



MEMORANDUM

TO: SAN LUIS & DELTA-MENDOTA WATER AUTHORITY DIRECTORS
FROM: DAN KEPPEL, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
SUBJECT: UPDATE REPORT
DATE: JULY 7, 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 wrapping up final details for next week's tour of the Lower Snake River Dams, monitoring the executive actions coming out of the Trump administration, engaging with Congress on new legislation, preparing comments on Trump administration proposed rulemaking efforts, and gathering ideas for Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) agency realignment. These issues and other matters important to our members are further discussed in this memo.

TRUMP 47 ADMINISTRATION

1. Reclamation Commissioner Nominated

Theodore ("Ted") Cooke, from Arizona, was officially nominated by President Trump last month to be the next Commissioner of Reclamation. Ted Cooke brings a 50+-year career in water finance, policy, and infrastructure, marked by steady progression from analyst to top-tier executive and regional thought leader. Mr. Cooke joined the Central Arizona Project (CAP) in 1999, serving initially as Deputy General Manager—Finance & Administration. He was promoted to General Manager in March 2016, overseeing all operations, policy implementation, and strategy for Arizona's largest water delivery system serving agriculture and urban areas. He is highly respected for his ability to turn complex financial models into actionable infrastructure plans; Mr. Cooke ran financial forecasting and modeling at CAP. He is known as a collaborative leader and led CAP's efforts in water conservation, budgeting, and governance. Throughout his CAP tenure, he advocated for community-focused water planning and interagency cooperation across the West.

Following his nomination, the Senate Energy and Natural Resources (ENR) Committee will conduct hearings before the full Senate votes to confirm.

Our Arizona members who have worked with him – including Alliance President Paul Orme – have good things to say about him. However (although I haven't seen anything publicly stated, yet) – we have members in the Upper Colorado River Basin, including Colorado, who have told me Upper Basin interests are concerned about having someone so closely aligned with Lower Basin water management in charge of finalizing the 2026 operating guidelines for the Colorado River. That being said – to my knowledge, the Alliance has never not sent a formal letter to the Senate ENR Committee expressing support for a candidate nominated by any previous president, and this time it was no different. The Alliance board of directors last week by a 10-0 e-mail vote formally authorized Alliance support for President Trump's nomination of Ted Cooke as the next Commissioner of Reclamation and the preparation of a related formal support letter to the Senate ENR Committee.

2. White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Chair Nominated

On June 16, the Trump administration [nominated](#) Katherine Scarlett to serve as chair of the White House's CEQ. Next, the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee will conduct hearings before the full Senate holds a confirmation vote. If confirmed, Ms. Scarlett will serve as the lead advisor on the administration's environmental policies, which include implementation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

3. President Trump Pulls Out of Columbia River Settlement

President Trump has withdrawn the U.S. from the *Resilient Columbia Basin Agreement*, a Biden-era \$1 billion legal settlement aimed at restoring endangered fish populations in the Pacific Northwest, particularly by considering the removal of four Lower Snake River dams. Trump framed the move as a defense of American energy and hydropower, saying the agreement endangered key infrastructure and energy production. GOP lawmakers and energy groups praised the action, citing concerns about dam removal and regional power loss. However, tribal nations, environmental groups, and Democratic officials condemned the decision as betrayal. Critics say scrapping the agreement threatens salmon recovery and renews legal uncertainty, with litigation expected to resume. Tribal leaders and Democratic lawmakers vowed to continue pursuing fish restoration efforts outside the agreement, calling extinction of the species unacceptable. I authored a guest column last month for *Farm Progress* expressing support for this action, a matter of great concern to our Pacific Northwest members.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Army Corps) and Reclamation have announced they are withdrawing from their plan to prepare a supplemental environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Columbia River system. A notice in the federal register Thursday announced the pending withdrawal will be published today. The process to update the 2020 EIS had started with a scoping process where initial public comment is collected, but otherwise has not progressed. The Trump

administration may yet seek to update the 2020 document. The presidential memo ordered its withdrawal but also included language directing federal agencies to develop another update to the document “as appropriate” that takes into account “any updated NEPA procedures.”

