

Monthly Briefing

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

Columbia Basin Tour Highlights Challenges Facing Eastern Washington Irrigators

Family Farm Alliance members and representatives earlier this month participated in tours, a reception, and a signing ceremony for a high-profile water infrastructure project attended by local, state and federal dignitaries in Eastern Washington state. Staff and board members for the South Columbia Basin Irrigation District (SCBID) – a long-time member of the Alliance- organized a two-day tour earlier this month for Alliance Executive Director Dan Keppen (OREGON) that highlighted recent accomplishments and key challenges facing SCBID and other local irrigation districts.

“The Columbia Basin Project supports some of the most productive agricultural land in the country,” said Keppen. “It was a privilege to see first-hand the cutting edge efforts local water managers are undertaking to provide the reliable and affordable water and power supplies that farmers and ranchers depend upon.”

The Columbia Basin Project

The Columbia Basin Project (CBP) is



Long-time Family Farm Alliance member Alice Parker (Columbia Basin Development League) has a heart-to-heart with Washington Governor Chris Gregoire at the Weber Siphon signing ceremony near Moses Lake.

a multipurpose development built by the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) utilizing a portion of the water resources of the Columbia River. The key structure, Grand Coulee Dam, is on the mainstem of the Columbia River about 90 miles west of Spokane (WASHINGTON). Extensive irrigation works branch southward on the Columbia plateau, 125 miles south toward Pasco (WASHINGTON) where the Snake and Columbia rivers

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Columbia Basin Project Tour (Cont'd from Pg 1)

join.

Principle CBP facilities also include Franklin D. Roosevelt Lake, and the Grand Coulee Power Plant Complex, switchyards and a pump generating plant. Primary irrigation facilities are the Feeder Canal; Banks Lake; the Main, West, and East Low canals; O’Sullivan Dam; Potholes Reservoir; and Potholes Canal. Within CBP, approximately 671,000 acres are currently irrigated. The soil and climatic conditions are favorable to the growth of grain, alfalfa hay, ensilage crops, dry beans, fruit, sugar beets, potatoes, sweet corn, and seed, and other specialty crops. Dairy farming and beef production are significant in the area.

The power production facilities at Grand Coulee Dam are among the largest in the world, with total generating capacity rated at over 6,800 megawatts. Sufficient flood control space is maintained in Franklin D. Roosevelt Lake to control the Columbia River at The Dalles (OREGON) to no more than 450,000 cubic feet per second.

The CBP also offers a vast recreation resource base characterized by long summers, mild winters, and an abundance of year-round sunshine. There are 350,000 acres of land and water available for recreation. Prior to development of the CBP, there were 35 lakes; there are now over 140 lakes, ponds, and reservoirs.

Regional Partnership Celebrates New Water Project

There was plenty of sunshine to bask in as Keppen and SCBID general manager Dave Solem hopped into a district rig earlier this month for a tour of canals, power generating stations, and Eastern Washington communities whose economies are driven by agriculture. In recent years, local irrigation districts have looked for opportunities and sought constructive ways to work within a federal policy arena that has increased emphasis on developing renewable energy. Local water users and the State of Washington have also taken a proactive role to secure American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) funding to build new water infrastructure.

With the impressive Weber Siphon construction project as a backdrop, Solem and Keppen participated in the August 2nd celebration commemorating a regional partnership and major milestone towards improved water deliveries to the Odessa area and communities up and down the Columbia River, while supporting stream flows for fish in river. A speech by Washington State Governor Chris Gregoire highlighted the event, which also featured public comments delivered by U.S. Bureau of Reclamation Pacific Northwest Regional Director Karl Wirkus, state Ecology Director Ted Sturdevant, state Agriculture Director Dan Newhouse, regional irrigators, and state and local elected officials.

“Today, we are celebrating what teamwork and community partnerships can accomplish. These partnerships are allowing

us to issue new water rights to our towns, provide water to our farmers, and support vital flows for fish,” said Governor Gregoire. “The benefits of a collaborative approach are clear – these new water resources will support an estimated 35,000 new jobs and add \$3 billion to our state economy.”

