

# Monthly Briefing

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

## 2018 Family Farm Alliance Annual Conference: *One Year In: What's changed, and where are we going in Western Water?*

Led by a suite of high profile speakers that included an advisor to House Speaker Paul Ryan, the second-in-command at the Department of Interior, the first woman Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation and a former member of President Carter's transition team, the Family Farm Alliance's Annual Meeting and Conference drew one of its largest audiences in recent memory to Reno (NEVADA). Alliance members from throughout the West made the trek to Reno, which hosted the event for the first time after over two decades of Las Vegas-based conferences.

The Alliance's 2018 Annual Meeting and Conference was held February 22-23

at the Eldorado Resort Casino. While an incoming winter storm delayed departures for some, and bad weather in Texas gummed up connections for attendees

attending the conference as "excellent", while over 92% rated it as "excellent" or "good".

"The folks I talked to all said the program, the facilities and the food were top-notch," said Harvey Bailey, long-time Alliance director who owns a citrus farm in California.

The 2018 Annual Conference general session included panel discussions on Western wildfire policy, new ways of managing Western watersheds to compliment agriculture and the environment, creative means of tackling Endangered Species Act (ESA) challenges, and connecting

urban consumers with rural producers.

Other presentations conformed with the conference theme and outlined the remarkable progress that has occurred on Western water and environmental policy matters in Year One of the Trump presidency and the 115th Congress.

Alliance President Patrick O'Toole opened the general session and summarized the busy year he and the Alliance had in 2017.

"The Family Farm Alliance has testified over 70 times since 2005 to advocate for Western water interests," Mr. O'Toole said. "Bruce Springsteen said he has the hardest working band



*A standing-room only audience attended the kickoff of the 2018 annual conference general session on February 22 at the Eldorado Reno (NEVADA)*

flying in from the Midwest and Washington, D.C., overall response from conference attendees was overwhelmingly positive. Over 71% rated the value/benefit of

### STORIES INSIDE.....

	<u>Page #</u>
Family Farm Alliance Priority Initiatives for 2018	3
The Trump Department of Interior	4
A Look at D.C. from Capitol Hill	5
California Wildfires: A look ahead at possible funding and policy fixes	6
Connecting Consumers with Agricultural Producers	7
Balancing Economic Prosperity and Environmental Protection in the West	8
Fish, Families and Farms—Developing Creative Ways to Address the ESA	9
Reclamation Policy Review and Customer Service Improvement Activities	11
Other Conference Highlights	12

*Continued on Page 2*

## 2018 Annual Conference (Continued from Page 1)

in rock and roll. We have the hardest working board of any nonprofit.”

### Mitzi Wertheim: Talking About Water

Mitzi Wertheim, Naval Postgraduate School Professor, Practice for Sustainability, Enterprises and Social Networking, was the first guest speaker on February 22. With a vast experience in government spanning fifty years, Ms. Wertheim has the distinguished honor of being the first woman appointee in the Navy to serve as Deputy Under Secretary. During the Carter administration she was part of the Transition Team. Ms. Wertheim is recipient of numerous recognitions, including; Navy Distinguished Public Service Award, HHS Alumni Award for Excellence, Department of Defense Federally Employed Women Award, and Woodrow Wilson Fellow.

Ms. Wertheim oversees the Energy Conversation, a network of government and other sectors working together to build the foundation for horizontal communications and “whole of government” solutions to complex energy problems, under the motto of building “change at the speed of trust.” She applied her unique perspective and offered guidance to the conference audience on how to communicate complex water issues to an American public that is largely uninformed about water and food policy, and perhaps, uncaring.

“I was overwhelmed at how complicated the water system was in the West,” she told the audience. “You want to get the water story told so that 11-year-olds can understand it. The genius is learning how to communicate with the general public.”

### Kiel Weaver: Working for the Speaker of the House

Another highlight of the conference was the luncheon keynote presentation by Kiel Weaver, the natural resources policy advisor to Speaker of the House Paul Ryan. Mr. Weaver’s relaxed delivery and self-deprecating style drew laughs throughout his half-hour speech.

“I don’t like talking about myself a lot and when I do, I usually make fun of myself,” he said.

In addition to talking about water and power priorities in the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress, Mr. Weaver described how he and

Speaker Ryan work together to deal with the big issues that are so important to Western water users. Mr. Weaver talked about the mood in Washington, how he fits into what’s going on, and summarized GOP accomplishments so far, including infrastructure and where water projects fit into that. He also shared some personal anecdotes about working with the third most-powerful elected official in the country.