4. NEPA Administration

a. White House reviewing NEPA plans across agencies

The Trump Administration is reviewing draft procedures from multiple federal agencies—such as the Departments of Energy, Interior, and Defense—aimed at changing how they implement NEPA. Critics, including environmental groups, worry that this is part of a broader effort to weaken NEPA and fast-track energy and infrastructure projects without thorough environmental review. These proposed “interim final rules,” submitted to the White House Office of Management and Budget (OMB), follow earlier moves by the Administration to dismantle long-standing NEPA regulations and replace them with vague, voluntary guidance. However, legal experts note that NEPA remains a binding statute, and even with deregulation efforts, agencies are still required to meet its legal mandates. The full content and implications of the proposed rules remain unclear, as the White House has not released any details.

b. Federal Agencies Propose Revamped Procedures for NEPA Reviews

At least five federal agencies—including the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Energy, and Interior—are moving to significantly scale back their NEPA procedures, many doing so without formally codifying the changes or seeking public comment. These rollbacks rely on President Trump’s directives, recent NEPA amendments in the Fiscal Responsibility Act, and a Supreme Court ruling narrowing NEPA reviews. Examples include the Interior Department (DOI) shifting most NEPA rules into a handbook outside the Code of Federal Regulations, the Defense Department limiting environmental impact statements (EIS) to 150 pages and not requiring mitigation, and the Air Force immediately rescinding its NEPA rules while taking comments. The Department of Energy similarly removed NEPA procedures tied to Presidential permits for projects on the border. Environmental groups warn these moves dramatically weaken long-standing protections, limit public participation, and sideline climate and environmental justice considerations. Meanwhile, related provisions in the just-passed reconciliation bill could further speed reviews via new fees and strict deadlines, signaling broader efforts to overhaul federal permitting.

c. Encouraging NEPA Fixes at USDA / NRCS

U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins last month announced the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is revising NEPA regulations to reduce unnecessary red tape to allow USDA to efficiently deliver the critical services and funds. USDA is issuing one set of department-wide NEPA regulations by rescinding seven agency-specific regulations, resulting in a 66% reduction in regulations. [CLICK HERE](#) for the pre-publication version of USDA’s interim final rule. At first

glance, this looks promising. In a related matter, I met (virtually) last week with Kristy Oates, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) State Conservationist for Texas, who has been appointed to serve on the national team tasked by NRCS Chief Aubrey Bettencourt to streamline the watershed PL-566 program. The team's charge is: "Getting plans authorized, implemented and funds appropriated in a timely manner." We had an excellent chat, and I used the Western Agriculture and Conservation Coalition (WACC) letter we sent to NRCS in May as the basis for my talking points with Ms. Oates.

5. EPA and Army Corps: Proposal to Revise 2023 Definition of WOTUS

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Army Corps have completed a robust series of listening sessions intended to seek input from stakeholders on real-world and practical experience with CWA programs and requirements that rely on the definition of "waters of the United States," or WOTUS. EPA and the Army Corps last month announced they intend to issue a proposed rule in the coming months that will prioritize clear interpretation and implementation of the law, reducing red tape, cutting overall permitting costs, and lowering the cost of doing business in communities across the country. The definition of WOTUS guides CWA implementation, including whether farmers, landowners and businesses must secure costly permits before they can pursue a project. The Alliance last April submitted a detailed comment letter in response to the EPA and Army that explains the importance of CWA implementation to Western irrigated agriculture, summarizes past federal efforts to clarify application and interpretation of the CWA, and provides recommendations on the current administrative process. In addition to providing input on the regulatory definition of WOTUS, the Alliance letter urged 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 under the CWA. If not excluded, overregulation of these types of projects under the CWA would discourage their use.

Over the course of nine listening sessions, EPA heard from people who are frustrated with the constantly shifting WOTUS definition. Norm testified in-person at the public session hosted by EPA at its Washington, D.C. headquarters on May 1. He and many other attendees of the listening sessions strongly supported EPA and the Army's plan to revise the 2023 WOTUS definition, urging the agencies to provide consistency for the regulated community that will stand the test of time. For some, this feedback was based on confusion over jurisdictional waters on agricultural land such as ditches, stock ponds and wetlands. The agencies also heard frustration from the on-the-ground experience of homebuilders and other industry stakeholders that are directly impacted by the definition of WOTUS.

