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**MEMORANDUM**

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**TO:** SAN LUIS & DELTA-MENDOTA WATER AUTHORITY DIRECTORS  
**FROM:** DAN KEPPEL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
**SUBJECT:** UPDATE REPORT  
**DATE:** FEBRUARY 6, 2023

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This memo is intended to keep you apprised as to what is happening on policy issues the Family Farm Alliance (Alliance) is engaged in. In the past month, much of our efforts have focused on planning for our 2023 annual conference, tracking new water legislation, engaging in litigation and administrative matters, and expanding public outreach associated with global food insecurity and the importance of Western irrigated agriculture. These issues and other matters important to our members are further discussed in this memo.

**BIDEN ADMINISTRATION**

**1. White House**

President Joe Biden recently announced that he's creating a new "investment in America Cabinet" to focus on implementing massive pieces of climate and infrastructure legislation. The president said he's creating a new sub-Cabinet that will include the secretaries of Commerce, Labor, Transportation and Health and Human Services. Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm and EPA Administrator Michael Regan will also be on the team.

a. State of the Union Set for February 7: FY 2024 Budget Delayed

President Joe Biden has accepted House Speaker Kevin McCarthy's (R-CALIFORNIA) invitation to deliver the State of the Union address on February 7, 2023. President Biden is expected to speak to a range of pressing issues, from the war in Ukraine to the looming US debt-ceiling fight. Meanwhile, we have heard the President's FY 2024 Budget Request, usually set to be released the

first Monday in February, will be delayed until mid-March at the earliest. The delay is mostly due to the late passage of the FY 2023 omnibus spending package in December.

b. California Wants to Turn Atmospheric Rivers into Water Supply

Vice President Kamala Harris visited her home state of California last month, stating that the state must prepare to balance "days of immense water" with the persistent drought that has gripped the region for more than two decades. She said that the state must "diversify" their approach "in terms of conservation to recycling, desalination and storage of water." The Vice President touted recent funding, including \$4 billion from the Inflation Reduction Act aimed at mitigating drought in the Colorado River Basin. The Colorado River supplies California with 4.4 million acre-feet of water annually. The drought-stricken state has struggled more recently with a deluge of precipitation from nine atmospheric rivers, 95% of which flowed to the ocean instead of to storage reservoirs, something state officials are looking to change.

c. CEQ Hires Western Drought/Resilience Director

The Biden Administration's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) has hired Kristen Averyt as CEQ's new Director for Drought and Western Resilience. Ms. Averyt brings experience on climate resilience and drought after serving as senior climate adviser for the State of Nevada's then-Gov. Steve Sisolak (D). She led climate planning and policy development for the former Governor, who lost his reelection bid last year to Republican Joe Lombardo. Ms. Averyt has also served as president of the Desert Research Institute (DRI) and as a research professor at the University of Nevada – Las Vegas. She holds a doctorate from Stanford University in geological and environmental sciences. Ms. Averyt joins Crystal Bergemann, CEQ's Senior Director for Resilience, to expand the office's work on climate resilience. Bergemann joined the Biden CEQ in October to play a key role in leading the administration's "all-of-government" approach to protecting communities from extreme weather.

d. CEQ: Tweaking NEPA Review to Account for Climate Change

The White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) last month released updated guidance that calls for federal agencies to take a broader look at the climate change impacts from major new infrastructure projects, government policies and federal decisions. The CEQ interim policy, [Reg. 0331-AA06](#), which takes effect immediately, is an effort to provide clearer guidance for how federal agencies should assess greenhouse gas emissions through the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The guidance will likely stall progress on the reviews of projects ranging from pipelines to federal policy actions, since agencies will be instructed to consider not only the amount of greenhouse gases federal projects and decisions directly cause, but also the effects a warming world will have on the nation and its infrastructure. That reverses Trump administration NEPA guidance, which had narrowed agencies' review of the effect major federal decisions have on climate change. It also asks agencies to tally annual greenhouse gas emission increases or reductions, net greenhouse gas emissions over the lifetime of the proposed action, translate climate

effects into comparable metrics — such as monetary damage from rising emissions — and to account for environmental justice concerns, including the cumulative effects of a decision on pollution, climate change and the environment. The notice was published in the Federal Register on January 9.