“Speaker Ryan and I are about the same age, and we share a mutual love of *Airplane*, the 1980 movie that many of the millennials we work with have no idea even exists. When we recycle some of the one-liners from that movie, we crack each other up. Others not in the know are not so amused.”

He closed his presentation by describing how difficult it is to move legislation; only 1 in 25 bills actually become law. Mr. Weaver also underscored the need to communicate with policy makers on the need to get things done.

“All of you must think bold but be willing to compromise and communicate towards that end,” he said.

### Internal Meetings

Other keynote speakers included Deputy Interior Secretary David Bernhardt and Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Brenda Burman (*see related story, page 4*). The two-day conference general session was preceded by a full day of meetings with the Alliance board of directors and Advisory Committee, where 2018 priority issues and actions were identified. Key initiatives identified by the leadership of the Alliance for 2018 are summarized on Page 3.

The Annual Meeting and Conference general session wrapped up at noon on Friday, February 23<sup>rd</sup> in NoVi at Eldorado Resort Casino. Over 60 Western water and conservation interests participated in a “Tour of Discovery” discussion of the 2018 Farm Bill with leaders of the Western Agriculture and Conservation Coalition.

“This conference was a great way to show off the Alliance, and a tremendous way to start the busy year ahead,” said Mr. Keppen. “I would like to thank our board, Advisory Committee, Mark Limbaugh, Gary Sawyers, Susan Errotabere and our conference planner – Jane Townsend – for another successful conference.”

This *Monthly Briefing* is dedicated to coverage of other conference highlights.



**2019 ANNUAL MEETING & CONFERENCE**  
**February 21-23, 2019**

**2020 ANNUAL MEETING & CONFERENCE**  
**February 20-22, 2020**

***FAMILY FARM ALLIANCE PRIORITY INITIATIVES FOR 2018***

- Seek ways to influence the Trump-Pence administration. Elevate the importance of agriculture within the Administration, and seek to influence Bureau of Reclamation policies, building upon the concepts advanced in the “Managing for Excellence” process.
- Modernize and improve implementation of the Endangered Species Act.
- Improve implementation of the Clean Water Act.
- Curb regulations & administrative actions that threaten Western irrigated agriculture.
- Advocate for repairing aging water infrastructure and developing new infrastructure.
- Seek ways to streamline the regulatory process for water and power projects.
- Push for continued support of grants and pursue innovative financing opportunities.
- Advocate for means of simplifying the title transfer process.
- Influence the development of the Congressional West-wide water bill.
- Update, expand and advance the arguments made in the 2015 Colorado River Basin policy paper and publish a new paper in 2018.
- Set up one or more Congressional field tours, coordinating with the Western Agriculture and Conservation Coalition and others.
- Use climatic extremes to catalyze needed changes in Western water policy.
- Engage in 2019 Farm Bill negotiations.
- Find ways to entice new people to enter and stay in Western irrigated agriculture.
- Continue to develop new resources to allow the Alliance to fully serve its members.



*The Family Farm Alliance board of directors met in Reno in February to set 2018 priorities for the organization.*



# The Trump Department of Interior

## High-Level Speakers Outline Interior, BOR Priorities

Several of President Trump's leadership team at the Department of the Interior – including Deputy Interior Secretary David Bernhardt, Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation Brenda Burman, four Reclamation regional directors and Paul Souza, Fish and Wildlife Service regional director for California and Nevada – provided the 2018 general session audience with insightful overviews of Department priorities.

### Deputy Secretary of the Interior David Bernhardt

"The Department of Interior is meant to impose the President's vision in policy, consistent with the legal obligations the department has," Mr. Bernhardt said in his breakfast keynote address on February 23. "American homes, communities and businesses all depend on food, forests and energy from Interior's jurisdiction."

Mr. Bernhardt reported that Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke, immediately after his confirmation by the Senate in early 2017, rapidly issued a series of secretarial orders, intended to shape Interior initiatives. Many of the administrative actions driven by Interior leadership in the past year have focused on regulatory reform.

"I expect 2018 and 2019 to be even more robust on the regulatory side," he said. "We have manuals and business practices that we are working hard to change."

Mr. Bernhardt reported that Secretary Zinke and the agency's view also is moving to focus on conservation efforts and realigning the department.

"This will allow us to better take care of the properties that we have," he said.

Currently, there is no regional alignment amongst Department of Interior agencies, which include the Bureau of Reclamation, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Geological Survey, and Bureau of Indian Affairs. Mr. Bernhardt publicly introduced for the first time a revised draft map showing potential Interior regions, based on a combination of state lines and watershed boundaries.