Following public comment on the proposal, the agencies will review input with the intention of issuing a final rule by the end of 2025.

6. DOI, Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)

a. Critical Habitat for Yellow-legged Frog

A coalition of California water, agriculture, and rural interests – including the Alliance - is raising concerns over a proposed FWS plan to designate 760,071 acres as critical habitat for four populations of the foothill yellow-legged frog listed under the ESA. The coalition, led by the California Farm Bureau, includes the Cattlemen's Association, the Family Farm Alliance, Public Lands Council and Rural County Representatives of California and others, warns of broad impacts on public and private lands, particularly since over 363,000 acres of the proposed area are privately owned. In response, the FWS extended the public comment period from May 17 to July 28.

b. Seeking Feedback on ESA Section 10(a) Reform

The FWS on June 9 issued a [Request for Information](#) (RFI) on improvements that could be made to its Endangered Species Act (ESA) Section 10(a) permitting processes for habitat conservation plans and conservation benefit agreements. In part, FWS is looking for examples of:

- Barriers that prevent applicants from pursuing these agreements
- Obstacles that have prevented an efficient and expeditious permitting process
- Strategies to improve communication with FWS on developing these agreements
- Options that would improve the overall effectiveness of the permitting program

Ideally, examples would include:

- Issues associated with timely development and approval
- Costs to the applicant associated with development
- Duplicative processes regarding ESA requirements and NEPA procedures
- Delays associated with FWS review/approval
- Suggestions to improve the process based on first-hand experience

Comments and information must be received by July 9, 2025.

7. DOI, Reclamation

a. Aging Infrastructure Account

Last month, Reclamation held an online workshop for the fiscal year 2026 application period for extraordinary maintenance (XM) funding. The Infrastructure Investments and Jobs Act provided \$3 billion for extraordinary maintenance work for both federal transferred and reserved works Reclamation-wide. Reclamation anticipates making approximately \$775 million available Reclamation-wide in fiscal year 2026. Prioritization of eligible extraordinary maintenance work will include factors such as risk, benefits, shovel readiness, demonstrated support from project

beneficiaries, and emphasis on projects that support reliable water and power delivery. Applications must be received by Reclamation’s regional office no later than July 18. Attached is the presentation that Reclamation delivered. You can [click on this link](#) for a list of previously funded projects. You will find the previous years' Reports to Congress and a table that lists selected projects for each fiscal year.

This FY 2026 application cycle reflects key changes driven by Family Farm Alliance advocacy. A major shift this cycle: Reclamation now encourages (but does not require) regional applicants to obtain letters of support from project beneficiaries responsible for reimbursable costs. Projects with demonstrated stakeholder support will be prioritized. This follows Alliance efforts to improve transparency and stakeholder input—especially for reserved works and non-reimbursable projects.

8. Trump Administration Takes Aggressive Forest Management Action

Amid worsening wildfire risks across the Western U.S., the Trump Administration last month issued an executive order aimed at accelerating wildfire prevention and response efforts, while the USDA rescinded the Roadless Rule, marking a dramatic policy shift in federal forest management. Several areas of the U.S. are seeing hot, dry conditions and dry fuels, increasing the potential for new ignitions and large fire growth, according to a June 23 National Interagency Fire Center report on current activity and conditions (*Capital Press*). Wildfire activity “remains elevated across the country” with six new large fires.

a. Executive Order on Wildfire Prevention and Response

Secretary of Agriculture Rollins and U.S. Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum on June 12 joined President Donald Trump for the signing of an executive order (EO) titled, “Empowering Commonsense Wildfire Prevention and Response” at the White House. The newly signed order directs federal agencies to consolidate and streamline federal wildland fire capabilities and enhance local response by adopting practical, technology driven strategies for land management, mitigation and response. It also directs agencies to modernize wildland firefighting efforts and expand efforts to prevent wildfires from starting in the first place. Many of the themes in this EO align with the *Fix Our Forests Act* (FOFA), which passed the House in January following the devastating fires in Los Angeles (CALIFORNIA). FOFA – legislation supported by the Alliance - is comprehensive, bipartisan legislation that restores forest health, increases resiliency to catastrophic wildfires and protects communities by expediting environmental analyses, reducing frivolous lawsuits and increasing the pace and scale of forest restoration projects.

b. Roadless Rule Rescinded

Agriculture Secretary Rollins last month announced during a meeting of the Western Governors’ Association in New Mexico, that USDA would rescind the 2001 Roadless Rule, essentially removing prohibitions on road construction, reconstruction, and timber harvest on nearly 59 million acres of the National Forest System. Supporters of this move say the roadless restrictions

severely limited the U.S. Forest Service from conducting responsible management and timber production, and impeded access for firefighters as they battled wildland fires. According to the USDA, 28 million acres of inventoried roadless areas are classified as being at high or very high risk of wildfire. Western Republican government leaders applauded USDA's rescission of the roadless rule. However, some Western Democrats and conservation interests were sharply critical of the decision.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE 119TH CONGRESS

9. **“One Big, Beautiful Bill” Signed into Law**

On July 4, 2025, President Donald Trump signed into law his administration's signature legislative package, officially titled the “One, Big Beautiful Bill.” This reconciliation package represents a major victory for the administration and congressional Republicans, fulfilling a central second-term priority. The bill, which narrowly passed both chambers of Congress, combines sweeping tax reforms, significant adjustments to federal spending programs, and broad changes to environmental and energy policy. The House approved the measure on July 3 by a slim 218-214 margin following an all-night session of intense negotiations. The Senate had passed the bill earlier in the week with a 50-50 tie, broken by Vice President J.D. Vance. Only two House Republicans—Reps. Thomas Massie (KY) and Brian Fitzpatrick (PA)—broke ranks to oppose the bill, citing concerns about fiscal responsibility and Medicaid changes, respectively.

Key provisions of the law include an extension of Trump-era tax cuts, substantial funding for border security, and significant reductions in social safety-net spending, particularly Medicaid. The bill also repeals numerous climate and clean energy programs established under the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). While a proposed tax on wind and solar projects was ultimately dropped, the law imposes a 12-month window for renewable projects to begin construction in order to retain tax credits, and it eliminates the IRA's methane fee and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. Supporters argue these measures will reduce regulatory burdens and stimulate economic growth, whereas critics warn of higher electricity prices, job losses in the renewable sector, and negative impacts on low-income families relying on safety-net programs.

The law's passage capped a contentious legislative process marked by record-breaking floor speeches from House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY) and intense lobbying from Speaker Mike Johnson (R-LA) and President Trump. The administration has hailed the bill as a transformative achievement, while Democrats have vowed to make its climate and healthcare rollbacks central to their 2026 midterm campaigns. As implementation begins, stakeholders are assessing both opportunities and challenges posed by the sweeping changes. Notably for Western states, the bill provides \$1 billion in non-reimbursable funding to enhance federal water storage and conveyance facilities, and allocates \$150 million in mandatory funding for PL-566 in FY 2026. TFG has prepared [this excellent summary of the bill](#) that was signed into law on July 4.

10. Congress Clashes Over Budget Cuts as FY 26 Spending Bills Take Shape

As the House begins marking up its FY 2026 spending bills, tensions are running high over the Trump administration's sweeping proposals to slash federal spending. The White House, through its Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE), is pushing a controversial agenda that includes a 23% cut to nondefense discretionary programs—threatening funding for clean energy, climate resilience, and infrastructure efforts. The administration's \$9 billion rescissions package targets a wide range of unobligated federal funds, with cuts focused on the EPA, Department of Energy, and key initiatives born from the bipartisan 2021 infrastructure law. While staunch Trump allies in Congress are applauding the proposed reductions, many moderates—and even some within the administration—are voicing concern. Even some Cabinet officials are reportedly urging lawmakers to bypass the administration's budget blueprint, which many view as politically driven rather than fiscally prudent. Key White House aides have long argued that [the Impoundment Control Act] is an unconstitutional limit on presidential power and suggested they will seek court rulings to overturn it, which could allow the White House to determine which spending to carry out, according to *The Washington Post*.

While there may be growing consensus that Congress will have to restore funding to sustainable levels, House Speaker Johnson, however, remains committed to the Trump agenda. Speaker Johnson emphasized his intention to pass the DOGE-backed rescissions package, including significant reductions to international climate and energy funding. But the road ahead is uncertain. Intraparty resistance is already surfacing. Several centrist Republicans have raised alarms about the real-world impacts of the cuts on constituents, especially in rural and underserved areas.

