

Monthly Briefing

A Summary of the Alliance's Recent and Upcoming Activities and Important Water News

2012 Family Farm Alliance Annual Conference: *Farm Water: The Key Ingredient for Healthy Rural Communities*

The 2012 Family Farm Alliance Annual Conference, held in late February in Las Vegas (NEVADA), is wrapped up, and the reports that have come in since the conference ended indicate that it was a resounding success.

"I have to say the conference in Vegas was one of the best I've covered," said one reporter from a major Midwestern farm journal.

"Great accommodations, great conference, excellent turnout," another conference participant noted. "Bottom line it was well done."

The 2012 Annual Conference, which took place at the Monte Carlo Resort and Casino, featured diverse, high profile speakers and panel discussions that focused on the innovative ways and

new partnerships that Western farmers and ranchers are developing to protect rural communities. Conference organiz-

ers intended to showcase how new and innovative forums and coalitions can be employed to reach mutually beneficial solutions amongst diverse, and

sometimes traditionally opposing, interests. A common challenge noted by many of the producers at the conference is the effort for Western farmers and ranchers to remain economically viable and still address environmental challenges and responsibilities.

"We've long understood the economics of the farming business," said Carl Mattson, a farmer from Montana. "The other thing that is now on our radar screen is the environmental responsibility element."

Alliance President Patrick O'Toole, who operates a sheep and cattle ranch near the Colorado-Wyoming state line,

opened up the conference with a speech that focused on the importance of finding new ways of doing business so that young people can be persuaded to look to agriculture as a life-long career choice.

"We are not in a sustainable mode right now," said Mr. O'Toole. "Only 6% of our farmers and ranchers are



Former Congressman Charlie Stenholm wowed the luncheon crowd on the first day of the 2012 Family Farm Alliance annual conference general session. The 13-term Texas Congressman kept the crowd laughing with his easy sense of humor, but bemoaned how partisanship has handcuffed progress on agriculture, water and oil and gas policy.

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2012 Annual Conference (Continued from Page 1)

younger than 35 years of age. That’s why it’s great to see young people in the audience today – we want to see even more next year. We need more young people – young engineers and producers on the ground who know how to do things.”

Mr. O’Toole noted that most of the farmers and ranchers in his Little Snake River neighborhood were over eighty years old.

“These are the kind of guys who knew how to get the job done,” said Mr. O’Toole. “They had to start somewhere, and they started at a young age. We need a resurgence of that, starting now.”

He recounted his experience in the Wyoming state legislature, when CEOs of top businesses were brought in to explain the types of traits they looked for in seeking young recruits.

“Virtually everyone we talked to, without prompting, told us they’d always take a kid who grew up on a farm or ranch, regardless of their degree,” Mr. O’Toole told the audience. “Now is the time to get these young people plugged into the process. This is exciting, and the Family Farm Alliance can be used as a forum to make that happen.”

Mr. O’Toole noted that finding ways to entice young people to enter and stay in the field of agriculture would continue to be a top priority for the Alliance, in addition to other important initiatives:

- Working to limit the duplicative scope of National Committee on Levee Safety in Western rural communities.
- Monitoring and engaging administrative rule-making actions that pose threats to Western irrigated agriculture.
- Seeking administrative and legislative solutions to streamline the regulatory process associated with developing low-head, low-impact hydropower development in existing conveyance systems.
- Continuing to discuss potential effects and impacts of climate change, building upon the interest created by the Alliance’s 2007 climate change report.
- Seeking ways to streamline the regulatory process so meaningful water enhancement and local conservation projects can be implemented.
- Continuing to develop new resources through increased membership, participation and fundraising to allow the Alliance to fully serve its members.

Mr. O’Toole also explained that the Alliance will also continue outreach efforts to advance Farm Bill funding priorities in the immediate term, and toward a longer-term strategy to address Farm Bill reauthorization.

Mr. O’Toole and several other representatives of agricultural and conservation organizations stayed an extra day in Las Vegas to plan for the unveiling of the new “Western Agriculture and Conservation Coalition” (see related article, page 6). The focus of that group in the near-term will be to advocate for water conservation funding as the Farm Bill is negotiated in Washington, D.C.