"By coordinating them closer and moving to a regional structure, we are better focused to solve the problems within each agency," he said.

### Commissioner of Reclamation Brenda Burman

Brenda Burman – the first female Commissioner of the Bureau of Reclamation – discussed priorities at her agency.

"To me, the Bureau of Reclamation's mission is simple," she said. "It is to deliver water and power at an economically feasible rate."

Streamlining projects, collaboration and infrastructure were some of the ways to advance that mission, she noted, and asked, "Have we let down the next generation for build-

ing the proper infrastructure we need?"

Commissioner Burman explained that Reclamation is a key partner in the West and therefore has a key role to play.

"Many communities in the West are intertwined with the water that is stored by the Bureau of Reclamation," she said. "I want to make Reclamation more accessible to you, and we want to know what we can do better and how we can do it better."

Commissioner Burman has heard concerns that Reclamation's policies may be outdated, and she vowed that the agency would be transparent as they respond to these concerns. This year, Reclamation will be seeking to conduct workshops to interact more directly with the public.

"The Family Farm Alliance is always thorough and well-researched, and we will continue to work with you on your proposals," she added. "Together, we can make things happen."

### Reclamation Roundtable

Following Commissioner Burman's opening remarks, four regional directors and one deputy regional director from the Bureau of Reclamation participated in an interactive discussion of key policy issues in this time-honored Alliance conference tradition. Dan Keppen (Alliance Executive Director) moderated a panel that included regional directors Terry Fulp (Lower Colorado Region), Mike Black (Great Plains Region), and Brent Rhees (Upper Colorado Region) and Lorri Gray (Pacific Northwest Region); and deputy regional director Federico Barajas (Mid-Pacific Region).

Mr. Barajas provided an overview of the grim hydrology facing his region, where snow melt was 20% of average in the Sierra Nevada. In the Klamath Basin, snow levels were at about 28% of normal levels.

"We need to hope for the best and expect for the worse," he said. "We are in for a challenging year ahead."

Mid-Pacific has five studies underway, seeking to increase storage. One of those studies is looking at raising Shasta Dam by 18 feet, which would equate to 600,000 acre-feet of new storage. Another proposed project is Sites Reservoir, an off-stream storage project located on the West side of the Sacramento Valley. This new facility is supported by multiple partners, including Reclamation and a Joint Powers Authority with over thirty different entities. Other projects include the Temperance Flats project on the San Joaquin River and working with the Contra Costa Water District to expand the Los Vaqueros reservoir by 245,000 acre-feet.

Brent Rhees, Regional Director of the Bureau of Reclamation's Upper Colorado Region, reported that the hydrology "gets drier the further south you go". Water conditions in the Rio Grande watershed are about 13% of normal and in the

*Continued on Page 10*

# A Look at D.C. from Capitol Hill

## Committee Staffers Discuss 115th Congress

The Family Farm Alliance’s representative in Washington, D.C., Mark Limbaugh, moderated a panel of staff from key congressional water committees, which provided conference attendees a first-hand opportunity to get the inside scoop on how the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress is taking on Western water and environmental challenges. Panelists included Lane Dickson (Republican Professional Staff for the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources), Camille Touton

(Democratic Professional Staff Member, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources – via video conference from D.C.); and Bryson Wong (Senior Professional Staff Member, Water, Power and Oceans Subcommittee, House Committee on Natural Resources).

Camille Touton focused her comments on budget hearings underway.

“The President’s proposed budget for the Bureau of Reclamation was a disappointment for rural water, WaterSMART and Title XVI programs,” she said.

Mr. Wong discussed H.R. 3218, a bill intended to streamline title transfers for Reclamation projects. He also summarized the FISH Act, a bill which would consolidate the ESA duties of the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) for anadromous fish with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS). The need for this legislation was driven, in part, by developments in California in 2016, when NMFS demands for cold water to be held back behind Shasta Dam for downstream salmon conflicted with USFWS calls for increased Shasta releases for delta smelt.

Western water infrastructure and regulatory streamlining were key topics of discussion advanced by the Republican committee staffers.

“Infrastructure continues to be a big topic,” said Mr.

Dickson, who discussed the White House’s infrastructure proposal that was rolled out earlier in the month. “Water supply needs a more prominent place in this discussion.”

He outlined efforts by his boss, Senator Jeff Flake (R-ARIZONA), who is the chairman of the Water and Power Subcommittee of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee. Senator Flake at the time was currently circulating a discussion

draft version of the “Water Infrastructure and Drought Resilience” bill, the result of many roundtable discussions, intended to address the concerns and priorities of the West.