That tension was on full display during the recent markup of the FY 2026 agriculture appropriations bill. Approved on a 35-27 party-line vote, the \$25.5 billion bill embodies the administration's priorities, with notable cuts to conservation and climate-related programs. It also proposes new restrictions on nutrition programs for low-income Americans and controversial changes to FDA regulations around abortion medication—provisions likely to ignite fierce debate on the House floor. While some research programs received modest increases—such as a \$2.5 million boost to the Agricultural Research Service—others faced steep reductions. The NRCS, Farm Service Agency, and USDA's main research grant body, the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, all saw funding slashed. House Appropriations Committee Chair Tom Cole (R-OKLAHOMA) is aiming to have all 12 funding bills ready for floor action by August recess, so GOP leaders have the option of teeing them up for passage. The Senate Appropriations Committee is [marking up the Ag-FDA and other funding bills this Thursday](#) (*POLITICO Weekly Agriculture*). The Senate's version would require Democratic support to pass because of the Senate's 60-vote requirement.

11. Support for WaterSMART Funding

Last month, we sent a formal letter to Congressional appropriators urging support for robust annual funding for Reclamation's WaterSMART program in the upcoming Fiscal Year (FY) 2026

appropriations process. And, we joined on to a related coalition letter with dozens of other organizations (full list [here](#)).

12. WILTR Act

We were recently approached to formally support the *Wildfire Infrastructure and Landowner Tax Relief Act of 2025* (WILTR Act), which was introduced by Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CALIFORNIA). The bill would create tax incentives for property owners to engage in pre-fire mitigation activities like brush clearing, road maintenance and controlled burns. It would do this in two ways – by excluding in kind work and actual payments from third parties to cover the cost of such activities from the definition of taxable income, and by creating a deduction for amounts spent on such activities for individual property owners. The support letter was sent to Rep. Issa; his office was grateful for our support.

13. Congress Advances Water Forecasting and Drought Relief Bills for the West

As the Western U.S. braces for another dry summer, Congress is advancing bipartisan legislation that would modernize the tools used to forecast water availability and renew a major program aimed at reducing water use in the drought-stricken Colorado River Basin.

a. House Subcommittee Considers Water Supply Forecast Bill

The House Subcommittee on Water, Wildlife and Fisheries last month held a legislative hearing on four bills, including one aimed at science-based water management. The *Snow Water Supply Forecasting Reauthorization Act of 2025* (H.R. 3857), introduced by U.S. Rep. Jeff Hurd, reauthorizes the Bureau of Reclamation’s Snow Water Supply Forecasting Program, empowering water managers with the use of emerging technologies to conduct snow monitoring and water supply forecasting and make decisions based on the best available science. The legislation supports modern technologies like LiDAR and satellite imagery to create 3D models of snowpack, giving water managers more accurate data to plan and respond to drought.

b. Senate Passes Package of Natural Resource Bills

The Senate has passed a bipartisan package of bills from the Energy and Natural Resources (ENR) Committee, including key water legislation focused on the Colorado River. Central to the package is the *Colorado River Basin System Conservation Extension Act* (S. 154), which would renew a \$125 million program to reduce water use in the Upper Basin—covering parts of Colorado, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming. The measure, led by Colorado Senators John Hickenlooper and Michael Bennet, aims to help stabilize water supplies amid ongoing drought through the System Conservation Pilot Program (SCPP) and was co-sponsored by several Western Republicans. The SCPP pays farmers and ranchers to fallow their lands or employ deficit irrigation practices. The Family Farm Alliance has supported similar legislation in the past, with caveats regarding the emphasis some interests place on “demand management” as a solution to the supply challenges of

the Colorado River. We have members in the Upper Basin who view this program simply as a means of paying West Slope farmers not to farm, with absolutely no assurances that the saved water will find its way downstream into Lake Powell. We need the federal government to continue working with states and stakeholders on looking at the proper mix of conservation of water use and storage up and down the River. Alliance Director Ea'mon O'Toole (WYOMING) will participate in a panel discussion in August at the Colorado Water Congress Summer Conference in Steamboat Springs and detail his community's experience with the SCPP.