Odessa farmers face growing water quality and availability issues associated with pumping from a depleting aquifer. The irrigators are within Columbia Basin Project boundaries where surface water deliveries were historically promised but not developed.

Construction of the Weber Siphon will allow Reclamation to bring 30,000 acre-feet of Lake Roosevelt Project water to up to 10,000 acres of land now relying on unsustainable groundwater supplies for irrigation. Current work is remedying a bottleneck where the East Low Canal crosses I-90 by way of the Weber Siphon Complex. By adding the second barrel of the siphon, the complex’s capacity is increased to accommodate this delivery of water.

The state of Washington provided \$800,000 to fund the design of the second siphon, which is now under construction. Washington’s congressional delegation and Reclamation secured \$36 million in ARRA funding to build it.

“Our success on this project is due to our shared commitment and partnership to finding positive solutions to complex water management issues here and throughout the West,” said



At the Weber Siphon signing ceremony (from L to R): Dave Solem (South Columbia Basin Irrigation District), Chris Voigt (Washington State Potato Commission); Jaime Shimek (U.S. Senator Patty Murray); Mike Schisow (Washington State Water Resources Association).

Columbia Basin Project Tour (Cont'd from Pg 2)

Wirkus.

Construction is scheduled to be completed in early 2012, and the first water will pass through the siphon next spring in time for next year's growing season. Through the new siphon, the Lake Roosevelt release program will deliver the first increment of new water to replace declining underground water to farmers in the Odessa area. Washington state and Reclamation are seeking additional water sources to provide more replacement water in the future.

Wind Development Concerns

While driving to the big siphon event, Solem and Keppen had plenty of time to discuss the new era of "green energy"

and how related government policies are impacting districts like SCBID. Solem explained that recent federal and state policy emphasis on renewable energy is having unanticipated impacts on Eastern Washington irrigators. For example, federal incentives currently offer generous tax credits or stimulus grants to wind-power producers. Also, state laws in Washington and other nearby states require utilities to generate or purchase an increasing amount of their power from renewable resources other than hydro. Both of these developments have led to greatly expanded wind projects along the Columbia River, which have further created new challenges for local water users dependent upon existing hydropower resources.



Local water managers like Dave Solem work in an environment where renewable energy has a very real impact on day-to-day irrigation district operations. His district is located adjacent to a 170-mile stretch of the Columbia River in Eastern Washington and Oregon that has received the attention of investors who have spent billions of dollars in the past 10 years on wind-power projects. In large part because of these investments, the Pacific Northwest now leads national efforts to develop renewable wind power.

Unfortunately, wind power has its drawbacks. The intermittent nature of generating electricity from wind can strain management efforts of the Bonneville Power Administration (BPA), which seeks to match the demand and supply flow of electricity moving through the system. When wind power unexpectedly changes, BPA must either cut back or increase hydroelectric production from the Columbia River dams in order to avoid blackouts or other power disruptions. This creates a new level of uncertainty and related challenges to

districts like SCBID, whose water source relies on pumps that need power to lift water from Grand Coulee and move it through district canals.

As the wind industry expands, BPA has found it more difficult to balance the surges and drop-offs in electrical power, and still meet other responsibilities, including court-ordered requirements to spill water to aid the passage of salmon protected by the Endangered Species Act. One long-term solution to this problem – which comes with a high initial capital cost – may be the development of "pumped storage" facilities, which can harness surplus energy to pump water from low reservoirs along the Columbia River to other storage reservoirs located at higher elevations. The power could be recovered at a later time by running the water downhill through a hydropower turbine system.

Low-Impact Hydropower Development

New hydropower projects of another type are presenting different challenges to district managers like Solem. Federal policies that encourage the recent development of new hydropower facilities in existing irrigation canal systems have brought in outside developers

who sometimes do not share the same management objectives as irrigation districts.

The Obama Administration – as demonstrated in a 2010 Memorandum of Understanding between the Departments of the Interior, Army and Energy – is pushing hard to develop low-head, low-impact hydropower throughout the American West. However, widespread uncertainty currently exists over what federal agency would manage hydropower development at Reclamation conduits. Sometimes, Reclamation would oversee such development. In other cases, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) performs this function. Elsewhere, it is very unclear what agency would manage conduit hydropower development – especially at older Reclamation facilities created administratively and without congressional authorization.

