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Over 100 Western Organizations Call on Congress to Pass Drought Legislation

WASHINGTON, D.C. (March 16, 2016) -- Yesterday, in a renewed call for Congress to pass drought legislation this year, over 100 Western water user organizations, commodity groups and state Farm Bureaus [sent a letter](#) to Senate Energy and Natural Resources Chairwoman Lisa Murkowski and Ranking Member Maria Cantwell urging bipartisan cooperation to produce compromise legislation that can be signed into law before President Obama leaves office.

Following up on a letter sent by nearly all of the same signatories in October 2015, the letter encourages the Committee to push the effort to find a legislative solution to the immediate- and long-term impacts of the drought across the finish line.

"Too much progress has already been made to let the Committee's hard work go to waste," stated Western Growers President and CEO Tom Nassif. "The people and the environment in the Western states cannot continue to suffer because of congressional inaction."

"The time to act is now," said California Farm Bureau President Paul Wenger. "Although several Western states, including California, are currently experiencing welcomed precipitation due to El Niño, we are not under the false illusion that the drought has ended. Every effort must be made to capture the benefits of the recent storms while ensuring our collective resiliency in the face of future droughts."

The letter calls on Congress to provide federal agencies with more flexibility and encourages a collaborative approach toward achieving multiple goals.

According to Family Farm Alliance president Pat O'Toole, "Any approach to Western water legislation must encourage cooperation and innovation if we are going to see real, positive and lasting results for people, agriculture and the environment."

Among the recommendations included in the letter are the promotion of new technology in water and species management, real-time monitoring and data collection to more closely align water supply operations and environmental needs, and new funding and financing tools to encourage investments in water infrastructure capable of meeting current and future demands.

The letter goes on to say that streamlining the federal permitting process and better aligning the regulatory agencies will help increase new water storage and improve water management.

Currently, several bills are under consideration in the Senate Committee, including a West-wide bill already passed by the House of Representatives. All that remains is for the Senate to act.

Recognizing the political challenges in an election year, the letter calls on the Committee to help "ensure that Western water users have every tool available to survive and recover from the current drought and to prepare for the hard, dry years that the future may hold."

About the California Farm Bureau Federation

The California Farm Bureau Federation works to protect family farms and ranches on behalf of more than 53,000 members statewide and as part of a nationwide network of more than 6.2 million Farm Bureau members.

About the Family Farm Alliance

The Family Farm Alliance is a non-profit, grassroots organization that advocates for family farmers, ranchers, irrigation districts, and allied industries in seventeen Western states. The Alliance is focused on one mission - To ensure the availability of reliable, affordable irrigation water supplies to Western farmers and ranchers.

About Western Growers

Founded in 1926, [Western Growers](#) represents local and regional family farmers growing fresh produce in Arizona, California and Colorado. Our members and their workers provide half the nation's fresh fruits, vegetables and tree nuts, including nearly half of America's fresh organic produce. For generations we have provided variety and healthy choices to consumers. Connect with and learn more about Western Growers on our [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

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