Photos of other conference highlights are include on pages 7-11 of this *Monthly Briefing*.



Family Farm Alliance President Pat O’Toole (above) and John Ehrmann of the Meridian Institute (below) participated in a panel discussion of their involvement with AGree, a national effort to find long-term, global food and agriculture policy solutions.



Three Alliance Witnesses Testify at Storage Oversight Hearing

Three members of the Family Farm Alliance, including President Patrick O’Toole (WYOMING), testified before a House Natural Resources Subcommittee on Water and Power oversight hearing on February 7. The hearing, titled “*Water for Our Future and Job Creation: Examining Regulatory and Bureaucratic Barriers to New Surface Storage Infrastructure*”, highlighted the regulatory burdens that hinder vital water storage improvement projects.

New water storage projects help create jobs, increase agriculture production, generate hydropower and grow the economy. The hearing provided witnesses an opportunity to offer up common sense ways to overcome those hurdles. The Family Farm Alliance had a major presence at the hearing, and their involvement in this matter was noted by Subcommittee Members during and after the hearing.

“I want to thank the Family Farm Alliance for the work you do on an ongoing basis as it relates to our water resources throughout the West,” said Rep. Jim Costa (D-California) to Mr. O’Toole at the hearing. “You play an important role.”

Mr. O’Toole, who operates a sheep and cattle ranch in Wyoming, has personal experience working to build High Savery Dam, a two-year construction project that took over fifteen years to permit. He testified about the importance of increased storage to agriculture and food security.

“There must be more water stored and available to farms and cities. Maintaining the status quo simply isn’t sustainable in the face of unstoppable population growth, diminishing snow pack, increased water consumption to support domestic energy, and increased environmental demands,” said O’Toole. “If we don’t find a way to restore water supply reliability for irrigated agriculture...our country’s ability to feed and clothe itself and the world will be jeopardized.”

Alliance member Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District (GCID) was represented at the hearing by its general manager, Thad Bettner. He testified of the importance of new storage to GCID and all of Northern California because the federal Central Valley Project (CVP), which GCID’s water diversions are intertwined with, and the State Water Project have both lost water supply yield and operational flexibility. That yield and flexibility has eroded over time due to in-

creased contractual obligations and increased water demands to meet the needs of endangered species and the state and federal refuge system.

“We do not need much in the way of additional water supplies in the Sacramento Valley, but without new storage, the pressure on our existing water supplies will continue to grow,” Mr. Bettner testified “The State’s population continues to increase and the reallocation of water to environmental uses is expanding. This reality continues to play itself out, especially given that no new investments in the development of additional water supply or storage have occurred.”

Mr. Bettner explained that, for water users in northern California, in the area of origin, the ever-increasing demand for water, coupled with no new storage, represents a threat to the vitality of irrigated agriculture in the Sacramento Valley, the local environment including the protection of the Pacific Flyway, and the regional groundwater system which sustains rivers, creeks and streams.

“A strong agricultural sector and healthy environment depend heavily upon a certainty of water supply,” said Mr. Bettner. “Disrupt that certainty, allow the strain on existing water supplies to persist, and investments in agriculture will not be as readily forthcoming. That lack of investment translates into a dim future for agriculture and continued instability in water supplies, which will threaten the economic health of the state as a whole.”

Rep. Jim Costa, a Democrat from California’s San Joaquin Valley, agreed that more storage is needed in California.

“Our current water system is insufficient to satisfy our water needs,” said Rep. Costa.

Cumbersome environmental regulations have delayed critical water storage projects for years while urban growth, environmental litigation and age strain current water storage infrastructure. Rural communities, ranches and family farms across the country are dependent on a dependable water supply, which is directly linked to storage capacity.

Norm Semanko, a long-time member of the Family Farm Alliance Advisory Committee, and executive director of the Idaho Water Users Association, testified that the often slow and cumbersome federal regulatory process is a major obsta-



Rep. Jim Costa
Photo Source:
The Online Office of Jim Costa

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Storage Oversight Hearing (*Cont'd from Page 3*)

cle to realization of projects and actions that could enhance Western water supplies.

“We must continue to work with federal agencies and other interested parties to build a consensus for improving the regulatory process, instead of using administrative channels that create new obstacles,” said Mr. Semanko.