When Reclamation employs non-federal entities to produce hydropower at its facilities, it uses a "lease of power privilege." This is a contractual right given to a non-federal entity to use a Reclamation facility for electric power generation. Under federal law, municipalities, public agencies, irrigation districts and rural electric co-operatives are given preference for a 40-year lease term. As part of this arrangement, the entity pays a fee to Reclamation for the use of the facilities.

One of the major administrative costs under the Lease of

Columbia Basin Project Tour (Cont'd from Pg 3)

Power Privilege program is the staff analysis of competing proposals to develop the power. Most Reclamation irrigation and water supply projects have an arrangement where operation and maintenance activities are transferred to the local beneficiary as a way to reduce paperwork and other costs. They believe that the non-federal operator best knows the details of the facility and is locally invested into the project, and therefore should be given the first chance to develop new hydropower facilities.

But sometimes, districts like SCBID have already determined that new projects will not pencil out, and do not wish to pursue new hydropower proposals, at least for the time being. However, federal policies encourage development – even if from outside interests- and this is where the rub lies. This can result in a situation where other entities develop power facilities on water delivery systems that irrigation districts are responsible to maintain.



Drop structures like this provide opportunities to generate low-impact hydropower in existing facilities. CBP irrigation districts are considering developing viable low-head hydro projects, but are concerned that outside developers may be allowed to build new projects without considering impacts to the primary purpose for which the canals were originally built: to deliver water to agriculture.

“It can be very difficult to make arrangements like this work,” said Solem.

Solem and others are working with the Washington State Water Resources Association and members of Congress to find ways to protect water users by specifically re-affirming hydropower development as secondary to water supply and delivery purposes and ensuring that there will be no financial

and operational impacts to existing water users.

“We need to protect agreements that the water users have on existing conduit generation projects and provide additional safeguards to ensure such projects do not undermine water deliveries,” said Solem.

The Family Farm Alliance is working with Dave Solem, the Washington State Water Resources Association, and other Western water users to develop such long-lasting safeguards.

A Cold Splash of Reality

A somber note of reality crept in to the otherwise celebratory mood at the recent signing ceremony for the Weber Siphon Project. That very day, Reclamation Regional Director Karl Wirkus and others present at the ceremony were alerted of a federal judge's recent rejection of the latest plan for protecting endangered Columbia River salmon runs. The news was especially noteworthy, and disappointing. For the third time in just over a decade, Judge Redden sent the National Marine Fisheries Services of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration back to the drawing board.

House Natural Resources Committee Chairman Doc Hastings perhaps captured best the reaction of local water and power users dependent on the Columbia and Snake rivers in his prepared statement regarding Judge Redden's ruling on the federal biological opinion and fish recovery plan for the Federal Columbia River Power System:

“Judge Redden has explicitly ordered federal agencies to consider dam removal.... Judge Redden has zero authority to order the removal of dams and the agencies have no authority to breach dams. Only Congress can authorize removal of the Northwest's federal dams and I can definitively state that this will not happen on my watch.”

While environmental activists rejoiced over Judge Redden's decision, water managers were deeply concerned. Darrell Olsen of the Columbia Snake River Irrigators Association, and co-author of a Family Farm Alliance 1998 agricultural economics study said, “I don't view this as a favorable ruling for hydropower or rate-payers.”

Terry Flores, executive director of Northwest River Partners, was also disappointed. “This is the most scientifically sound and vetted and collaborative and frankly, expensive, biological opinion that we're aware of,” he told Portland's largest newspaper, *The Oregonian*. “It seems as though the judge is letting the perfect get in the way of the very, very good.”

Alliance Arizona Members Trek to Eastern Oregon

Two dozen agricultural, urban, environmental and academic stakeholders from Arizona traveled to Eastern Oregon earlier this month to see firsthand how ranchers and conservationists there are working together to meet dual goals of keeping water in agriculture and improving stream flows as well. The Family Farm Alliance was well-represented both on the tour bus and by welcoming committees in Oregon.