Family Farm Alliance President Patrick O’Toole will testify before Senator Flake’s committee on March 22 and share the Alliance’s support for his infrastructure package.

“Infrastructure, management, and supply certainty are the main pri-

orities driving this effort,” said Mr. Dickson. “Storage and conveyance are the main points of emphasis for infrastructure.”

During the question and answer session following the panel presentation, Pat O’Toole underscored the importance of keeping rural communities alive.

“You can’t tell your kids to come back to the ranch if there is no water and your country is not there cheering you on and telling you that it is okay to be here,” Mr. O’Toole said. “Water should not be a partisan issue. We need to work together. In this political climate, compromise seems to be a bad word.”

Panelists noted that infrastructure is one of the few issues that can get bipartisan support in Congress.

“Everyone has infrastructure in their Congressional district,” said Mr. Wong. “So, there is a strong incentive to get something done.”



**Mark Limbaugh (at the podium), the Family Farm Alliance’s representative in D.C., every year moderates a panel of Congressional water committee staffers at the Alliance annual conference. This year’s panelists included Camille Touton (pictured on the video screen), Lane Dickson (Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee) on the left, and Bryson Wong (House Committee on Natural Resources), sitting on the right.**

# A look back at a year of wildfire devastation

## A look ahead at possible federal funding and policy fixes



**2017 wildfire in Modoc National Forest, Northern California.** Photo courtesy of Joe Spendolini Photography.

In the world of Western water, a massive wildfire in the headwaters of a watershed can devastate the water supply – both quantity and quality – so important to the many beneficial uses in that river basin, including the irrigation of farms and ranches that produce some of our Nation’s high-quality food and fiber. Recent wildfire disasters in California and other Western states have underscored the importance of finding solutions to federal funding of wildfire suppression and prevention, as well as on-the-ground management that can lead to improved forest health.

April Snell (Executive Director of the Oregon Water Resources Congress) moderated a panel discussion on this topic that included Cecilia Clavet (Senior Policy Advisor, The Nature Conservancy, Arlington, VA); Erin Huston (California Farm Bureau Federation, Washington, D.C.); and Tim Quinn (Executive Director, Association of California Water Agencies - ACWA).

All the organizations represented on this panel are founding members of the California Forest Watershed Alli-

ance, whose core policies are intended to protect forests and local economies and promote forest restoration.

Dr. Quinn discussed ACWA’s Headwaters Framework Document, developed by a working group consisting of over 30 individuals, whose actions are driven, in part, by 2017 wildfires that burned over 500,000 acres, double the area burned in 2016.

“We are trapped in a reactive forest management world,” said Dr. Quinn. “We are always reacting and not planning for the future. We are not planning for the next catastrophe. We need to undo our forest world that we have built.”

Erin Huston noted that the Thomas fire that burned swaths of southern California in late 2017 was the largest fire in the state’s history. As of December 22, an estimated \$171 million in damage was caused by the fires in Ventura County. The national cost of wildfire suppression surpassed \$2.4 billion for FY 2017.

Ms. Huston also lamented the current state of state forests.

“California now has about 100 trees per acre, while historically it has been about 40 acres per tree,” she said. “There are 129 million dead trees in the forest”.

The panelists described the various pieces of federal legislation that are being considered in Congress, including the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act, which “enjoys widespread bipartisan support”, according to The Nature Conservancy’s Cecilia Clavet.

The bills generally focus on addressing funding challenges (“fire borrowing”) and the more controversial approach of facilitating forest thinning through mechanical means and controlled burns.

“Thinning can be perceived differently by different people,” said Ms. Clavet. “However, a

Clavet. “However, a

common understanding can be achieved through coalition building.”

She pointed to the Ashland (OREGON) Community Forest Project, in an area with a big wildfire risk.

“Ashland is typically not supportive of removing trees, but there was robust dialogue in the community which has now led to a huge tree thinning effort,” she said. “Even if they do not normally agree on a topic, in the face of strong evidence, people can realize the importance of thinning.”





# Connecting Consumers with the Producers

## Examples of urban-ag outreach efforts in the Western U.S.

All Westerners, like all Americans, prefer healthy food and prize open spaces. There is a need to emphasize the virtues of farming and ranching in the West, building upon the growing public appreciation for open space, farmer's markets, and the rapidly growing interest in local, sustainable, and organic foods.

