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Family Farm Alliance
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National Water Resources Association
Association of California Water Agencies
Oregon Water Resources Congress
Upper Missouri Water Association
Idaho Water Users Association

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Contact: Peter Carlson
National Urban Agriculture Council
202.429.4344

Western Groups Continue “Invest in the West” Campaign for Bureau of Reclamation

Local Agencies Ask Secretary for Commitment on Bureau’s Budget

Western water groups are continuing their campaign to increase federal investment at water facilities in the 17 fast-growing western states served by the Bureau of Reclamation. In a letter to Interior Secretary Gale Norton sent May 3, the groups stated that “The West is moving dangerously close to outgrowing the infrastructure resources necessary to assure a minimum level of urban and agricultural water supply, even as droughts loom inevitably on the horizon.” The groups are requesting the Bush administration to commit to an enhancement of the Bureau’s Water and Related Resources budget to \$1 billion, beginning in 2003.

The effort is part of a larger campaign titled “Invest in the West.” They are seeking to reverse a 36% decline in the Bureau of Reclamation’s budget over the past 10 years. The Bureau is responsible for water supply infrastructure facilities that are vital to economic and environmental needs of the west.

“Our members believe that no agency, no matter how focused, can adequately serve the 21st century economy and environment with a budget that continually lags behind its core customers’ needs,” the letter stated, referring to additional cuts proposed in the 2002 federal budget.

Water users emphasize that western states are currently reeling under an energy crisis that is directly tied to under-investment in power generation and natural gas development. The same crisis in power supplies is likely to repeat itself with water if state and federal government do not improve and expand water supply facilities, particularly those served by the Bureau.

In the coming weeks, water groups will also undertake their own post-card mailing campaign to Members of Congress, urging them to take action to compel greater investment by the Bureau of Reclamation.