

# The Best of our Conversation Articles: So Far

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

In the fall of 2011, I interviewed the University of Arizona’s Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, Shane C. Burgess. That “conversation” article was the launch of a regular conversation series in *Arizona Agriculture*.

I remember thinking at the time how conversations like Dean Burgess’ could launch a great forum for key stakeholder in the agriculture industry or certainly influencing our industry.

I mentioned it to Dean Burgess as a follow-up once his conversation appeared in print in the October 2011 issue of *Arizona Agriculture*. He said, “Julie, you should do them monthly.

So, eventually I did.

The conversations have launched great dialogue, given us insights into other industries, launched new stakeholder partnerships and given my team more outreach ideas based on what is said in these conversation articles.

For example, while I’ve been in conversation with Kimber Lanning of Local First Arizona for several year (through an introduction by Clint Hickman), when she was the featured conversationalist in the May 2018 issue of *Arizona Agriculture*, we realized more partnership activities could and would occur. Since then, Lanning, Arizona Farm Bureau CEO Philip Bashaw and myself have met and we continue figuring out more ways to effectively partner.

On other occasions, my group of conversationalists have connected more with our county and state leadership within the Farm Bureau family and made efforts to work more in collaboration with the agriculture industry.

In this month’s conversation feature, I’m going to highlight a few of my favorite quotes from my sources and where appropriate share an update to the conversation if applicable. I plan to do this periodically to highlight where these conversations have brought us.

## That First Conversation in 2011 with the Dean

**Arizona Agriculture:** What’s your philosophy for balancing the university-based research with practical production advances for agriculture in Arizona?

**Dean Burgess:** There are multiple pieces to this. I think the first one is that fundamentally we need to be ensuring that we are giving our students the best education they can get. They need to be exposed to as many different aspects of our science environment as we can. So, this necessitates that we maintain our strong science footing; because there are many students that have no aspirations to go into our innovation or entrepreneurial economy but do when they realize what they can do with it. Plus, fundamental research is an economic engine. The amount of money the basic sciences bring into the state is very large.

The second issue we need to keep in mind is that we must always be focusing on how we can translate our basic science into some good for society. We all carry around with us today cell phones. There is a lot of basic science that’s gone into battery design on these. We wouldn’t have these cell phones if we didn’t have battery design.

A good example of something that people said was completely esoteric but turned out to be useful is Fractal Geometry, a mathematical construct found in nature that for years and years people said were simply pretty pictures; pretty designs. My point? All our cell phone aerials are now designed on Fractal Geometry and that’s why we don’t have long aerials sticking out of our cell phones anymore because fractal geometry has allowed aerials to work.

Another example closer to home was people’s interest in insects. So, 100 to 200 years ago, people were collecting insects because it was fun. But it’s from the study of entomology that our understanding of other ecosystems and how they work has occurred. It’s the understanding about how insects can ruin our crops and plants; it’s the

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Arizona Agriculture, Arizona Farm Bureau’s monthly publication, has hosted the conversation articles since 2011, witnessing greater impact gleaned beyond simply reading the articles.

# Legislative Aspects of DCP are Done. Now What?

By Chelsea McGuire, Government Relations Director

On the last day of January, after three marathon days at the legislature, the Governor signed into law the legislation necessary for Arizona to sign on to the Drought Contingency Plan (DCP), a strategy for preserving Lake Mead’s water.

The Lower Basin DCP is a multi-state agreement regarding how to implement water allotment cuts when a shortage is declared on the Colorado River. Once enacted, the DCP will require Arizona to reduce its Colorado River Deliveries by 512,000-acre feet. While the terms of DCP have been a topic of discussion among the lower-



Pinal County farmers face the biggest loss in water as it relates to the Drought Contingency Plan.

basin states for years, recent hydrology shows the chances of a shortage in Lake Mead are more probable than not, starting in 2020. That made 2019 the time to act. This lit the fire under the feet of the stakeholders involved, increasing pressure to strike a deal before a shortage was declared.

Of the states involved in the plan (California, Nevada, and Arizona), only Arizona needed express legislative authorization to sign on to the DCP. But before that could happen, water users in Arizona had to decide just how to spread the pain of 512,000 fewer acre feet of Colorado River water to go around.

As the lowest priority users of Arizona’s Colorado River allotment, agricultural districts in Pinal County were set to absorb the entirety of the DCP-mandated cuts. Thanks to a summer-long stakeholder process, agreements were made to identify 595,000-acre feet of water, delivered over the next six years, to mitigate the losses in Pinal County. But just over 300,000-acre feet of that water is surface water. The rest will consist of groundwater that the Districts don’t currently have the infrastructure to access. Obtaining that water will require about \$50 million

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Would You Ever Run for Office?