The last panel of the 2018 Family Farm Alliance annual conference general session featured representatives involved with efforts to highlight local food production and traditions. Speakers included Jessica DuBose (Community Program Manager for the Blue Zones Project, Klamath Falls, OR); Dr. Jonathan Mabry (University of Arizona), who discussed how Tucson became the first American city to become part of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network as a City of Gastronomy; and Nick Matteis, Director of CA Grown.

Sheldon Jones, Chief Operating Officer of the Soil Health Institute (North Carolina) moderated the panel, and in his opening remarks, explained that every farmer in America feeds some 154 people per day.

"We need to understand that good policy that is good for ag, is good for the nation," he said.

### Klamath Basin: Blue Zones Project

Jessica DuBose described the Blue Zones Project (BZP), a national initiative funded in Klamath Falls, Oregon by a healthcare foundation and local interests. A key initiative of the BZP is to address the challenge of "food deserts" in the local community, as part of a larger effort to advance physical, mental and social health initiatives with the BZP.

Community food movement and connecting to agriculture is a huge priority for the BZP.

"Working with over 80 organizations in Klamath County, we have had over 5,000 people pledge to improve their own personal well-being," said Ms. DuBose. "They pledge to make healthy choices become the easier choices to make in their own lives."

The BZP food policy committee has been instrumental in

providing healthier food choices within convenience stores, which are visited by many residents every day. As part of a broader effort to improve access to healthy food, BZP is also helping to reconnect agriculture and the community.

"Food deserts" - locations without easy access to fresh, healthy, and affordable foods - are a big problem in Western rural communities. In many places, there is also a disconnect to the local agricultural community, even though 68% of consumers are more likely to visit restaurants serving locally sourced food versus restaurants that do not, according to the National Restaurant Association.

By increasing local food production and local consumption through vehicles like farmer markets, BZP seeks to increase community health and reconnect ag producers to the community and improve the economy.

"We don't promote organic or conventional growers," said Ms. DuBose. "Instead, we urge customers to get know their farmers".



**Sheldon Jones, Chief Operating Officer of the Soil Health Institute introduces panelists participating in a conference general session discussion about connecting ag producers with their communities.**  
Photo courtesy of Holly Dillemath, Herald and News.

### Tucson, AZ: UNESCO Creative City for Gastronomy

Johnathan Mabry discussed the designation of Tucson in 2015 as the first American city to become part of the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) Creative Cities Network for gastronomy, honoring Southern Arizona's food traditions and culinary innovation. Tucson is one of nine "Creative Cities" in the U.S.

Tucson's agriculture heritage extends back more than 4,000 years as the longest known continuously cultivated area in the North America, a legacy celebrated today at Mission Garden, an interpretation of heritage plants and the culinary history of Southern Arizona. Tucson also has an incredibly unique mix of cultural influences reflected in its local food, from the Sonoran hot dog's cross-border origin story to historic wheat brought to the area by Spanish missionaries and the fruit of the prickly pear cactus showing up in local

*Continued on Page 12*

## Seeking a Sustainable Balance of Economic Prosperity and Environmental Protection in the West

Alliance President Patrick O'Toole organized and moderated a high-profile panel of agency, agriculture and conservation representatives that wrapped up the first day of the 2018 annual conference general session. Mr. O'Toole led the discussion on an important paradigm shift underway: moving away from confrontation and litigation and towards collaboration and cooperation solutions.

"We need natural resource solutions that recognize the importance of irrigated agriculture and ultimately improve the ecology and rural economies," said Mr. O'Toole.

Joining Mr. O'Toole on the dais were Robert Harper (Director of Water, Fish, Wildlife, Air and Rare Plants, U.S. Forest Service), Dave Smith (Coordinator, Intermountain West Joint Venture); Paul Souza (Director, Pacific Southwest Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service); and Jay Tanner (Board of Directors, Partners for Conservation).

### Juniper Reduction, Beaver Reintroduction

Mr. Tanner – owner of the Della Ranches in Utah – sits on the board of directors of Partners for Conservation, an organization consisting of private landowners across the nation to encourage collaboration with the Fish and Wildlife Service and other Interior Department agencies, the U.S. Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service and others, intended to conserve working lands. On his own ranch, he has initiated innovative and effective measures to manage juniper and reintroduce beaver habitat.

"Junipers have been rampantly growing all over the West," he said. "They are sucking up much of the water in the areas where they are growing."

On his ranch, juniper reductions are making a significant difference for water and wildlife, including sage grouse habitat which benefits from juniper removal.

"Sage grouse hate trees," he said. "Predators live there."

Mr. Tanner talked about the importance of beavers in the West, and how their reduction in population brought on by European trapping had a significant impact on Western hydrology. Reintroducing beavers to his ranch has provided for more localized water storage capacity and imparted a significant impact on the amount of water in the area.