Rep. Doc Hastings (WASHINGTON), the chair of the House Natural Resources Committee, voiced similar concerns.

“Regulations and associated litigation have hijacked these projects, to the point where their very purposes have been compromised and the construction of new water storage to continue to meet the needs of these regions is nearly impossible to achieve,” said Chairman Hastings. “Water users throughout the West have been forced to stand by and watch powerlessly as increasingly burdensome federal rules based on questionable science and never-ending litigation makes it more and more difficult to continue to receive the water they need.”

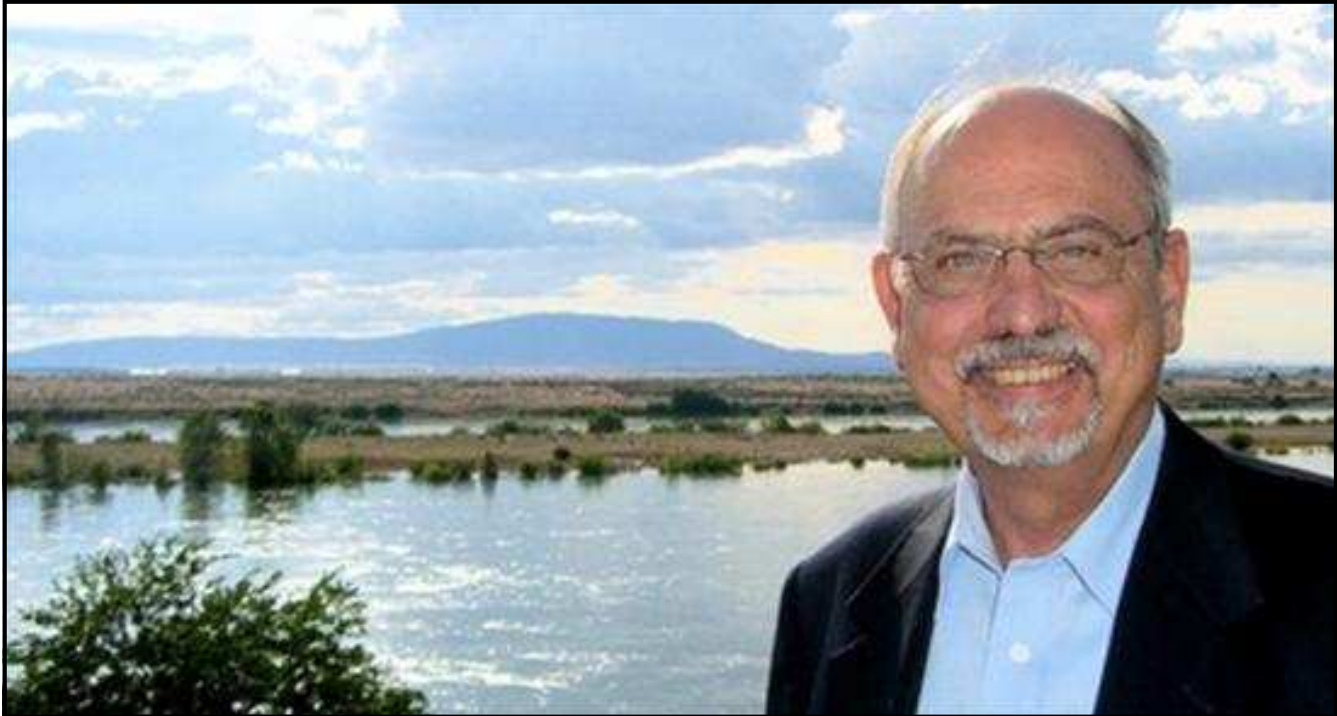
The Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has built more than 600 dams over the last century, however over 66% of their facilities were constructed over 50 years ago. A recent Reclamation study found nearly one hundred potential sites

for new surface storage, yet due to environmental regulations and other factors it has been over a generation since Reclamation built multiple large scale water storage facilities.

Michael Gabaldon, director of technical resources for Reclamation, who represented the agency at the hearing, defended the agency's regulatory processes. “The processes are founded in law,” he said. “ESA, NEPA -- that is the law of the land. We need to comply with it.”

The Alliance will seek to build on the success of the hearing and is working with the Subcommittee staff and others on Capitol Hill to solve some of the problems identified by witnesses.

“There are some reoccurring problems with project permitting processes that we have identified over the past decade,” said Alliance Executive Director Dan Keppen. “We know that there are often conflicting agency permit requirements and timelines, and unwieldy analysis requirements. Those issues were well-documented by the witnesses who testified at the hearing. Now, we need to roll up our sleeves and come up with some creative solutions to those problems.”



House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings (WASHINGTON).

Photo Source:

House Natural Resources Committee

Important Small Conduit Hydro Bill Passes House

The U.S. House of Representatives on March 6 passed H.R. 2842, the “Bureau of Reclamation Small Conduit Hydropower Development Act,” sponsored by Representative Scott Tipton (R-CO) by a vote of 265 to 154, including 28 Democrats.



Rep. Scott Tipton (CO)
Photo Source:
Rep. Scott Tipton Website

“This legislation is an important piece of the all-of-the-above energy strategy that our country needs in order to strengthen reliable domestic energy production, generate economic growth, and get Americans working. In Colorado alone, this legislation would provide the capacity to generate as much hydroelectric power as the Glen Canyon Dam,” said Rep. Tipton. “By streamlining the regulatory process, and reducing administrative costs for small

hydropower development at Reclamation’s facilities, this common sense legislation will encourage the production of clean, renewable hydropower and provide much needed opportunities for the creation of new jobs in parts of Colorado and the nation’s hardest hit rural areas.”

The bill was previously approved by the Natural Resources Committee with bipartisan support and is endorsed by the Family Farm Alliance, the National Water Resources Association, the Association of California Water Agencies and the American Public Power Association.

The Family Farm Alliance worked with Congressional staffers to help craft this bill, and provided expert testimony as the bill wound its way through House committees last year.

“We support H.R. 2842 and believe it will reduce costs to foster more conduit hydropower at federal facilities and empower irrigation districts to develop this generation,” said Alliance Executive Director Dan Keppen.

The bill would amend the Reclamation Project Act of 1939 to authorize the Secretary of the Interior, acting through the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation), to con-

tract for the development of small conduit hydropower at Reclamation facilities; streamline small hydropower (1.5 MW or less) permitting and development at Reclamation facilities; protect water delivery functions at Bureau facilities as primary purposes; and waive the requirement for certain National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements plus some additional issues.

Three amendments and a motion to recommit with instructions were considered:

- Representative Scott Tipton (R-CO) – offered a technical amendment which was accepted by voice vote.
- Representative Keith Ellison (D-MN) – offered an amendment which would give the Secretary of Interior veto authority over these projects if there is a loss of jobs. The amendment was defeated by a voice vote.
- Representative Grace Napolitano’s (D-CA) – offered an amendment which would remove the NEPA exemption from the bill. This amendment was defeated by a vote of 253 to 168.
- Representative John Garamendi (D-CA) – offered a motion to recommit which would require that all materials used for this legislation be made in America. The motion to recommit was defeated by a vote of 237 to 182.

The bill now goes to the U.S. Senate for consideration.

“I am hopeful that my Senate colleagues take up this common sense legislation and join the House in advancing the development of abundant and environmentally responsible hydropower, generating affordable energy, and creating much needed American jobs,” urged Rep. Tipton, after the bill passed the House.



Alliance Advisory Committee member Grant Ward (AZ) participated in a panel discussion that addressed HR 2842 and other hydropower legislation and policy issues at the February 2012 Alliance annual conference.

Alliance Engages in New Farm Bill Coalition

The Family Farm Alliance joined with representatives of the California Farm Bureau Federation, Trout Unlimited, Wyoming Stock Growers Association, The Nature Conservancy, Arizona Public Lands Council, Environmental Defense Fund, Public Lands Council (PLC) and the Irrigation Association on February 25 to form the Western Agriculture and Conservation Coalition to advocate for balanced management of resources in the rural west.

The goals of the Coalition would be to support the common interests of agriculture and conservation through targeted education, advocacy, and outreach and to engage decision makers and resource managers in the spirit of collaboration to further a shared vision for a rural west that is economically and environmentally sustainable.

"Livestock producers look forward to the opportunity to show the inextricable connection between their ability to stay in business, and the health of the economies and natural resources of the West," said PLC president and rancher from Nevada, John Falen. "Through wise resource use over generations, and through clear private property rights, ranchers have proven themselves diligent stewards of the

land."

Chris Wood, President and CEO of Trout Unlimited, said: "successful conservation depends on collaboration. In the West, many of our conservation projects wouldn't happen without two things: agricultural producer partners and Farm Bill support. We urge Congress to act quickly to ensure a Farm Bill that continues to provide vital tools for private land stewardship."

As a first step, the groups agreed to call on Congress to pass the Farm Bill this year in order to ensure the greatest possible amount of funding for the conservation title. The Senate Agriculture Committee is holding a conservation hearing tomorrow, an action which the groups agreed was an important step in the right direction. The groups will submit detailed policy proposals to the Committee in the next few days.

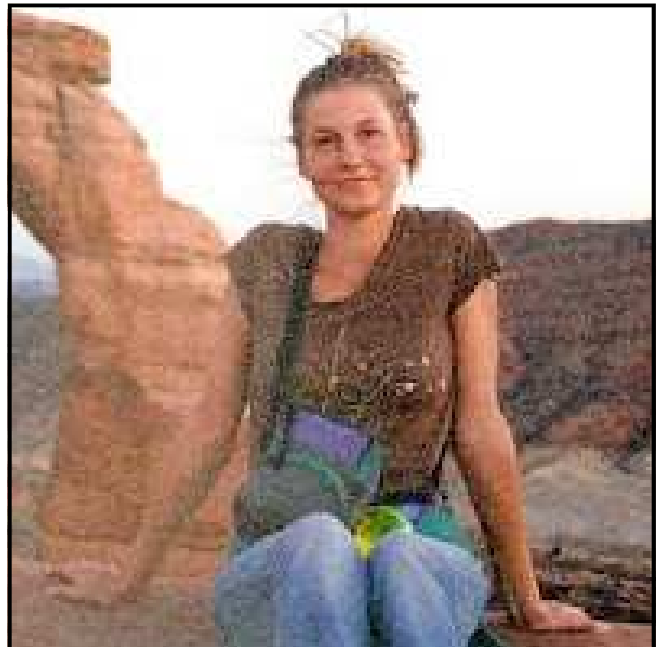
While the current farm bill debate is the priority of the coalition, members of the Western Agriculture and Conservation Coalition look forward to potentially expanding the coalition's focus to include other areas of importance to western agriculture production and conservation efforts.

Meet Harmony Burright: Conference Photographer

The photos of the 2012 Family Farm Alliance annual meeting and conference that you see in this edition of the "Monthly Briefing" were taken by Ms. Harmony Burright, a graduate student from Oregon State University. Harmony wanted to attend this year's conference, in large part to listen to panelists discuss the formation of the newly created Western Agriculture and Conservation Coalition (see related story, above). Harmony is working on a project that investigates payment for environmental services, including Farm Bill conservation programs like the Agricultural Watershed Enhancement Program, as part of her master's degree work in water resources policy and management at OSU. The Alliance agreed to waive her conference registration fee in exchange for utilizing her amateur photography skills in Las Vegas.

"I would like to sincerely thank the Family Farm Alliance for helping to attend the conference – what incredible people and salient information," said Ms. Burright. "It was a truly valuable experience at this stage in my career. It is really refreshing to see diverse groups with a common vision working collaboratively towards achieving that vision."

"Harmony did a great job covering the conference, and we were pleased that she could participate," said Alliance Executive Director Dan Keppen. "We wish her luck in as she moves forward in her career in the world of water policy."



*Harmony Burright
Oregon State University graduate student
and amateur photographer*

Highlights from the 2012 Annual Conference



AGree: A Long-Term Vision of Agriculture, Striving to Include Mutual Goals of Production and Conservation

Top Left—A.G. Kawamura, former Secretary of Agriculture under California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger. “When you don’t have predictability, you realize you need infrastructure – storage, flood control, delivery systems—for the future of California. We are constantly looking at enhancing the predictability for irrigated agriculture.”

Middle, Left—Carl Mattsen, Montana farmer. “AGree is a great platform to talk about water, because of the wide range of stakeholders. Good, honest, frank discussion is forcing the other side to look at this in a light they haven’t looked before. They are forced to consider how much food is at stake.”

Bottom left, above - the audience had many good questions for the AGree panelists.

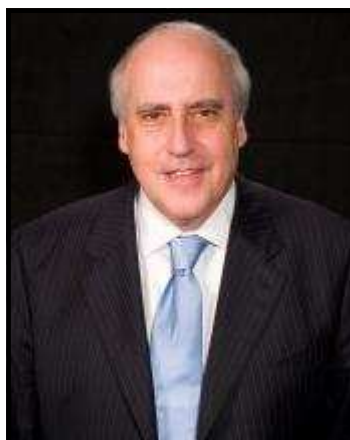
Highlights from the 2012 Annual Conference



Clean Water Act Rulemaking
This panel discussion focused on CWA rule-making that could have serious implications for agricultural water users. Moderated by Family Farm Alliance counsel Gary Sawyers, the panel featured Acting EPA Assistant Administrator Nancy Stoner (who participated via live videoconference from Washington, D.C.), former EPA Assistant Administrator Ben Grumbles (Clean Water America Alliance), and Tom Donnelly (National Water Resources Association).

Top Left— Mr. Donnelly and Mr. Grumbles listen as Ms. Stoner explains justification for EPA’s guidance approach. She noted that many more steps will be taken in the rule-making.

Bottom, Left—Tom Donnelly explains that, under the 2008 CWA guidance, irrigation canals were not jurisdictional. Mr. Donnelly believes that under the recent guidance, that issue is now questionable. Nancy Stoner responded that irrigation distribution systems are generally not jurisdictional, and irrigation return flows are exempted. Ben Grumbles noted that there is a need for collaboration between agencies and policy officials that needs to account for agricultural needs and growing demands relative to water quality challenges.



Keynote Speakers

Left—Dan Glickman, also a leader in the AGrEE effort (see p 7) delivered the keynote addresses during breakfast on the last day of the general session. Due to illness, Mr. Glickman, the former Secretary of Agriculture under President Clinton, made his remarks via live videoconference from Washington, D.C.

Photo Source: Bipartisan Policy Center

Former Congressman Charley Stenholm provided the keynote address at the general session luncheon. He also was an active audience participant for most of the general session (right).



Highlights from the 2012 Annual Conference



A Look at DC From The Hill
Top Left—Mark Limbaugh (The Ferguson Group), the Alliance’s advocate in Washington, D.C. moderated a panel of congressional staffers who participated live via teleconference from D.C. Participants included Camille Calimlim (House Water and Power Subcommittee Minority staff director) Josh Johnson (Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee Republican staff director), and Kiel Weaver (House Water and Power Subcommittee staff director). The panelists discussed hydropower, Endangered Species Act, and storage issues, and participated in a Q & A session moderated by Mr. Limbaugh



Strange Bedfellows: The Western Agriculture & Conservation Coalition
Center Left— David Cook (Vice-Chair, National Cattlemen’s Beef Association Federal Lands Committee), talks about the importance of maintaining water and land conservation programs in the Farm Bill. Cook, along with Sean McMahon (partially hidden), Russ Schnitzer (Trout Unlimited), and Dan Keppen (Family Farm Alliance) discussed the formation of a new coalition intended to advocate for the continuance of these types of programs. Jeff Eisenberg (standing) the D.C. advocate for this coalition, moderated the panel discussion.



Low-Head Hydropower Developments
Bottom Left— David Murillo (center, Deputy Commissioner for the Bureau of Reclamation), discusses Reclamation’s efforts to craft a new lease-of-power privilege policy. Grant Ward (Family Farm Alliance Advisory Committee) listens. Alliance executive director Dan Keppen (standing) moderated the panel, which also included Kiel Weaver (House Water and Power Subcommittee staff director), who participated via videoconference from Washington. The panel discussed administrative and legislative solutions that will simplify efforts of Western water users to implement low-head hydropower projects in canals and conduits.

