Fargo area.

### Writing On The Opinion Pages

Opinion pieces by Family Farm Alliance Executive Director Keppen have appeared recently in the *Western Farmer-Stockman* and the *Siskiyou* (CALIFORNIA) *Daily News*. The *Farmer-Stockman* piece discussed a recent water report released by the Western Governors Association, and its observations that measures may need to be taken to restrict growth in order to truly address future water problems. The *Daily News* column focused on the recent positive meeting Keppen had with coastal fishermen, U.S. Senator Gordon Smith (OREGON), and high level Bush Administration fisheries officials.

### Alliance's O'Tooles Are Blogging It

The Western Folklife Center in Elko (NEVADA) is sponsoring blogs by Western folks. Alliance President Pat O'Toole and his wife Sharon (WYOMING) are creating one of the blogs. Sharon is trying to get the word out, because it is a six-month project for the Center. To access the blogs, go to [www.westernfolklife.org](http://www.westernfolklife.org), then click on "Connect." The O'Tooles were also featured prominently in the fall 2006 edition of *Range Magazine*. Pat was the focus of a story on how the oil and gas boom in the Rocky Mountains is affecting rural communities. Pat's ties to the Alliance are noted in the article. Also, Sharon O'Toole wrote a story for this issue that addresses the need to control wild horse populations, and how Eastern politicians are making that difficult.

### USBR'S 'Managing For Excellence'

## Alliance, Other Interests Outline Expectations

In an effort to clearly articulate expectations to the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) regarding the development of a 21<sup>st</sup> century action plan, the Family Farm Alliance has joined the American Council of Engineering Companies (ACEC) and the Colorado River Energy Distributors Association (CREDA) and formally transmitted a letter outlining key concerns.

The letter was transmitted to Reclamation Deputy Commissioner Brenda Burman at a September 19-20 public workshop sponsored by Reclamation in Salt Lake City (UTAH) to provide give-and-take dialogue on that agency's *Managing for Excellence* program.

MEETING PARTICIPANTS FELT that the day-and-a-half gathering provided a positive step toward developing an improved, mutual understanding by Reclamation employees and their customers of how decisions are made and money is spent by Reclamation.

"I think Reclamation is doing a great job of trying to be as open as possible with its customers," said Alliance President Pat O'Toole (WYOMING). "They were very prepared in Salt Lake, had all the presentation information available on-line before the meeting, and were willing to seriously address some tough questions thrown at them by water users."

Several of those tough questions were formally outlined in the coalition letter signed on to by the Alliance.

"The letter identified specific expectations that we can gauge as we move through this process," said Dan Keppen (OREGON), Alliance Executive Director. "It was intended to state our views on improving customer standing in Reclamation financial decision-making, providing more opportunities for local water users to outsource design work, facilitating title transfers, and emphasizing the use of performance-based standards over design-based standards in construction projects."

THIS PAST SUMMER, IT BECAME apparent to some customers that, perhaps the *Managing for Excellence* leadership team did not have a clear understanding of what the water and power customers expect out of this process. The Family Farm Alliance Board of Directors on September 15 unanimously moved to send the letter to Reclamation to coincide with the Salt Lake City meeting.

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## Water Users, Environmentalists, U.S. OK Settlement

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September 13 in U.S. District Court in Sacramento (CALIFORNIA) to end an 18-year legal dispute over the operation of Friant Dam.

**IT ALSO RESOLVES** longstanding legal claims brought by a coalition of environmental and fishing groups led by NRDC providing for substantial river channel improvements and sufficient water flow to sustain a salmon fishery upstream from the confluence of the Merced River tributary while providing water supply certainty to Friant Division water contractors.

Some 60 miles of the river were dried up, except for occasional flood releases, when the Central Valley Project's Friant Division became fully operational some 50 years ago. At one time, the river hosted an extensive salmon run, which the NRDC has fought in court to re-establish.

The settlement has two equal goals:

- A restored river with continuous flows to the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta and naturally reproducing populations of Chinook salmon in 153 miles of river downstream from Friant Dam.
- A water management program to minimize water supply impacts to the 15,000 Friant Division farm families who are dependant upon San Joaquin River water supplies by providing a flexible combination of recirculation, recapture, reuse, exchange and/or transfer programs. Additional storage such as groundwater banking will also be explored.

NRDC, Friant and the government agreed to work together on projects to improve the river channel between Friant Dam and the Merced River. Flow restoration is to be coordinated with these channel improvements, with spring and fall run Chinook salmon populations reintroduced in approximately six years.