e. New Strategy to Account for “Value of Nature” in Decision-Making

The Biden Administration has unveiled a 15-year strategy to incorporate the value of the "natural world", including assets like clean air and water alongside traditional national economic statistics like gross domestic product in making federal decisions. The plan, called the [National Strategy to Develop Statistics for Environmental-Economic Decisions](#), aims to account for the value of assets ranging from minerals to clean water, as well as the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss. The strategy was first [announced in August](#) and will be implemented over a 15-year period, relying in part on existing data as well as new statistical analyses.

2. EPA-Corps: Final Revised WOTUS Rule

As previously reported, on the day before New Year’s Eve, the Biden administration Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) finalized their [rule](#) redefining “waters of the United States” (WOTUS) subject to jurisdiction under the federal Clean Water Act (CWA). The agencies touted the final rule as a “durable” policy that returns to pre-2015 standards while comporting to Supreme Court decisions and introducing several new exclusions from federal jurisdiction, including six new waivers for agricultural lands (see the [public fact sheet](#), the [ag fact sheet](#) and the [land owners fact sheet](#) for the newly finalized WOTUS rule). The final rule aims to apply both competing tests that the Supreme Court set out in the 4-1-4 *Rapanos v. United States* decision – the “significant nexus” and “relatively permanent flow” tests. Previously, the Administration stated that the current final rule would be just “Phase I” of a two-part rulemaking on WOTUS, indicating that another rule would be proposed by late 2023 that would provide a “durable” WOTUS definition, but the agencies’ announcement made no mention of another rulemaking, stating that this final rule would provide a “durable definition” of WOTUS.

a. SCOTUS Implications

The new rule also comes as the Supreme Court is already weighing a decision in *Sackett v. EPA*, which deals with the jurisdictional standard for wetlands under the CWA. According to sources, a majority decision expected from the more conservative wing of the high court in *Sackett* could derail much of the final WOTUS rule. In fact, many House and Senate GOP Members and several trade organizations representing those impacted by CWA implementation denounced the rulemaking as overreaching and premature due to the *Sackett* case currently before the court. – Over 190 House Republicans in a [letter](#) blasted the Biden Administration for its “premature and reckless” WOTUS final rule. The Members demand EPA and the Corps rescind the rule and postpone any subsequent agency action on WOTUS to allow the Supreme Court to issue an opinion

on *Sackett*. The Congressional Western Caucus included a quote from me in their “What Others are Say” document that was shared with the media last month. Agriculture and water groups (including the Alliance) have asked the justices in an amicus brief to reinterpret the CWA and exclude most wetlands and streams from the definition of WOTUS.

b. Red States/Industry Groups File Lawsuits

Red states, beginning with Texas, are starting to file challenges against the new final WOTUS rule. The publication of the regulation triggers a 60-day deadline for lawsuits before the rule takes effect in mid-March. Legal challenges to the Biden Administration’s final WOTUS rule are expected in multiple federal district courts across the country. Besides the states, a coalition of industry groups representing oil and gas, mining, real estate, and farming interests, argue in their [complaint](#) filed in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Texas that the Biden Administration’s new definition of WOTUS is "unworkable" and conflicts with the CWA, the Constitution and Supreme Court precedent.

c. House Republicans Introduce Bill to Reverse Biden WOTUS Rule

House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Chairman Sam Graves (R-MO) and Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee Chairman David Rouzer (R-NC) led 147 Members of Congress last week in introducing a joint resolution of disapproval under the Congressional Review Act (CRA) on the Biden Administration’s WOTUS rule. [Click here to view the legislation.](#) [Click here to view the list of all 147 cosponsors.](#) Subcommittee Chairman Rouzer has also announced that the Subcommittee will hold a hearing on February 8, 2023, examining the effects of the WOTUS rule. The hearing, entitled, “Stakeholder Perspectives on the Impacts of the Biden Administration’s Waters of the United States (WOTUS) Rule,” will be held at 10:00 a.m. EST on Wednesday, February 8, 2023, in 2167 Rayburn House Office Building.