# International Water Conservation Inventor Visits Arizona Farm Bureau

By Marlon Tanner and Bethany Bennick, *Global Ties Arizona*

Focused on community growth and women empowerment, Biplab Paul has transformed thousands of farmers’ lives across India from an idea originating here in the United States. His recent visits to Arizona Farm Bureau and other places reflect his ongoing effort to improve his country’s water resource.

Biplab’s adventure started in 2004, when the U.S. Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs invited him to be a part of the International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP). Biplab, with prior experience conducting water analysis in Gujarat, visited several U.S. cities, including Phoenix, Arizona and Miami, Florida with an open-mind, anxious to learn how the city provides fresh water to its residents.



Mr. Paul seated on the edge of his water conservation invention.

After Biplab’s visit with Miami’s Global Ties Office, he returned to India with an idea: the Bhungroo, an underground water management, and storage device. Biplab’s Bhungroo, which means straw in Gujarati, helps subsistence farmers in rural India easily store excess water to prepare for prolonged droughts. Land once unsustainable for farming began turning a profit for the farmers.

In 2011, the Bhungroo business grew when Biplab and his wife, Trupti Jain, developed their own social enterprise, Naireeta Services. Through Narieta Services, Biplab specifically teamed up with women farmers across India and the world to invest in the Bhungroo initiative. Since then, over 3,000 Bhungroos have been installed, helping more than 20,000 poor farmers and their 80,000 family members. Biplab remains reluctant to patent his technology in order to keep cost low and accessibility high for farmers across the world and is currently partnering with the World Bank and USAID as a part of the Feed the Future program.

Global Ties Arizona was selected to host Biplab Paul in

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in new and improved well infrastructure in the Pinal County irrigation districts, this despite efforts over the last several years to improve infrastructure.

The legislation was in two parts. The first was a resolution giving the Director of the Department of Water Resources the authority to sign DCP, when the opportunity to do so arises. The second was codification of the agreements needed to provide mitigation to Pinal County, including a total of \$9 million dollars to begin the well infrastructure improvement.

## It’s not over until there’s water in the ditch.

Despite Arizona passing the DCP bills by the federal deadline, the Bureau of Reclamation February opened a notice in the Federal Register, directing the Governors in the Colorado River Basin States to suggest ways to prevent catastrophic losses on the River, if DCP is not signed into law. This doesn’t mean that the Federal Government is taking over control of our water, but it does mean the Feds are still putting pressure on all the states involved to make sure that a DCP is signed, sealed, and delivered before the lake reaches a tier 1 shortage.

The agricultural industry is also working diligently to obtain the rest of the money necessary for well improvements, including an estimated \$20 million from federal funding sources. The \$9 million from the State, in addition to \$1.3 million per year in a repurposed pump tax and at least \$10 million combined from the districts themselves and from the Central Arizona Water Conservation District, will go a long way toward beginning the projects. But the key will be making sure that new wells are ready to go by 2023, when wet water mitigation is no longer available. Therefore, the bulk of that money is needed sooner rather than later – and with the federal government, “sooner” is almost never an option.

To that point, Representative David Cook is the sponsor of a bill (HB2590) that would appropriate \$20 million to the Department of Water Resources for the purposes of well infrastructure in Pinal County. Though the irrigation districts have every reason to believe that the federal money will come through, they need that money up front in order to complete the projects in a timely manner. This \$20 million would be an insurance policy for the federal funding.

## What does this mean for consumers?

Arizona is truly dependent on Colorado River Water. Not only does it bring life to the states that border it, it has brought decades of healthy economic activity to Maricopa, Pinal, and Pima counties thanks to the Central Arizona Project canal mainly driven by the agriculture industry. By protecting this river and the precious resource it carries, DCP is good for every Arizonan.

But this protection is not without its costs. The loss of surface water in Pinal’s irrigation districts will mean that the farms in that district won’t be able to produce the alfalfa, corn, and other grains that our dairies rely on for feed. With 39% of the state’s dairy sales coming from Pinal County, this will inevitably increase the price of the ice cream and other dairy products you and I cannot do without. We will also see an increase in the price of beef, as Pinal County’s top-notch feedlots are no longer able to source affordable, local feed. Therefore, the agricultural community will keep fighting for what it was promised: the resources to improve well infrastructure to mitigate the water loss necessitated by DCP.

