

March 1, 2019

Mr. Matthew Lohr
USDA, NRCS Office of the Chief
1400 Independence Ave., SW, Room 5105-A
Washington, DC 20250

Mr. Richard Fordyce
USDA, Farm Services Agency
1400 Independence Ave., SW, STOP 0506
Washington, DC 20250

RE: 2018 Farm Bill Implementation

Dear Chief Lohr and Administrator Fordyce,

As business leads with major operations in the Southwest/Colorado River basin, we write to support funding and implementation of key elements of the 2018 Farm Bill.

Across economic sectors, business operators increasingly recognize the challenges drought and a warming climate have brought to our region. Water risk, availability, and pricing, combined with pressures from rapid population growth, threaten business operations, growth, location, innovation and financing.

Moving forward, we must provide a secure water future for agriculture, industry, communities and rivers and streams that drive our quality of life and burgeoning regional economies.

Congress recognized these challenges and the unique elements of Western agriculture industries and water delivery/irrigation systems in Farm Bill reauthorization language and funding – providing new, dedicated funding and directives to key programs that will bring significant benefits, modernizations and efficiencies to water management and delivery across the region. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP), the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Operations Program (Watershed Act), and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) all contain new authorities tailored for providing drought relief for Western producers and river systems.

In particular, Congress provided major financial support for EQIP, and new EQIP authorities, allowing irrigation districts to ramp up irrigation modernization and efficiency projects, with the goal of considerable water savings.

NRCS support and funding for irrigation modernization and efficiency projects that improve water delivery should be made a priority, while also benefitting rivers with the water savings. These types of carefully designed projects improve drought resiliency for agricultural, municipal, and environmental interests, providing significant benefits from

the investment of Farm Bill dollars. These projects also meet the directives that irrigation district and canal company projects must be linked to a “watershed-wide project.”

Persistent drought has permeated Western landscapes. Agricultural water efficiencies are one of the keys to water security in the region. Through effective partnerships and planning on irrigation projects, water savings can be directed to watershed/forest health, riparian areas and stream flows, and help provide the secure municipal and industrial water supplies that allow our quality of life and economies to flourish.

As you are well aware, water collaboration in the Colorado River basin – as represented by the Drought Contingency Planning process – is at an all-time high. Redirecting flows to our river systems and Lake Mead will avert mandated delivery cuts and the economic impacts to ag and other industries that would ripple across the region and the country. Federal support – financial and programmatic – for water efficiencies/conservation, and the DCP in particular are foundational to our water future.

In closing, we express our support for our agriculture and ranching industries, and the USDA and NRCS, as you work to implement the 2018 Farm Bill. The West faces real water challenges, and the solutions must ensure an adequate water future and economic opportunities for all. We also know that, in business, evolution and change are inevitable. Modernization, innovation and investment have always held the keys to business success. The new authorities in the 2018 Farm Bill reflect this, and we support the NRCS’ efforts to make meaningful inroads on drought response through them.

We look forward to working with you on implementation of the Farm Bill and investment in our water future.

Sincerely,



Glenn Hamer
President and CEO
Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Phoenix, AZ



Kelly Brough
President and CEO
Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce
Denver, CO



Nicholas J. Colglazier
Director
Colorado Competitive Council
Denver, CO



Amber Smith
President and CEO
Tucson Metro Chamber
Tucson, AZ



Derek Miller
President and CEO
Salt Lake Chamber
Salt Lake City, UT



Ted Maxwell
President/CEO
Southern Arizona Leadership Council
Tucson, AZ



Todd Sanders
President and CEO
Greater Phoenix Chamber of Commerce
Phoenix, AZ



Christian Reece
Executive Director
Club 20
Grand Junction, CO



Terri Kimble
President and CEO
Chandler Chamber of Commerce
Chandler, AZ



Molly Fogarty
Senior Vice President Corporate Affairs
Nestlé USA
Arlington VA



Scarlett Foster-Moss
VP of Public Relations and Govt. Affairs
Swire Coca-Cola, USA
Draper, UT



Warren Gorowitz
VP of Sustainability
Ewing Irrigation and Landscape Supply
Phoenix, AZ



Gene Smith
President of Residential, Commercial, Gold,
Lighting
Hunter Industries
San Marcos, CA



Brian Merrill
CEO
Western River Expeditions
Salt Lake City, UT



Darren McGregor
General Manager, North America
Rubicon Water
Fort Collins, CO



Steve Abernethy
President
Senninger Irrigation, Inc.
Clermont, FL



Phil Wahlzynski
President
Down River Equipment
Wheat Ridge, CO



Todd Reeve
CEO
Business for Water Stewardship
Portland, OR

cc: Kevin Norton, Acting Assoc. Chief of Conservation
Leslie Deavers, Acting Chief of Staff
Jimmy Bramblett, Deputy Chief for Programs
Astor Boozer, Regional Conservationist, West
Kari Cohen, Projects Branch Chief for RCPP and CIG