Family Farm ALLIANCE®

PROTECTING WATER FOR WESTERN IRRIGATED AGRICULTURE

MEMORANDUM

TO: **SAN LUIS & DELTA-MENDOTA WATER AUTHORITY DIRECTORS**

FROM: SAMANTHA BARNCASTLE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: UPDATE REPORT

DATE: MARCH 3, 2026

This executive director's report is intended to keep you apprised as to what is happening behind the scenes on policy and other issues the Alliance is engaged in or is otherwise tracking. This report is intended for your use, but I understand that you may wish to share this information with your local board members and close associates. I would ask that you be circumspect when you distribute this, however. Here is your update on activities during the month of April:

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

The Trump Administration sent its federal budget request for fiscal year 2027 to Congress on April 3, 2026 (Good Friday). This request begins the annual appropriations process, where lawmakers decide how hundreds of billions of dollars will be spent before the fiscal year starts on October 1. Although presidents are legally required to submit the budget by early February, delays have been common in the past few Administrations. President Trump has proposed a $1.5 trillion baseline for the Pentagon, a significant 50% increase from current levels. Additional emergency defense funding related to the U.S. and Israel conflict with Iran may be requested separately in an emergency supplemental funding bill.

The Administration's proposed FY2027 budget signals a continued restructuring of the federal workforce that is highly relevant to Western agriculture and water management. While overall federal employment is projected to remain relatively flat—with a modest net increase of roughly 3,000 positions—the composition of that workforce is shifting significantly. Major reductions are targeted at traditional civilian and land-management agencies, with the U.S. Department of Agriculture expected to see some of the largest losses, even accounting for the transfer of wildfire responsibilities to a new Interior-based fire service. The Department of the Interior, after already reducing its workforce by roughly 20% over the past 15 months, is again offering widespread

incentives for additional employees to leave through a "deferred resignation program" and early retirement options.

At the same time, the Administration is prioritizing growth in areas tied to national security, technology, and operational capacity, alongside broader efforts to consolidate programs, pursue privatization, and reduce the footprint of federal service delivery. The practical implication for our community is a federal government that may be less present in day-to-day agricultural, conservation, and water program delivery, with increased reliance on fewer personnel, different agency structures, and potentially greater expectations placed on state, local, and producer-led efforts to fill those gaps. This also means we need to step up our game when it comes to making sure Congress and the Administration are aware that agriculture and food security directly impact our national security.

TRUMP 47 ADMINISTRATION

1. **WaterSMART NOFOs out!**

The Bureau of Reclamation has three open WaterSMART funding opportunities to support water management, drought resilience, and innovation efforts. The available funding opportunities include:

1. Small-Scale Water Efficiency Projects- Supports projects that improve water use efficiency, increase water conservation, and help communities better manage water resources.

The Small-Scale Water Efficiency Projects funding opportunity is available on grants.gov by searching for opportunity number R25AS00279. Applications are due by June 2, 2026, at 4pm MDT.

2. Applied Science Grants- Provides funding for projects that develop tools and information to support water management decisions and enhance hydrologic resilience.

The Applied Science Grants funding opportunity is available on grants.gov by searching for opportunity number R25AS00280. There are two rounds of applications for this funding opportunity. The first round is due by July 8, 2026, at 4pm MDT and the second round is due by April 13, 2027, by 4pm MDT.

3. Drought Response Program- Assists communities in preparing for and responding to drought, including drought contingency planning and construction of drought resilience projects.

The Drought Response Program funding opportunity is available on grants.gov by searching for opportunity number R26AS00016. Applications are due by July 28, 2026, at 4pm MDT.

On Tuesday, April 28, 2026, at 1:00pm MDT, the Bureau of Reclamation will host an informational webinar to discuss eligible applicants and project types, program requirements, and

the evaluation criteria for the Applied Science Grants Notice of Funding Opportunity. Use this link to join the webinar. A recording will be made available after April 28 on the Applied Science Grants webpage. Additional information will be posted on their *website*.

2. **Historic funding for Western Water Infrastructure!**

The Bureau of Reclamation announced an $889 million investment in Western water infrastructure through the Trump Administration's "One Big Beautiful Bill," part of a broader $1 billion commitment through 2034 to expand water storage, improve conveyance, and modernize aging systems across the West. The funding targets projects in California, Idaho, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming, with a heavy emphasis on strengthening water reliability for agriculture and growing communities. California alone will receive $540 million, including major investments in the Delta-Mendota Canal, Friant-Kern Canal, San Luis Canal, and Shasta Dam expansion—projects that are critical to Central Valley water users.

Many of the funded projects are led by or directly benefit Family Farm Alliance members and partners, highlighting the organization's strong presence in federal water infrastructure efforts. Notable awards include $200 million for the Friant-Kern Canal restoration, $30 million for Idaho's Lewiston Orchards Irrigation District, $100 million for Utah's Strawberry Highline Canal replacement, and $100 million for Wyoming's Fort Laramie Tunnel repairs. Additional funding supports projects like the Eastern North Dakota Alternate Water Supply Project and Belle Fourche irrigation system improvements, underscoring a broad, multi-state effort to enhance water delivery systems that underpin Western agriculture. Congrats to those of you who were successful!

For the Alliance, we do not stop here. This is a drop in the bucket when compared to the need we're experiencing – thinking bigger and developing larger strategies with continued funding at this level will be required for our continued success in the West. The Alliance continues to engage with federal agencies to ensure spending targets our members' real needs. Reclamation will be doling out another approximately $1B by the end of FY2026 consistent with the IRA mandate, likely to the CO River only, so we'll continue to monitor those developments and report back.

3. **More details emerge on USDA's *new* Regenerative Ag program**

The Trump administration has launched a $700 million regenerative agriculture pilot program that pays farmers to adopt conservation practices aimed at improving soil health, water retention, and productivity—an approach that closely mirrors earlier "climate-smart agriculture" initiatives of the Biden Administration despite past Republican skepticism. The program emphasizes direct payments to farmers, mandatory soil testing, and measurable on-farm benefits, while avoiding climate-focused language and instead tying soil health to broader goals like nutrition and public health. While the initiative has drawn cautious support from some conservation and agriculture groups, significant questions remain about implementation, including reduced USDA staffing, a narrower list of eligible practices, and unresolved debates over the link between soil health and crop nutrition. Overall, the effort reflects a growing bipartisan convergence around conservation practices, even as political disagreements persist over framing, funding, and regulatory approach.