To continue the river’s legacy of a vibrant Arizona, we must make sure that we don’t leave the industries that rely on its water – quite literally – out to dry. 🚜

**Editor’s Note:** As this article went to publication, the Gila Indian River Community threatened to withdraw from the Drought Contingency Plan despite the passage of the bills in the legislature and a signature by Governor Ducey. The Federal Bureau of Reclamation, the federal agency overseeing the DCP said, “we are hopeful and optimistic they will work through this latest issue.”

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understanding of how parasites operate and since then has grown our understanding of how these parasites carry other infectious diseases. Once we understand something we can engineer solutions.

Research, which most people would consider the basic science research that you talked about, gives us opportunities in translational science research and we work with a lot of industry partners and federal research partners on contract research. Clearly there are great needs and opportunities for our translational research.

If we look at Cooperative Extension, research done in Iowa may not be that relevant to what needs to be done in Yuma.

It's obviously a different environment. I think it's important that we are able to do applied work with our producers who need work done in specific areas.

Also, if you look back in the history of extension, a number of things that were done by extension years and years ago are now jobs in their own right. Extension also provides us with a mechanism of actually creating brand new jobs that didn't exist before.

One thing to add to all this is that we are all siblings in the same primary production family. *What we do is create new wealth from the sun.* It doesn't matter whether we are growing tomatoes, lettuce, cows, or we're providing environments which have tourism opportunities.

And, the biggest sibling in this whole family is our farmers. They produce the new wealth, the hard wealth, the hard dollars from the sun. Arizona Farm Bureau is a group of those people.

**Follow-up Note:** Since that interview seven years ago, Shane Burgess is known as the guy that re-labeled our state, "The Nutrition State," been part of maximizing support for farmers in translational science research by supporting the launch of Yuma Center of Excellence for Desert Agriculture and fully embedding himself in Arizona agriculture.

2013 Conversation with Humanitarian Howard Buffett, Warren Buffett's Son

Arizona Agriculture: Why Arizona; Why Willcox?

Buffett: Every year for about 10 years we came to Arizona and spent time with the Border Patrol to work on immigration issues. I got familiar with Arizona that way.

In the meantime, the 9,200-acre farm in South Africa that we've had for a long time is where we do a lot of research. We did some regular farming to get an idea of what costs were. After 15 years, we decided there are things we could do easier and more cost effectively here than over there. We looked for an area we could have drought and heat stress; primarily drought stress. We have water, so we could have our benchmark fields against drought tolerance.

We've set up test plots designed to mimic small production in Africa and we're working with a large agriculture manufacturer and seed company to put together a conservation agriculture system. We develop and test everything here and then we'll migrate it to the other countries.

Ultimately, that's what drove us back here. Where could we find an area in the U.S. that would mimic some of what we want but would be so much easier to do? Flying to South Africa takes a while.

This one [Willcox Farm] will actually be a hybrid. Besides mimicking small farms in Africa for that reason, we will have all the precision testing equipment for Purdue and Penn State and we think Texas A&M will eventually be down here too. We'll have precision planters, precision combines, everything. We're setting up an 80-acre drip field too.

Plus, we're doing a little bit of our own stuff; water tests on 10 acres. Some larger research will be alley cropping with corn and beans which will take a whole pivot.

We're looking at yield differences.

The truth is eventually we'll need more ground out here. We're just getting started. We're building a 60x90-foot lab. The lab will do tissue sampling, root sampling, plant sampling, and all sorts of microscope stuff that I don't even know how to describe. That's primarily Penn State and Purdue.

We do hope to connect efforts with the University of Arizona and Arizona State University, eventually. We actually know good people at ASU that we've had a long relationship with. We've worked a lot with ASU on immigration issues.

**Follow-up Note:** The Sequoia Farm Foundation (name of the Willcox farm) continues as a current member of the Arizona Farm Bureau. Their research also continues on the Willcox farm.

2017 Conversation with Rancher Stefanie Smallhouse about Amazon Purchasing Whole Foods for \$13.7 billion

Arizona Agriculture: Can Amazon get truly cheaper organic product in its Whole Foods grocery stores?

Smallhouse: For the most part, farmers and ranchers are price takers. When we grow specialty products we can have more impact on the price either directly or indirectly depending upon the product and the market. As these products are provided by more growers and available in more places, they naturally become more affordable to the consumer through competition at the retail level. However, the price to produce them does not necessarily become more economical for the grower unless operations merge. Folks who shop at Whole Foods don't generally like the idea of agricultural mergers at any level. Amazon may be the cyber Walmart but farmers and ranchers do not produce widgets, we produce food with limited resources.