**3. Bureau of Reclamation: New Project Funding Announcements**

a. \$580 Million Investment to Fulfill Indian Water Rights Settlements

The Department of the Interior recently announced a nearly \$580 million allocation to continue fulfilling settlements of Indian water rights claims using funding from President Biden’s Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Reclamation Water Settlements Fund. There were 34 [congressionally enacted Indian Water Rights settlements](#) as of November 15, 2021, when the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law was signed. Indian reserved water rights are vested property rights for which the United States has a trust responsibility. Federal policy supports the resolution of disputes regarding Indian water rights through negotiated settlements. Settlement of Indian water rights disputes breaks down barriers and helps create conditions that improve water resources management by providing certainty as to the rights of all water users who are parties to the disputes.

b. WaterSMART Environmental Water Resources Projects

The Bureau of Reclamation has announced the [FY 2023 WaterSMART Environmental Water Resources Projects program](#). Run for the first time in FY 2022, this program provides funding for projects focused on environmental benefits and that have been developed as part of a collaborative process to help carry out an established strategy to increase the reliability of water resources. Projects with multiple benefits to watershed health are encouraged and prioritized. Applicants may request funding in three categories:

- Category A: Water conservation and efficiency projects that result in quantifiable and sustained water savings and benefit ecological values.
- Category B: Water management or infrastructure improvements to benefit ecological values or watershed health.
- Category C: Restoration projects benefitting ecological values or watershed health that have a nexus to water resources or water resources management.

Eligible applicants are states, tribes, irrigation districts, water districts, and other organizations with water or power delivery authority located in the Western United States. Nonprofit conservation organizations working in partnership with the entities listed above or that notify entities listed above are also eligible to apply. In FY 2023, an unspecified amount of funding is available to support approximately 20-40 awards of up to \$3 million through this program – this is an increase from FY22 which allowed for a maximum request of \$2 million. A 25% cost share is required for projects that meet specific requirements. For projects that do not meet these requirements, a cost share of 50% or more of total project costs is required. **Applications are due March 28, 2023.**

**4. Forest Restoration and Wildfire Prevention Funding Announced**

Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack [announced](#) on January 19 that over \$490 million has been allocated to 11 forest restoration and wildfire prevention projects, including for about 10 million acres in the Klamath River Basin and other projects in California, Arizona, Idaho, Oregon, Utah and Washington. Funding came from the Inflation Reduction Act, which provided \$5 billion in additional funding available to the Forest Service for fuels reduction and forest treatments.

**5. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: WRDA Implementation**

On January 20, the Army Corps of Engineers published a Federal Register notice (88 FR 3729) requesting comments on the implementation of the 2022 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA). The comment period ends March 21. Comments may be submitted to the [www.regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov) docket #COE-2023-0002, or to [WRDA2022@usace.army.mil](mailto:WRDA2022@usace.army.mil). The notice also announced three virtual stakeholder meetings to provide input on WRDA provisions on February 15, 22, and March 1. For further information, see:

<https://www.usace.army.mil/Missions/Civil-Works/Water-Resources-Development-Act/#LatestWRDA>.

## **6. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA): Tougher Regulation of Livestock Farms?**

EPA says it will study whether to toughen regulation of large livestock farms that release manure and other pollutants into waterways. EPA has not revised its rules dealing with the nation's largest animal operations — which hold thousands of hogs, chickens and cattle — since 2008. The agency said in 2021 that it planned no changes but recently announced that it had reconsidered in response to an environmental group's lawsuit. While not committing to stronger requirements, EPA acknowledged needing more recent data about the extent of the problem — and affordable methods to limit it. Food & Water Watch, whose lawsuit prompted the agency's reversal, said a new approach was long overdue.

