



## WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL

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[www.westernstateswater.org](http://www.westernstateswater.org)

April 22, 2026

The Honorable Glenn “GT” Thompson, Chairman  
House Committee on Agriculture  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1301 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Angie Craig, Ranking Member  
House Committee on Agriculture  
U.S. House of Representatives  
1010 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Farm, Food, and National Security Act (H.R. 7567)

Dear Chairman Thompson and Ranking Member Craig:

The Western States Water Council (WSWC) is a government entity created by the governors to advise and engage on water policy issues affecting the West. The WSWC supports investment in voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs that are implemented in coordination with state and local governmental partners, while providing the maximum flexibility possible and opportunity for innovation to create efficiencies, coordinate funding and achieve tangible water savings. Agriculture sustains many rural economies and communities in the West. Water scarcity and periodic drought impact all water users across the West, but particularly threaten the agricultural sector, which accounts for the predominant share of consumptive water use westwide.

A sustainable agricultural economy requires promoting efficient water use and achieving net water savings, given overdrafted groundwater aquifers and increasingly stressed surface streamflows. In some cases, assisting in the transition from irrigated to dryland farming may be necessary, while striving to maximize production. It is also important to address other concerns including non-point source pollution, fish and wildlife habitat, endangered and invasive species, drought and wildfire resilience. Locally-identified concerns should be addressed on a voluntary basis, across public and private lands, in targeted and collaborative ways.

As noted in our attached position, the WSWC supports prompt reauthorization of the 2026 Farm Bill, which contains several key provisions for water conservation, water quality improvement, water supply reliability, and rural assistance for drinking water and wastewater facilities. Additionally, the National Water and Climate Center’s water supply forecasts, snow surveys, soil climate analyses, and other programs are particularly important and have long been supported by WSWC. The continuation and adequate funding of these programs provides certainty and stability for water managers, farmers, ranchers, and other water users making long-term decisions that impact rural communities, water resources, the environment, the economy, and food security.

The WSWC strongly supports U.S. Department of Agriculture conservation programs and financial assistance to producers, rural communities, water users, and water quality managers, including: the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and associated Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP); Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP); Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP); Environmental Quality Improvement Program (EQIP) and its Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) subprogram; the Colorado River Basin Salinity Control Program (CRBSCP); the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP); and other watershed protection and planning programs. Many agricultural producers in the West voluntarily participate in these programs, benefiting agriculture, the economy, the environment, and the ability of communities to meet increasing demands for adequate supplies of water of suitable quality. EQIP and RCPP are of particular importance

to western states, providing targeted financial assistance for critical regional initiatives, addressing drought through irrigation efficiency, salinity control, and water quality management.

Many of these programs are reauthorized or expanded in the recently released House version. Recent legislation—including the One Big Beautiful Bill (P.L. 119-21)—has begun folding IRA funds into the permanent Farm Bill baseline. While this improves long-term funding stability for Conservation Title programs, it represents a net decrease from 2025 levels. For EQIP specifically, this restructuring amounts to a functional cut of more than \$1 billion—a reduction that falls disproportionately on Western States. The WSWC supports Farm Bill funding levels based on demonstrated need rather than baseline budget targets, and urges sufficient investment to address water conservation, flood protection, and water quality remediation.

By 2025, CRP enrollment was approaching the 27-million-acre statutory cap, prompting FSA to impose strict enrollment cutoffs and reject offers that arrived after set deadlines. For the 2025 and 2026 fiscal years, only about 1.8 to 1.9 million acres were available for all CRP enrollments combined, after accounting for expiring contracts and administrative reserves. The WSWC asserts that existing CRP acreage caps and spending and staffing limits are an obstacle to achieving further progress toward food and water supply security and reliability. The WSWC supports raising acreage limitations.

We also support modifications to the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention Act to waive the 250,000-acre limit for regional drought projects, and to waive duplicative watershed planning requirements. This would facilitate use of this program in large watersheds across the West and facilitate water conservation and drought mitigation efforts.

The WSWC supports financial and technical assistance to producers through the CSP to maintain and improve existing conservation systems and adopt comprehensive conservation activities.