The cost of production for many specialty products is higher than that for traditional crops and therefore demands a higher price, otherwise growers would not put in the effort. In a beef industry example, to participate in the Global Animal Partnership (GAP) program with our beef, we must meet certain standards and obtain certifications which also have fees associated with them. This makes our beef marketable to Whole Foods. There are not a lot of growers who qualify for this program which forces the price up throughout the supply chain. If Amazon were to make our GAP 4 certified ribeye less expensive to the masses, then either they lose or we do. Our production costs are not likely to decrease, and we have the freedom to walk away from the certification process if it doesn't pencil out. A program like GAP only works with certain operations. It was not difficult to meet the animal care standards because that is the way we have always operated, but the record keeping, certification and audit process is intense and costly.

These food products are not necessities for people and the traditional product provides the same nutritional value. If Amazon is successful in broadening the customer base by lowering the price, that does not mean we as growers will be able to meet the demand at the same rate. Even if growers could increase production, you are eventually faced with the law of finite resources amidst compliance with label restrictions.

So, to answer your question, in the short term yes because Costco is already doing it, but in the long term I would think something must give which will change the product.

**Follow-up Note:** After Amazon acquired the grocery chain in 2017, Amazon.com did slash prices at Whole Foods in an effort to change its pricey reputation and entice more shoppers into stores. However just recently, the Wall Street Journal reported that Amazon is raising prices on more than 500 items at Whole Foods as costs for packaging, ingredients and transportation "are putting a widening hold in Amazon's pockets." 🚚

The Faux Farm Gal

By Jan D'Atri, Arizona Media Celebrity



Jan D'Atri

I had an interesting year. One of my unchecked boxes on my bucket list, as many of you know, is to be like you, a farmer or rancher! You guys are my heroes!

God knew that...and so this year he gave me a chance to prove myself!

He wrote a poem about the experience... and asked if I would share it with you.

Reluctantly, I agreed.....

The Faux Farm Girl

Her Dad was a butcher, her mom was a cook

But when I made Jan

Well, I just stopped to look.

I'll send her to Yuma where farmers are fine!  
There's plenty of land, and a ton of sunshine  
I'll make her a Rovey, A Smallhouse, A Kerr.  
Or a Dugan, Thelander, a Heiden, for sure!

I'll teach her to farm and to milk goats, you know?  
I'll give her a mentor like, well, Rhonda Crow!

But.....what HAPPENED....was THIS:

Oh, I brought her to Yuma  
To harvest some greens  
But her yield—well, amounted to one hill of beans.

I shipped to her Willcox...and Annie's great Orchard  
Imagine what happened...  
Those apples got tortured.

I sent her to see how a farmer survives!  
But she asked how they do it without Facebook Lives?

She tried driving tractors but got in a jam  
You can't drive a John Deere  
AND Instagram!

I sent her to Eloy to learn to pick cotton  
As well as expected...the idea was, well rotten.  
Poor Tiffany and Rodney...They did what they could  
But they shipped her out quickly  
As well they should.

Now that just ain't right  
Got some adjusting to do  
But I'll make her a farm gal before it's all through.

Because I know there's a farmer  
Somewhere in her heart.  
But the adjustments are major,  
Not sure where to start.

I'll trade in her Calvin's for Carhardt, I will  
And boots that kick dirt in the farm fields  
But still....  
The clothes don't make cowgirls  
It's hard work-- no play  
But I'll make her an Aggie come end of the day!



Farm Gal

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I sent her to Hickman’s  
Oh, what a disgrace  
‘cuz I’m the one that got egg on my face.

I showed her a ranch where the cows  
They did roam  
But came time for brandGin’?  
she brung em all home!

She tried milkin’ everything!  
Oh, that was a joy...  
All she could milk was a carton of soy.

She tried growing chilis and Swiss chard and such  
But the whole darn experiment  
was just too dang much.

When Julie writes pressers  
Can she help me save face?  
I don’t want this gal – to be farming’s disgrace!

Well, Jan sat me down at the end of the Day,  
Said, Lord...I can’t do this...d’ya think we can pray?  
I wanna be a farm girl and work these great lands.  
But I know what you’re thinking.....it’s out of your hands.

But wait, Lord...HOLD ON, HERE!  
This COULD be my FATE!  
I’ll Grow You Some HEMP  
Thanks to SB TEN 98!

So Grosetas and Heidens and Bagnalls and Boelts...  
I’ll make sure she doesn’t come near your cows and your colts.  
Or your farms or your ranches  
Just AIN’T meant to be  
My Jan Project’s done with....  
She’ll stay on TV! 🚗

**Editor’s note:** Originally recited during the 3rd Annual FFA Blue & Gold Gala, D’Atri had so many requests for the poem, Arizona Farm Bureau offered to publish it. Note to Jan: You are our honorary Arizona Farm Girl.