The field trip was funded by the Walton Family Foundation as part of its five year initiative in the Colorado River Basin to seek ways to preserve and enhance both the Colorado River system as well as the economies – such as agriculture – that depend on it. MaryLou Smith, Policy and Collaboration Specialist with the Colorado Water Institute, organized the tour.

“We sought a diversity of stakeholders from both the agricultural and environmental camps to participate in this tour,” said Ms. Smith. “We wanted folks who are interested in seeking common ground to meet multiple objectives. We gathered together a group of those who have an open mind to new ideas and are willing to approach problems with a constructive attitude.”

The Family Farm Alliance worked closely with Ms. Smith over the past two years as she facilitated a work group of diverse Colorado River interests to seek the most effective and innovative ways water can be shared for mutual benefit, without damaging agricultural or rural communities; to pinpoint obstacles to sharing; and to develop strategies to alleviate obstacles.

Though the initiative was aimed at finding solutions for the Colorado River Basin, the work group is investigating transfers throughout the West in an attempt to uncover best ideas for the Basin. The Group has developed recommendations for the Western States Water Council (WSWC) in the context of toolbox strategies to increase the chance that WSWC might get the governors behind at least some of our recommendations.

To get a sense of real-world solutions that are already being developed, the Walton tour hit the ground in Eastern Oregon and visited projects on the Deschutes River (with the Three Sisters Irrigation District and the Deschutes River

Conservancy) the Upper Klamath Basin (with Klamath Basin Rangeland Trust) and the John Day River (with the Oregon Freshwater Trust). Tour participants from Arizona included representatives from Family Farm Alliance members Hohokam Irrigation District, Maricopa-Stanfield Irrigation District, and the Salt River Project. Tom Davis, general manager of the Yuma County Water Users Association and a member of the Alliance’s Advisory Team, also made the trip to Oregon.

“The conservation groups we met with seemed to be more constructive and not litigious,” said Mr. Davis. “I think they realize that working with ranchers and understanding their needs can lead to solutions that help the environment and ranching.”

Mr. Davis also noted that he was surprised at how much money is being spent to obtain water from farmers and ranchers to secure relatively low flows in upper tributaries that may or may not have long-term benefits to fish.

In the Deschutes Basin, the local tour guide was Marc Thalacker, general manager of Three Sisters Irrigation District, and also a member of the Alliance Advisory Committee. Mr. Thalacker’s district has taken advantage of Oregon’s conserved water provisions, which have allowed the district to enhance in-stream flows while providing up to 25% more water on-farm. While the new piping projects and an innovative fish screen project are clear indications that good changes are happening in the Deschutes Basin, Mr. Thalacker believes the real reason

for success along the Deschutes River is improved relationships between agricultural, conservation and urban interests.

The tour bus wrapped up its road trip in the Klamath Basin, where Alliance Executive Director Dan Keppen briefed the group over an outdoor lunch on the conflict and collaboration that have characterized Klamath Basin watershed policy development over the past decade. Following lunch, the Arizona contingent embarked on the bus again for an afternoon tour of several local projects intended to improve fishery habitat and enhance dryland grazing and cattle management activities. That part of the tour was hosted by the Klamath Basin Rangeland Trust.

A similar tour for Colorado stakeholders will be supported by the Walton Foundation and take place in September.



Kurt Thomas of the Klamath Basin Rangeland Trust discusses water conservation and fish habitat restoration efforts undertaken by local ranchers in the Upper Klamath River watershed.

Sacramento Valley Rice Farmer to Represent Alliance at Colorado Regional Freshwater Forum

A Family Farm Alliance director with a strong agricultural and conservation ethic will represent the Alliance at an October 2011 Colorado water forum hosted by the Johnson Foundation (WISCONSIN). Sandy Denn, who grows rice and provides waterfowl habitat in the Sacramento Valley (CALIFORNIA) will speak to the “Charting New Waters Colorado Regional Freshwater Forum” on October 18 at the Botanic Garden in Denver (COLORADO).

Mrs. Denn is a third generation farmer. Born in Willows (CALIFORNIA), she farms rice at Snow Goose Farms with her husband, Wallace Denn. Snow Goose Farms, situated near the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge, is a winter haven to migratory waterfowl.

