



MEMORANDUM

TO: SAN LUIS & DELTA-MENDOTA WATER AUTHORITY DIRECTORS
FROM: DAN KEPPEL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SUBJECT: UPDATE REPORT
DATE: OCTOBER 6, 2025

This memo is intended to keep you apprised as to what is happening regarding policy issues the Family Farm Alliance (Alliance) is engaged in. In the past month, much of our efforts have focused on creating workgroups to advance recommendations for Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) agency realignment, executing our upcoming farmer lobbyist trip to D.C., finalizing planning for our annual conference, and wrapping up transition activities associated with our incoming executive director, Samantha Barncastle, who takes over the helm on October 31. These issues and other matters important to our members are further discussed in this memo.

GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

The federal government has entered a shutdown, placing an estimated 750,000 federal workers on furlough while essential services such as national security, law enforcement, Social Security, and select health programs continue to operate. Non-essential agencies and programs are suspended, with ripple effects across infrastructure, research, and agriculture. Congressional leaders remain at an impasse, with House Republicans urging passage of a “clean” continuing resolution, while Senate Democrats resist, creating ongoing uncertainty. The shutdown has sparked strong reactions from both policymakers and stakeholders. Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman Sam Graves warned of delays to critical projects and hardship for essential federal employees working without pay. Agricultural organizations including the Alabama, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Mississippi Farm Bureaus, as well as the National Cattlemen’s Beef Association, National Cotton Council, and others, have issued urgent calls to avoid disruptions to USDA programs and Farm Bill negotiations. Meanwhile, the White House has emphasized that the only path forward is passage of a clean continuing resolution, underscoring the severe costs of inaction—estimated at \$400 million per day.

1. Related Tariff Concerns

Farmers and agricultural groups are expressing growing frustration and uncertainty as the federal government shutdown drags on and trade negotiations stall. With tariffs continuing to disrupt global markets, producers of crops like soybeans and corn are facing tough decisions about storage and sales amid shrinking market access and unclear prospects for economic aid. Many see potential disaster looming if trade talks with China fail to produce results soon, as administration officials consider tapping tariff revenues or the USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation to fund additional farm bailouts. However, the shutdown has halted USDA operations, delaying the release of this aid and preventing farmers from accessing critical support services and loans through local Farm Service Agency offices.

2. Tension Between USDA and Congressional Democrats

Simultaneously, tensions between the USDA and Congress have deepened, with Democrats accusing the department of withholding vital information about its shutdown contingency plans. While Republican staff received private briefings, Democrats were denied access, intensifying partisan divides over the handling of the crisis. Meanwhile, USDA is moving ahead with new rules tightening work requirements for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants, extending eligibility limits and reducing states' ability to waive them. Critics warn that these rapid changes, combined with the shutdown and high inflation, risk throwing the system into disarray and further straining rural and low-income communities already coping with economic instability.

3. TFG Special Report

The Ferguson Group (TFG) has released a [Special Report](#) outlining how this shutdown may impact local communities, and will continue to provide policy updates from Capitol Hill. The policy landscape remains fluid, but the TFG Special Report provides a key resource for understanding how these developments may affect sectors most critical to our organization's mission.

TRUMP 47 ADMINISTRATION

4. Spring Unified Agenda for Federal Agency Rulemaking

The Trump Administration's Spring Unified Agenda outlines an aggressive deregulatory push at EPA and the Interior Department. At EPA, the plan targets major climate, air, water, and chemical rules. The agency is moving to repeal the 2009 greenhouse gas endangerment finding, roll back Biden-era tailpipe standards, delay or weaken methane rules for oil and gas, and reconsider soot, smog, and power plant pollution limits. EPA also plans to narrow Clean Water Act protections for wetlands and small streams (consistent with the Supreme Court's *Sackett* decision), revise PFAS

drinking water and wastewater standards, and scale back coal industry water rules. Several chemical safety rules and reporting requirements are also slated for rollback or delay.

