



*Protecting Water for Western Irrigated Agriculture*

## 2017 Annual Meeting & Conference Farming and Ranching in “The Next West” FINAL AGENDA

**Wednesday**  
**February 22, 2017**

**8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**      **Board of Directors and Advisory Committee Meetings**

**Thursday**  
**February 23, 2017**

**7:30 a.m.**      **Registration Desk Open**

**8:00 a.m.**      **Welcome – Opening Comments:** Alliance President Patrick O’Toole will summarize the busy year he and the Alliance had, engaging in a variety of national initiatives, developing new partnerships, and strengthening existing networks. He will set the stage for the 2017 general session, which will be forward-looking and focused on making positive change with a new Congress and new administration in Washington, D.C.

**8:10 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.**      **“The Colorado River in the Next West: Where do we go from here?”**  
Recent public messaging on the Colorado River suggests that all parties are in agreement as to what is most needed for Colorado River’s health and stability. Is the top priority for the next administration the need to complete the negotiations between the United States and Mexico? Is it resolution of the Lower Basin “structural deficit”? Is a full suite of supply enhancement and demand management actions on the table? Hear from a high profile panel of water managers about their perspectives, goals and advice to the Trump Administration about Colorado River water policy. Moderated by Tina Shields (Water Department Manager for Imperial Irrigation District), this panel features Tom Buschatzke (Director, Arizona Department of Water Resources), John Entsminger (General Manager, Southern Nevada Water Authority), Kevin Kelley (General Manager, Imperial Irrigation District), and Jeff Kightlinger (General Manager, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California).

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9:30 a.m. to 9:45 a.m.

**Break**

9:45 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

**Reclamation Roundtable** – Acting Commissioner David Murillo will be the keynote speaker prior to the panel discussion featuring all five regional directors from the Bureau of Reclamation, who will participate in an interactive discussion of key policy issues that span the West in this time-honored Alliance conference tradition. Dan Keppen (Alliance Executive Director) will moderate a panel that includes regional directors Terry Fulp (Lower Colorado Region), Mike Ryan (Great Plains Region), Brent Rhees (Upper Colorado Region). David Palumbo (Deputy Commissioner for Operations) and Roseanne Gonzales (Dir. of Administration) will also weigh in, discussing drought, flood, the Reclamation workforce, and aging infrastructure.

11:00 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.

**The New Farm Bill** - This panel of agency and congressional agriculture committee representatives and agriculture and conservation spokespersons will provide perspectives on what the new Farm Bill might look like, and how it may be used as a vehicle to improve coordination between the Interior Department and USDA water conservation programs. Panelists include John Farner (Irrigation Association) and Josh Maxwell (Republican staff director, House Committee on Agriculture), John Piotti (President, American Farmland Trust. Moderated by Alliance President Patrick O’Toole.

Noon to 1:15 p.m.

**Luncheon featuring Keynote Speaker: Lester Snow.** Lester Snow was founding director of the Water Foundation and continues to provide strategic counsel on programs, projects, and initiatives. Mr. Snow has a distinguished record of innovation and results working on complex natural resource management matters. Prior to the Water Foundation, he served as California Secretary for Natural Resources. Previously, Mr. Snow was Director of the California Department of Water Resources, where he headed a Department that protects, conserves, and manages California’s water supply, including operation of the California State Water Project, the largest state-run, multi-purpose water and power system in the United States. Mr. Snow has also served as Executive Director of CALFED, regional director for the Bureau of Reclamation, General Manager of the San Diego County Water Authority, and spent six years with the Arizona Department of Water Resources.

1:15 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

**A Look at D.C. from the Hill:** Mark Limbaugh moderates this panel of staff from key congressional water committees, via interactive videoconference. Get the inside scoop on how the new Congress will tackle Western water and environmental challenges.