"By putting debris into the stream, beavers end up widening the bank out and improving the flow in the stream by instituting backlog," he said.

### Changing the Fish vs Farmers Dynamic

As Regional Director for U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service region that covers California, Nevada and parts of Oregon, Paul Souza is directly engaged in some of the most controversial Endangered Species Act (ESA) challenges in the country. He has seen the conflicts that can occur between the agricultural and environmental sectors and wants that to end.

"Fish vs. farmers is the worst situation we can find our-



*Jay Tanner. Photo courtesy of the Sage Grouse Initiative*

selves in," he said. "We need to do our best to change that dynamic."

Mr. Souza expressed concern about single species management under the ESA becoming the dominant image of conservation.

"We need to broaden the image to what we are looking for," he said. "We need to tell the story of farmers making efforts of conservation to show the public what farmers are doing to help the environment."

### Flood Irrigation and Waterfowl in the West

The mission of Dave Smith's Intermountain West Joint Venture (IWJV) is to conserve priority bird habitats through partnership-driven, science-based projects and programs. Private landowners have been key players in conserving wildlife for four to five generations. Mr. Smith talked about the importance of wetlands in the Closed Basins and Klamath Basin, which are part of a complex extending across Southern Oregon-Northeastern California that provides some of the continent's most important habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, and other water birds.

"Approximately 30% of the world's population fly through this area of the IWJV, so we are aiming to preserve as much as possible," said Mr. Smith.

In this part of the West, flood irrigation applied by farmers and ranchers is critical to bird habitat.

"We cannot provide wetland habitat in this part of the world, unless we make it a priority to the landowners of this area," said Mr. Smith. "Flood irrigation still has a large role to play."

*Continued on Page 11*



# Fish, Families and Farms

## *Developing creative ways to address ESA challenges*

Long-time California water policy veteran Jason Peltier moderated a panel on February 23 on Implications associated with implementation of the federal Endangered Species Act (ESA), which are as various as the Western landscape, and locally-driven solutions are just as diverse. Western water managers from three different states described how solutions are being developed to protect family farms and fish.

### **New Mexico: The Silvery Minnow**

Mike Hamman (Chief Engineer and CEO, Middle Rio Grande Conservancy District) talked about New Mexico's silvery minnow and his district, which serves about 65,000 acres of irrigated lands in the middle of New Mexico. The silvery minnow is just one of the species that they manage, including birds, mice and sunflowers.

Once the silvery minnow was listed for protection under the ESA, an environmental group sued the Bureau of Reclamation, claiming that Reclamation could restrict irrigation diversions to meet in-stream flows mandated by the ESA.

The biological opinion used to list the minnow was deemed to be "arbitrary and capricious" and was thrown out, and the in-stream flows were ordered, which was appealed. The Land and Water Fund of the Rockies – formidable litigators with deep pockets" – prevailed over Reclamation and waters users in that case.

Sen. Pete Domenici (R-NEW MEXICO)

in 2003 successfully advanced a legislative proposal to block the taking of water from cities and farmers for the endangered silvery minnow. Mr. Domenici, chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, said his plan would prevent federal agencies from forcing New Mexico cities and farmers to give up their water to save the minnow. But the proposal would also provide habitat to prevent the minnow from going extinct.

These developments, and others, ultimately led to development of the Middle Rio Grande Endangered Species Collaborative Program, consisting of 16 different agencies, tribal governments, state and local governments.

"This set the wheels in motion for a collaborative solution to this vexing problem," said Mr. Hamman.

Initial progress was hampered by a lack of trust and good science to guide the group to a solution to the problem.

"That was the major struggle during those times," Mr. Hamman recalled.

Over \$150 million was spent from 2000 to 2014 on water, habitat projects and science coordinated through the Collaborative Program.

"Ultimately, we all learned that fish need water that is timed in proximity with their life cycle," he said. "Sure, fish need water. We just needed to learn how to get it to them in the right place and at the right time."

### **Lower Colorado River MSCP**

Chris Harris discussed the Lower Colorado River Multi-Species Conservation Plan (MSCP), considered by many to be a flagship program for species conservation in the West. Mr. Harris explained that the MSCP was created to balance

the use of the Colorado River water resources with the conservation of native species and their habitats. The program works toward the recovery of species currently listed under the ESA. It also reduces the likelihood of additional species listings. Implemented over a 50-year period, the program accommodates current water diversions and power production, and will optimize opportunities for

future water and power development by providing ESA compliance through the implementation of a Habitat Conservation Plan.