At Interior, Secretary Doug Burgum is advancing “zero-based regulatory budgeting,” with new rules carrying five-year sunset provisions. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) plans to rescind the Biden-era public lands conservation rule and ease oil, gas, and mining development on public lands. The Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) will propose Endangered Species Act (ESA) revisions and decide on delisting grizzly bears by January, while the Bureau of Ocean Energy Management (BOEM) plans to expand offshore mineral extraction.

5. Department of Interior (DOI), Bureau of Reclamation

a. Cooke Nomination Collapses

The White House asked Ted Cooke to withdraw as nominee for Bureau of Reclamation commissioner, leaving the agency without a confirmed leader amid sensitive Colorado River negotiations. Cooke, former head of the Central Arizona Project, attributed the withdrawal to paperwork issues and political opposition, including concerns from Upper Basin states about perceived bias. He defended his record working with diverse Arizona stakeholders and noted past commissioners from within the basin. The vacancy comes as seven basin states face a November 11 deadline to reach an agreement in principle on post-2026 river operations. Cooke warned that the leadership gap complicates consensus during a critical period for water management in the region. Meanwhile, Scott Cameron has been named the Acting Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation.

b. Agency Realignment and Efficiency

Our Reclamation agency realignment initiative is advancing through close collaboration between the Alliance, the National Water Resources Association (NWRA), and senior DOI and Reclamation leadership. Following the submission of a set of joint recommendations, leadership expressed strong support for key priorities: streamlining National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) processes, expanding the role of local districts and contractors in operations and maintenance, and reducing duplicative reviews. DOI and Reclamation are committed to moving at least one or two of these reforms forward by year’s end, with milestones tied to upcoming national conferences – including our October annual conference -and a final wrap-up in December.

6. DOI, BLM: Public Lands Rule Poised for Repeal

Following OIRA review, the Bureau of Land Management plans to propose rescinding the 2024 Conservation and Landscape Health Rule, which placed conservation on equal footing with other uses across 245 million acres. Ranching and agricultural groups – including the Alliance - argued the 2024 policy threatened forage management and grazing access and added bureaucracy. Opponents of rescission, including former officials and conservation groups, said the rule was

needed to protect fragile landscapes and support restoration. The proposed repeal enters a 60-day comment period ending November 10, with lawsuits from six states still pending. Industry groups intend to support rescission during the comment process.

7. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

a. New WOTUS Rule

The Trump Administration is preparing a new Clean Water Act (CWA) rule that could narrow federal jurisdiction over wetlands. Western agriculture groups welcomed the effort for clarity, emphasizing exclusions for irrigation infrastructure to avoid regulatory uncertainty across Western delivery systems. A reported internal EPA presentation indicated wetlands would be regulated if they hold surface water through the wet season and have direct surface connections to rivers or streams that also flow during that season. Former and anonymous EPA staffers cautioned that the approach could significantly reduce federal coverage. The proposal follows the Supreme Court's 2023 *Sackett v. EPA* decision, which limited protections to wetlands with a continuous surface connection to relatively permanent waters and left several terms undefined.

b. CWA 401 Rule

EPA's 2023 Water Quality Certification Improvement Rule governs how states and tribes review federally licensed projects for compliance with local standards. Western states recently submitted comments to EPA's solicitation for public comment on the rule. California supported the rule's broader review framework, including consideration of impacts from entire activities and inclusion of groundwater, isolated waters, and nonpoint sources tied to federal permits. The state cautioned against duplicative federal requirements. Idaho urged targeted revisions emphasizing foreseeable, direct impacts, clearer project descriptions, and defined timelines. Nevada endorsed the broader scope to ensure comprehensive water-quality protection. Washington recommended leaving the rule intact to avoid regulatory whiplash. Wyoming sought a narrower framework, closer to 2020, and warned the definition of water-quality requirements is overly broad.