“My husband and I have long believed that agriculture and the environment can coexist in harmony if common sense and sensitivity are applied to agricultural practices and environmental reforms,” she said.

Mrs. Denn has been politically active in local, state and federal arenas for many years. Since 1993 she has served as Vice President of the Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District board. For several years, she was president of the Central Valley Project Water Association. In 1994 she initiated a movement in Glenn County to unite opposing entities in the matter of groundwater management to gain local control. She helped put in motion the Northern Sacramento Valley Water Forum to promote interface and exchange of education on water issues between water agencies and local governments. Mrs. Denn also serves on the California Department of Water Resources’ Water Advisory Panel which screens and monitors grant applications for groundwater management and monitoring projects. She has served in a variety of other water related and civic positions and recently earned a law degree.

The general format for the October forum in Denver is to have panels composed of Colorado-based experts/stakeholders along with “outside” experts from other parts of the country. The Colorado experts will frame the chal-

lenges and solution opportunities in the state, and then engage in facilitated dialogue with the outside experts who will reflect on Colorado’s challenges and offer insights about possible solution pathways based on experience/models from elsewhere.

Sandy Denn has been invited to represent the Alliance and participate as one of the “outside experts”. Alliance President Patrick O’Toole (WYOMING) will also play a prominent role at this meeting. The Foundation is planning for an audience of approximately 100 water leaders representing diverse interests in Colorado and the surrounding region.

The Family Farm Alliance has been engaged over much of the past two years in a process hosted by the Johnson Foundation that led to the June 2010 “Freshwater Summit”, which took place at Wingspread, near Racine, Wisconsin. Government, industry and non-profit sector chieftains and experts, representing diverse interests and perspectives, sat side-by-side at the table to deliberate and finalize an urgent call to action for a national strategy to address the looming freshwater crisis facing the U.S.

The Foundation’s *Call to Action*, released one year ago in Washington, D.C., is the culmination of an intensive two-year, diverse collaboration of leaders from business, nongovernmental organizations, agriculture, academia, govern-

ment, foundations and communities. It explores the nature and breadth of the United States’ freshwater challenges, attempts to articulate potential solutions to those challenges and offers recommendations to ensure domestic freshwater resources are secure for the 21st century.

After the big splash in September with the unveiling of the *Call to Action*, the Johnson Foundation has been working on a number of fronts. Notably, the Foundation wants to do another regional forum in the Seattle (WASHINGTON) area, likely in January 2012.

“Details have not been worked out yet, but the Seattle forum is likely to have a very different format (and focus) than the Denver forum,” said Lynn Broaddus, Director of Environmental Programs at the Johnson Foundation.



Sandy Denn. Photo courtesy of knowacaliforniafarmer.com

Alliance Participates in Oregon State PES Study

The Family Farm Alliance is participating in an Oregon State University (OSU) Department of Geosciences study dealing with "payment for ecosystem services" (PES) funded by the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture. Alliance Executive Director Dan Keppen (OREGON) recently participated in a lengthy interview with OSU professor Hannah Gosnell, who, along with researchers at University of Oregon and partners at Sustainable Northwest, is conducting research on the potential for ranchers and family forest owners to prosper from various payment for PES opportunities in 4 case study areas in OREGON, WASHINGTON, IDAHO AND MONTANA.

Ecosystem services are the direct or indirect products and services that humans receive from functioning ecosystems. Direct ecosystem services include food, fiber, timber and clean water. Indirect ecosystem services include carbon sequestration, soil formation, nutrient cycling and flood control, for example.

PES programs involve payments to individuals or organizations to preserve or enhance ecosystem services through sound land and water management practices. Such programs include:

- Government mediated programs (e.g., Farm Bill conservation incentive and cost-share programs);
- Regulatory or compliance markets (e.g., wetland mitigation banking under the Clean Water Act or conservation banking under the Endangered Species Act); and,
- Voluntary markets and certification schemes (e.g., carbon markets, water leasing, and Forest Stewardship Council and Salmon Safe certification).

