



Protecting Water for Western Irrigated Agriculture

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July 14, 2017

The Honorable John Barrasso, Chairman
Environment and Public Works Committee
United States Senate
410 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Barrasso:

On behalf of the Family Farm Alliance (Alliance), we are writing to express our support for your bill, S. 1514, the HELP for Wildlife Act. As you know, irrigated agriculture has created much of the robust habitat for wildlife in the Western U.S. and our members work with and consider themselves to be avid sportsmen in support and conservation of this important habitat.

The Alliance is a grassroots organization of family farmers, ranchers, irrigation districts and allied industries in 16 Western states. The Alliance is focused on one mission: To ensure the availability of reliable, affordable irrigation water supplies to Western farmers and ranchers. We are also committed to the fundamental proposition that Western irrigated agriculture must be preserved and protected for a host of economic, sociological, environmental and national security reasons – many of which are often overlooked in the context of other national policy decisions. The Alliance believes we must continue to invest in the planning, design and construction of new water supply and management infrastructure in the Western U.S. to help meet the growing demands for water for farms, cities and the environment, and as such, protect and conserve the vital wildlife habitat created by our members' farms and ranches.

We appreciate the fact that S. 1514 recognizes that normal farming practices are necessary in the West in producing food for the Nation and the world, all the while protecting wildlife from unscrupulous practices (such as baiting) in the process. We also appreciate that nothing in the Act would affect State water rights; although, we would request the bill be strengthened to also protect a State's ability to permit new water uses in the future.

Again, the Alliance supports S. 1514 and urges quick action on this important legislation. We believe the protections authorized in S. 1514 represent an important step forward in efforts to help make the West resilient for both farms and wildlife.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Patrick F. O'Toole".

Patrick O'Toole
President

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dan Keppen".

Dan Keppen
Executive Director