8. Department of Health Services: MAHA Report

The Trump Administration recently released a health policy roadmap (the "Make America Healthy Again, or MAHA initiative) emphasizing education, research, and voluntary commitments over new mandates on the food and agriculture sectors. Officials framed the approach as a government-wide effort addressing chronic disease while collaborating with industry and farmers. Agencies plan to explore definitions for ultra-processed foods and to update dietary guidelines; immediate pesticide restrictions were not included. USDA emphasized farmers as partners and pointed to voluntary corporate moves, pilots for regenerative practices, and proposals such as restoring whole milk in schools, fertility education, and distributing produce boxes to families receiving food assistance. Observers noted that interagency coordination would influence how far certain ideas advance.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE 119TH CONGRESS

9. Senate Republicans Confirm 48 Trump Nominees After Rule Change

The Senate confirmed 48 of President Donald Trump's nominees in a single vote using newly adopted GOP rules that allow en bloc approval of lower-level, non-judicial nominees by simple majority. Republicans said the change addressed prolonged delays; Democrats criticized the process as rushed. Confirmed officials include Jessica Kramer (EPA Office of Water), Katherine Scarlett (White House Council on Environmental Quality), Leslie Beyer and Andrea Travnicek (Interior), and William Doffermyre (Interior Solicitor). USDA appointees include Dudley Hoskins, Scott Hutchins, and Richard Fordyce. The move marked a significant procedural victory for the administration, enabling faster staffing across agencies.

10. Senate to Consider Second Package of Trump Nominees

Senate Majority Leader John Thune (R-SD) has put forward a resolution to advance more than 100 Trump Administration nominees, many of them for energy and environment posts, under new Senate rules that allow bulk confirmation of nominees for lower-level positions. The package includes Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) nominees Laura Swett and David LaCerte, as well as Neil Jacobs for NOAA, Timothy Walsh for Energy's environmental management office, Lanny Erdos for the Office of Surface Mining, Ned Mamula for the U.S. Geological Survey, and several others. Some nominees, such as Audrey Robertson for DOE's renewables office and Michael Boren for USDA Undersecretary over the Forest Service, face Democratic criticism over ties to oil, gas, or past agency dealings.

The push comes after Senate Republicans lifted their "holds" on Treasury nominees following new guidance on renewable energy tax credits, though Sen. Ted Budd's (R-NC) protest over FEMA aid delays continues to block Homeland Security picks. Meanwhile, the Judiciary Committee is advancing more federal court nominees, and the Banking Committee plans votes on HUD and Treasury posts. However, the timing for floor consideration of Majority Leader Thune's nominee package remains uncertain.

11. SPEED Act Sparks Debate Over Permitting Reform

House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Bruce Westerman (R-Ark.) advanced the Standardizing Permitting and Expediting Economic Development (SPEED) Act (H.R. 4776) with Rep. Jared Golden (D-Maine). The bill would revise NEPA by setting review deadlines, narrowing agency analyses, and limiting litigation. Supporters argue it would accelerate energy, water, and infrastructure projects; critics warn it weakens environmental safeguards and public input. Democrats expressed mixed views. Some signaled openness to targeted reforms while questioning implementation. Ranking Member Jared Huffman (D-CALIFORNIA) sharply criticized the bill's approach.

Industry and agricultural groups – including the Alliance - largely backed the measure, asserting that NEPA has grown cumbersome and delays projects vital to Western water supply and infrastructure. For Alliance members, faster approvals could help irrigation upgrades, canal modernization, and conservation projects. Additional supporters include groups focused on forestry, wildfire mitigation, and rural economies. Opponents counter that recent staffing and funding have begun reducing backlogs and that narrowing reviews could undercut accountability.