Livestock groups have said government regulation is strong enough and that voluntary measures such as planting off-season cover crops and buffer strips between croplands and waterways are the best way to curb runoff. Environmental groups argue that regulations should cover more farms; require better construction of manure lagoons to avoid leaks; and outlaw practices such as spreading waste on frozen ground, where it often washes away during rainstorms or thaws.

## **DEVELOPMENTS IN CONGRESS**

The 118<sup>th</sup> Congress has convened and both U.S. House of Representatives and U.S. Senate leadership are finalizing committee assignments. Our voice in Washington, D.C., The Ferguson Group, has compiled the [118th Congressional Committee Assignments Special Report](#) which includes all Chair and Ranking Members on House and Senate Committees. Along with this, you can access committee websites for the most up-to-date information on membership, subcommittee assignments, and recent actions.

In the House, we work closely with the Committee on Natural Resources, particularly with House Water, Oceans and Wildlife Subcommittee, which has now been renamed the Water, Wildlife and Fisheries (WWF) Subcommittee. Some notable factoids about this Committee:

- Rep. Westerman (R-AR) is the new Committee Chair; he is a forester and worked closely with the Alliance in the last Congress when he was the Ranking Member of the Committee.
- Rep. Cliff Bentz (R-OR) will chair the WWF Subcommittee. He is my Congressman and will be the keynote speaker at our annual conference later this month in Reno.
- Rep. Paul Gosar (R-AZ) is back on the Committee after Democrats kicked him off last year for posting a controversial video.
- New Rep. Harriet Hageman (R-WYOMING) and I went to school together at the University of Wyoming back in the 1980s!
- New California Congressman John Duarte will join the Committee.

On the Democrat side of the aisle, Rep. Melanie Stansbury (D-NM) – who we’ve worked with since her time as a staffer on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee – is the new Ranking Member on the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) – a newcomer to this committee – is the Ranking Member on Energy and Mineral Resources, where she will likely push her strong climate change agenda.

We also work closely with the Western Caucus, which in this Congress is well represented on the House Agriculture and Natural Resource Committees; every single Subcommittee Chair is a Member of the Western Caucus. Senator Cynthia Lummis (R-WYOMING), an old friend of the Family Farm Alliance (she and Alliance President Patrick O’Toole served together in the Wyoming State Legislature) is the new Chair of the Senate Western Caucus. We also have a close relationship with Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-WASHINGTON), Chairman of the Congressional Western Caucus.

### **7. Root and Stem Project Reauthorization Act**

Rep. Newhouse and Rep. Scott Peters (R-CALIFORNIA) recently introduced the bicameral *Root and Stem Project Reauthorization Act* alongside Senators Steve Daines (MONTANA) and Dianne Feinstein (CALIFORNIA). This legislation provides the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management with a clear statutory tool to treat forests more efficiently and empower collaborative processes through “Root & Stem” projects. By authorizing the U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management to propose and enter collaborative stewardship contracts and agreements, this legislation will allow the agencies to accomplish more hazardous fuels reduction and empower the agencies to engage with state, local, and tribal partners to ensure forest management projects compliment ongoing conservation efforts, benefit communities, and protect local ecosystems. Click [here](#) for bill text. The Family Farm Alliance formally supported similar legislation in the last Congress, which passed the Senate last December.

### **8. House Republicans Reintroduce Water Bills**

Last month, House Republicans introduced several water bills focused on improving available water supplies in drought conditions. Rep. David Valadao (R-CALIFORNIA) reintroduced his *Working to Advance Tangible and Effective Reforms (WATER) for California Act*, [H.R. 215](#). The bill was cosponsored by the entire California GOP House delegation and would, among other things, mandate the Trump-era biological opinion under the ESA that would allow for more water to be made available to agriculture in the Central Valley via the federal Central Valley Project and the State Water Project. The Biden Administration is currently reconsulting on that opinion.