OSU is working with Keppen and Alliance President Patrick O'Toole (WYOMING) on one part of the study that is focused on the intermediaries that work with landowners to assist them in accessing various PES opportunities.

The Alliance believes that PES programs can provide opportunities for motivated farmers and ranchers to develop another cash flow stream to help support other agricultural operations. The OSU study is timely, says Keppen, since the Alliance is gearing up efforts to engage in the development of 2012 Farm Bill conservation title programs.

"We will urge policy makers to give Farm Bill conservation programs a priority, seek the greatest amount of funding within existing pots, and protect the amount available," said Keppen. "We will continue to work with other water users and conservation groups who share a common interest

in supporting working ranches and healthy landscapes and to ensure that continued emphasis is placed in the Farm Bill to support incentive-driven conservation programs that pay farmers and ranchers for doing good conservation deeds. Thousands of water and land conservation projects have been completed across the Western United States, and these efforts should continue."

Ranchers in the West depend on the availability of both public and private land for economically viable operations, and PES programs can keep private agricultural lands viable.

"The single most important factor leading to the loss of wildlife and ecologically degraded landscapes is fragmentation from development, not from farming and ranching," said O'Toole. "Ranchers want a stable business climate for their operations. Conservation groups want healthy and productive landscapes."

This philosophy meshes very nicely with the overarching goal of the OSU project, which is to enhance the capacity of ranchers and family forest owners to capitalize on the growing demand for provision of ecosystem services associated with working ranchlands and forests.

"During the research phase of our project we aim to identify the factors affecting family forest and ranch owners' adoption of economic diversification strategies involving management for ecosystem services," said Dr. Gosnell. "We are particularly interested in how intermediaries –by that, I mean extension faculty, government agencies, community-based groups, consultants, and the like - can and do work with landowners to connect them with these opportunities."

During the outreach phase of the project, OSU's aim is to accelerate and deepen the transfer of PES program information to individuals and organizations involved in or interested in such opportunities. Finally, OSU plans to disseminate results of research and extension efforts to policymakers to improve policies pertaining to PES programs and opportunities.

This is a three-year project running through 2013.

"We are currently conducting interviews with key individuals and organizations in four case study areas covering 15 counties in the Interior Northwest," said Gosnell. "Once the interviews are complete, we will develop and disseminate a landowner survey in the case study areas to explore landowner access to and participation in PES programs."

This information will then be used to improve programs and policies that compensate landowners whose land and water management practices sustain or improve ecosystem services.

"We will also produce written reports and outreach materials documenting the outcomes and recommendations resulting from this project," Gosnell said.

Thank You to Our New and Supporting Members!

AUGUST 2011

ADVOCATE (\$1,000 -\$5,000)
Buckeye Water Conservation
and Drainage District (AZ)
Oregon Water Resources Congress
Paloma Irrigation
and Drainage District (AZ)

DEFENDER (\$500-\$1,000)
Arizona Machinery
Columbia Canal Company (CA)
Farm Credit of New Mexico

PARTNER (\$250-\$500)
Applegate Group, Inc. (CO)

SUPPORTER (\$100-\$250)
Bowles Farming Company (CA)

Job Opportunity: OFS Executive Director

Oregonians for Food & Shelter (OFS), a 501(c)(6) non-profit association located in **Salem, Oregon** is seeking a full-time, **Executive Director** to start ideally on or before **January 23, 2012**. Starting salary commensurate with experience.

Competitive benefits include family medical, retirement plan and more.

The Director, reporting to the OFS Board of Directors and managing a staff of two, is responsible for the successful continuation of the OFS mission: *“to promote the efficient production of quality food and fiber while protecting human health, personal property and the environment, through the integrated, responsible use of pest management products, soil nutrients and biotechnology.”*

For a detailed job description, information on OFS and application requirements – email your **name, current job position, mailing address, daytime phone number and salary expectations** to ofs.directors.job@gmail.com

Completed applications must be received by 5:00 P.M. (PDT), September 9, 2011.

The Selection Committee plans to begin interviews in October and make a final decision around December 1, 2011.

All applicant information submitted will be kept confidential.

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 his NEW e-mail address: dankeppen@charter.net, or visit our website: www.familyfarmalliance.org.



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