Last month the Alliance sent a formal support letter to the House Natural Resources Committee and bill authors explaining why we support this legislation. We were approached by Committee staff, who are working towards a coalition to include support from the state/local level and have a goal of including letters from all 50 states before the House sends the bill to the Senate. I encourage all of you to send a letter supporting this bill to Madeline Kelley at Madeline.Kelley@mail.house.gov. Feel free to use our letter as a basis for your own letter, if that helps.

12. Farm Bill Timeline Slips as Year-End Looms

Prospects for a farm bill this fall have dimmed. House Republicans missed a target to advance a bill out of committee by late September, and Senate leaders now point to December at the earliest. Senate Agriculture Chair John Boozman (R-Ark.) forecasted year-end timing; Sen. John Hoeven (R-N.D.) suggested a deal could land before the end of 2025, while noting competing priorities such as nominees, the NDAA, and appropriations. Without action, Congress must extend the 2018 law again before December 31 to avoid disruptions to farm and nutrition programs.

13. Risch, Merkley Advocate for Urban Canal Repairs

Sens. Jim Risch (R-Idaho) and Jeff Merkley (D-Ore.) have introduced the Urban Canal Modernization Act to allow Bureau of Reclamation aging-infrastructure funds to address extraordinary maintenance for urban canals. They highlighted public-safety risks in developed corridors and cited the Klamath Basin's A Canal, built in 1906, as an example of aging infrastructure serving both agricultural and community needs. The senators said the bill would unlock federal grants for repairs in urbanized settings where funding access is often complicated.

14. House Panel Presses Corps on WRDA Implementation

On September 10, the House Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment examined implementation of recent Water Resources Development Acts (WRDAs). Chairman Mike Collins (R-Ga.) pressed the Army Corps on delays and cost overruns and cited dredging needs at Georgia ports. Ranking Member Frederica Wilson (D-Fla.) pointed to budget and staffing pressures while emphasizing the need for consistent funding. Members from Western states raised water-supply resilience, including Forecast-Informed Reservoir Operations and Airborne Snow Observatories (FIRO). Corps leadership described FIRO successes in California and potential application nationwide. On regulatory matters, Assistant Secretary of the

Army for Civil Works Adam Telle said a proposed rule would codify the *Sackett* decision and provide clarity on Waters of the United States.

15. House Committee Advances Weather Act Reauthorization

On September 10, the House Science, Space, and Technology Committee advanced the bipartisan Weather Act Reauthorization Act (H.R. 5089). The bill updates research programs, modernizes alerts, and expands NOAA's use of commercial weather data. Amendments covered tornado research, AI forecasting, harmful algal blooms, and rip-current warnings. The committee reported the bill unanimously for House consideration.

ALLIANCE INITIATIVES

16. New Leadership Elected to Family Farm Alliance Board of Directors

The Alliance Board of Directors has elected new officers who will guide the organization into 2026. Mark Hansen (WASHINGTON) has been elected President. Mr. Hansen raises irrigated forage crops and cattle in Washington's Kittitas Valley, drawing on a background that includes growing up on his family's California farm and working as a crop consultant after earning a Crop Science degree from Cal Poly. Since purchasing his Ellensburg hay ranch in 1995, he has been active in local agricultural and community organizations, while raising two children with his wife, Melissa. Other officers elected include: First Vice President Clinton Pine (IDAHO); Second Vice President Nate Eckloff (NEBRASKA); Treasurer Marc Thalacker (OREGON). In addition, Don Schwindt (COLORADO) will serve as Chairman of the Board. The officer slate was approved unanimously by the board of directors.