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2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

**“WOTSUP with WOTUS?”** - The Obama Administration’s Clean Water Act rulemaking, which created intense controversy over which “Waters of the U.S” (WOTUS) are jurisdictional under the Act, is now the subject of a battle being waged in federal court. Meanwhile, senior water policy appointees within the Obama Administration have formally pledged that decade-old clarifying provisions intended to provide assurances on operations and maintenance of irrigation canals will hold, regardless of what the court decides. Hear from attorneys on both sides of the litigation, as well as policy makers close to the rulemaking, to learn what’s up with WOTUS. Moderated by Gary Sawyers (Bolen Fransen Sawyers LLP, Fresno, CA), panelists include Melinda Kassen (Interim Director, Center for Water Resources, Theodore Roosevelt Conservation Partnership), Don Parrish (American Farm Bureau Federation, Senior Director, Regulatory Relations), and John Pawlow (House Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee, Professional Staff).

3:00 p.m. to 3:15 p.m.

**Break**

3:15 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

**Seeking a Sustainable Balance of Economic Prosperity and Environmental Protection in the Next West.** President-elect Trump has vowed to honor “the legacy of Theodore Roosevelt ... one of our great environmentalists.” How will he make good on this promise with his new Administration? Listen to this well-respected panel of policy experts, conservationists and producers discuss how to avoid the wild pendulum swings that characterize land and wildlife policy in America and implement actions that seek to find a sustainable balance of environmental protection and economic prosperity. Moderated by Mary Kelly (Partner, Culp & Kelly, Austin, Texas), this panel features Eric Holst (Associate Vice President, Working Lands, Environmental Defense Fund), Cannon Michael (Bowles Farming Co., California), Ted Kowalski (Senior Program Officer – Environment, Walton Family Farm Foundation Colorado River Initiative), (Barry Thom, Regional Administrator of NOAA Fisheries West Coast Region), and David Willms (Office of Wyoming Governor Matthew Mead).

**Exhibitors’ Presentations (5 minutes each)**

5:00 p.m. to 5:15 p.m.

**2017 Annual Meeting**

5:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

**Evening Reception - Monte Carlo Patio, Las Vegas Blvd. entrance**

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February 24, 2017

7:30 a.m. - 8:00 a.m. **Continental Breakfast**

8:00 a.m.– 8:45 a.m. **Keynote Address: John Fleck.** Long-time water reporter and author of the recently published “Water is For Fighting Over”, John Fleck is the new Director of the Water Resources Program at the University of New Mexico. In Las Vegas, Mr. Fleck will discuss his new book and further explain why he’s cautiously optimistic about the West, and how our region can cope with water challenges in the future.

8:45 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. **Getting on the Same Page for Effective Communications -** Western farmers and ranchers are stepping up their game to employ sophisticated marketing, communications and outreach strategies to both protect and enhance their livelihoods. Central Oregon Irrigation District has implemented an aggressive marketing and communications strategy as its customers’ way of life has been threatened by Endangered Species Act litigation driven by outside interests. In California, a massive state-wide public outreach campaign is being developed to change the media and public perception in the state that leads the country in cash farm receipts. Idaho water users are gearing up for an epic battle as environmental activists apply pressure to remove critical dams on the Lower Snake River. As agricultural communicators, we will be much more effective if we’re all saying the same things. Learn more about these and other efforts, and why they are important to the future of the rural West. Panelists include Shon Ray (Central Oregon Irrigation District), Norm Semanko (Idaho Water Users Association) and Mike Wade (California Farm Water Coalition). Moderated by Brian Werner (Northern Water, Berthoud, Colorado).

10:00 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. **Break**

10:15 a.m. to **Vision on Infrastructure: Getting Irrigation Districts ready to Maximize Federal Financing Opportunities.** President-Elect Trump has articulated his vision for domestic infrastructure improvement that has the potential to provide significant federal investment in irrigation modernization. However, districts will need to check regulatory and financial boxes to be able to leverage federal dollars in local projects. This panel of water managers, conservationists and policy experts will provide detailed information regarding the work that irrigation districts need to be doing right now to prepare for a renewed focus on tackling aging water infrastructure challenges. Moderated by Marc Thalacker (Sisters, Oregon), panelists include Julie O’Shea (Farmers Conservation Alliance, Oregon); David Palumbo (Deputy Commissioner, U.S. Bureau of Reclamation); Urban Eberhardt (Kittitas Reclamation District, Yakima Basin, Washington); and Laura Ziemer (Trout Unlimited, Bozeman, Montana).

