

For Immediate Release



Arizona Coalition Pushes for Investment in Aging Water Infrastructure

(April 6, 2021) – A coalition of Arizona agricultural organizations and urban and rural water districts are urging President Joe Biden and congressional leadership to address aging Western Water Infrastructure needs proposed during this session of Congress.

A larger coalition of 200 organizations from 15 western states (who collectively represent \$120 billion in agricultural production, nearly one-third of all agricultural production in the country, and tens of millions of urban and rural water users), earlier sent a letter to then President-elect Joe Biden on January 12, 2021, requesting federal attention to aging Western Water infrastructure needs.

Existing Western water infrastructure is in desperate need of rehabilitation and improvement. Most of the federal water projects in the West were built well over 50 years ago and were not designed with present and future population demands and climate conditions in mind. Without immediate attention, the coalition says, the Western water system will quickly prove inadequate to meet the needs of urban and rural water users and the environment.

The coalition strongly encourages the federal government to invest in a diversified water management portfolio that enhances water supply and quality for urban, rural and environmental uses while keeping water flowing to Arizona farms. Specific recommendations include funding for:

- Water conservation.
- Water augmentation, recycling, reuse, and desalination projects.
- New water storage facilities, both surface and groundwater.
- Watershed management, fish passage and recovery, and habitat restoration.

- Federal financing mechanisms for water projects.
- Loans for local districts operating and maintaining federally owned irrigation projects.
- Water quality improvement for rural communities.

Beyond financial support, the coalition is also calling on the federal government to ensure the timely construction of water projects by wisely streamlining the regulatory and permitting processes.

“Water is the lifeblood of Arizona and the West. It is critically important that water infrastructure receives attention in an infrastructure stimulus package this Congress to address the various needs in Arizona including maintenance, rehabilitation, development of new infrastructure, desalination, conservation, etc. Such funding is long overdue. Without reliable and affordable water supplies, every sector of our state economy suffers,” says Tom Davis, President of the Agribusiness & Water Council of Arizona (ABWC) and General Manager of the Yuma County Water Users’ Association.

“While there are many who think of infrastructure in terms of highways, bridges and other transportation facilities, there is an equally compelling need for federal investment in water infrastructure across the West. Meaningful and timely federal investment in water infrastructure, along with a regulatory system that prioritizes efficiency and completion of projects, is necessary to preserve our farms and strengthen our rural communities in the West,” said Western Growers President and CEO, Dave Puglia.

“In order to ensure that food can continue to be safely and affordably produced in the West, significant investments in water infrastructure are needed. The Arizona agriculture industry annually contributes \$23 billion dollars to the economy. Supporting an effort to improve existing water infrastructure and fund new technologies will benefit our current economy and allow great flexibility to conserve this precious resource, all while securing access to a safe, reliable water supply for the future,” said Stefanie Smallhouse, President of the Arizona Farm Bureau.

[About Agribusiness & Water Council of Arizona](#)

Founded in 1978 to represent agribusiness, irrigated agriculture, and municipal water interests by working to promote and protect water resources throughout the state. ABWC actively educates and supports all aspects of water, agriculture, and agribusiness and serves as the state affiliate to the National Water Resources Association (NWRA).

[About Arizona Farm Bureau:](#)

The Arizona Farm Bureau is Arizona's largest farm and ranch organization which serves nearly 25,000 members that represent production agriculture throughout the state of Arizona and is part of a nationwide network of more than 5.5 million Farm Bureau members.

About Western Growers:

Founded in 1926, Western Growers represents local and regional family farmers growing fresh produce in Arizona, California, Colorado, and New Mexico. Our members and their workers provide over half the nation's fresh fruits, vegetables, and tree nuts, including nearly half of America's fresh organic produce. Some members also farm throughout the U.S. and in other countries, so people have year-round access to nutritious food. For generations, we have provided variety and healthy choices to consumers.

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Supporting Organizations Include:

Agribusiness & Water Council of Arizona
Arizona Cattle Growers Association
Arizona Cotton Growers Association
Arizona Farm Bureau
Buckeye Water Conservation & Drainage District
Central Arizona Irrigation & Drainage District
Roosevelt Water Conservation District
San Carlos Irrigation & Drainage District
Wellton-Mohawk Irrigation & Drainage District
Western Growers
Western Plant Health Association
Yuma County Water Users' Association
Yuma Fresh Vegetable Association