And, Rep. Tom McClintock (R-Calif.) also reintroduced [H.R. 186](#), the *Water Supply Permitting Coordination Act*, with Rep. Valadao as a co-sponsor. The bill would streamline permits for new water storage projects by designating Reclamation as the coordinating agency for federal environmental permits.

Rep. Doug LaMalfa (R-CALIFORNIA) introduced the *Protect Our Water Rights (POWR) Act* (H.R. 289). The bill directs Reclamation operations in the CVP and Upper Klamath Lake. Sacramento Valley contractors' allocations would align with the percentages in the Sacramento Water Year Type Index, with not less than 100% of their contract quantities in Wet and Above Normal Years, not less than 75% in Below Normal years, and not less than 50% in Dry and Critically Dry years. The bill provides additional conditions regarding substitute supplies, making water available to wetlands, protection of municipal and industrial water supplies, and protection of other operations, deliveries, and allocations to other Reclamation project contractors. The bill also directs Reclamation to operate all water in the Upper Klamath Lake above elevation 4136 feet solely for agricultural and refuge purposes associated with state-adjudicated water rights, and to the extent practicable, maximize storage in the lake.

California's simultaneous drought and flood emergencies are raising questions about the state's overall approach to water supplies. On January 13, six members of Congress sent [a letter](#) to President Joe Biden and California Governor Gavin Newsom seeking action in response to the recent storms.

#### **9. Forest Information Reform Act**

Rep. Matt Rosendale (R-MONTANA) recently introduced legislation to overturn a 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals decision in 2015 that has forced the Forest Service to consult with the FWS on forest management plans when new information arises about potential threats to endangered species. Rep. Rosendale's H.R. 200 mirrors a bill he introduced in 2021, called the "Forest Information Reform Act". Rosendale and Sen. Steve Daines (R-Mont.) tried unsuccessfully to attach language to last December's omnibus spending package. In practice, the ruling in *Cottonwood Environmental Law Center v. Forest Service* has slowed some forest work like projects to reduce wildfire threats and improve wildlife habitat. In August, the Property and Environment Research Center in Bozeman, Mont., reported that 130 projects in the West had been delayed as a result of the ruling.

#### **10. 2023 Farm Bill**

The farm bill is an omnibus, multiyear law that is typically renewed about every five years. With enactment of the omnibus spending bill in December 2022, lawmakers laid the groundwork for battles to come in the next farm bill. The current farm bill expires at the end of September. The planning and budgeting process for the 2023 Farm Bill has begun, and Congressional Agriculture committees are starting to outline the next five years' spending for national conservation, food, farm and nutrition programs.

*Politico* recently reported that the House leadership chaos of January 2023 may have wide implications for the farm bill — including holding up work on the bill and complicating its eventual path to passage. However, the House and Senate Agriculture Committees are poised to focus on debating a new farm bill after lawmakers used the newly enacted omnibus funding package to



clear their to-do lists. House Ag Republicans will make increasing oversight of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and other nutrition programs a general priority in this Congress. GT Thompson, the new chair of the House Ag Committee, has suggested he'll quickly launch probes into the Biden administration's expansion of food assistance programs during the pandemic, along with the Agriculture Department's rollout of climate-ag program funding.

a. Family Farm Alliance Farm Bill Priorities

The Alliance throughout 2022 prepared for the next farm bill by engaging with agricultural and conservation partners, developing written testimony for Congressional hearings, and working with its members to prioritize its energies in the farm bill debate. Last month, we put together our Farm Bill "wish lists" for Congressional offices and committees. Outside of WACC engagement, the Alliance this year will continue to work directly with Congressional agriculture committee staff and Western Members of Congress on the next farm bill. Alliance President Pat O'Toole met Senator John Hickenlooper (D-COLORADO) directly to discuss the 2023 Farm Bill.