17. 2025 Annual Meeting and Conference

The Family Farm Alliance's 2025 Annual Meeting and Conference is right around the corner, kicking off October 29–31 in Reno, Nevada. With the theme *Flowing Forward: Shaping the Future of Western Water*, this year's gathering promises to be one of the most pivotal in the Alliance's history—bringing together farmers, ranchers, policymakers, and water managers to tackle urgent challenges facing irrigated agriculture in the West.

a. A Defining Transition in Leadership

The 2025 conference will mark a historic leadership transition. After 20 years at the helm, I will step down on October 31, passing the torch to Samantha Barncastle. Sam will make her debut as executive director during the two-part panel *Then and Now: The Evolution and Vision of the Family Farm Alliance*, featuring Alliance founders and rising leaders. Also happening at the 2025 annual meeting, the board presidency will pass from Paul Orme, who has served since early 2024, to Mark Hansen, a farmer from Washington's Yakima Basin (*see related discussion, above*).

b. Highlights from the Agenda

The two-day program is packed with timely sessions:

- **Reclamation Roundtable (Oct. 30, 8:45 a.m.)** – Acting Commissioner David Palumbo and Interior officials will discuss NEPA reform, local management, and cutting red tape, moderated by Keppen.
- **Monarch Butterfly Rulemaking (Oct. 30, 10:00 a.m.)** – A landmark ESA proposal will be examined by regulators, farm leaders, and conservationists.
- **Western Water at a Turning Point (Oct. 30, 1:15 p.m.)** – Congressional staff will share insights on federal water and ag policy.
- **Groundwater Management (Oct. 30, 2:00 p.m.)** – Experts from California, Colorado, and Oregon will spotlight practical sustainability strategies, moderated by Barncastle.
- **SNAKE RIVER IRRIGATION MODERNIZATION (Oct. 30, 3:30 p.m.)** – A look at partnerships tackling phosphorus-driven water quality issues.
- **Bridging the Currents (Oct. 31, 8:15 a.m.)** – Tribal leaders and irrigation managers will address salmon recovery, river health, and farm economies in the Northwest.
- **Then and Now: Alliance Evolution (Oct. 31, 9:45 a.m.)** – Reflections on the Alliance’s legacy and future vision.

Attendees can also enjoy a Friday matinee screening of *You Just Can’t See Them From the Road*, a California Rangeland Trust documentary on modern ranching.

c. Keynote Speakers

Last week, we learned that NRCS Chief Aubrey Bettencourt and the second-in-command at EPA’s Office of Water – Peggy Browne – have both agreed to deliver keynote addresses in Reno. We’re still working out the details as to who will join us from the Department of Interior, although we know we’ll have a strong contingent of folks joining us from the Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner’s office and the regional offices. Assuming the government is open for business, that is....

d. Honoring the Past, Investing in the Future

The conference will also feature the Patrick O’Toole Memorial Young Conservationist Scholarship, supporting the next generation of water and land stewards. Pat believed deeply in building the next generation. This scholarship ensures his legacy continues. Registration is open now at www.familyfarmalliance.org. Don’t miss the chance to be part of this pivotal conversation at the end of the month.

18. 2025 Farmer Lobbyist Trip

The Family Farm Alliance capped off one of its most successful Farmer Lobbyist trips to

Washington, D.C., with more than 50 meetings across Capitol Hill and the Trump Administration in just two and a half days. The annual trip, a cornerstone of the Alliance’s advocacy program, brought producers and water managers from nine Western states directly into the halls of Congress and federal agencies to press for practical solutions on water, forestry, and agriculture policy. The group’s agenda emphasized modernizing aging infrastructure, streamlining regulatory processes, and sustaining conservation programs that allow farmers to do more with less water. Discussions focused on tools like Reclamation’s Aging Infrastructure Account and Natural Resources Conservation Service programs such as PL-566 and EQIP, which members highlighted as critical but too often slowed by red tape.

Meetings with senior officials underscored that message. At Interior, Acting Assistant Secretary for Water and Science Scott Cameron pledged that the Trump Administration was going to be “a better friend to farmers,” while at the White House Council on Environmental Quality, newly confirmed Chair Katherine Scarlett outlined plans to reform National Environmental Policy Act and Endangered Species Act processes to improve project delivery. Environmental Protection Agency officials signaled openness to Alliance concerns over watershed mapping, pesticides, and liability for PFAS contamination. Alliance representatives also met with members of Congress from Oregon, California, Arizona, Washington, Idaho, Colorado, Wyoming, and Nebraska. Conversations touched on the slow-moving “skinny” farm bill, forestry and watershed health, and the need to reauthorize the WIIN Act.