14. “Skinny” Farm Bill on the horizon?

After clearing their agriculture “One, Big Beautiful Bill” hurdle, Republicans are looking to pass a smaller (“skinny”) farm bill that includes some key policies that haven’t been updated since the last farm bill was passed in 2018. Congress has already included \$67 billion in spending farm bill programs in the reconciliation package, meaning some of the most expensive (and controversial GOP priorities) have already been handled. That leaves a key group of other farm programs that need to be extended, funded or updated. Democrats have pledged that they won’t come to the table for farm bill talks after Republicans significantly cut climate and SNAP spending. GOP lawmakers hope that Democrats – especially those who are facing competitive reelection bids in 2026 - will offer some support, though, for a less-controversial farm bill that simply extends some programs and boosts funding for bipartisan priorities (*POLITICO Weekly Agriculture*).

IN THE COURTS

15. *United Water Conservation District v United States*

The Association of California Water Agencies (ACWA) last week transmitted its *amicus* brief in support of the United Water Conservation District’s petition, which I’ve previously reported on. Joining the Alliance on the brief were the California Special Districts Association, Modesto Irrigation District, Rowland Water District, South San Joaquin Irrigation District, Santa Clarita Valley Water Agency, and Turlock Irrigation District. General Counsel Norm Semanko and I think the brief is a good one, and we’re glad we were able to join. This is a critical issue impacting California's water rights system and public water agencies across the Western United States.

ALLIANCE INITIATIVES

16. *Colorado River Initiative*

As the Colorado River Basin continues to face historic drought and mounting demands, DOI and Reclamation are stepping up with a suite of funding initiatives and collaborative efforts to build long-term water resilience across the West. From tribal modernization projects in Arizona to irrigation upgrades in Colorado and multimillion-dollar drought resiliency grants in California and Utah, federal water managers have announced millions of dollars to support water projects in the region.

In the Lower Colorado River Basin, Reclamation is exploring partnerships to develop new water sources, including early-stage proposals like the one teed up by Cadiz Inc. – the Mojave Groundwater Bank in California. If realized, the bank could significantly expand options for storing and delivering water during shortages. Meanwhile, in western Colorado, Reclamation has announced nearly \$12 million in federal funding for modernization projects led by the Orchard Mesa Irrigation District. This includes converting 8.4 miles of open canal into pressurized pipelines and installing advanced flow meters to monitor usage in real-time. These upgrades are expected to reduce water losses, cut salinity loading in the Colorado River by over 4,500 tons annually, and improve agricultural water efficiency. The Colorado River Indian Tribes (CRIT) will receive \$1.1 million to assess and modernize their irrigation infrastructure—potentially paving the way for a future title transfer of their irrigation project. Such a move could open doors to expanded leasing options and long-term water savings. These efforts are unfolding as Reclamation and DOI continue to work with Basin States and Tribal Nations to finalize Post-2026 Operating Guidelines for the Colorado River—a new framework to govern water management once current agreements expire. A draft EIS is expected by the end of the year.

Beyond the Colorado Basin, Reclamation is also investing more than \$33 million through its WaterSMART Drought Response Program to improve resiliency in communities across California, Nebraska, Utah, and Washington. These projects include water treatment facilities, expanded infrastructure, and new water management technologies designed to help communities withstand and adapt to persistent water shortages.

17. Executive Director Transition

Samanth Barncastle begins her first day at the Alliance on August 1, joining the contracting 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. We are planning an in-person meeting with our contracting team on August 6 in Boise (IDAHO), intended to kick-off the transition period between August 1 and October 31, when I officially step down as executive director.

18. 2025 Farmer Lobbyist Trip to D.C.

As previously reported, our 2025 farmer lobbyist trip will take place **September 15-18 in Washington, D.C.** Monday, 9/15 and Thursday, 9/18 (p.m.) are travel days. The bulk of our meetings will take place September 16-17 and the morning of September 18. More details to follow in the coming months.

