

April 20, 2020

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-232, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Room H-204, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi and Minority Leader McCarthy:

On behalf of the undersigned parties, we thank you for your bipartisan leadership to address the massive consequences caused by the recent COVID-19 outbreak by passing legislation to address and mitigate for this emergency. We represent thousands of Western farmers, ranchers and businesses on millions of acres of productive land who provide the food our nation relies upon, as well as many of the public agencies who supply water to Western urban, suburban and rural residents. As you consider further measures to help our country recover economically - including boosting federal funding for infrastructure -we urge that you consider critically needed investments that address the shortcomings of our aging Western water infrastructure.

The COVID-19 pandemic underscores the importance of safety and stability provided by domestic food production. As this crisis has pointed out, a stable domestic food supply is essential and of national security interest. For farmers and ranchers to survive, and for food to continue to be produced here in the American West, a stable water supply is a necessary part of any conversation about our national food security.

As a result, we believe it is critical that our country continually invest in the Western water infrastructure necessary to meet current and future demands. Our existing water infrastructure in the West is aging and in need of rehabilitation and improvement. Most of the federally funded water infrastructure projects that benefit the large cities, rural communities and small farms in the West were built over 50 years ago. As hydrological conditions in the West change and populations continue to expand, failure to address water security has become increasingly critical. Failing to improve water infrastructure and develop supplies will inevitably result in additional conflict as pressure grows to 'solve' urban and environmental water shortages. Moving water away from Western irrigated agriculture will surely contribute to the decline of our national food security.

Our organizations collectively believe that water conservation, water recycling, watershed management, conveyance, desalination, water transfers, groundwater storage, and surface storage are all needed for a diversified water management portfolio and such efforts MUST be included in the next stimulus package.

- Water conservation, one of the most cost-effective actions that can positively affect water supply stability, needs to continue to be aggressively pursued in conjunction with new water storage and other actions.

- Additional funding will be needed to kick-start new water recycling, reuse and desalination projects currently being studied or that are ready for construction, either through the Water Infrastructure Improvements for the Nation (WIIN) Act of 2016 and other funding authorities.
- Programs that fund water conservation and management improvements, fish passage, and habitat restoration - all in support of water project operations in the Reclamation states of the West - need additional funding to accelerate construction of this ready-to-go infrastructure.
- We need new water storage – both surface water and groundwater – in order to adapt to a changing hydrology and develop usable and sustainable supplies to meet growing demands for water. Water storage projects should be tailored to local circumstances and need. This means in some cases projects will be constructed above ground and others below ground. Some projects will be traditional construction and others green infrastructure, dependent on the wide variety of local needs.
- The federal government must remain an active partner and expand its involvement in finding 21st century solutions to water problems in the West either through direct funding to help meet these needs or by developing and expanding federal financing mechanisms that have a very low cost to the Treasury and to taxpayers. There is a need for additional federal funding for loans from the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) to non-federal irrigation districts responsible for operating, maintaining and rehabilitating federally owned infrastructure (under P.L. 111-11 authorities). These local operating entities need immediate funding and financing for extraordinary repairs and rehabilitation on their federally owned canals and water delivery structures. Most, if not all of these major construction projects are ready to proceed if direct financing was made available. Unfortunately, these operating entities have very few, if any, affordable financing options available. In short, water resource infrastructure investments in rehabilitating these aging federal projects should be made more attractive and affordable for these non-federal districts who operate and maintain this critical federally owned water delivery infrastructure.
- Similar funding and financing tools should be made available to commence construction on permitted and approved water storage and supply infrastructure. The WIIN Act made funding available to help non-federal entities plan, design and construct new water supply infrastructure at both federal and non-federally owned facilities. New financing tools like the Water Infrastructure Finance and Innovation Act (WIFIA) can also work to finance some non-federally led construction on new and existing water supply and delivery projects. Any existing and additional funding could be made available immediately to kick-start these worthy projects that have already been approved by Reclamation and the Congress.
- Beyond monetary assistance, the federal government should also bring forward policy changes that help ensure that water projects are built in a timely fashion. Making funding available for projects is useless if projects take decades to be approved. In the past, Congress has, on a bipartisan basis, put forward significant efforts to streamline and improve environmental regulation and permitting processes. Any infrastructure package should contain similar provisions to streamline the development of water projects.