4. **USDA NEPA Rulemaking complete**

The USDA has finalized a historic overhaul of its NEPA regulations, consolidating seven agency-specific rules into a single, streamlined framework that cuts the overall regulatory volume by 66%. The reform aims to restore NEPA to its original purpose—ensuring environmental impacts are considered—while dramatically reducing review timelines by up to 80%, saving millions in taxpayer dollars and allowing critical loans, infrastructure, forest health, and rural development projects to move forward faster. According to Secretary Rollins, this reform is a key part of USDA's broader deregulatory agenda, addressing years of bureaucratic delays that slowed approvals, increased costs, and hindered innovation, ultimately benefiting farmers, ranchers, loggers, and rural communities who rely on timely USDA support.

5. **USDA Water Savings Commodities Grant Update**

No news is good news, or is it? We really aren't certain, but we began to push more broadly for this money to be released. In addition to meeting with USDA directly, the Alliance has reached out to industry partners, like the Farm Bureaus and other agriculture groups, to seek assistance in getting this money released. We have also sought the advise and support of Hill staff and members of Congress who, in an election year with a tight budget, will be looking for wins anywhere they can get them. We're told that the USDA's farmer safety net program has caused some potential reallocations and budgeting flexibilities to be deployed such that the money may just not be present in this grant account, which would explain why it has not been released. In any case, we have not heard anything back from USDA since we met and still do not know the status of this money. We will be tracking this and continuing our efforts to get this money freed up for our districts who were successful awardees, but in this budget cycle there are certainly no promises being made!

6. **USDA Reorganization drama continues**

Tribal governments are strongly criticizing USDA's planned reorganization, warning that relocating roughly 2,600 Washington-based employees to regional "hubs" could erode long-standing relationships, reduce institutional knowledge, and disrupt services—particularly in areas tied to treaty obligations and wildfire management. Leaders argue the plan risks significant staff attrition and "brain drain," especially after the department already lost more than 16,000 employees last year, and say it will make coordination more difficult despite USDA's claims it will improve local access. USDA leadership, including Undersecretary Stephen Vaden, has defended the reorganization as necessary to streamline operations and place staff closer to stakeholders, with relocations targeted for completion by the end of the summer. However, the department has not yet finalized or announced which employees will be moved, and concerns remain widespread—reflected in overwhelmingly negative public feedback—leaving uncertainty about implementation and its impacts as the plan moves forward. Nonetheless, Secretary Rollins has assured the public that all flexibilities will be in place to support this transition and the federal agency's employees.

7. US Forest Service Announces HQ Relocation to Utah

The U.S. Forest Service announced it will relocate its headquarters from Washington, D.C. to Salt Lake City, Utah, as part of a broad restructuring aimed at positioning agency leadership closer to the western lands that make up most of the 193-million-acre national forest system. The move is expected to be complete by summer 2027, with approximately 260 headquarters positions relocating to Salt Lake City and 130 remaining in Washington. The restructuring also includes transitioning to a state-based organizational model to push decision-making authorities closer to the field, eliminating existing regional and station office structures, and establishing operational service centers in six cities across the country. Research operations will be consolidated under a central organization in Fort Collins, Colorado. Western Republican leaders praised the move as bringing management decisions closer to the lands managed by the agency, while some Forest Service retirees and policy groups expressed concern about losing proximity to Congress and federal decision makers in Washington. For more information, please visit: USDA Prioritizing Common Sense Forest Management, Moves Forest Service Headquarters to Salt Lake City | USDA

8. The Debate over the CO River continues – All eyes on Reclamation

Supply conditions on the Colorado River have deteriorated rapidly over the past month, with hydrology now pointing toward one of the worst runoff years on record. Federal forecasters recently cut projected inflows into Lake Powell to just 1.75 million acre-feet—about 27% of average, following an already historic snowpack collapse across the basin, including Colorado's worst snowpack in more than 80 years. As a result, reservoir elevations are projected to fall toward crisis levels as early as this summer, raising the risk of lost hydropower production and threats to downstream deliveries. Basin State officials and water managers are increasingly sounding the alarm, with Upper Basin leaders noting they "can't cut water they don't have," while Lower Basin states warn that proposed reductions could devastate agriculture and key industries. Interior Secretary Doug Burgum has acknowledged the reality of the situation, warning that "nobody will be happy" with the eventual plan, as the basin faces unavoidable shortages.

Declining water levels in Lake Powell are raising serious concerns about the future of hydropower generation at Glen Canyon Dam, as projections show the reservoir approaching the critical "minimum power pool" threshold where electricity production would no longer be possible. Low snowpack and reduced runoff across the Colorado River Basin are driving these conditions, with forecasts indicating historically weak inflows that could push water levels dangerously close to that cutoff. If levels drop below roughly 3,490 feet, the dam would be unable to generate hydropower, threatening a key source of electricity for millions in the West and increasing pressure on already strained water and energy systems.

At the same time, lower reservoir levels are altering water temperature dynamics below the dam—reducing cold water releases and changing mixing patterns—which can favor nonnative species like bass while stressing native fish such as the humpback chub that depend on more stable thermal conditions. The Colorado River Energy Distributors Association (CREDA) has raised concerns about operational changes that prioritize cold water releases, arguing they could further constrain already limited hydropower generation. Reclamation is closely monitoring conditions and considering management actions to keep the reservoir above critical levels, but the situation

underscores the growing risks to both water supply, ecosystem balance, and energy reliability in the Colorado River Basin.

On the federal side, the Bureau of Reclamation is preparing to take a more direct role after basin states failed to reach agreement on post-2026 operations, with the agency signaling it will act unilaterally if necessary to operate the system. Options under consideration include releasing additional water from upstream reservoirs like Flaming Gorge, cutting releases from Lake Powell to downstream users, and imposing deeper allocation reductions across the Lower Basin. At the same time, states are lawyering up—Arizona has retained outside counsel, and multiple states and irrigation districts are formally positioning around "Law of the River" arguments—while Congress and stakeholders push back on various federal proposals. With negotiations stalled, deadlines missed, and both sides digging in over how shortages should be shared, this update may be moving from the this section to the Litigation section of this monthly update memo soon (unfortunately), as the risk of a Supreme Court fight becomes increasingly real.

9. A new source of funding for Trump vetoed SW CO project

New state funding for the Arkansas Valley Conduit highlights the ongoing tension between federal efforts to shift responsibility back to states and the financial realities facing rural communities. After the Trump administration vetoed legislation that would have reduced repayment costs for local users, Colorado is stepping in with an additional $45 million to keep the long-delayed project moving forward—ensuring continued progress on a pipeline intended to deliver clean drinking water to more than 50,000 people in southeastern Colorado. While the administration has emphasized limiting federal spending and returning cost responsibility to local beneficiaries, the situation underscores the challenge of making that approach workable on the ground. State leaders are now filling funding gaps to prevent the burden from falling too heavily on small, rural communities that lack the financial capacity to absorb large infrastructure costs, reinforcing the need for a balanced, fiscally sustainable partnership between federal, state, and local stakeholders.

