



MEMORANDUM

TO: SLDMWA BOARD OF DIRECTORS
FROM: DAN KEPPEL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SUBJECT: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT
DATE: MARCH 7, 2022

This memo is intended to keep you apprised as to what is happening behind the scenes on policy issues the Family Farm Alliance is engaged in. In the past month, much of our efforts have focused on hosting our 2022 annual convention in Reno, engaging in Biden Administration rulemaking efforts, monitoring federal agency implementation of the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*, working with Congressional staff on upcoming hearings and draft legislation, and public outreach and speaking engagements. These issues and other matters important to our members are further discussed in this memo.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION DEVELOPMENTS

1. President Biden's State of the Union Address

On March 1, President Joe Biden delivered his State of the Union (SOTU) address. President Biden's address marked his first SOTU speech and his second address to a joint session of Congress since taking office on January 20, 2021. The President's speech primarily focused on America's response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. He also highlighted COVID-19 progress, the nomination of Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson to the Supreme Court, implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), and the fight against inflation. President Biden also briefly touched on issues important to agriculture, such as competition, export problems and infrastructure.

a. Ukraine Invasion

A central theme of President Biden's address was the global response to the aggression of Russian President Vladimir Putin. As Russian and Ukrainian forces enter a second week of bloody,

destructive warfare, United Nations and international condemnations aimed at the Kremlin continue to pile up. The White House initially asked Congress for \$6.4 billion in assistance to the Ukrainian government. This aid would allocate \$3.5 billion in funding for troop deployment and support to NATO allies and \$2.9 billion in foreign security and humanitarian assistance. The White House has deployed 12,000 troops to Europe, with an additional deployment of 7,000 to Germany on February 24. The U.S. has joined other countries condemning the actions of Russian President Vladimir Putin and has levied heavy sanctions. As Congress negotiates an FY22 spending package ahead of the March 11 funding deadline, aid to Ukraine will be a likely addition to the bill. Republicans appear to be more interested than Democrats in quickly providing new weapons to Ukraine and in imposing punishing new sanctions on Russia, according to *Roll Call*.

b. Food and Competition

The President briefly mentioned issues involving agriculture in his speech, including supply chain challenges in port cities that have disrupted ocean-carrying transportation of exported items, and competition.

c. Ukraine Invasion Impacts to American Agriculture

Consumers facing higher prices for products made with corn and wheat could be in for more pain as global supplies grow tighter because of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Wheat prices jumped 37% and corn prices jumped 21% so far in 2022 after rising more than 20% throughout all of 2021. Persistently rising inflation has already prompted companies like Kellogg and General Mills to raise prices and pass the costs off to consumers and that pattern may worsen with the current crisis. As the situation unfolds, the federal government must consider the economic impact the war may have on the country's already beleaguered supply chain, rising inflationary pressures, oil and natural gas prices, and more. Worries about how U.S. agriculture will fare from the Ukrainian crisis were also voiced at a House Agriculture Committee hearing late last month, where lawmakers warned about rising energy costs for farmers, spikes in grain prices and possible demands on U.S. farms to help fill the needs of a struggling Eastern Europe (*E&E News*). While U.S. wheat growers might ultimately be able to sell more to allies who need the help, American farmers are more likely to be hurt in the short term by volatile prices and increased fuel costs tied to the conflict.

Prior to the Russian invasion, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack told The Associated Press that a conflict in Ukraine would present an "opportunity, obviously, for us to step in and help our partners, help them through a difficult time and situation." The American agricultural industry posted its highest annual export levels ever recorded in 2021, Secretary Vilsack announced nearly one month ago. The final 2021 trade data published by the Department of Commerce on February 8 showed that exports of U.S. farm and food products to the world totaled \$177 billion, topping the 2020 total by 18 percent and eclipsing the previous record, set in 2014, by 14.6 percent.

d. SCOTUS Nominee

President Biden used portions of his address to shine line on his nomination last month of Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson to serve a lifetime appointment as an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. Senate Judiciary Committee Chair Dick Durbin (D-IL) hopes to begin Judge Jackson's confirmation hearing beginning March 21. Senate Democrats have set a goal to confirm Judge Ketanji Brown Jackson by April 8, ahead of the chamber's two-week Spring recess. Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) congratulated Judge Jackson on her nomination and called for a "rigorous, exhaustive review of Judge Jackson's nomination as befits a lifetime appointment to our highest Court." Judge Jackson is expected to be confirmed in time to hear *Sackett v. EPA*, related to the federal government's jurisdiction over the Nation's waters and wetlands (see *Item 4, below*).

e. Hey! What about Climate Change?