The “Honorable” Mention Goes to Joe Citizen

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

Though I’ve been back to Washington D.C. since then, in 2007 I had an epiphany moment when joined with Arizona Farm Bureau’s D.C. delegation to meet our Congressional leaders. The near-speechless awe I’d maintained for our political leaders was gone. Before my Farm Bureau history, I’d gone nearly every year to Washington D.C. when I was part of the National Cotton Women’s Committee of the National Cotton Council.



During Senator Kyl’s brief appointment to Senator McCain’s seat and before Martha McSally was appointed to the Senate seat, Senator Kyl spoke this last November to Arizona Farm Bureau’s delegate body during the 2018 Annual Meeting. We again serendipitously met for a moment before he went up to speak to the lunch crowd.

This change of perspective made me nervous. Had I become a cynic about politics? Or, might my attitude be defined by a more pragmatic transformation. One experience certainly helped. In D.C. that year, I was separate from the group as I’d just left a gathering with American Farm Bureau’s Women’s Leadership Committee after giving a presentation. Heading the Farm Bureau delegation’s way, I ended up in Senator Jon Kyl’s office about 10 minutes ahead of the group. While I waited in the office, Senator Kyl walked in

willing to run for a political office on the local, state or national level? A good chunk of our citizenry is well qualified to run for office. A candidate’s lack of “political” experience shouldn’t disqualify them. That’s fixable. The fact that we’re experiencing the day-to-day challenges of American life qualifies us. A crash course in American government and civics fixes the poorest of misinformed citizens (we’re reminded daily of this from some of our current politicians). This point is separate from incumbency and experience, which certainly has its advantages in our system. But eventually the longest-serving of politicians retire and our benefits of incumbency disappear. The idea of political service should certainly not be discounted by those in Farm Bureau leadership. A core competency of ours is to develop leadership and advocacy skills if you get involved in Farm Bureau activities. It’s also one of the reasons why our candidate school was so popular. And, down the road I’m hoping we bring it back. In our own Arizona Legislature today, we can count a handful of legislators with farm and ranch backgrounds and grounded leadership that they credit the Farm Bureau with developing. Senator Sine Kerr wrote an entire editorial about this very fact. So, the next time you write to your representative from your legislative or congressional district, certainly place the word “Honorable” before their name and title. Also remember who gave them that honor. 🚗

trailed by some of his staff. “You must be with the Arizona Farm Bureau group,” Senator Kyl said, as he stuck out his hand to shake mine, noting my name badge. Then, he sat down next to me and we chatted for about five minutes. Flattered, I answered every question the Senator asked (a role reversal for my journalistic questioning of everyone else) and for a moment felt like we were simply two American citizens dreaming of the best for this country, not the Senator and the constituent haggling out the importance of our position on an issue. Jon Kyl didn’t act like a politician to me; he reflected his humanity, the unabashed “Joe, well Jon, Citizen.” Arizona Governor Doug Ducey’s earlier appointment of Kyl to replace Senator John McCain generated cheers from me because of his statesman-like qualities. Having stepped down and with Martha McSally now in that Senate slot, it’s a reminder of the potential of all of us to serve. Thank you, Senator Kyl, for your service. Which leads me to reflect that we all start out as average American citizens before we become a candidate for office and then a politician if we win an election. But at its core, we’re simply every day Americans. If we remain grounded in this fact, we operate more as a statesman during our tenure than a seated politician simply focused on the next election and what party will be in control. Protocol does dictate a standard of respect for anyone willing to lead; but it doesn’t require adoration. If money, time and intimidation were not a deterrent, would you be

Water

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January 2019 as an IVLP Gold Star Visitor. During his recent visit to Arizona, Biplab visited with faculty at the School of Sustainability at Arizona State University, toured Arizona Falls via the Salt River Project, explored the City of Phoenix - Tres Rios Wetlands, met with immigrant farmers at Golo Farm and the Phoenix Public Market, and spoke with staff at the Arizona Farm Bureau. Through these conversations, Mr. Paul was able to learn more about Arizona’s unique approach to water as it relates to farming and food security. “We were impressed with Mr. Paul’s passion for his country and desire to improve the conditions of the subsistence farmers he works with,” said Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director. “His questions let me know he’s always learning, investigating and trying to apply what he learns during his travels. It’s exciting to discover what inspired his Bhungroo invention based on an earlier visit to the United States.” Biplab was subsequently recognized for his accomplishments at the 2019 Global Ties U.S. National Meeting in Washington D.C. The U.S. State Department works with international leaders every day to create more stories and opportunities just like Biplab’s, one handshake at a time. 🚗

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# Arizona's Latest Conformity to the Federal Tax Code No Simple Matter this Time

By Philip Bashaw, Arizona Farm Bureau CEO

Conformity with the federal tax code is typically an annual exercise in Arizona that largely goes unnoticed during the legislative session. Mostly these changes are technical in nature and have an insignificant impact on taxpayers.

