



P.O. Box 216 Klamath Falls, Oregon 97601

*Protecting Water for Western Irrigated Agriculture*

January 9, 2020

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

Dear Chairman Barrasso and Ranking Member Carper:

On behalf of the Family Farm Alliance (Alliance), we write to express our support for S. 3051, “America’s Conservation Enhancement Act” (“ACE Act”). The ACE Act is a comprehensive, bipartisan wildlife conservation bill. The legislation is broadly intended to protect both wildlife and wildlife habitat, while protecting livestock from predatory species.

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. The Alliance is also on record for consistently supporting collaborative, coordinated and incentive-driven voluntary efforts to implement species conservation programs. Our members also have strong concerns regarding the need to properly manage invasive species with priority.

Several titles of the ACE Act address issues that are outside the scope of our organization’s mission. Therefore, we will not address those components of the legislation in this letter.

We do support Section 401 of this legislation, which outlines the “Sense of the Senate” regarding conservation agreements and activities:

1. Voluntary conservation agreements benefit species and the habitats on which the species rely;
2. States, Indian Tribes, units of local government, landowners, and other stakeholders should be encouraged to participate in voluntary conservation agreements; and
3. The United States Fish and Wildlife Service the National Marine Fisheries Service should consider the enrollment in, and performance of, conservation agreements and investment in, and implementation of, general conservation activities by States, Indian Tribes, units of local government, landowners, and other stakeholders in making determinations under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) of 1973.

Sections 402 and 403 of the ACE Act take further positive steps towards improving implementation of the ESA by authorizing studies that will help inform how to improve successful conservation and recovery of endangered and threatened species.

### **Protection of Water and Wildlife from Invasive Species**

Section 105 of the ACE Act includes important provisions intended to protect water and wildlife from invasive species. The Alliance for the past ten years has supported administrative and legislative actions and funding for biological controls, mitigation management, and elimination of invasive species, including, but not limited to, quagga mussels and striped bass. In places like California's Bay-Delta, there is a critical need to reduce and remove invasive vegetation and predator fish species in the Delta that adversely affect water supply operations and the health of ecosystems. In other parts of California, predation of ESA-protected fish like salmon by non-native fish needs to be controlled.

In the Colorado River Basin, there is also an important need to balance invasive removal efforts with an emphasis on restoration of native plants and the river processes that sustain them. We are hopeful that Section 105 of the ACE Act will increase and coordinate the removal of invasive plants that negatively impact the natural water cycle and native plant and animal endangered species (examples are tamarisk/salt cedar, Russian Olive, Golden Algae, and other phreatophytes).

Section 105 authorizes \$2.5 million to the Army Corps of Engineers and \$2.5 million to the Secretary of the Interior for each of fiscal years 2021 through 2025 to implement Section 10 of the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, which protects water, oceans, coast and wildlife from invasive species. Section 105 further improves participation of stakeholders – including nongovernmental organizations and industry – in invasive species control efforts. We urge that this program provide opportunities for the Interior Department's Bureau of Reclamation's water and power customers to work in partnership with Reclamation in all aspects of program implementation.

### **Conclusion**

This bill takes important steps towards improving successful conservation and recovery of endangered and threatened species in the Western United States, an issue that is a top priority with our membership. It also helps address the critical challenges Western water users face regarding invasive species management. We strongly support Sections 105, 401, 402 and 403 of the ACE Act, which are issues of great importance to our Western farmers, ranchers and water agencies.

I encourage you or your staff to contact Dan Keppen at (541)-892-6244 if you have any questions regarding this letter.

Sincerely,



Patrick O'Toole  
President



Dan Keppen  
Executive Director