"Actively restoring aquatic habitats and wetlands is not a simple thing," said Mr. Harris. "We had to learn a great deal on the fly."



*Aerial view of the Los Lunas Silver Minnow Refugium in New Mexico.*  
Photo courtesy of New Mexico State Engineer's Office

*Continued on Page 10*

## Creative Ways to Address the ESA (Cont'd from Pg 9)

### Yakima Basin

Urban Eberhart (Kittitas Reclamation District) - Member of the Yakima River Basin Enhancement Project Work Group and Implementation Committee - addressed collaborative efforts in the Yakima Basin and what that means for Washington state salmon and farmers. The Yakima Basin puts out more than \$5 billion in agricultural related revenue.

A coalition of irrigation districts, private water companies and municipalities including the City of Yakima, Washington have created a partnership for the purpose of promoting multiple uses of the Yakima River Basin Water Supply. The Yakima River Basin is one of the most diversified and productive agricultural areas of the world. The Bureau of Reclamation's Yakima Project irrigates 464,000 acres and is one of the top Reclamation Projects for high-value crop and dairy production.

To help plan for expanding access to more irrigation and M&I water storage capacity and to help relieve tensions in the basin over water supply management, water users have worked with other water stakeholder interests and the Yakima Nation in developing the Yakima Basin Integrated Plan. This well-thought out, long term comprehensive set of solutions seeks to restore ecosystem functions and fish habitat and improve long-term reliability of water supplies for stream flows, agricultural irrigation and municipal supply.

The Integrated Plan was developed in a public, collaborative process involving local, state, federal and tribal governments plus stakeholders representing environmental, irrigation and business interests.

"Prior efforts to increase water storage in the Yakima Basin have failed, in part due to a lack of consensus among the key stakeholders," said Mr. Eberhart. "The Integrated Plan offers the best opportunity in decades to resolve long-standing problems afflicting the Basin's ecosystem and economy."

Making available increased water storage for farms, fish and local communities is a key component of the Plan. When implemented, the Plan will greatly improve operational flexibility to support stream flows while meeting the basin's basic water supply needs under a wide range of seasonal and yearly snowpack and runoff conditions, both now and under possible future hydrologic conditions. The State of Washington also passed a bill to honor the work of the restoration efforts, and agreed to split the cost shares, with the rest coming from federal, local and private funding.

"We took people who used to be adversaries and found a common goal to help facilitate development projects," said Mr. Eberhart. "Former adversaries are now working together going forward."

## Reclamation Roundtable (Continued from Page 4)

Pecos River watershed, conditions are at 7% of normal. Lake Powell will be 25 feet lower than the previous year and 33 feet lower than the peak from the previous year.

The Regional Director of the Reclamation's Lower Colorado Region, Terry Fulp, emphasized the importance of storage projects on the Lower Colorado River, where 92% of the inflows in Lake Mead come from the Upper Colorado system.

"The value of carryover storage is huge," said Mr. Fulp. "We live on carryover storage. In the Colorado River Basin, we can store about 4 times what we receive in average inflow."

Lake Mead is currently about 41% full, holding about 10.1 million acre-feet of water. Mr. Fulp predicted that no users would be cutback this year, but the full entitlements may not be delivered because of the high level of water conservation efforts underway.

"Lake Mead is about 20 feet higher than it would have been without all of the conservation efforts that have taken place over the past several years," he told the audience.

Lorri Gray, Regional Director of Reclamation's Pacific Northwest Region, described the stark contrast between her

region and other Reclamation regions.

"We do not have near as much storage in the Pacific Northwest as other areas," she said. "However, Columbia River flows will fluctuate between 125-150 million acre-feet per year."

Columbia River management is dictated in part by a court order which controls how the Corps of Engineers, Bonneville Power Authority, NOAA Fisheries and Reclamation do business.

Ms. Gray summarized ongoing efforts in the Yakima Basin (WASHINGTON), and the Deschutes Basin (OREGON), which she pointed to as a good example of people coming together and coming to resolution based on a dispute over the Oregon spotted frog.

She agreed with comments made in introductory remarks by Alliance Executive Director Dan Keppen regarding the growing acceptance of new dams by the public and policy makers.

"Dams used to be a bad word," Ms. Gray said. "Now it's a good word, because we need increased storage for water as much as possible."

## Bureau of Reclamation Policy Review and Customer Service Improvement Activities

David Palumbo – Bureau of Reclamation’s Deputy Commissioner of Operations – discussed the Customer Service Improvement Initiative underway at Reclamation on the opening day of the conference general session. He noted that Reclamation in recent years has field some criticism from its water and power customers regarding costs, design issues, schedules, and benefits.