10. President's Budget hard on Reclamation and others

The Administration's proposed FY2027 budget outlines significant reductions in federal investment across key agencies that support Western water infrastructure, most notably a 24% cut to the Bureau of Reclamation's core Water and Related Resources account and a 28% reduction for the Army Corps of Engineers. The proposal also scales back or eliminates programs critical to Western water users—including WaterSMART grants, water recycling, and ecosystem restoration—while broader cuts to Interior, EPA, and USDA further reduce staffing, science, and conservation capacity that underpin water project development and management. Taken together, the budget reflects a shift toward a narrower federal role focused on core operations, with fewer resources for collaborative, locally driven water supply and infrastructure projects—though Congress has historically stepped in to restore many of these funding cuts during the appropriations process. Here is the language from the President's budget proposal regarding Reclamation:

Bureau of Reclamation
The Budget refocuses Reclamation on its core missions of maintaining assets that provide safe, reliable, and efficient management of water resources throughout the western United States. The

Working Families Tax Cut Act also included $1 billion for construction of Reclamation water storage and water conveyance projects.

For example, the Budget:

- Eliminates funding for WaterSmart grants for local ecosystem restoration projects, climate studies, and water recycling plants;
- Focuses Reclamation on its mission of managing water in the western United States and ends its foray into woke projects like lining water canals with solar panels at the taxpayers' expense; and
- Terminates funding for programs that support frivolous local projects like installing artificial turf at schools and community parks.

Programmatic funding is going to continue on a downward trend, at least for this next budget cycle. We continue to stay engaged to ensure Congress understands and follows through for Western Agriculture, while also continuing to try to shape the narrative with the Administration to protect continued investment in western water infrastructure and agriculture.

11. Administration's Expedited Permitting Agenda Moves Forward

a. Bipartisan permitting reform talks resume (cautiously)

Bipartisan permitting reform talks on Capitol Hill are cautiously restarting after months of stalled negotiations tied to the administration's actions on renewable energy projects. Senate Democrats had paused discussions following stop-work orders on offshore wind and what they described as a de facto slowdown in solar permitting, but recent Interior Department moves to resume reviewing large-scale solar and onshore wind projects—combined with the Department of Justice's decision not to appeal a federal court ruling allowing a major offshore wind project to proceed—are being viewed as signs of good faith. Key negotiators have indicated a willingness to reengage if the administration continues demonstrating a consistent and balanced approach across energy sources.

At the same time, the White House has become more actively involved in negotiations, reflecting growing urgency around energy costs, grid reliability, and infrastructure needs. While there is broad bipartisan interest in advancing permitting reform to accelerate energy development, significant tensions remain over renewable energy policy and trust in the administration's follow-through. As a result, any final deal still faces uncertainty, particularly in a politically charged election year.

b. ESA Rulemaking hits troubled waters

Efforts to reform and scale back the Endangered Species Act (ESA) encountered significant legal, political, and practical headwinds over the past month. The Administration is advancing proposals to narrow the scope of ESA protections—most notably by revisiting the definition of "harm" to potentially exclude habitat modification—and is continuing to weigh changes to grizzly bear management, both of which are now under White House review. At the same time, these efforts are facing immediate pushback, including new lawsuits over federal sage grouse management

plans in the West and broader criticism that proposed changes could weaken already struggling species protections.

Compounding these challenges, a federal court recently struck down prior ESA regulatory rollbacks related to interagency consultation, dealing a legal setback that could constrain future reform efforts and reinforce stricter habitat protection requirements. Meanwhile, on-the-ground conflicts tied to ESA-listed or protected species—particularly wolves in California—are intensifying, with public safety concerns and significant livestock losses increasingly driving the policy conversation. Taken together, the Administration's ESA reform agenda is moving forward, but is already encountering substantial resistance from the courts, conservation groups, and real-world management challenges across Western landscapes.

c. God Squad convenes – litigation can't stop them (this time)

The Endangered Species Committee—commonly known as the "God Squad"—convened on March 31st to consider an ESA exemption for offshore oil and gas activities, marking just the fourth time the committee has met since its creation in 1978 and its first meeting in roughly three decades. Despite its sweeping authority to override ESA protections, the committee has been used only sparingly, and at least one of its past decisions was ultimately overturned in court. This latest convening has already drawn significant legal scrutiny, with the Center for Biological Diversity filing suit both before and after the meeting—first attempting unsuccessfully to block it, and now challenging the legal basis and process behind the exemption itself. The renewed use of the God Squad, combined with immediate litigation, underscores both how rare—and how contentious—this tool remains, while signaling it could play a more prominent role in future ESA conflicts.

12. DOI, Bureau of Reclamation: Agency Realignment and Efficiency

Family Farm Alliance and NWRA continue to meet with Reclamation on this initiative, though much of the progress has recently slowed. With large overhauls of NEPA and other internal policies, in part formulated in Secretarial Order 3446, the ground continues to move under our feet. We continue to hold regular meetings and discussions as things are shifting, and will continue to keep membership appropriately informed in our progress. As a more immediate matter, if you are part of a Reclamation Irrigation District with reserved works that requires O&M or Procurement for an upcoming project, and you believe you are capable of taking on more responsibility related to features of your project, please reach out to me to discuss this topic further.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE 119TH CONGRESS

13. Reconciliation 2.0

Congressional House Republicans are exploring a second reconciliation bill to advance party priorities before the midterms, with energy policies—especially permitting reform—high on the agenda. However, the effort faces significant hurdles from a narrow majority, procedural constraints, and internal disagreements, including concerns about making permitting reform a partisan issue. Some Senate Republicans were quick to weigh in on the lack of procedural ability to achieve a reconciliation package surrounding permit reform, stating the parliamentarian will need to make determinations that may stop any such effort. The Senate has recently begun

bipartisan permit reform discussions again. And, talks of a third reconciliation bill have also recently started, but again, even getting through a second one will be extremely tough.

14. Farm Bill (Maybe)

The House Agriculture Committee has advanced a revised 2026 Farm Bill to the full House for a soon to occur vote, marking a significant step toward reauthorizing federal agriculture and food programs through 2031. The legislation includes updates to risk management tools, expanded access to credit, investments in rural development and energy programs, and enhancements to conservation and disaster assistance for producers. However, the bill remains controversial, with critics raising concerns about provisions affecting environmental regulation, nutrition programs, and overall funding priorities, signaling potential challenges as it moves through the full House and into Senate negotiations. The Congressional Western Caucus unanimously endorsed the 2026 version of the bill that came out of the House Agriculture Committee after markup. Some staff remain uncertain whether we will see a Farm Bill completed this year, but Senate Agriculture Committee Chair, John Boozman (R-Ark.) has promised action soon and we also know a House floor vote is imminent, so we remain hopeful and engaged.

The Senate version of the farm bill could diverge from the House approach by expanding flexibility in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), including allowing more access to enrolled lands for livestock grazing and emergency haying during drought. Senators are also considering lifting summer restrictions on E15 ethanol sales, though that faces jurisdictional hurdles. In addition, the Senate package is likely to address rising input costs by promoting fertilizer price transparency and boosting domestic production, alongside broader efforts to respond to ongoing financial pressures facing farmers. The Alliance provided a letter in support of the House version of the Farm Bill and will similarly engage when the Senate begins moving forward. When the bill is called for a floor vote, we'll reach out further to encourage engagement among our membership with your congressional delegation.

15. Senate ENR Subcommittee Considers Water Infrastructure and Drought Legislation

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources (ENR) Subcommittee on Water and Power held their rescheduled legislative hearing Tuesday, March 17 where they considered 20 legislative proposals aimed at strengthening water infrastructure and addressing drought conditions in the West. Among the bills under consideration is S. 3743, introduced by full committee Chair Mike Lee (R-UT), which would direct the Interior Department to study improvements to hydropower performance at the Glen Canyon Dam and address invasive species downstream of Lake Powell. Additional legislation focused on increasing water recycling and storage in the drought-stricken Colorado River Basin, authorization of watershed pilots to assess priority investments in conservation, and authorization of cost share to accelerate improvements to large irrigation canals of concern in urbanized areas of the West, as well as hydropower licensing reform. Witnesses included representatives from the Bureau of Reclamation and the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission.

16. Appropriators Begin Fiscal 2027 Spending Bill Process

The House and Senate Appropriations Committees have begun the early stages of drafting FY 2027 spending bills, but the process faces several obstacles. The White House budget request was delayed until early April, preventing Cabinet officials like the Interior Secretary and EPA Administrator from testifying. Congress has also yet to finish its fiscal 2026 bills, with the

Department of Homeland Security (DHS) remaining unfunded due to a partisan standoff over immigration policy. Additionally, a potential multi-billion-dollar supplemental funding package could reshape overall spending decisions. Despite these hurdles, some subcommittee hearings and preliminary meetings are underway, with Cabinet officials tentatively scheduled to testify in April and May.

The House and Senate Energy-Water Appropriations Subcommittees are in the early stages of FY 2027 planning, but progress is limited. Sen. John Kennedy (R-LA), chair of the Senate subcommittee, held an initial meeting to discuss funding priorities for the Department of Energy and the Army Corps of Engineers, though he noted that meaningful work on a bill cannot begin until overall top-line spending levels and subcommittee allocations are agreed upon. On the House side, Rep. Chuck Fleischmann (R-TN), chair of the House subcommittee, expressed optimism, saying he is ready to move forward and get a bill passed in committee and on the floor.

17. DROUGHT Act introduced

Federal lawmakers have introduced the "DROUGHT Act" to expand funding for water infrastructure projects in the Coachella Valley and other drought-stricken regions across the West. The bill would increase the federal cost-share cap under the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) from 80% to 90% for projects in areas facing extreme drought or serving disadvantaged communities, making it easier for local agencies to finance large-scale water projects. Supporters say the legislation is aimed at accelerating critical investments in water recycling, storage, and conveyance systems as drought conditions intensify, while reducing financial barriers that have delayed projects. The proposal reflects growing recognition in Congress that expanded federal support will be necessary to address long-term water supply challenges in regions like the Coachella Valley and across the broader Colorado River Basin.

18. House version of Glen Canyon Dam Water Management bill introduced

A new bill introduced by Celeste Maloy (R-UT) would require a feasibility study on installing a selective withdrawal system (such as a thermal curtain) at Glen Canyon Dam to improve water management while preserving hydropower generation. The proposal responds to low Lake Powell levels and forced costly bypasses of power production and aims to identify solutions that maintain energy output without impacting ongoing Colorado River operating negotiations. Senator Mike Lee (R-UT) introduced a companion bill in the Senate, which the Alliance has already publicly signaled support for.

19. Wildfire still a *HOT* topic!

Congress has been actively addressing wildfire risk and forest management in recent weeks, advancing multiple bills aimed at prevention, response, and long-term resilience. The House is set to vote on measures including the "Wildfire Aerial Response Safety Act" (H.R. 6618), which directs a federal study into how civilian drones have disrupted firefighting operations and explores counter-drone technology and public education. Lawmakers are also considering the "Long-Term Good Neighbor Authority Act" (H.R. 7951), which would allow states, tribal nations, and local governments to enter 20-year agreements with federal agencies to collaboratively manage forests and reduce wildfire risk. Additional legislation under review includes bills expanding public lands access, improving road and trail safety, and extending water restoration programs across major river basins. These congressional efforts reflect growing recognition that wildfires are increasingly

interconnected with drought, water shortages, and regional ecosystem management, and that coordinated federal, state, and local action is needed to mitigate escalating threats. We're also told that Wildfire remains a priority on the Senate side, and expect to see movement there soon, too.

20. <u>More ESA focus last month, and more to come</u>

Congressional activity around the Endangered Species Act (ESA) picked up this month, with the Senate taking a notably more measured and bipartisan approach compared to ongoing efforts in the House. A recent hearing before the Senate Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Fisheries, Water, and Wildlife focused on evaluating how the law is functioning after 50 years, with members on both sides of the aisle emphasizing that species recovery—not just protection—should be the central goal. Lawmakers and witnesses highlighted several shared priorities, including improving transparency, incorporating more state-led data, providing incentives for recovery, and ensuring agencies have sufficient resources to implement the law effectively.

Importantly, the Senate discussion reflected a willingness to find common ground, with both Republicans and Democrats expressing openness to targeted reforms such as modernizing agency operations, increasing flexibility for private landowners, and strengthening state-federal collaboration. However, concerns about agency capacity—particularly staffing shortages at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—were raised as a potential barrier to meaningful reform. This more collaborative tone stands in contrast to the House, where a broader ESA overhaul has advanced along more partisan lines, focusing on expanding state authority and narrowing the scope of the law. Taken together, congressional momentum on ESA reform is clearly building, but the path forward remains uncertain, with the Senate pursuing incremental, bipartisan improvements while the House continues to push more sweeping changes.

21. <u>AI has become a Hill topic, with a variety of bills going in all directions</u>

Congress is beginning to more actively engage on AI-related infrastructure, particularly around the rapid expansion of data centers and their impacts on energy and water resources. In the House, lawmakers are advancing proposals like the Protect American AI Act to streamline permitting and shield projects from litigation delays, while others are pushing in the opposite direction—calling for a pause on new data center development until environmental and resource impacts are better understood. This emerging divide, coupled with state-level actions like Utah's new water reporting requirements, signals that AI policy debates in Congress are increasingly intersecting with Western resource concerns, especially around water use and infrastructure strain. Please also see the additional section below on other happenings in the world of AI regulation.

IN THE COURTS

22. <u>Court rules farm groups have right to intervene in CWA litigation</u>

A federal appeals court has ruled that pork producers and other agricultural groups can formally join a major Clean Water Act case challenging nutrient pollution regulations in Ohio's Maumee River watershed. The case centers on whether current limits on agricultural runoff—set through a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL)—are sufficient, with environmental groups arguing they are too weak. By allowing groups like the National Pork Producers Council to intervene as full parties, the court gives agriculture a stronger role in defending existing regulations and arguing that

additional requirements are not mandated under the law. This decision elevates the stakes of the litigation, as farm groups will now be able to directly influence arguments, potential settlements, and appeals in a case that could shape how agricultural runoff is regulated nationwide.

See also the paragraph below on states' recent activities regulating nitrate levels.

23. Nebraska v. Colorado (US Supreme Court)

Nebraska officials are continuing to actively advance the Perkins County Canal project—working through planning, land acquisition, and early development steps—demonstrating a clear intent to move forward with construction even as legal questions remain unresolved. At the same time, Nebraska has filed an original action with the U.S. Supreme Court seeking to compel Colorado to meet its obligations under the South Platte River Compact, while Colorado has countered that the case is premature because Nebraska has not yet suffered a concrete injury.

This dual-track approach appears to be a deliberate strategy: by proceeding with the canal, Nebraska strengthens its position either to ultimately complete the project and begin diverting water or to force a more immediate legal confrontation if Colorado intervenes to block or impede development. In doing so, Nebraska increases the likelihood of creating a ripe, justiciable dispute—one grounded in actual impacts rather than hypothetical harm—which could compel the Court to more directly address Colorado's delivery obligations under the compact.

24. King Ranch Case (Washington)

A federal judge has denied a preliminary injunction sought by the King Family, a multigenerational Washington ranching family, allowing state enforcement proceedings over alleged wetland violations and significant fines to continue. However, the broader legal fight is ongoing, with the family—represented by the Pacific Legal Foundation—arguing that they are entitled to a jury trial rather than being forced into an administrative process, a constitutional question that will be addressed in a hearing to be held this coming May. The Alliance continues to track this case and will report on any significant legal issues.

ALLIANCE INITIATIVES

25. Water quality – States and nitrate monitoring

One topic across multiple states this month was that of nitrate monitoring in streams from farm runoff. Oregon has adopted new nitrate monitoring rules for the Lower Umatilla Basin that will require most farmers to develop certified nutrient management plans, regularly test soil for nitrates, and maintain records for at least a decade. The rules aim to address decades-long groundwater contamination issues that have threatened drinking water supplies in the region, but they have drawn mixed reactions—farm groups warn of added costs and regulatory burden, while environmental advocates question whether the state has sufficient resources to enforce them. Overall, the policy represents a significant shift toward more data-driven accountability in agricultural water quality, though its effectiveness will depend heavily on implementation and oversight.

Minnesota regulators are reevaluating whether the state's 2019 Groundwater Protection Rule is sufficient to address nitrate pollution from agricultural fertilizer, following a lawsuit and court order requiring further review. Critics argue the rule has failed to meaningfully reduce contamination in drinking water, noting it targets only certain fertilizer practices and does not fully address other major sources like manure, while much of the pollution problem persists. State officials are now seeking public input on whether stronger restrictions are needed, highlighting an ongoing debate between environmental groups pushing for stricter regulation and agricultural stakeholders who say the issue is more complex and may take years or decades to reflect improvements in groundwater quality.

California lawmakers have introduced the Nitrogen Pollution Reduction Act in the state legislature, which would require state regulators to establish enforceable limits on nitrogen runoff from agricultural lands to address widespread groundwater contamination. The proposal is said to be aimed at tackling a long-standing public health and environmental issue, as excess fertilizer use contributes to unsafe drinking water, harmful algal blooms, and significant greenhouse gas emissions. Supporters argue the bill would hold polluters accountable and create a more level playing field for farmers already using responsible practices, while also targeting impacts disproportionately affecting rural and low-income communities.

26. Experimental Crops

Lately we're seeing a lot of grant funding and promotion of new, experimental water savings crops. This past month saw the announcement of a new $9 million federally funded study to explore using the cactus pear as a drought-resilient biofuel crop that could significantly reduce agricultural water use in the Mountain West. Researchers at the University of Nevada, Reno will test hundreds of varieties in multiple states, including Arizona, Nevada, Idaho, New Mexico, Wyoming, Colorado, and Utah, over five years to evaluate how much biomass they can produce with minimal water, with the goal of developing renewable fuels like ethanol and biodiesel. Because cactus pear thrives in arid environments and requires far less water than traditional crops like corn or soybeans, scientists see it as a promising option for expanding biofuel production without competing with food crops or straining limited water supplies. The impact of such an experimental crop on local economies is something to watch closely as this research plays out.

A recent Arizona Republic article explains that researchers across the Colorado River Basin are studying alternative forage crops that could use less water than alfalfa, aiming to reduce pressure on the river as drought worsens. These efforts highlight experimental crops and water-saving potential, but they remain largely in the research phase, with significant uncertainty about whether they can match alfalfa's reliability, economics, and suitability for farmers' operations. From a practical, producer-focused perspective, the piece reflects a growing push from researchers to influence cropping decisions based on water use, but it underscores a key tension: while alternative crops may look promising on paper, adoption ultimately depends on whether they work in real-world conditions—on real farms, with real markets—rather than what policymakers or academics think should be grown. Here is the article – take a look: To conserve Colorado River water, less-thirsty crops sought

27. AI and Data Centers in the Desert

The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) forthcoming update to its Water Reuse Action Plan (WRAP) is expected to help states develop regulatory frameworks for water reuse as data centers face mounting pressure over their water consumption. The revised plan is anticipated to be released soon, according to Bruno Pigott, executive director of the WateReuse Association and former acting head of EPA's water office. Pigott cited inconsistent state regulations, and in some cases outright prohibitions on recycled water use, as key barriers to broader water reuse adoption. While states like Florida, California, and Texas have strong frameworks in place, most states lag behind. EPA is expected to focus on guidance and coordination rather than setting national standards, though some tech industry groups are calling for uniform federal regulations to avoid a patchwork approach. Growing localized community opposition to data centers over water scarcity concerns is adding urgency to the issue. A Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory study projects data center water demand will nearly double within three years. Legislation has been introduced in Congress, H.R. 2940, that would create a 30 percent tax credit for water reuse projects to help offset the cost of recycling infrastructure.

Then, in late March, the White House released a new AI policy blueprint urging Congress to adopt a light-touch federal framework that prioritizes innovation, competitiveness, and a unified national approach over a patchwork of state regulations. The plan emphasizes key areas including child safety, energy demands from data centers, workforce impacts, and protections for free speech and intellectual property, while largely relying on existing laws rather than creating new regulatory bodies. It also calls for federal preemption of state-level AI laws deemed burdensome, though states would retain authority over areas like consumer protection and child safety. However, the proposal leaves major questions—such as liability, privacy, and national security risks—largely unresolved and faces uncertain bipartisan support in Congress.

A new report from Food and Water Watch argues that the rapid expansion of AI-driven data centers is dramatically increasing energy and water consumption, raising concerns about impacts to already strained resources. It estimates a single hyperscale facility can use as much electricity as 2 million households, while nationwide water use from data centers could equal that of 18.5 million households by 2028. The report also warns that states are increasingly bending energy and environmental policies—extending fossil fuel use or limiting local regulation—to accommodate data center growth. Overall, it characterizes the AI data center boom as a major emerging environmental and policy challenge, particularly in water-scarce regions like the West.

28. Agriculture and water technology

Across the West, policymakers and water managers are increasingly turning to technology-driven solutions to supplement traditional water supplies, with growing interest in both desalination and cloud seeding. Desalination—while still expensive and energy-intensive—is gaining renewed attention in places like Southern California and Nevada as a long-term drought hedge, alongside emerging technologies like atmospheric water generation and more energy-efficient treatment systems. At the same time, cloud seeding is seeing expanded investment across Western states, with programs now operating in at least nine states and delivering an estimated 5–15% boost in snowpack at relatively low cost. While none of these tools are silver bullets, the broader trend is

clear: as water scarcity intensifies, states are increasingly willing to invest in innovation to stretch existing supplies and create new ones, particularly where traditional surface and groundwater sources are no longer keeping pace with demand.

WESTERN WATER "HOT SPOTS"

Across the West, water supply conditions are trending sharply downward as the region heads into the 2026 irrigation season, driven by a combination of historically low snowpack, record winter and early spring heat, and an early runoff that has already peaked in many basins. In multiple states, snowpack levels are among the lowest on record, triggering water restrictions, reduced allocations, and growing concern about a return to widespread drought conditions by summer. Major systems like Lake Powell continue to decline, while rivers such as the Rio Grande are already projected to fall short of meeting irrigation and ecological demands. Federal and state responses are ramping up, including drought task forces, contingency planning, and expanded conservation measures, but the overall picture remains one of tightening supplies and high uncertainty. With a likely transition from La Niña to El Niño later this year adding further unpredictability, producers across the West are facing a season defined by limited water availability, increased reliance on groundwater, and the need for continued operational flexibility.

Here's the link to the US Drought Monitor: Maps | U.S. Drought Monitor

29. Drought – and the "Drought Paradox"

A new study has found that plants in the Colorado River Basin are drawing heavily on groundwater during hot, dry summers, rather than relying only on surface soil moisture as previously assumed. This "drought paradox" means vegetation continues high levels of water use even during drought, effectively pulling water that would otherwise contribute to river flows. Researchers warn this process is a significant and underappreciated driver of declining streamflows, as rising temperatures increase plant water demand and reduce the efficiency of snowmelt runoff.

30. More on Wildfire, and each month the outlook is worse

Drought and worsening water supply conditions are already translating into a severe and early wildfire season across the West, with impacts hitting both rangeland and agricultural operations. In New Mexico, officials have enacted sweeping statewide fire restrictions as unseasonably hot and dry conditions—combined with historically low snowpack—have led to 288 wildfires in just the first three months of the year, more than double the recent average. Similar conditions are playing out elsewhere, with nearly 900,000 acres of pastureland burned in Nebraska in recent weeks, forcing emergency responses and livestock support efforts as grazing land and feed supplies are destroyed. Federal and state officials are warning that low snowpack and early drying will extend and intensify fire risk, prompting calls for accelerated mitigation work from agencies like the U.S. Forest Service, even as staffing and resources remain constrained. Taken together, the combination of limited water supply, dry soils, and extreme heat is not only reducing irrigation reliability but also significantly increasing wildfire risk, creating compounding challenges for agricultural producers across the region.

31. California weather and water supply

California water officials are warning that below-average snowpack this year is unlikely to recover, threatening the state's water supply as it heads into the hot, dry summer months. Because snowpack provides roughly one-third of California's annual water, reduced accumulation and early melt could significantly limit runoff into rivers and reservoirs. While reservoirs are currently in relatively good shape, experts caution that without sufficient spring snowmelt, water availability could quickly decline later in the season. Last month's initial allocation of only 15% for Central Valley farmers led to an outcry. Please see this article about Family Farm Alliance Board Member Cannon Michael's thoughts on the current situation: Cannon Michael Warns West Side Farmers Face Major Challenges

California's situation is like others, entering the 2026 water year in a significantly constrained position, with statewide snowpack at just 18% of average, including only 6% in the northern Sierra, 21% in the central Sierra, and 32% in the southern Sierra. Extremely warm late-winter conditions have further reduced that already limited snowpack, accelerating melt and raising concerns about drought, wildfire risk, and reduced runoff into the summer. Despite some reservoir gains from earlier storms, storage remains under pressure, and irrigation districts have already begun delivering water earlier than normal due to heat and limited capacity, with concerns that supplies in some areas could run short by mid-summer.

On the federal side, the Bureau of Reclamation has taken several concrete actions to manage shortages. Central Valley Project allocations were modestly increased but remain low, with south-of-Delta and Delta agricultural contractors at 20%, and municipal and industrial users south-of-Delta at 70%. Reclamation is also holding back about 94,000 acre-feet in San Luis Reservoir as a drought reserve and continuing real-time operational adjustments to balance water deliveries with environmental requirements. In addition, spring pulse flow releases on the Sacramento River are being implemented to meet fishery needs, underscoring the ongoing tradeoffs between environmental mandates and water supply reliability for agriculture.

32. Columbia, Snake and Yakima River Basins (ID/OR/MT/WA)

Water supply conditions in the Pacific Northwest are already constrained heading into the 2026 irrigation season. In the Yakima Basin, the Bureau of Reclamation's March forecast shows junior water users receiving about 44% of full supply, while senior rights holders receive 100%. That reduced allocation is driven by snowpack at just 33% of average, despite reservoirs sitting at 76% full (128% of average for this time of year). Across Washington more broadly, snowpack is roughly 50–55% of normal statewide, with some basins closer to 35%, reinforcing expectations of a fourth consecutive drought year and a likely dry irrigation season.

On the federal side, the Bureau of Reclamation is actively managing the Yakima Project under shortage conditions—setting prorated allocations, continuing monthly water supply forecasts through at least July, and operating reservoirs to meet irrigation, contract, and instream flow obligations. At the same time, broader federal involvement in the region remains focused on system operations and policy tradeoffs, including ongoing management of flows in the Columbia River Basin where hydropower, fish requirements, and water supply reliability continue to be in

tension. Taken together, the current numbers point to a below-average water year with federal project operations and allocation decisions directly shaping how shortages are distributed across agriculture.

Southern Idaho farmers are also facing a severe water shortage heading into the 2026 growing season due to record-low snowpack caused by unusually warm temperatures, limiting the natural runoff that typically supplies irrigation (to echo the song of the rest of the West). With little spring snowmelt expected, producers will be forced to rely on reservoir storage much earlier, leaving those with junior water rights especially vulnerable to shortages. Many farmers may have to reduce water-intensive crops or leave fields fallow, and some areas could run out of irrigation water months earlier than normal, raising concerns about significant production losses. Primary crops said to be affected will include alfalfa, potatoes, and sugar beets.

33. Colorado River Basin (AZ/CA/CO/NV/NM/UT/WY)

a. Nevada groundwater recharge highlighted in new report

A new study highlights Las Vegas as a rare example of successful groundwater recovery, showing how decades of overuse were partially reversed through active management strategies like artificial recharge—injecting treated Colorado River water back into aquifers. These efforts have helped stabilize groundwater levels despite continued population growth and rising overall water demand. However, the case also underscores limits: Las Vegas still relies heavily on imported surface water and continues to pump groundwater faster than natural recharge in some areas, illustrating both the potential and constraints of recovery efforts in arid regions.

b. Colorado's Snow Drought and its broad impact

Colorado, like the rest of the West, is facing a deepening "snow drought" with snowpack levels near record lows and major river basins well below normal—raising serious concerns about water supply heading into spring and summer. In response, the state has activated a multiagency drought task force to coordinate planning around expected shortages, wildfire risk, and broader impacts to water users. Officials warn that reduced snowpack—Colorado's primary natural reservoir—will limit runoff, strain reservoirs, and increase the likelihood of both water restrictions and an intense wildfire season, signaling a challenging year ahead for agriculture and communities across the state.

Even as Colorado cities push residents to conserve water amid severe drought, utilities are increasingly turning to drought surcharges and rate structures that mean customers' bills may still rise even if they use less water. These fees are designed to both encourage conservation and stabilize utility revenues—since reduced water sales during drought create budget shortfalls—so in many cases, households must significantly cut usage just to keep bills flat, rather than see savings.

c. Arizona is looking to private funding for solutions

Saving water in Arizona is proving increasingly expensive, as solutions like recycling, conservation programs, and developing new supplies require significant investment while federal funding has declined. There is a growing interest in shifting more of those costs onto large water users—particularly corporations like data centers—rather than households and farmers alone. Policymakers and water experts are exploring mechanisms for companies to help fund conservation efforts, arguing that businesses benefiting from Arizona's limited water resources should play a larger role in sustaining them. And what's more, large corporations like Proctor & Gamble and Google are stepping up to fund on-farm efficiency projects. The nonprofit Bonneville Environmental Foundation, which channels corporate money to water-saving efforts through its "Business for Water Stewardship" program, has contracted more than $27 million from major companies for such projects since 2020. While not always so eager to help, companies are now getting involved for two primary reasons: preventing harm to their production capabilities and preventing harm to their reputation. The actual impact of this new trend remains to be seen. And one thing remains clear, the private sector simply cannot do what federal funding can do – in other words, this is no replacement for the federal dollars that are needed in the West.

d. Utah's Weber River Basin – new technology!

Utah water managers are piloting NASA-developed airborne technology in the Weber Basin to improve how snowpack is measured and forecasted, using advanced sensors like LiDAR and imaging spectrometers to map snow depth and water content across entire watersheds. Unlike traditional point-based systems, the technology provides high-resolution, basin-wide data that can significantly improve runoff forecasting and water supply planning. The multi-year "Wings Over Weber" project is intended to help inform decisions around reservoir management, drought response, and Great Salt Lake conditions, though officials are still evaluating whether the benefits justify the cost.

e. Utah's effort to map and remove water guzzling invasive species

Utah is launching a new mapping effort focused on identifying where water-intensive vegetation—particularly invasive species like phragmites—is consuming significant amounts of water in the Great Salt Lake basin. Scientists say these plants can drain tens of thousands of acre-feet annually, and better mapping will help target removal and restoration efforts more effectively. The goal is to give water managers more precise, actionable data to recover flows to the lake without broad, blunt policy measures. Ultimately, the initiative reflects a growing emphasis on measurement and targeted management—recognizing that improving water supply outcomes increasingly depends on understanding exactly where water is being lost across the system.

f. Utah is on a roll this month!

Scientists are said to have identified a potentially large freshwater reservoir beneath Utah's Great Salt Lake using airborne geophysical surveys, with water stored in sediments thousands of feet below the surface and likely fed by mountain snowmelt over long periods. While the discovery could have implications for addressing dust pollution from the shrinking lake and may eventually

be considered for uses like environmental mitigation or even irrigation, researchers emphasize that the findings are preliminary, the full size and accessibility of the resource remain uncertain, and significantly more study is needed before any practical application can be determined.

g. New Mexico's 2019 Water Data Act sets stage for national recognition

Recent news highlighting New Mexico's Water Data Initiative has recognized the public service project as one of the nation's "50 States, 50 Breakthroughs," reflecting its role in modernizing how water information is collected and shared. The initiative aims to integrate fragmented water data into a more accessible, real-time system to support decision-making by policymakers, researchers, and water users, improving understanding of water use, availability, and system vulnerabilities across New Mexico. Led by the New Mexico Bureau of Geology and Mineral Resources (NMBGMR) at New Mexico Tech, the initiative was launched as part of the 2019 New Mexico Water Data Act, a landmark piece of legislation that set the state on a path to become a national leader in collecting, standardizing, and sharing water data.