Congress must use any infrastructure stimulus package to not only address our nation's chronic needs surrounding roads, bridges and airports, but to also include water infrastructure needs for storage and conveyance. If and when additional infrastructure funding is discussed as part of a larger economic stimulus

package, we need your help to ensure that federal dollars flow to the water infrastructure needs mentioned above. We look forward to working with you to address this critical need and national security interest.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please do not hesitate to contact Erin Huston (California Farm Bureau Federation - ehuston@cxfb.com), Dan Keppen (Family Farm Alliance – dan@familyfarmalliance.org) or Dennis Nuxoll (Western Growers Association - dnuxoll@wga.com).

Sincerely,

African American Farmers of California
American Pistachio Growers
Arizona Farm Bureau Federation
Association of California Egg Farmers
Association of Oregon Counties
Bitter Root Irrigation District (MT)
California Agricultural Irrigation Association
California Apple Commission
California Bean Shippers Association
California Blueberry Commission
California Cherry Growers and Industry Association
California Cotton Alliance
California Farm Bureau Federation
California Grain and Feed Association
California Pork Producers Association
California State Beekeepers Association
California Warehouse Association
California Wool Growers Association
California Women for Agriculture
Central Arizona Irrigation and Drainage District
Central California Irrigation District
Charleston Drainage District (CA)
Colorado Fruit and Vegetable Growers Association
Colorado Wool Growers Association
Del Puerto Water District (CA)
Dolores Water Conservancy District (CO)
Eldorado County Water Agency (CA)
Elephant Butte Irrigation District (NM)
Farmers Conservation Alliance (CA/MT/NV/OR)
Far West Equipment Dealers Association (CA)
Garrison Diversion Conservancy District (ND)
(NE/WY)Glenn-Colusa Irrigation District (CA)
Grassland Basin Authority (CA)

Agribusiness & Water Council of Arizona
Arizona Cotton Growers
Arnold Irrigation District (OR)
Association of California Water Agencies
Associated Oregon Hazelnut Industries
Byron-Bethany Irrigation District (CA)
California Alfalfa and Forage Association
California Association of Wheat Growers
California Blueberry Association
California Cattlemen’s Association
California Citrus Mutual
California Cotton Ginners and Growers Association
California Fresh Fruit Association
California Pear Growers Association
California Seed Association
California Sweetpotato Council
California Water Alliance
California Wild Rice Advisory Board
Carlsbad Irrigation District (NM)
Central Oregon Irrigation District
Central Valley Project Water Association (CA)
Colorado Farm Bureau
Colorado River District (CO)
Columbia Basin Development League (WA)
Deschutes Basin Board of Control (OR)
Eagle Field Water District (CA)
Electrical District No. 3 of Pinal County (AZ)
Family Farm Alliance (WEST-WIDE)
Farwell Irrigation District (NE)
Friant Water Authority (CA)
Gering-Ft. Laramie Irrigation District
Goshen Irrigation District (WY)
Grower-Shipper Association of Central