We saw a real willingness from both sides of the aisle to find bipartisan solutions, particularly on forest management and project delivery. It’s clear our message is resonating at the right time. This was one of the most effective Farmer Lobbyist trips I’ve been on. A big reason for that was the professional support and initiative shown by our advocates in Washington – The Ferguson Group. Our members can be proud—our voice was heard loud and clear in D.C.

19. Executive Director Transition

Samanth Barncastle is now 60 days into working with the Alliance contractor team. I will still serve as executive director until October 31, my last day. Sam will assume the role as executive director at the end of the annual conference general session. On October 16, she will be the keynote speaker at the [2025 Water Sustainability Summit](#), hosted by our friend Mauricio Guardado and his team at United Water Conservation District in Ventura County, California. Feel free to reach out and welcome Sam at her official new email address: samantha@familyfarmalliance.org.

20. Transportation-Related Costs of Water Infrastructure Projects

As presented by Scott Petersen on our last ZOOM call, we believe many of you have concerns about transportation-related cost-drivers on water infrastructure projects. Consider the following California examples, included in the table below:

Project Name	Project Location	Total Project Cost	Transportation Related Costs	Transportation Percentage of Total Cost
B.F. Sisk Dam Raise and Reservoir Expansion Project	San Joaquin Valley, CA	\$1.1B	\$525M	48%
Delta-Mendota Canal Subsidence Correction Project	San Joaquin Valley, CA	\$1.7B	\$425M	25%
Sites Reservoir	Sacramento Valley, CA	\$6.2 - 6.8B	\$985M	14%

Some of our California members are working to build a coalition that would use the upcoming federal surface transportation reauthorization to secure funding for critical water infrastructure projects that support irrigated agriculture. Encouragingly, there is both an understanding of the issue and early involvement from Congressional committee leadership staff.

So – as reminder – we’re asking our members to review projects you are working on and provide information on how much of the total project cost is related to transportation work (new roads / bridges, relocating roads/bridges, etc.). Please provide as much information as possible by this Friday, October 10. We’ll compile a list of our responses and share that with the Committee. Thanks for your consideration. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me, Sam or Scott Petersen.

WESTERN WATER “HOT SPOTS”

21. A Change in the Weather....

Forecasters now place a 71% chance on La Niña developing this fall, which is expected to drive significant shifts in weather across the western U.S. In California, state climatologists warn of “extreme” wet-dry swings and severe storm events through the rainy season, heightening risks tied to climate-driven variability. Meanwhile, the Pacific Northwest may see relief from drought conditions, as La Niña typically redirects the jet stream to bring wetter and colder weather to the region. Current models suggest the event will likely be weak and short-lived, with about even odds it persists into early 2026 before conditions return to normal by spring.

22. Columbia and Snake River Basins (ID/OR/MT/WA)

e. House Panel Weighs Bill to Block Snake River Dam Removal

On September 3, the House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries held a hearing on the Defending Our Dams Act (H.R. 2073) from Rep. Dan Newhouse (R-Wash.). The bill would bar federal funds from studying, removing, or functionally altering the four Lower Snake River dams and would require joint approval from the Army and Bonneville Power Administration for fish-spill operations. Subcommittee Chair Harriet Hageman (R-Wyo.) linked the measure to the administration's withdrawal from the Resilient Columbia Basin Agreement and said stakeholders view the settlement as a path toward dam breaching. Administration witnesses emphasized hydropower, navigation, and irrigation benefits, noting power for hundreds of thousands of homes and the dams' role in wheat exports. Democrats cautioned against restricting studies or operational flexibility, and NOAA raised concerns about spill limits and juvenile salmon survival. Nez Perce Chairman Shannon Wheeler opposed the bill on treaty and recovery grounds. Last summer's tour by the Family Farm Alliance and Idaho Water Users Association highlighted agricultural reliance on the dams for energy and navigation.