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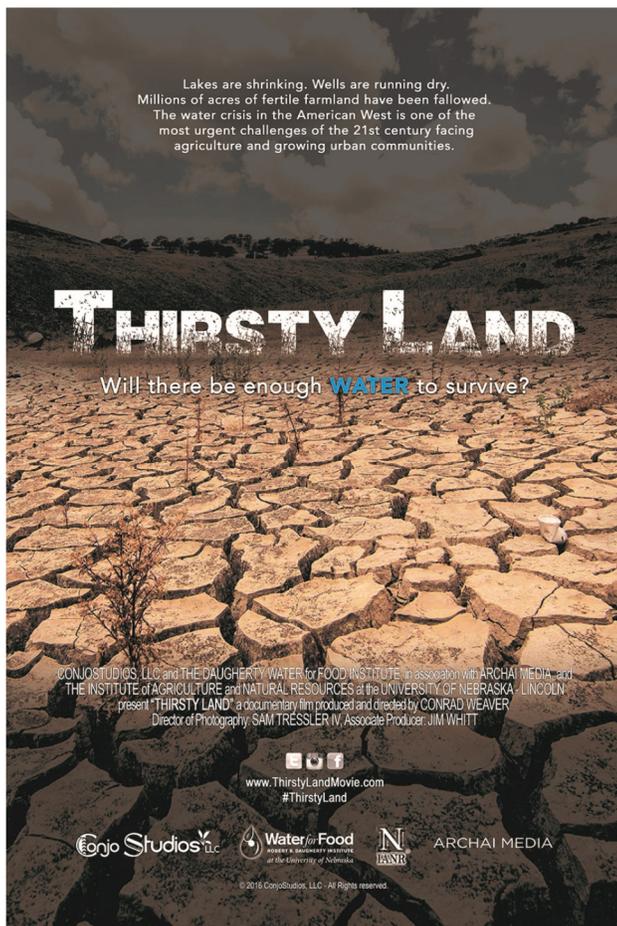
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11:45 a.m. to noon

*Award Presentation and Closing Comments – Patrick O’Toole*

1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

**“Thirsty Land”** - a full screening of the new documentary - produced and directed by Emmy Award winning filmmaker Conrad Weaver, who will be present to introduce the film and answer questions after the Friday afternoon showing.



“Thirsty Land” is a documentary film that tells the story about extreme drought, agriculture, and the water crisis in the western United States and how these challenges impact farmers, local communities, and the environment. It features interviews with two Western producers who serve

on the Family Farm Alliance board of directors. The depleted water resources in the American West is one of the most urgent challenges of the 21st century facing agriculture and growing urban communities. The drought in this region has local, national, and global impacts not only for the present, but also for future generations.

The film looks at the water crisis from the side of agriculture and the potential long-term impact a continuing drought in the USA will have on our global food supply, and how it impacts local communities and cities, as well as farmers in the drought-stricken areas of the country.

Thirsty Land is produced and directed by EMMY® Award-Winning film maker, Conrad Weaver. It was recently a featured selection at the Tallgrass Film Festival in Wichita, KS, and just recently became available for screening events across the country.

“Our goal is to motivate change in people’s behavior and attitudes about the usage of water: to help the audience think about their own consumption of water every time they take a drink, enjoy a shower, or water their lawn,” said Mr. Weaver. “We hope this project will give the audience a better appreciation for farmers, scientists and companies who work so hard to produce our food, and preserve clean drinking water for our world.

Conrad Weaver will introduce his new film, starting at 1:00 p.m. on Friday, February 24, 2017. Drinks and hors d’oeuvres will be served at the showing, which will take place on the Monte Carlo Resort premises. Mr. Conrad will be available to answer questions and discuss the film with the audience.

“Our initiative is to help people understand the urgency of this situation, and motivate individuals, companies, and governments - both local and federal - to actions that conserve this important natural resource and preserve our way of life and our ability to provide food to a growing global population,” said Mr. Weaver.