Highlights from the 2012 Annual Conference



Reclamation Friday

Above—after an opening keynote speech on the last day of the general session by former U.S. Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman, a nearly two-hour workshop co-hosted by the Alliance and the Bureau of Reclamation allowed the audience to interact with Roseann Gonzales (left), and Reclamation Deputy Commissioners David Murillo (center) and Grayford Payne (right), who are currently working on changes to “Directives and Standards” in the Reclamation Policy Manual. This has important implications for issues like water transfers, feasibility studies, and lease of power privilege for all federal water contractors in the West.

Below—Mike Ryan, Regional Director for Reclamation’s Great Plains Region, summarizes key regional issues at the Reclamation Roundtable, a time-honored Alliance conference tradition. Also participating in the Roundtable discussion—from left to right, seated— were regional directors Don Glaser (Mid-Pacific Region), Lorri Lee (Pacific Northwest Region), Larry Walkoviak (Upper Colorado Region) and Terry Fulp (Acting Director, Lower Colorado Region). Reclamation Commissioner Mike Connor could not participate in this year’s Roundtable, but he did spend two hours with the Alliance’s board of directors and Advisory Committee earlier in the week in Las Vegas.



Highlights from the 2012 Annual Conference



Award Winners

Above —Long-time Alliance Advisory Committee member Mike LaPlant (WA) presents Alice Parker (WA) with the John Keys III Memorial Award

Below—Dan Keppen (OR) presents Kiel Weaver (in Washington, D.C. via videoconference) with the Family Farm Alliance “Water Warrior” award



A Big Thank You to Our New and Supporting Members!

FEBRUARY-MARCH 2012

CHAMPION (\$5,000 and Greater)

Maricopa-Stanfield Irrigation & Drainage District (AZ) Westlands Water District (CA)

ADVOCATE (\$1,000 - \$5,000)

**A Tumbling T Ranches (AZ) Borba Farms (CA) Elephant Butte Irrigation District (NM)
Four States Irrigation Council (CO-NE-KS-WY) Fremont-Madison Irrigation District (ID)
Heart Mountain Irrigation District (WY) Kings River Water Association (CA)
Klamath Drainage District (OR) Langell Valley Irrigation District (OR)
Las Vegas Valley Water District (NV) Orange Cover Water District (CA) Paramount Farming (CA)
Payette River Water Association (ID) Salt River Project (AZ)
Santa Ynez River Water Conservation District ID #1 (CA) South San Joaquin Irrigation District (CA)
Yuma County Water Resources Association (AZ)**

DEFENDER (\$500-\$1,000)

**Bengard Ranch, Inc. (CA) JG Boswell Company (CA) Burley Irrigation District (ID)
Carlsbad Irrigation District (NM) Central Colorado Water Conservancy District
Law Office of Steven Hernandez (NM) Kronick, Moskovitz, Tiedemann & Girard (CA)
Lower South Platte Water Conservancy District (CO) Marathon Farms (AZ)
William J. Mouren Farming (CA) Parreira Almond Processing (CA) Perez Farms (CA)
Ryan Family Farms, LP (CA) Triple R Farms, LLC (ID) Salopek 6U Farms, Inc. (NM)
Snow Goose Farms (CA)**

PARTNER (\$250-\$500)

**Bolen Fransen (CA) Colusa County Water District (CA) Hermiston Irrigation District (OR)
Kaweah Delta Water Conservation District (CA) Flying R Farms (AZ)
Mason, Robbins, Browning & Godwin (CA) Lower Yellowstone Conservation District (MT)
MCL Farms (WA) Midland Tractor (CA) Gary Roberston (CA) Seus Family Farms (CA)
State of Idaho Water District #63 Staunton Farms (CA) Trinchera Water Conservancy District (CO)**

SUPPORTER (\$100-\$250)

**Campbell Brothers (CA) Columbia Basin Development League (WA) Falls Irrigation District (ID)
Frank Hammerich (OR) Mancos Water Conservancy District (CO) Morris Irrigated Farms (WA)
Nelson Plummer (AZ) Stanfield Irrigation District (AZ) Tempe Farming Company (AZ)
Walla Walla River Irrigation District (OR)**

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Make your tax-deductible gift to the Alliance today! Grassroots membership is vital to our organization. Thank you in advance for your loyal support. If you would like further info, please contact Dan Keppen at dankeppen@charter.net, or visit our website:

www.familyfarmalliance.org