Notably absent in the president's address was any serious discussion of the climate crisis, despite the vast press coverage the day before his speech about the latest "doom and gloom" report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) warning of the deadly effects of climate change both now and in the future. "The extent and magnitude of climate change impacts are larger than estimated in previous assessments," the latest IPCC report summary said, particularly highlighting "substantial damages" and "increasingly irreversible losses" to ecosystems and "shifts in seasonal timing." President Biden's short shrift paid to climate change in his address did not go unnoticed by some on the far left. Here are five key takeaways from the U.N. climate report, dutifully reported by the *Los Angeles Times*:

- A focus on protecting vulnerable people. The scientists say efforts to combat climate change and reduce the risks should involve everyone, including governments, businesses and citizens. And because some people are suffering disproportionately, they wrote, "equity and justice" are vital in decision-making and investment.
- An urgent call for action. With the increase in average temperatures of about 1.1 degrees Celsius (2 degrees Fahrenheit) so far, we are seeing "widespread negative impacts on people and ecosystems". Swift cuts in emissions would prevent the worst effects.
- Water-related risks are growing. Research shows that as the planet gets warmer, the water cycle is changing. Droughts and floods are becoming more extreme and are projected to keep intensifying as temperatures rise.
- Nature can be harnessed for solutions. Restoring degraded ecosystems and conserving 30% to 50% of the Earth's lands and waters would boost nature's ability to absorb and store carbon, the scientists said, while also helping ensure water supplies.

This sounds a bit like the Biden Administration's Build Back Better game plan and attendant messaging, which has been put on the back burner in recent weeks due to the crisis in Ukraine and growing public concerns about inflation, fuel prices and their relationship with the administration's energy policies.

f. GOP Reaction

Iowa Governor Kim Reynolds delivered the GOP response to President Biden's speech, hammering the president and Democrats on issues like inflation and parental control of education. Rep. Glenn Thompson (R-Pa), Ranking Member of the House Committee on Agriculture, criticized the president for ignoring the challenges facing American producers.

2. Recent Appointments

The Biden Administration has announced the following new political appointees to leadership positions within Reclamation and the Department of the Interior:

- Michael Brain will serve as deputy commissioner at the Bureau of Reclamation, the department said. Mr. Brain most recently was a staff member for the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Energy and Water Development.
- Katherine Pustay Currie will serve as the Interior Department's deputy infrastructure coordinator for the bipartisan infrastructure law. Ms. Currie was previously the deputy staff director to the Steering Committee in the U.S. Senate and an Interior Secretary policy staffer. She previously worked in the Alaska Legislature.
- Gary Gold will serve as deputy assistant Interior secretary for water and science. Mr. Gold was previously an Arizona engineer and policy advisor for Sen. Kirsten Sinema (D-ARIZONA).
- Joan Mooney will serve as principal deputy assistant Interior secretary for policy, management and budget. Mooney was previously the president and CEO of the Faith & Politics Institute and served as assistant secretary for the Department of Veterans Affairs in the Obama administration.

Overall, we're pleased with these appointments. We have worked with Michael for several years now on Reclamation and Corps funding issues. Gary Gold served for the last two years on the Family Farm Alliance Advisory Committee!

3. Implementation of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

Several bureaus across the Department of the Interior submitted to Congress their fiscal year 2022 blueprints for implementing President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law ("BIL, also referred to as the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*, or "IIJA") last month. As required by the Infrastructure Law, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Wildland Fire, and the Office of Surface Mining Reclamation and Enforcement have submitted their official spend plans to the U.S. Congress. The Department also submitted spend plans outlining efforts to plug and reclaim orphaned oil and gas wells, as well as a spend plan outlining efforts to restore ecosystems and protect habitats. The spend plans outline how the Interior Department and bureaus will stand up new programs and

expand existing work to deliver results.