At the same time, the settlement limits water supply and cost impacts to Friant Division long-term water contractors. Friant leaders said the



Friant Water Users Authority

Helping introduce California's San Joaquin River settlement at a Sacramento news conference September 13 are Friant Water Users Authority Chairman Kole M. Upton (foreground) and attorney Dan Dooley. Upton and Dooley were the water users' lead negotiators in a process that lasted more than a year.

settlement would also remove water supply and quantity uncertainty that has existed for nearly two decades and threatened to become significant permanent reductions because of a judge's decision.

**DRAFT FEDERAL** legislation

authorizing the Departments of the Interior and Commerce to implement the settlement is in the hands of Congress and was, on September 21, the subject of a House Water and Power Subcommittee hearing.

Planning, design work, and environmental reviews will begin immediately, and interim flows for experimental purposes are to start in 2009. Full restoration flow releases would begin in 2014.

The settlement continues in effect until 2026, with the U.S. District Court retaining jurisdiction to resolve disputes and enforce the settlement. After 2026, the court, in conjunction with the California State Water Resources Control Board, would consider any changes.

For Friant growers, costs are capped at the millions of dollars now being paid annually through Central Valley Project Improvement Act assessments, and the agreement details a number of other financial mechanisms.

Settlement negotiations were convened a year ago by U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein and House Water and Power Subcommittee Chairman George Radanovich. They urged the parties to put aside differences and develop a framework to restore the river in a manner that would provide water supply certainty to the Friant farmers who depend on San Joaquin River water.

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## New Ties Are Knotted By Farmers, Commercial Fishermen

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Deputy Secretary of Commerce David Sampson and Dr. William Hogarth, director of NOAA Fisheries, traveled to the Oregon coast with Senator Smith to personally deliver the message to commercial fishermen.

"We stand by the commercial fishing industry and will do what we can to help them through this difficult time," said Sampson. "We heard their calls and acted quickly."

**AFTER THE GROUP TOURED** the harbor area, Senator Smith convened a meeting during which 20 farmers, fishermen, and local elected officials listened to concerns and heard proposed solutions to the challenges facing the Klamath River and the producers who rely upon it.

Dan Keppen (Alliance Executive Director), Greg Addington (Klamath Water Users Association Executive

Director) and farmers Dick and Jim Carleton participated in the meeting, as did Klamath County Commissioner Bill Brown and State Senator Doug Whitsett.

Over the past several months, the Alliance and other Klamath farming representatives have met several times with coastal fishermen in an effort to better understand the issues faced by each party, and to work toward realistic solutions.

**THE FARMERS** and fishermen proposed similar solutions, including the need to address disease issues in the Klamath River, modernize and expand hatchery operations, control seal lion predation at the mouth of the Klamath, and increase fish production in tributaries.

Notably, both sides advocated for increased flexibility of Klamath Project operations, through regulatory measures and the development of new offstream storage.

## Alliance Helps Outline USBR's 'Excellence' Expectations

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*Managing for Excellence* is Reclamation's response to *Managing Construction and Infrastructure in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Bureau of Reclamation*, a comprehensive report completed earlier this year by the National Research

Council (NRC) of the National Academy of Sciences (NAS).

Executing the action plan is a primary initiative for Reclamation this year. This process provides an important opportunity for western water users to find further ways to improve transparency in Reclamation decision-making and make the organization as efficient as possible.

"We will endeavor to work closely with Reclamation and implement an action plan that fits Reclamation's role in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," said Keppen. "It is clear that Interior is closely overseeing this matter, and there is also strong interest expressed by two congressional

committees. We believe this dynamic makes our involvement in the current Reclamation process a good investment."

A third *Managing for Excellence* public meeting is scheduled to take place during the second week of November in Sacramento (CALIFORNIA).

If you want to closely monitor this process, check out Reclamation's "Managing for Excellence" website (<http://www.usbr.gov/excellence>), which is scheduled to include all the documents distributed in the Las Vegas and Salt Lake City workshops, as well as latest news.

## Water Supply Ideas

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meant to be a beneficial instrument in meeting Western water needs.

"Our goal was to gather together water supply enhancement ideas from around the West and put them into one master data base," Alliance President Patrick O'Toole (WYOMING) says.

Projects listed include supply enhancement such as canal lining and piping, and reconstruction of existing dams. Integrated resource plans were also listed.

Water conservation is important but is far from the only solution.

"While conservation is surely a tool that can assist in overcoming water supply problems, it cannot be viewed as the single answer to water shortages," O'Toole said.

"Mandated or one size fits all conservation programs are doomed to failure in light of the drastically different circumstances of water users across the West."

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