34. Nebraska wildfires

As of the end of March, historic wildfires across Nebraska have burned more than 700,000 acres—much of it critical grazing land—making the Morrill Fire the largest in state history and leaving tens of thousands of cattle displaced. Driven by extreme winds, drought, and dry conditions, the rapidly spreading fires have forced evacuations, overwhelmed local response capacity, and prompted a state emergency declaration with support from the National Guard and federal fire teams. The damage comes amid broader drought conditions across the region, compounding already strained forage and water supplies for producers.

In the aftermath, ranchers are facing urgent challenges to feed and relocate livestock, while relief efforts are mobilizing to meet immediate needs. Industry groups and nonprofits have launched disaster funds and in-kind support initiatives like hay shipments to affected operations, with thousands of bales being donated and transported by volunteers. While community response has been strong, the scale of the disaster underscores the growing vulnerability of agricultural systems to wildfire and drought across the Great Plains and the West.

Recent precipitation has brought some drought relief to parts of the Midwest—particularly in the eastern Corn Belt—but conditions worsen moving west, with Nebraska facing a bleak outlook heading into the growing season. Meanwhile, nearly 99% of Texas remains in drought, highlighting persistent dryness across the southern Plains. Despite localized improvements, soil moisture remains precarious in many key agricultural regions, and broader concerns continue over low snowpack and ongoing dryness in the West.

35. Rio Grande Basin (CO/NM/TX)

a. Rio Grande water supply running thinner than ever

The headlines this past month across numerous media outlets for approximately four days straight read as follows: "Climate change and prolonged overuse are pushing the Middle Rio Grande into

'dire' situation" highlighting what the media called a severe and potentially irreversible water crisis. With the river already drying for extended periods in recent years and expected to dry even earlier in 2026 due to record-low snowpack and shifting runoff patterns, both of which are reducing flows, increasing wildfire risk, and forcing greater reliance on groundwater for municipal supply. While not the 5-alarm fire the media would make it out to be (yet), the situation is raising alarms about legal and management consequences, including potential violations of Rio Grande Compact obligations and growing competition among agricultural, municipal, and environmental demands. Experts warn the crisis reflects long-term climate-driven changes rather than temporary drought, signaling the need for significant adjustments in water use and planning statewide.

b. New Mexico increases water theft violation fees

New Mexico's Governor signed legislation in March to significantly strengthen water enforcement and investment statewide, including a major update to water code penalties—the first in over a century—raising fines for violations from $100 to up to $3,400 per day. The law is intended to deter illegal water use, such as unauthorized well drilling, and gives the Office of the State Engineer stronger enforcement authority. The penalty had not been increased since the NM Water Code was first passed by its Territorial Legislature in 1907. New Mexico is one of the hardest hit by the ongoing drought, not having seen an 'average' or 'above average' water supply since 2003. The move comes as other states are also tightening the rules related to water use, including new groundwater regulations that cover metering and reporting requirements, and more. (Note: I worked on this legislation in my home state for multiple years, and it was widely supported by agriculture who, in this case, are often the senior water users being stolen from)

MISCELLANEOUS

- Republican US Senator Steve Daines of Montana dropped his bid for re-election to a third term this past month. Daines withdrew his name just minutes before the deadline for candidates to file for the November election with the Montana secretary of state's office. Simultaneously Seth Bodnar, former president of the University of Montana, launched an independent campaign for Daines's seat.
- Rep. Ryan Zinke (R-Mont.), a former Interior Secretary during President Trump's first term, also announced he will not seek reelection this November. Zinke, who has represented Montana in the lower chamber for three non-consecutive terms joins over a dozen Republican House lawmakers not seeking re-election, as Democrats are optimistic about their chances of taking control of the lower chamber this November.
- House Committee on Agriculture Chairman Glenn "GT" Thompson (PA-15) announced the official placement of Rep. David Valadao (CA-22) to the House Committee on Agriculture to replace the late Doug LaMalfa. Valadao is a producer himself with a strong record of representing farm families in Congress.
- Here is an opinion piece worth reading if you have some extra time: OPINION: Public Land Grazing is Vital for a Healthy America – Pagosa Daily Post News Events & Video for Pagosa Springs Colorado
- In case you missed it, DEF sensor relief has finally arrived! EPA has eliminated the DEF sensor requirement, and projects it will save farmers in the neighborhood of $4B annually. Read the press release here: Trump Administration Announces Latest Action to Address

Diesel Exhaust Fluid (DEF) System Complaints, Saves American Farmers and Truckers Over $13 Billion Annually | US EPA

- Here's a couple of hard statistics to chew on: The number of cattle raised in the United States is already the lowest since the 1950s — a consequence of a 2022-2023 dry spell that reduced forage and raised hay prices across the High Plains. This year, according to the Agriculture Department, 64 percent of the U.S. cattle inventory is affected by drought, along with most of the hay and alfalfa used for feed.
- The Salton Sea contains an estimated $500 billion in lithium critical for batteries and clean energy, but development faces growing local opposition due to existing environmental damage and concerns that extraction could further strain already limited water supplies in the region. Stay tuned for more as this topic grows in interest.

ADMINISTRATIVE

- This month I'll be siting still preparing to take on interns for the summer, writing, and working on more development of the 'Boots on the Ground' advocacy Campaign. I am also in the beginning stages of planning the Board's Summer Retreat. But, I'm off and running again in May and June, with most of my calendar filled with travel for those months. More to come on that front.
- Please continue to send pictures and an explanation paragraph for any of your successful water infrastructure projects you have in motion or recently completed. Also, if you have digital images or videos of your projects, facilities, or producers, and you can share those, please send them my way so we can continue to add to our arsenal for our 'Boots on the Ground' Campaign.

This is a quick summary of just a few of the issues the Alliance has been engaged in, some of which has come directly from other authors, such as Alliance Contractors. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 575-202-2705 or ***samantha@familyfarmalliance.org*** *if you have specific questions or would like further information about what the Alliance is doing to protect water for Western irrigated agriculture.*