The Rural Development title includes several provisions for financial and technical assistance. The WSWC supports work to bring clean, safe drinking water and sanitation to rural communities, including funding for the Rural Water and Wastewater Circuit Rider Program, water and wastewater technical assistance, and raising the maximum amount of project financing for water, waste disposal, and wastewater facility grants

The WSWC encourages Congress to ensure sufficient funding for the conservation and rural programs that address water conservation, flood protection, and water quality remediation needs. Again, the WSWC particularly supports investment in voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs that are implemented in coordination with state and local governmental partners. Such programs should provide maximum flexibility and opportunity for innovations to create efficiencies, coordinate funding, and achieve measurable water savings.

Thank you for your leadership on these issues which are so important to our western states.

Sincerely,



J.D. Strong  
Executive Director



**POSITION  
of the  
WESTERN STATES WATER COUNCIL  
regarding  
USDA CONSERVATION PROGRAMS  
and  
WATER RESOURCES**

**Anchorage, Alaska  
September 14, 2023**

**WHEREAS**, water is the lifeblood of the West and this is most apparent in the agricultural sector, which accounts for the predominant share of consumptive water use westwide; and

**WHEREAS**, agriculture sustains many rural economies and provides important employment opportunities both directly and indirectly; and

**WHEREAS**, increasing demands on often scarce water resources and periodic drought threaten the West and its agricultural base and the communities built on that base; and

**WHEREAS**, many agricultural producers in the West rely on irrigation surface water delivery systems that are shared among multiple producers and operated by an irrigation district, canal company, mutual ditch company, or acequia while others rely on overdrafted and or overallocated groundwater basins; and

**WHEREAS**, maintaining a sustainable agricultural economy in the West requires promoting efficient water use and achieving net water savings, while maximizing production and in some cases assisting in the transition from irrigated to dryland farming; and

**WHEREAS**, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) conservation programs focus on conservation of ground and surface water resources, as well as reductions in nonpoint source pollution, including nutrients, sediment, pesticides and salinity; and

**WHEREAS**, many agricultural producers in the West voluntarily participate in USDA programs to implement conservation practices that improve water use efficiency, water quality and wildlife habitat; and

**WHEREAS**, the Farm Service Agency (FSA), Rural Development (RD), Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), and National Water and Climate Center (NWCC) administer many water-related programs; and

**WHEREAS**, multiple USDA farm financial assistance programs are particularly important to producers and rural communities, water users and water quality managers, including the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP), Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP), Emergency Watershed Protection Program

(EWPP), Environmental Quality Improvement Program (EQIP) and its Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG) and Colorado River Salinity Control Program (CRSCP), and Regional Conservation Partnership Program, and others such as watershed protection and planning programs; and

**WHEREAS**, special EQIP funding also covers a number of initiatives, including the Drought, Ogallala Aquifer, National Water Quality, Resiliency to Climate Change, and WaterSMART Initiatives; and

**WHEREAS**, the Western States Water Council (WSWC) supports USDA Conservation Program funding levels based on need rather than baseline budget targets; and

**WHEREAS**, the WSWC supports collaborative, targeted and voluntary conservation actions to address locally identified farm, range, forest and water resource concerns on private and public lands; and

**WHEREAS**, the WSWC supports actions to address secure water supplies, improved water quality, and drought and wildfire resilience, as well as wildlife habitat conservation and invasive species threats; and

**WHEREAS**, the WSWC supports the role of Conservation Title Programs in providing solutions to resolve water supply reliability, water quality impairments, groundwater recharge, and other water resource concerns facing agricultural water users and agricultural producers; and

**WHEREAS**, the WSWC supports the continued efforts of Rural Development to provide financial assistance for drinking water, wastewater facilities and other services to rural communities.

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Western States Water Council strongly supports USDA Conservation Programs, and urges the Administration and the Congress to provide sufficient funding to address water conservation, flood protection and water quality remediation needs.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the WSWC supports regional cooperative agricultural programs such as EQIP Initiatives, the Colorado River Salinity Control Project, and the Regional Conservation Partnership Program.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the WSWC supports the work done by Rural Development to bring clean, safe drinking water and sanitation to rural communities.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the WSWC supports investment in voluntary, incentive-based conservation programs, including when appropriate assisting in the transition from irrigated to dryland farming, that are implemented in coordination with state and local governmental partners, while providing the maximum flexibility possible and opportunity for innovation to create efficiencies, coordinate funding and achieve real water savings.

Revised and Readopted  
(See also Position #413 adopted Oct. 20, 2017 and #455, Oct. 15, 2020)