Unlike previous years, the current discussion related to conformity comes in the wake of the most significant federal tax reforms in nearly three decades. That has left Arizona lawmakers with decisions to make related to conformity without a whole lot of solid data.

The federal tax reforms are estimated to result in a decrease in federal incomes taxes of over \$1.5 trillion over 10 years. This is largely achieved by reducing the income tax rates. While the reduction in revenue is significant, it was also offset by broadening the base of revenue subject to income tax.

## Here is why it matters to the Arizona Income Tax

In many cases, the Arizona Tax Code relies on the federal tax code. For example, Arizona uses the federal definition for Federally Adjusted Gross Income and largely uses the federal definitions for itemized deductions. This is the basis for determining the income taxes we all pay. Under the federal tax reforms, more than 100 significant provisions were made to the federal tax code including those we rely upon to determine the state income tax.

While we rely on the federal definitions to determine what income is taxable, Arizona sets its own rate for how much to tax that income. If the state applies their current tax rate to the new broadened base adopted by the federal tax code, as they would under a simple conformity, it will result in a tax increase for many taxpayers in Arizona.

Unfortunately, it is difficult to determine what impact of simple conformity. Estimates ranges between \$50 million and \$250 million impact in the resulting tax increase. Some lawmakers would like to use the additional revenue in the general fund while others would like to avoid the increase to taxpayers. Without understanding how much revenue needs to be offset or how much can be appropriated, scoring the amount of revenue has proven difficult.

Lawmakers passed a proposal to adopt the federal tax code to allow for the simplicity of the changes but offset the increase by reducing the state level rates. The plan proposed to conform to the federal tax code for one year and temporarily reduce the tax rate by .11% which is estimated to reduce the tax increase by \$150 million. The proposal was vetoed by Governor Ducey on the basis that without being able to accurately estimate the increases, the tax rate adjustment could overshoot the revenue increases. The governor has proposed to conform to the federal tax code and put any tax windfall into the rainy-day fund.

In the event Arizona does not conform to the federal code, it is possible Arizona taxpayers would be required to calculate their income using two different formulas for their state and federal returns.

The impasse between the legislature and the governor may very well draw out the length of the session as they try to work out a deal 🗳️

# A Word of Thanks

By Katie Aikins, Arizona Farm Bureau Education Director

The Arizona Farm Bureau Educational Farming Company has been supporting ag-related youth programs since it's inception in 2003.

Others have contributed to the outreach and success of the Foundation, for that, we are grateful and say Thank You! The Foundation donors play a pivotal role in educating the public of all ages about the importance of Arizona's agriculture through educational programs that teach about the production of food, fiber, and natural resources highlighting Arizona agriculture's diversity and dynamic.

Since October 1, we have raised more than \$59,000 with the help of our generous donors. We extend a hearty "Thank You" to the many donors that have already contributed either through our letter writing campaign, a special grant, or through the Racin Bacon Derby Dinner Fundraiser. Your generous donation to the Educational Farming Company will help us reach our goal of connecting with more than 100,000 students, teachers and parents throughout the State this year with the positive message of agriculture. We could not do our educational outreach without you. Your contribution has impacted the lives of thousands of Arizona students, teachers, and parents and helped educate a population that is so far removed from the farm that we get them a little closer to it.

Do you want to play a role in making a positive impact on youth and the agriculture industry through the work of the Educational Farming Company? If you'd like to donate, you can go online to azfb.org and under programs find the "donor" button on the "Educational Farming Company" page. Or simply write a check to **Arizona Farm Bureau Educational Farming Company** to 325 South Higley Road, Gilbert, Arizona, 85296. For questions and further information about our program, contact Katie Aikins at 480.635.3608.

Together we can help change the dialogue of our food and work towards a more agricultural literate community.



**Arizona Farm Bureau  
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Ana Otto  
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See **THANKS** Page 7



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What is Farm Bureau University - Board Essentials?

By Amber Morin, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Manager – Leadership and Business Development

Farm Bureau University (FBU) - Board Essentials is an online educational resource offered by American Farm Bureau. It provides training to county board members, helping to improve in the areas of governance, planning, policy development and advocacy, and membership.