Additional information about each bureau's spend plans can be accessed on the Department's infrastructure webpage. Programs outlined in Reclamation's spend plan includes a \$8.3 Billion Investment in Water and Drought Resilience. Interior and Reclamation intend to fund water efficiency and recycling programs, rural water projects, WaterSMART grants, and dam safety to ensure that irrigators, Tribes, and adjoining communities receive adequate assistance and support.

a. WaterSMART Drought Contingency Planning Grants

Reclamation last month began rolling out opportunities for some of its WaterSMART programs, including the Drought Response Program's Drought Contingency Planning grants, which support the development and update of drought contingency plans. Through this funding opportunity, Reclamation provides financial assistance for planning that, when implemented, will increase water reliability and improve water management through the use of expanded technologies and improved modeling capabilities. Applicants may request up to \$200,000 for plans to be completed within two years. Generally, a 50 percent minimum recipient cost-share is required. The funding opportunity is available on [grants.gov by searching for opportunity number R22AS00178](#). Applications are due by April 14, 2022, at 4 pm MDT. Find out more information at [Reclamation's WaterSMART program webpage](#).

b. WaterSMART Applied Science Grants

The WaterSMART Applied Science Grants funding opportunity is also now available from Reclamation. These grants support projects to develop hydrologic information, decision support tools, and tools to improve modeling and forecasting capabilities to increase water supply reliability. Applicants may request up to \$200,000 for projects to be completed within two years. A 50% non-federal cost share is required. The funding opportunity is available on [grants.gov](#) by searching for opportunity number [R22AS00165](#). Applications are due on Thursday, April 14, 2022, at 4:00 p.m. Mountain Daylight Time (MDT). Find out more about the Applied Science Grants program on Reclamation's website at [www.usbr.gov/watersmart/appliedscience](#).

c. GOP Push Back on Implementation Directives

As funding from the BIL is begins to move towards states, the Biden administration is directing state officials to invest in projects that ensure climate resilience, address inequality and use unionized labor. But GOP Senators and governors are pushing back on federal directives, arguing they go beyond the intent of the law. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) last December issued a memorandum entitled "Policy on Using Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Resources to Build a Better America". Republican Senators recently took issue with the FHWA memorandum, saying it seeks to implement a wish list of policies not reflected in the BIL. Sixteen GOP governors also sent a letter to President Biden last month, demanding that the administration defer to states' priorities. Now, top House Republicans are ramping up oversight to ensure the money isn't spent

wastefully or fraudulently. In a [letter](#) to White House senior adviser Mitch Landrieu, who is tasked with implementing the historic law, and Reps. Sam Graves (R-Mo.), ranking member on the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, and James Comer (R-Ky.), ranking member on the House Oversight and Reform Committee, said their probe will ensure the money from the package is being spent based on states' needs and not Democratic priorities.

d. Alliance Actions

The Family Farm Alliance board of directors last month at its annual meeting in Reno (NEVADA) identified federal implementation of the BIL as a top priority for the Alliance to engage in for 2022. Senior leaders from the Department of the Interior's Office of Water and Science and the Bureau of Reclamation were also present at the Alliance's annual conference, to highlight the implementation of the BIL and reinforce the importance of partnerships. The steering committee that helped drive last year's Western Water Infrastructure Initiative – consisting of the Alliance, ACWA, California Farm Bureau, NWRA and Western Growers – met with Interior Assistant Secretary Trujillo and Reclamation Deputy Commissioner David Palumbo for 45 minutes in Reno to discuss implementation challenges. Our organizations in January sent a detailed letter to the White Council on Environmental Quality and the Departments of Agriculture and Interior outlining those concerns. We're working on setting up a follow-up meeting with Deputy Commissioner Palumbo to continue that discussion.

In the coming months, our coalition will conduct routine meetings with Interior and Reclamation leadership to monitor progress. We're also investigating legislative options that might be pursued to tweak provisions of the IJA that slipped under the radar last year. On the public relations front, here are a couple of good articles that relate to recent activities the Alliance has been engaged in:

- An article by Cato Institute that includes a link to the [letter](#) we developed with ACWA, California Farm Bureau, NWRA and Western Growers on implementation concerns with the bipartisan infrastructure law; and
- A recent [interview](#) I did with the national Irrigation Association magazine regarding the \$8.3 billion western water infrastructure piece we worked on.

Our coalition will be re-mobilizing the communications team we used last year, this time to stress the importance for state governments to step up and meet the federal funding commitment.

4. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) / Army Corps of Engineers: WOTUS

In the weeks following the January announcement by the U.S. Supreme Court that it would revisit the scope of Clean Water Act (CWA) precedent in *Sackett v. EPA*, there has been plenty of other breaking news regarding "Waters of the U.S." (WOTUS). As you likely know, the CWA prohibits the discharge of pollutants from a point source to navigable waters unless otherwise authorized under the Act. Navigable waters are defined in the Act as "the waters of the United States, including the territorial seas." Thus, WOTUS is a threshold term establishing the geographic scope

of federal jurisdiction under the CWA. The term “waters of the United States” is not defined by the Act but has been defined by EPA and the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) in regulations since the 1970s and jointly implemented in the agencies’ respective programmatic activities.

a. *Sackett v. EPA*

The case to be taken up by the Supreme Court centers on a conflict between an Idaho couple, Chantell and Michael Sackett, and EPA. The Sacketts attempted to build a home on land the EPA claims to be federally protected wetlands under the CWA. The Supreme Court in 2012 sided with the Sacketts in their battle for judicial review of an EPA order that stopped them from building a house on their northern Idaho land and threatened heavy fines. The justices in January agreed to consider whether the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals erred when it affirmed that the federal government has permitting authority over the couple’s property.

In a recent proposed rulemaking, the Biden Administration is currently moving to formally scrap the Trump Administration’s *Navigable Waters Protection Rule (NWPR)* regulation, arguing it pulled back protections for streams and wetlands across the nation, and put in its place pre-2015 regulations informed by court precedent while preparing for a future rulemaking that would craft a new “durable” definition of WOTUS under the CWA. Republicans in Congress are pushing the Biden Administration’s EPA and Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to hold off on redefining WOTUS until the Supreme Court weighs in on the matter in *Sackett v. EPA*.

b. EPA, Corps Announce Regional WOTUS Roundtables

EPA and the Corps have announced the participants of 10 regional roundtables aimed at facilitating discussion on a future rulemaking redefining WOTUS while highlighting regional differences, moving forward even as the pending Supreme Court case could affect the definition. The agencies said the roundtables have been selected to highlight geographic differences and a range of perspectives, including agriculture, conservation groups, developers, drinking water and wastewater managers, environmental organizations, communities with environmental justice concerns, industry, tribal nations, and state and local governments.

Member Paul Arrington (Idaho Water Users Association) and I were included on the nomination form developed by the California Farm Bureau for the Western region. Other allies will engage in the Southwest forum. We appreciate the leadership from our friends with the Arizona and California state Farm Bureaus to help us fill those slots on the Southwestern and Western regional roundtable proposals. While EPA and Corps have not announced dates for the roundtables, they say they anticipate hosting them virtually over the spring and summer. It remains unclear whether the agencies will finalize what they are describing as a more “durable” definition of WOTUS before the Supreme Court rules in *Sackett v. EPA* sometime next year. A new Supreme Court decision could result in a completely new definition of WOTUS under the CWA for years to come.

c. Other Family Farm Alliance Efforts

Alliance members believe the federal agencies should simply revert to the pre-2015 regulations and guidance that has been longstanding and is familiar to the regulated community. The proposed rule should not include additional interpretations of the Supreme Court's decisions in *SWANCC*, *Rapanos*, and other relevant CWA cases in administering the pre-2015 regulations and guidance. The current guidance memo on implementing the Clean Water 404(f) exemptions for construction and maintenance of ditches and maintenance of drains should remain in place. EPA conducted a series of public hearings to solicit public comment on the revised definition of WOTUS earlier this year. Alliance General Counsel Norm Semanko represented us at the January 13 hearing. For the irrigation community, certainty in the definition of WOTUS is critical. We blasted out an email tomorrow that captured Norm's excellent 3-minute comments on this important issue.

The Alliance also worked with its members to prepare a formal comment letter to EPA that was transmitted to the agency on February 7. The Alliance letter recommends the agencies conclude that man-made canals, drains, roadside ditches, wastewater and stormwater treatment, constructed wetlands, water reuse and recycling facilities, groundwater recharge facilities, and other similar infrastructure features not be categorized as WOTUS and regulated under the CWA.

The SCOTUS January decision to grant *cert* could provide a new perspective of what the language in the CWA really means. In 2019, the Family Farm Alliance submitted extensive formal comments to the EPA and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in support of the Trump Administration's approach to base a new WOTUS rule on former Justice Scalia's plurality decision in the 2006 case *Rapanos v. United States*. With *cert* granted in the Sackett case, the Supreme Court could take action in October that removes the need for the Biden Administration to write a brand-new rule for what constitutes WOTUS under the CWA. We will continue to cover this important new development closely, while also continuing to advocate for irrigated agriculture with the Biden Administration as they proceed with current rulemaking.

5. Corps of Engineers Guidelines for Climate and Environmental Justice

In other Corps news, House Transportation and Infrastructure (T&I) Democrats sent a [letter](#) to Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Michael Connor and Brenda Mallory, chair of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) at the White House complaining that the Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) is late in updating 30-year-old planning and construction guidelines for federal projects, called the principles, requirements and guidelines (PR&Gs). The letter opines that the lack of updates to the PR&Gs could hamstring the Corps' ability to tackle climate change and environmental justice and deploy infrastructure dollars. The Alliance has in the past criticized the updates in question, as they would elevate environmental concerns as the agency weighs costs and benefits of water resource projects, such as building dams and levees. The Corps was supposed to have updated the PR&Gs by last summer under the 2020 Water Resources Development Act (WRDA) bill. According to House T&I staff, all other federal water resource agencies have finished implementing the PR&Gs.

6. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Foothill Yellowlegged Frog Listing

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has proposed to list four of six distinct population segments (DPSs) of the foothill yellowlegged frog, a stream dwelling amphibian from Oregon and California, under the Endangered Species Act (ESA). After a review of the best scientific and commercial information available, the FWS found that listing the South Sierra and South Coast DPSs as endangered and the North Feather and Central Coast DPSs as threatened is warranted. In the Service's proposal, water management policies, ag practices and other factors are identified as threats. All of these DPSs are in California and cover 20 counties. If you think protecting a frog under the ESA is no big thing – think again. Just ask the irrigators in Central Oregon who took significant efforts to adapt their water management impacted due to the listing of the Oregon spotted frog a few years back. Some of the same activist groups behind the Oregon frog listing are the same ones driving this latest effort. We're working with California Farm Bureau, the timber industry, and others to develop a formal comment letter on the FWS proposal. The comment period for this proposal ends on February 28, so some – including California House Republicans – have asked for a 90-day comment period extension. We signed on with other groups to another letter prepared by Farm Bureau asking for an extension, which FWS recently announced it would grant.

7. White House CEQ: Guidelines for Environmental Justice Spending

The White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) last month published a website that shows which communities are deemed “disadvantaged”, and therefore in line for more federal dollars. These neighborhoods may qualify under President Biden's plan to direct 40% of the benefits from federal investments in climate and clean energy toward communities “most affected by pollution”. The tool assesses census tracts along eight different environmental metrics: climate change, clean energy and energy efficiency, clean transportation, affordable and sustainable housing, remediation and reduction of legacy pollution, critical clean water and waste infrastructure, health burdens, and training and workforce development. Any tract that exceeds certain levels in at least one of these metrics, and that also exceeds a socioeconomic indicator – such as low-income levels or low high school graduation rates – is considered “disadvantaged”. The tool does not include race as a factor for determining which communities are disadvantaged, according to CEQ.

8. USDA: Watershed and Flood Prevention Operations Program (WFPO)

USDA will spend more than \$166 million to address flood control projects — many long overdue — made more urgent by climate change. The funding comes through the infrastructure package Congress enacted last year. Officials announced the first round of 108 projects in 23 states, with a second to come once applications are accepted and reviewed. The legislation included \$918 million for watershed programs at the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) . [Details on the projects](#) can be found on the NRCS website.

Last month, after a conversation with Senator Jeff Merkley's (D-OREGON) office, we put together an *Issue Alert*, urging our members to contact their Members of Congress using a message at [THIS LINK](#) regarding this important federal conservation program. We had heard that there was pressure from some quarters on Capitol Hill to significantly lower the WFPO funding for FY22 to pay for other things. This is a program that Family Farm Alliance members have put to use to replace leaking, open canals with pressurized pipes, and overall improving agricultural water security. The program's funding is becoming increasingly competitive because of the scale of need in modernizing agricultural infrastructure. The link for the *Issue Alert* can be downloaded [here](#). While several Alliance members in Western states have projects that were included in the first round of announced projects, unfortunately, several projects already underway that involve modernizing Western irrigation systems were not. We're working to set up a meeting with high level officials at USDA and NRCS to address this concern.

DEVELOPMENTS IN CONGRESS

Pressure is ratcheting up on congressional negotiators to finalize talks for a massive government funding package by a looming shutdown deadline next week, as lawmakers on both sides of the aisle advocate for emergency aid for Ukraine in response to Russia's ongoing invasion (*The Hill*). Democratic leaders have announced plans to attach supplemental funding for humanitarian and military assistance for Ukraine to a larger spending omnibus package to fund the government through the rest of the fiscal year, calling it the quickest vehicle to greenlight the billions in spending. This will put even more pressure on Congress to wrap up work on government funding legislation in time for a March 11 deadline, after the cutoff date was previously pushed back several times to buy negotiators more time for spending talks.

9. ***“Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act Amendments of 2022”***

Last month, we notified Reps. Schrier (D-WASHINGTON) and Garamendi (D-CALIFORNIA) of the Alliance's support for their discussion draft “*Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) Amendments of 2022.*” As you may know, Section 50215 of the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act* (Public Law 117-58) reauthorized the WIFIA program through the end of FY 2026. However, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law failed to include improvements to the WIFIA program sought by Members of the House. Rep. Schrier's forthcoming bill, which is expected to earn bipartisan support, is intended to provide the vehicle to legislate WIFIA priorities in the House. These include extending WIFIA terms up to 55-years (Sec. 4) and allowing WIFIA loans to be approved for transferred work operators of federally owned facilities as long as the repayment stream is from non-federal sources (Sec. 6). The “Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act Amendments of 2022” includes several priorities for western water, including:

- Section 4: Full text of Rep. Garamendi's [H.R.2979](#), *To amend the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act of 2014 with respect to the final maturity date of certain loans, and for other purposes.*
- Section 6: Full text of Rep. Costa's [H.R.3023](#), *Restoring WIFIA Eligibility Act*

The Alliance has been on record as supporting these provisions in the past.

ALLIANCE INITIATIVES

10. 2022 Annual Meeting and Conference

I've received a bunch of follow-up emails, texts and phone calls since our conference adjourned on February 25. It's all been very positive, and I'll include all of the observations into a document that we can use as the basis for planning next year's event. Additional annual conference highlights can be found on the Alliance website: www.familyfarmalliance.org. Josh Rolph and Megan Newton also put together a piece that highlighted the conference; that was blasted out via email last Wednesday. Reclamation also blasted out a national press release last week, discussing how Interior, Reclamation and other Biden Administration leaders engaged at our conference.

OTHER WESTERN WATER NEWS

11. Westerners “Strongly Favor” More Protection of U.S. Rivers...even those who haven't seen a river in two years.

The Pew Charitable Trusts last month sent out an urgent call to Congress and state policymakers to protect more rivers and streams from “the rising threats they face”. ([Western voters strongly favor more protection of U.S. rivers](#)). The Pew opinion piece calls for increased “safeguarding” of rivers under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the Clean Water Act. To support this position, it points to [a poll of registered U.S. voters](#) in five Western states that, “not surprisingly”, found “overwhelming support for additional conservation of our nation’s rivers”. In the states surveyed—which included California - 67% of voters favored more safeguards for U.S. rivers, with 59% supporting the protection of at least 50% of the nation’s rivers. A closer examination of the actual [poll results](#) suggests that these numbers should have been presented with caveats. Of those polled, the highest number (27%) said they haven't even explored or visited a river in the past two years. In California, the number was **41%!**

There are some other interesting results in this poll that weren't reported as well. It's a good example of how polling information can sometimes be used out of context. (Which, admittedly, I may have just been guilty of doing...) It's also sad that so many presumably urban Westerners are so disconnected from their natural surroundings.

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 if you would like further information about what the Alliance is doing to protect water for Western irrigated agriculture.