A large portion of the energies at the Alliance will be devoted to the 2023 Farm Bill conservation title. Once again, the Alliance will work closely on this with its partners in the Western Agriculture and Conservation Alliance (WACC). In light of what could likely be a polarized and unstable environment in the House, it will be interesting to see what legislation is actually enacted by the body. In this divisive political environment, a thoughtful group like the WACC is needed more than ever.

b. Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations Program

The Alliance and many of its members are strong supporters of the NRCS Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations Program, often referred to as the "PL-566" Program. The WACC supports modernizing the Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations Program to prioritize multi-benefit projects that reduce flood and drought risk to producers and rural communities through a combination of infrastructure investments with improvements and protections to natural features that help provide the risk reduction. The Alliance supports expanding and modernizing the PL-566 Program to prioritize multi-benefit projects that reduce flood and drought risk to producers and rural communities. This can be done through a combination of infrastructure investments with improvements and protections to natural features that help provide the risk reduction.

c. Overarching Capacity Concerns

Several Alliance members over the past two decades have noted diminished efficiencies associated with NRCS delivery of conservation programs to on-the-ground applications. They have observed that the "evolutionary process" which began to occur at that time has weakened NRCS' ability to provide technical assistance. We would like to see less paperwork and more applied conservation. One means of improving local input would be to dedicate more dollars to educating farmers on available programs and opportunities. The once strong role of watershed teams needs to be revived.

There are also opportunities to leverage personnel at the local level, where local professionals can take on some of the technical duties once provided by NRCS staff. Many producers in the West use irrigation water delivery systems that are shared among multiple producers, such as irrigation districts, canal companies, or mutual ditch companies. Thus, flexibility is needed to work directly with these multi-producer, water-delivery entities to best deliver the Farm Bill’s conservation title benefits to western producers. Greater focus on the part of NRCS to work with these agencies both in terms of education and program implementation is needed.

d. Farm Bill Engagement with the WACC

The Alliance co-founded the WACC over a decade ago, in an effort to support the common interests of agriculture, conservation, and other interests tied to resources on behalf of a viable and sustainable rural West. Water is the core resource concern that the WACC wants the government to address more effectively. The WACC strives for USDA prioritization of project proposals that deliver cross-sector benefits to farming, ranching, and conservation. A key part of WACC collaboration has focused on Farm Bill conservation programs, where the interests of coalition agriculture and conservation groups are very closely linked.

The Conservation Title programs that the Alliance via its involvement with WACC are focused on for 2023 Farm Bill reauthorization include EQIP, the Conservation Innovation Grant Program (CIG), and RCPP. The Alliance supports reducing the high administrative burdens on both NRCS staff and partners alike that leads to project delays and unnecessary expenditures on complex contract administration. The WACC is also striving to find ways to simplify program delivery without harming environmental interests or program integrity.

## **JUDICIAL DEVELOPMENTS**

### **2. Interior Department v Navajo Nation**

The Family Farm Alliance board of directors last month moved to join an amicus (“friend of the court”) brief with other Western water groups in support of plaintiffs as the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) considers *Interior Department v. Navajo Nation*. This case could decide whether the federal government has a duty to protect the Navajo Nation’s access to the dwindling flows of the Colorado River. The federal government argues in the case that it is not legally obligated to assess the Navajo Nation’s needs because no treaty, agreement or law explicitly addresses the tribe’s claim to Colorado River water. The 9<sup>th</sup> U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals sided with the Navajo Nation and said the Interior Department had a “duty to protect and preserve the Nation’s right to water.”

The Biden Administration and backers of the Western water user amicus brief argued that the lower court ruling would complicate ongoing efforts among seven Western states to reduce their use of water from the drought-plagued Colorado River that serves the needs of 40 million people and millions of acres of important food-producing farms and ranches. We believe that end-run is

improper for two reasons. First, because it infringes upon this Court’s retained and exclusive jurisdiction over the allocation of water from the mainstream of the Colorado River in the Lower Basin. It also seeks to impose judicially enforceable fiduciary duties on the United States without the kind of express positive-law grounding that the Supreme Court has repeatedly required before recognizing a judicially enforceable trust obligation.

