



Over 100 water and agricultural organizations urge Congress to use infrastructure legislation to address Western water challenges

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(Washington, D.C.) – Over 100 organizations representing water and agricultural interests in the Western U.S. urged Congress today to use any infrastructure package under consideration to help address severe hydrological conditions in the West.

“As a nation we must continually invest in the Western water infrastructure necessary to meet current and future demands,” the groups stated in a [letter](#) sent to key congressional committees and Western senators. “Our existing water infrastructure in the West is aging and in need of rehabilitation and improvement.”

President Trump has said infrastructure might be one area that both political parties in the 116th Congress can agree upon. The Democratic Party’s to-do list also includes an ambitious infrastructure program. Rep. Peter DeFazio, D-Ore.—one of the recipients of the letter—now chairs the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, where he intends to lead efforts to produce a multi-billion-dollar infrastructure bill to fund transportation and water projects.

“We agree with Rep. DeFazio’s assessment that infrastructure is a place of potential common ground and agreement in this Congress,” said Pat O’Toole, president of the Family Farm Alliance, one of the signatories to the letter.

“Despite a much-above-average snowpack, many California water users will still face water shortages in 2019,” California Farm Bureau Federation President Jamie Johansson said. “That underlines the need to improve our water infrastructure, so we can make more efficient use of water for both our economy and environment.”

“The recent wet weather notwithstanding, we know that persistent drought conditions in the western United States are the new normal,” said Western Growers President and CEO Tom Nassif. “For this reason, our nation must invest, in earnest, in the long-term security of our water supplies in the West.”

The letter underscores that water conservation, water recycling, watershed management, conveyance, desalination, water transfers, groundwater storage and surface storage are all needed in a diversified management portfolio.

“We need you to ensure that Western water users have every tool available to survive and recover from years of drought and to prepare for the hard, dry years the future may hold,” the letter states. “We call upon each of you to push forward on infrastructure and in so doing you must use any infrastructure package to not only address our nation’s chronic needs surrounding roads and bridges, but to also include water infrastructure needs for storage and conveyance.”

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