19. 2025 Annual Meeting and Conference

The 2025 Family Farm Alliance Annual Conference will take place October 30-31 at the Silver Legacy Resort and Casino in Reno (NEVADA). Conference coordinator Jane Townsend and I are

making plans to publicly announce the conference and set up on-line registration and hotel reservation information in the coming weeks. We're brainstorming on Friday afternoon "tour" ideas now. One option may be to show the recent California Rangeland Trust documentary, "You Just Can't See Them From the Road", which portrays modern West Coast ranchers—invisible to and misunderstood by the rapidly modernizing society they sustain. Here's how the general session is shaping up:

- **"Trump Water Subcabinet"** – we'd like to see if we can get the Trump Water Subcabinet to Reno again, assuming it's put together by then.
- **Reclamation Roundtable** –we'll invite ASWS Andrea Travnicek, the new Commissioner, and key Reclamation leaders to focus on agency realignment and our work with them in the coming months.
- **"The View from Capitol Hill"** – key committee staffers from the House Natural Resources Committee, Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, and Senate and House Ag Committees.
- **"Then and Now: The Evolution and Vision of the Family Farm Alliance"** – We're working with Doug Kemper (past and long-time executive director of the Colorado Water Congress) on coordinating two panels that will take a look back at the first 30 years of the Alliance and then pivot to the present and outlook for the future. Gary Sawyers – longtime past general counsel and one of the founders of the Alliance – is helping with the first panel. The second panel will focus on Samantha and some of our newest Alliance members, including our new board president.
- **Monarch Butterfly Recovery** – I'm working on this with Jessica Fox, one of the top monarch researchers in the country and a past recipient of the U.S. Water Award. Acting FWS Director Paul Souza has confirmed his participation, and key representatives from the ag, energy and pollinator sectors will join him to discuss the huge implications associated with the listing and proposed recovery of the monarch butterfly.
- **Groundwater / Shallow Groundwater / Upper Watershed Hydrology Panel** –Sam Barncastle is taking the lead to assemble a panel of experts to discuss data gaps, new technology, and the need to better understand the relationship between ground cover, ET, and the relationship between precipitation, runoff, shallow groundwater movement and aquifers in parts of the West.
- **Snake River Water Quality Partnership** – Working with our friends at The Freshwater Trust (TFT), we'll have a panel consisting of representatives of Idaho Power Company, Oregon NRCS, EPA Region 10, and an irrigation supplier to discuss this partnership, which blends hydropower mitigation, data-driven restoration, irrigation modernization, and stakeholder coordination to revitalize the mid-Snake River.

I predict that this year's conference – due in part to our new October timeline – will be our best attended yet. So – save the date! And remember, our internal board and Advisory Committee meetings are scheduled for Wednesday, October 29.

ADMINISTRATIVE & MISCELLANEOUS

- Alliance Director William Bourdeau (CALIFORNIA) authored an excellent op/ed in his capacity as executive vice president of Harris Farms and the owner of Bourdeau Farms. William's piece was recently published in the *Fresno Bee*. [“Trump budget signals long-overdue shift toward pragmatic water management”](#) explains how the Trump Administration's budget proposal supports construction of above-ground storage facilities, repairing and improving conveyance through the Delta and Central Valley and investing in groundwater recharge and banking infrastructure.
- U.S. Agriculture Secretary Brooke Rollins is voicing strong opposition to the increasing use of prime agricultural land for solar panel installations. [Read more.](#)
- Paul Simmons, long-time general counsel and most recently past executive director of the Klamath Water Users Association (KWUA) recently retired from the association, capping off a remarkable career dedicated to solving some of the most complex water challenges in the American West. I'm dedicating my July column in *Western Farmer Stockman* magazine to my good friend and long-time professional associate; check that out for more on Paul's career later this month.
- The California Farm Water Coalition – a valued, long-time partner of the Family Farm Alliance -recently announced that its executive director, Mike Wade, will be stepping down in February. Mike has served as the organization's head since 1998. The Coalition and the Family Farm Alliance have worked together closely in recent years on collaborative efforts to raise public awareness on how Western irrigated agriculture underpins food and economic security. I first began working with Mike when I was at the Northern California Water Association in the late 1990's. Our professional relationship has only improved since that time, and I consider him to be a strong and effective partner of the Alliance. The Farm Water Coalition is now one of our closest allies, and Mike's professionalism and expertise in agricultural education and outreach are second to none. You can read more about Mike's coming departure in the July *Monthly Briefing*, which was published July 1.

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.