However, we all know that many of you in farm and ranch country don’t have the best internet connections. To remedy this, Arizona Farm Bureau Field Staff reworked

the online formats into in person, interactive, and hopefully entertaining educational experiences, which we will be rolling out via 10-minute trainings at county board meetings.

The 5 courses within FBU’s Board Essentials have been thoroughly vetted to include information that pertain to our Arizona County Farm Bureau leadership and it’s needs. Whether you’ve been on the board for three weeks or 30 years, this training will sharpen your skillset and understanding as a board member. The 5 courses are listed below. We look forward to implementing this program throughout the year in our county field work and encourage your participation and suggestions as we begin implementation.

- 1. Being a Board Member** - Offers foundational knowledge regarding Farm Bureau history, organization structure, and board member roles and responsibilities.
- 2. Governance** – Will equip you with the knowledge and skills to effectively lead the county Farm Bureau. It will highlight your legal and ethical duties, including interpreting financial statements, running meetings, and managing governance documents.
- 3. Planning** - Will uncover the process for creating an effective program of work, building fiscally sound budgets, all of which increases the return on your time and dollar investment.
- 4. Advocacy & Policy Development** - Farm Bureau is an advocacy leader for American agriculture because farmers and ranchers like you saw a need and acted – either by using the policy development process or by advocating to elected officials. This training explores how this generation of Farm Bureau members can continue this legacy!
- 5. The Membership Cycle** - Diverse, high-quality member programming provides opportunities for volunteers to engage, and when volunteers are motivated, you reach more prospective members. Engaging more volunteers and recruiting new members surfaces prospective board members for succession planning, so your county Farm Bureau can have a healthy turnover with active members! 

Meet Arizona Agriculture’s Tina Thompson

By Brooke Gladden, AACD Communications Director with contributions by Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Outreach Director

Every Arizona ranch story is unique and rich in history. Tina Thompson’s story is no exception. A ranch family that settled in Arizona in 1879, this family’s commitment to the environment, quality beef and family are the common denominators you’ll discover when reading about other ranch family operations in the state.

Tina Thompson’s story is also sprinkled with lots of commitment to industry groups ... well, certainly another common denominator among our Arizona ranch families.

*An Interview with Tina Thompson, southern Arizona rancher.*

*An ongoing series of our Arizona farmers and ranchers*

*Tell us about your operation and a bit of the history:* I grew up on the ranch that my husband and I now own and manage full time. We raised our son on the ranch and now have a wonderful little granddaughter! I am the 5<sup>th</sup> generation carrying on the ranching tradition and our granddaughter is the 7<sup>th</sup>. She is starting her own little herd already. Our son lives and works nearby and helps us as much as possible with the ranch and cattle work.

Our ranch is located at the foothills of the Chiricahua Mountains in the South East corner of Arizona. My Great, Great Grandparents, Brannick and Mary Riggs and numerous children, homesteaded here in 1879. The story goes that after they had spent a couple of years in the Fort Bowie area they were headed to the California Gold Rush but when they came to this beautiful country the women declared that they wanted to stay right here! And so, they did! I am very thankful for that. They came with milk cows but then quickly started raising beef cattle and sold beef to Fort Bowie nearby. They were here during the time of Geronimo and the Apache raids and unrest but had befriended the Apaches and were always a safe house during times of Apache Warfare.

See **THOMPSON** Page 8



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## Thompson

continued from page 7

When Geronimo surrendered for the 3<sup>rd</sup> and final time and traveling back to Fort Bowie the cavalry stopped here at the homestead and stayed overnight in the old school house. This was terribly frightening to my Great Grandfather who was a young boy at the time and he spend the night under his bed! The ranching tradition started here, and several members of the family were part of the Chiricahua Cattle Co. of Cochise County.

**What breed of cattle do you raise?** I grew up with Polled Herefords. My Great Grandfather, BK Riggs, was one of the first ranchers in our area to bring in Herefords and my family proudly raised quality Polled Herefords until the 1990's. When my husband, David, and I became involved with the family ranch we saw the need and benefits to changing to Black Angus. We are mostly Black Angus now with still some Polled Hereford influence. To help meet our demands for top quality Black Angus Bulls we started our own Registered Black Angus herd. Our son and Daughter-in-Law, Cory and Gabbe Thompson, also have a registered herd here and are very involved with the operations of the registered herds.