“The first thing we are going to focus on is communication,” said Mr. Palumbo. “We need to focus on why we are designing what we are designing.”

Ruth Welsh, who works out of Reclamation’s Technical Services Center in Denver, reported that Reclamation plans to have a workshop in Denver this summer, aiming to look at the economic benefit estimates, the feasibility study process, explore collaborative efforts for feasibility studies, and create transparency for feasibility studies. There is also a need to make the policies for transferred works - facilities

owned by Reclamation but operated and maintained by an irrigation district or other entity - to be standardized and transparent.

Alliance Executive Director Dan Keppen pointed to the “Managing for Excellence” process, an initiative launched during the Bush 43 Administration in close collaboration with Reclamation’s water and power customers and stakeholder interests.

“That is a true partnership document,” Mr. Keppen said. “The Family Farm Alliances uses that as a measure of gauging how Reclamation is doing.”

Mr. Keppen said the Alliance would be happy to work with Reclamation in the coming year to get the word out on future workshops.

“We heard you loud and clear and are planning on doing something,” said Mr. Palumbo. “You will see a lot out of us from this initiative in the next year.”

## Balancing Western Economics with the Environment

*(Continued from Page 8)*

### Inter-agency Collaboration for Safe Communities and Healthy Forests

Rob Harper talked about the Forest Service and its lands, explaining that the intent is to keep communities safe and forests healthier. He believes there is good intent for federal employees to work well with other agencies, including Bureau of Land Management, EPA and National Marine Fisheries Service.

“Collaboration is not a story you hear about other agencies in government,” he said. “Programs like IJWV and Partners should be used as models, by telling stories of the collaboration that is being manifested.”

Mr. Harper expressed interest in staying connected with the Alliance regarding water policy.

“This was a good experience for me, and I learned a lot about the challenges irrigators and ranchers are facing and the conservation issues you are moving forward.”



*Alliance President and Wyoming rancher Patrick O’Toole (at the podium) on February 22 moderated a panel of agency staff and Western landowners, including (from left to right) Jay Tanner (Rancher, Partners for Conservation board), Rob Harper (U.S. Forest Service), Paul Souza (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) and Dave Smith (Intermountain West Joint Venture).*



## Connecting producers with consumers (Cont'd from Page 7)

craft beers.

The UNESCO designation has resulted in more than \$30 million worth of benefits brought in to the community.

"Tax revenue from food businesses went up, lodging went up, and job growth in food preparation and food serving and the number of restaurants really went up," said Dr. Mabry.

With the designation in hand, local organizers formed a new nonprofit that manages the UNESCO reporting requirements to demonstrate progress and use the designation to leverage additional benefits that can be brought to the community. The designation has been used to improve the local food system and local economy and support the creators of the food culture.

### CA Grown

Nick Matteis, Executive Director of the Buy California

Marketing Agreement (CA Grown), talked about how his organization connects with the public, using social media, targeted audiences and reaching out to local producer spokespersons who have the most to say in what is being grown in their community.

"California Grown is all about connecting Californians with the people who grow and produce their food," he said. "It really is that simple."

CA Grown puts out farmer stories every week, with about 70 grower profiles that have already been shared with the public. The organization works with outside contractors to help facilitate locally-sourced food. With over 400 types of crops grown in the state every year, a strong fleet of farmers markets in urban areas, and people who flock to those markets, CA Grown caters to an audience that increasingly wants to have a food experience, and not just a meal.

"California is the community," said Mr. Matteis. "Locally grown is California grown."

## Other Conference Highlights



*Left—Gary Sawyers (L) presents longtime Alliance Advisory Committee Chairman Dick Moss with the prestigious John Keys III Award. Mr. Moss stepped down as chair, and will be replaced by Gary Esslinger, general manager of Elephant Butte ID (NM). "Water Warrior" award winners (not pictured) included Ernie Schank (Truckee-Carson ID, NV), and longtime Advisory Committee members Grant Ward (AZ) and Norm Haak (ND).*

*Right—Darrell Henry, Executive Director of the Western Caucus Foundation, spoke on February 22 at the general session. "If anyone recreates, works or lives near public lands, then that is who we are targeting with our advocacy."*



## DONOR SUPPORT

**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](mailto:dankeppen@charter.net), or visit our website: [www.familyfarmalliance.org](http://www.familyfarmalliance.org).**



Contributions can also be mailed directly to:  
Family Farm Alliance  
22895 S. Dickenson Avenue  
Riverdale, CA 93656.