Here’s the full list of cases scheduled for oral argument in the March 2023 argument session: [Arizona v. Navajo Nation](#) & [Department of Interior v. Navajo Nation](#) (consolidated for one hour of oral argument on March 20).

## ALLIANCE INITIATIVES

### 3. 2023 Annual Meeting and Conference

This year’s Family Farm Alliance annual meeting and conference will take place February 23-24, 2023, at the Silver Legacy Resort and Casino in Reno, Nevada. The 2023 annual conference theme is, “*A Wake Up` Call for America - Why Farms, Water and Food Matter*”. A typical Family Farm Alliance annual conference features diverse, high- profile speakers and panel discussions that focus on the innovative ways and new partnerships that Western farmers and ranchers are developing to protect rural communities. Rep. Cliff Bentz (R-OREGON), the new chair of the House Water, Oceans & Wildlife Subcommittee, USDA Under Secretary Robert Bonnie, Interior Assistant Secretary Tanya Trujillo and Reclamation Commissioner Camille Touton have all confirmed their attendance at our conference.

The 2023 conference will feature the other following addresses and panel discussions:

- **Reclamation Roundtable** — featuring Commissioner Touton and all 5 regional directors;
- **“Kiss the Ground” with Forestry and Ag Solutions;**
- **SCOTUS and Western Water**
- **A Look at D.C. from the Hill;**
- **Generation “NEXT”: Re-framing Western Agriculture;**
- **Solving Nutrients Challenges with Bushels of Nature:** The Nutrient Work Group
- **The P.L.- 566 Small Watershed Program – A Report from the Field;**
- **A Conversation with Biden Administration Water Leaders on Opportunities to Best Implement the Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations Program;** and
- **Colorado River Agricultural Water Management and Policy Challenges.**

Following the end of the conference general session at noon on February 24, a “Farm (Bill) to Fork” luncheon will take place off-site at Mari Chuy’s Restaurant in mid-town Reno. Leaders of the Western Agriculture and Conservation Coalition will guide an informal discussion on the 2023 Farm Bill. Internal meetings of the Alliance board of directors and Advisory Committee will take place earlier in the week in Reno. Please visit [www.familyfarmalliance.org](http://www.familyfarmalliance.org) for

conference registration information, hotel booking information, sponsorship opportunities, and the latest schedule of events.

## ADMINISTRATIVE & MISCELLANEOUS

- Mike Wade (California Farm Water Coalition) wrote this [guest commentary](#) (“In defense of alfalfa”) for the California Farm Bureau “Ag Alert”, discussing the “Alfalfa 101” paper that our two organizations put together late last year.
- The audience at the Mid-Pacific Water Users Conference in late January was the largest since I’ve been on the conference planning committee (24 years!). Amongst the crowd were plenty of Alliance members and supporters. I had the honor of moderating two outstanding panels: 1) With of Central Valley Project Authority and district managers, including Federico Barajas and Alliance Advisory Committee Members Jason Phillips and Jeff Sutton; and 2) With three lobbyists, including former Congressman Dennis Cardoza (D-CA), Bill Ball, and our own Lane Dickson. Mike Wade and I did a tag-team “TedTalks” luncheon presentation on our latest favorite topic: food security.
- I drove back from Reno and provided an Alliance update (virtually) to the Tri States meeting, which included members of the Idaho Water Users Association, Oregon Water Resources Congress (OWRC) and Washington State Water Resources Association, which was hosted by our long-time Advisory Committee member April Snell, of OWRC.
- I’m traveling to Orlando later this week where I’ll be on a panel with Reclamation Deputy Commissioner David Palumbo and Andre Monette (BBK Law) to talk about the Western Drought at the National Council of Farmer Cooperatives annual meeting.

*This is a quick summary of just a few of the issues the Alliance has been engaged in. Please do not hesitate to contact me at [dan@familyfarmalliance.org](mailto:dan@familyfarmalliance.org) if you would like further information about what the Alliance is doing to protect water for Western irrigated agriculture.*