**What kind of conservation work have you done on your operation?** We spend a lot of time dealing with a lack of water. We have a pasture that my Great Grandfather, BK Riggs, named "Tickle Gizzard" because "There isn't enough water in this country to Tickle a Cow's Gizzard!" This is a constant struggle for us. My father, H. Robin Riggs, started putting in extensive pipelines and storage tanks in the 70's that we have continued to build on and improve.

We are in a beautiful area at the foothills of the Chiricahua Mountains but if we weren't here providing water from wells and pipelines, there would be no water available to wildlife for most of the year. We have installed and maintain 18 ½ miles of pipeline. Along with 37 drinkers, 10 wells that we use and 21 dirt tanks.

Monitoring, repairs and maintenance of our water system consumes most of our time. I am very thankful that my Grandfather and Father, Herbert and Robin Riggs, did a lot of Mesquite removal during their time of management. Because of their diligent brush removal work, we have good grassland pastures without much brush encroachment. We work to maintain healthy grasslands by having smaller pastures and rotate grazing to allow for each pasture to have time of rest during the growing season. We have drilled two new wells in the last three years. One only resulted in 2 gallons a minute but one we drilled in May 2018 pumps a good 6 gallons or more a minute. This well has been a life saver and has given some relief in times of water storage loss due to broken floats and such.

**What in terms of conservation work is next for your operation?** As mentioned earlier, we have 21 dirt tanks with most of them built over 70 years ago and have filled in over the years. During the drought we have managed to clean out 4 of them. Dirt tank water is not only a benefit to our cattle operation but a life saver to a lot of the smaller mammals and reptiles that are unable to use our drinkers. We are working to get all our dirt tanks cleaned out so there can be a reliable year-round source of water for cattle and wildlife. We are also looking at replacing an old trick tank system on our forest allotment to improve water reliability there where it is not reliable now.

**What sort of technologies have you implemented on your ranch and how have they changed over the years?** We have gone away from windmills and are now using solar power on four of our wells. Along with our elaborate pipeline system we have installed some new technology in one of our main water storage tanks to monitor the water level. This monitoring system works off cell service and logs data onto a website that we can check into and see what our water levels are. Every year we have had float valves break (often with the help of a Black Bear) and dump 12 to 20 thousand gallons of our precious water within 24 hours. Even though we check the tanks and drinkers every other day we can lose all our storage in 24 hours putting us in a major crisis of watering cattle. Until this summer when we drilled a new well we were only able to pump about 2 to 3 gallons a minute. We totally relied on water storage to keep up with 160 head of cattle in that area.

This new monitoring system alerts us right away when we are losing water, so we can find and fix the problem before we lose all our water storage.

**Why are you a Farm Bureau Member?** For many years I have relied on Farm Bureau's input in deciding who and what to vote for, especially their insights on propositions. In the last few years, I have seen the political pull Farm Bureau has in the state and in D.C. While I am a big supporter of NCBA too, I see that Farm Bureau is better recognized and more influential with our politi-



Tina Thompson and her husband, David.

cians on both sides of the aisle. I also appreciate their Ag in the Classroom programs and think that is very effective. And their support and involvement with FFA.

**What involvement do you have in Natural Resource Conservation Districts (NRCD)?** I was recruited by Richard Riggs who was a long time and well-known champion of our local NRCD. He was ready to retire and asked me to consider taking his place. It was a huge honor for me since I have a lot of respect and admiration for him and the work he has put into our NRCD for so many years.

Richard recruited me in 2010. I became an official board member in September 2010 and have been active

ever since. [ Tina Thompson is District Supervisor for the Willcox- San Simon NRCD.]

**What changes have you seen in the Triangle NRCD since you joined?** We have become a lot more involved with AACD and working with them in partnership programs. We have put a lot more emphasis on recruiting members and updating our membership list. In the last two years I've been pleased to see that there is more interest from other agencies in involving local NRCD's in conservation programs. We have also become more active in providing local work groups.

Through our Resource Center for Environmental Education we have greatly increased interest and participation in our Annual Riggs Field Day. By getting donations for Buckles and other prizes from the local businesses that are involved in agriculture, we have increased attendance and interest from our students and advisors to come prepared for a good competition. Next year we will have to up the difficulty in questions because students have been studying the material so well that it's become too easy for a lot of them!

**Tell us something about yourself that not many know:** Thanks to social media I don't know that there's much people don't already know about me! Perhaps, if they don't follow me on Facebook and Instagram they wouldn't know that I am an amateur photographer with the goal of using my pictures and videos to promote ranching, the cattle industry and agriculture.

I did receive the AACD 2018 Outstanding Supervisor award last summer. This was for my NRCD position and work. I am now 2nd vice President for AACD. 🐄

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