California Grower-Shipper Association of
 Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties (CA)
 (CA)Idaho Farm Bureau Federation
 Imperial Irrigation District (CA)
 Kansas Bostwick Irrigation District (KS)
 Kern County Water Agency (CA)
 Kittitas County Timothy Hay Growers & Suppliers
 Kittitas Reclamation District (WA)
 Little Snake River Conservation District (WY)
 Lower Yellowstone Irrigation Project (MT)
 Milk Producers Council (CA)
 Modesto Irrigation District (CA)
 Monterey Peninsula Water Management District (CA)
 Nebraska State Irrigation Association
 New Magma Irrigation and Drainage District (AZ)
 Nevada Farm Bureau Federation
 North Dakota Irrigation Association
 Northeast Oregon Water Association
 North Platte Valley Irrigators Association (NE)
 Ochoco Irrigation District (OR)
 Olive Oil Commission of California
 Oregon Association of Nurseries
 Oregon Dairy Farmers Association
 Oregon Forest Industries Council
 Oregon Women for Agriculture
 Pacific Seed Association
 Panoche Water District (CA)
 Pershing County Water Conservation District (NV)
 Pothook Water Conservancy District (CO)
 Reclamation District 108 (CA)
 Roza Irrigation District (WA)
 Salt River Project (AZ)
 San Luis Water District (CA)
 Sargent Irrigation District (NE)
 Savery – Little Snake River
 Water Conservancy District (WY)
 South Columbia Basin Irrigation District (WA)
 South Valley Water Association (CA)
 Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District (WA)
 Tehama-Colusa Canal Authority (CA)
 Truckee-Carson Irrigation District (NV)
 Tumalo Irrigation District (OR)

Hawaii Farm Bill Federation
 Henry Miller Reclamation District #2131
 Idaho Water Users Association
 Imperial Valley
 Vegetable Growers Association (CA)
 Kings River Conservation District (CA)
 Kittitas County Farm Bureau (WA)
 Klamath Water Users Association (CA /OR)
 Lone Pine Irrigation District (OR)
 Mercy Springs Water District (CA)
 Maricopa-Stanfield Irrigation & Drainage Dist.(AZ)
 Montana Water Resources Association
 Nampa & Meridian Irrigation District (ID)
 Nebraska Water Users Association
 New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau
 Nisei Farmers League (CA)
 North Dakota Water Users Association
 Northern California Water Association
 North Unit Irrigation District (OR)
 Olive Growers Council of California
 Oregon Association of Conservation Districts
 Oregon Cattlemen's Association
 Oregon Farm Bureau
 Oregon Water Resources Congress
 Pacheco Water District (CA)
 Panoche Drainage District (CA)
 Pathfinder Irrigation District (NE / WY)
 Plant California Alliance
 Queen Creek Irrigation District (AZ)
 River Garden Farms (CA)
 Roza Sunnyside Board of Joint Control (WA)
 San Carlos Irrigation & Drainage District (AZ)
 San Luis & Delta-Mendota Water Authority (CA)
 San Joaquin River Exchange Contractors
 Water Authority (CA)
 Sites Project Authority (CA)
 Southeastern Colorado Water Conservancy District
 Southwestern Water Conservation District (CO)
 Swalley Irrigation District (OR)
 Three Sisters Irrigation District (OR)
 Tulare Lake Basin Water Storage District (CA)
 United Water Conservation District (CA)

Utah Farm Bureau Federation
Ventura County Agricultural Association (CA)
Washington State Potato Commission
Western Growers Association (AZ/CA/CO/NM)
Western Plant Health Association (CA)
Whitehead H2O (CO)
Yuma County Water Users Association (AZ)

Utah Water Users Association
Washington State Farm Bureau
Washington State Water Resources Association
Western Agricultural Processors Association (CA)
West Stanislaus Irrigation District (CA)
Yuba Water Agency (CA)

cc: The Hon. Lisa Murkowski, Chair, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
The Hon. Joe Manchin, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources
The Hon. John Barrasso, Chairman, Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
The Hon. Thomas Carper, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works
The Hon. Jared Huffman, Chair, House Committee on Natural Resources
The Hon. Rob Bishop, Ranking Member, House Committee on Natural Resources
The Hon. Peter DeFazio, Chair, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
The Hon. Sam Graves, Ranking Member, House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure