



Protecting Water for Western Irrigated Agriculture

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October 5, 2018

The Honorable John Barrasso, Chairman
The Honorable Tom Carper, Ranking Member
Committee on Environment and Public Works
United States Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510-6175

Re: America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

On behalf of the Family Farm Alliance (Alliance), we write in support of the "America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018" (S. 3021, or "AWIA"). Thank you for your leadership on this important legislation. We further thank you for the opportunity to provide a witness – Mr. Pat Riley of Montana – to testify on this matter last May.

The Alliance is a grassroots organization of family farmers, ranchers, irrigation districts, and allied industries in 16 Western states. The Alliance is focused on one mission: To ensure the availability of reliable, affordable irrigation water supplies to Western farmers and ranchers. We are also committed to the fundamental proposition that Western irrigated agriculture must be preserved and protected for a host of economic, sociological, environmental, and national security reasons – many of which are often overlooked in the context of other national policy decisions.

As you know, the AWIA - also known as the Water Resource Development Act (WRDA) - is a biennial piece of legislation that is the main vehicle for authorizing water projects to be studied, planned and developed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps). It is also the legislative vehicle for implementing policy changes with respect to the Corps' water resource projects and programs. As such, this legislation is very important to the rural communities of the Western United States.

We appreciate that the 2018 AWIA includes specific provisions that will benefit the Upper Missouri River watershed, where Mr. Riley resides, as well as rural communities and agricultural

water users in those areas of the country located west of the 100th meridian. Some of the key provisions of AWIA 2018 that apply to the Upper Missouri River system and the West include modifications to Fontenelle Reservoir in Wyoming, flood protection on the Snake River, reauthorization of the national levee safety program, adjustment of flood control rule curves on non-Federal reservoirs, control of invasive species, and evaluation of federal agency capabilities and capacity, among others.

The AWIA 2018 also includes several sections we believe would give local interests a stronger role in flood management and provide a balanced and fair means of addressing the challenges faced by rural communities with limited funds and human resources.

While we were disappointed to learn that many Bureau of Reclamation-focused provisions were not included in S 3021, we were pleased to see that the bill will assist the family farmers and ranchers served by the Klamath Project in California and Oregon. The Klamath provisions give Reclamation the authority to use funds Congress provided earlier this year to implement measures such as groundwater pumping and other priorities. These provisions are a major step in immediately aiding both water users and Reclamation in managing water more effectively and efficiently.

We believe the America's Water Infrastructure Act of 2018, developed and advanced by your Committee, -- in an overwhelmingly bipartisan manner -- shows a strong commitment to existing and future water infrastructure, recognizes the unique challenges faced by Western rural communities, and makes important strides in addressing those challenges. The public infrastructure needs our Nation is currently facing are daunting, and they will require innovative solutions to meet those needs. The infrastructure investments made by prior generations have benefited this country for over a hundred of years. Now it is this generation's responsibility to invest in our water infrastructure for future generations. S. 3021 makes a significant contribution toward meeting that responsibility.

Thank you again for the opportunity to work with your committee on this important legislation. The Family Farm Alliance and our members stand ready to assist you in your further efforts.

I encourage you or your staff to contact Dan Keppen at (541)-892-6244 if you have any questions regarding this letter.

Sincerely,



Patrick O'Toole
President



Dan Keppen
Executive Director