f. Tribes, States, Environmental Groups Seek to Revive Snake River Dam Lawsuit

Following the administration's withdrawal from the Resilient Columbia Basin Agreement, tribes, environmental groups, and the states of Oregon and Washington asked a federal judge to lift a stay and reopen litigation over Columbia Basin hydropower impacts on endangered salmon and steelhead. Filings submitted September 12 proposed a schedule that could restart legal activity as soon as this week. Plaintiffs argue dam removal studies and broader recovery actions are necessary to protect salmon and honor treaty obligations; agricultural and utility groups counter that removal would disrupt irrigation, navigation, and clean energy. The dams power hundreds of thousands of homes and move a significant portion of U.S. wheat exports. The Justice Department has indicated it may seek to move directly to summary judgment to expedite resolution.

23. Colorado River Basin: New NGO Report

A new report from a coalition of environmental organizations warns that the Colorado River system is at the brink of collapse and calls for urgent policy changes to prevent disaster. The report highlights critically low water levels behind Glen Canyon Dam, raising the risk that hydropower production could fail and water deliveries to millions could be disrupted. The groups urge immediate reductions in water demand, changes to dam operations, and greater transparency in water management negotiations among the seven western states that depend on the river. They argue that the river's current management framework has failed to adapt to worsening drought and climate change impacts.

The report emphasizes the stakes: the Colorado River supplies water to over 40 million people, irrigates farmland across the Southwest, supports 30 tribal nations, and flows into two states in

Mexico. With another poor water year looming, experts warn the system may not withstand continued strain without significant intervention. The advocacy groups behind the report—including the Great Basin Network, Sierra Club, Save the Colorado, and the Glen Canyon Institute....no real friends of agriculture—press for stronger leadership and collaboration to implement long-term solutions that balance ecological health with human needs. Without such changes, they claim, the river could face irreversible decline.

24. Balancing AI Growth and Water Resources

The rapid global expansion of data centers to support artificial intelligence is straining water resources, particularly in arid regions like the western U.S., prompting heightened scrutiny and new regulations such as California’s requirement for facilities to disclose water use. With hyperscale capacity doubling every four years and electricity consumption projected by the International Energy Agency to nearly double by 2030, major operators like Microsoft, Amazon, Google, and Meta are pledging to become “water positive” by 2030. Yet, siting new centers in drought-prone areas has fueled conflict with agricultural users, as seen in Arizona. At the same time, technology and agriculture are finding opportunities for collaboration: companies like Amazon Web Services are co-investing in irrigation modernization and precision agriculture to reduce water demand and bolster farm resilience, aligning sustainability goals with shared resource challenges.

ADMINISTRATIVE & MISCELLANEOUS

- I'm sure many of you have been following the controversial move in California to reorganize Congressional districts. This has some very real ramifications for our rural California members, including Nadine Bailey, our director from Northern California. Nadine and several other Family Farm Alliance supporters are interviewed in this excellent story about how this redistricting move could have a very real impact on real rural people. Check it out here: <https://calmatters.org/politics/2025/09/redistricting-modoc-marin/>
- The Western States Water Council (WSWC) last month announced the appointment of J.D. Strong as its new Executive Director, effective September 1, 2025, following the retirement of longtime Executive Director Tony Willardson. Tony’s retirement comes after 46 years of dedicated service to the WSWC. Strong most recently served as Director of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation and previously as Director of the Oklahoma Water Resources Board (OWRB).

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 541-892-6244 or dan@familyfarmalliance.org if you would like further information about what the Alliance is doing to protect water for Western irrigated agriculture.