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CONVERSATION WITH EXTENSION VICE PRESIDENT: DR. MARTIN

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Strategic Communications

Dr. Ed Martin is the Associate Vice President and Director of the UArizona Cooperative Extension. He is the chief administrator of over 500 Extension employees across the state. In this position since early 2023, Arizona Agriculture wanted to give Dr. Martin a platform to highlight Extension plans going forward.

With offices in every county and five tribal nations, Martin leads his Extension team to meet the growing needs of stakeholders, helping improve the lives, communities, environment, and economies of Arizonans across the state.

Martin oversaw the recent economic impact study showing Extension's impact on the economies at the state and county levels. In addition, Extension recently completed a statewide needs assessment. Both studies will help develop a new Strategic Position plan that will develop a road map to help direct Extension programming and investment for years to come.

Martin earned a B.S. in Agricultural Engineering, an M.S. in Agriculture and Extension Education, and a Ph.D. in Agricultural Technology and Systems Management from Michigan State University. He has been with the University of Arizona since 1992. In addition to his administrative duties, Dr. Martin is a faculty member in the Biosystems Engineering Department. His responsibilities lie mainly in irrigation water management, crop water use, and irrigation scheduling at the field level.

A long-time irrigation specialist, Dr. Martin likes to point out that he's learned as much from agricultural producers as he has from textbooks. He enjoys telling stories about his work with Arizona's farmers and ranchers.

Arizona Agriculture: Congratulations on your promotion. Tell us what you hope to achieve as head of UArizona's Extension System.

Dr. Martin: To lead an organization that has the flexibility to address the ever-changing needs of our stakeholders in Arizona. When I assumed the role of Interim Director in 2021, my team and I began working towards a new Strategic Action Plan for UArizona Extension. I believed it was time for Extension to reevaluate its programming priorities and work with our stakeholders to ensure we meet their needs effectively and efficiently. I am also working towards securing ongoing state funding that will allow Extension to meet those clientele needs in a state where population growth is among the highest in the nation. Finally, I want to secure our stakeholders' trust in Arizona Extension by delivering timely, relevant, and impactful programs throughout the state.

Arizona Agriculture: While so many of us in agriculture know why Extension is so important, share in your own words why Extension is so important.

Dr. Martin: The strength of Extension is our reach, as we have offices in all 15 coun-

ties and in five tribal nations. We're in a unique position to collaborate with groups across the state to improve people's lives, communities, the environment, and the economy of Arizona.

The need for scientific, research-based information is greater now than ever before, as disinformation spreads quickly online and through social media. Extension is here as a

trusted source to address the issues and challenges facing Arizonans today. We provide data on sustainable agricultural practices, support families with financial education and positive parenting workshops, provide meaningful mentorship opportunities to youth through 4-H, and address nutrition, wellness, and quality of life concerns in the home and on the job.

Arizona Agriculture: Share one or two special stories you like to tell about your experiences with our Arizona farmers and ranchers.

Dr. Martin: When I started in 1992 as Extension's Irrigation Specialist, I was a bit wet behind the ears, as they say. Coming from Michigan, I had much to learn about Arizona agriculture. I am grateful for the support and patience of Arizona growers, who undoubtedly took me under their wing to help me help them.

Your Father, Pat Murphree, was one of my earliest mentors. Working together at the University of Arizona's Maricopa Agricultural Center (MAC), I spent many Friday afternoons with Pat, driving the fields and getting a new lesson each time. Since Pat, there have been numerous mentors from the agricultural community who have helped me better understand their connection to the land and proved repeatedly that Arizona growers and ranchers are some of the best stewards of our state's natural resources.

Arizona Agriculture: In Arizona with UArizona as our Land Grant University, what makes our linkages with the university, Extension, and agriculture production so special? Where are we a cut above or at least setting a high bar in the Extension world across the country?

Dr. Martin: Cooperative Extension leads in so many areas. Recently, a new memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed by users and managers of the Prescott National Forest. Our work with ranchers and federal agencies who oversee these lands demonstrates that agreements can be reached with research-based scientific data, open communication, and trust. We are paving the way for other states to follow.

Integrated Pest Management is another programmatic area where Cooperative Extension leads as our faculty and staff are among the best in the nation. Our producers have reaped the benefit of working with these outstanding people, including reductions in pesticide applications, improving ag-

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Dr. Ed Martin oversaw the recent economic impact study showing Extension's impact on the economies at the state and county levels.

ARIZONA FARM BUREAU EXITS GOVERNOR'S WATER POLICY COUNCIL

By Staff Reports

With thoughtful and sober consideration and in the best interests of our members, the Arizona Farm Bureau withdrew last month from the Governor's Water Policy Council. Following on the heels of a personal letter and call to the Arizona Governor's office, the Arizona Farm Bureau President announced to the press that the Arizona Farm Bureau's representation on the Water Policy Council would end.

"On behalf of the Arizona Farm Bureau Federation, I express our disappointment in what has been the workings of the Rural Groundwater Committee (RGC) of the Governor's Water Policy Council (The Council)," said Arizona Farm Bureau President Stefanie Smallhouse in a news release. "While we respect the efforts made by Governor Katie Hobbs' administration to address pressing issues related to rural groundwater, we believe the current process in place has been deaf to the concerns and priorities of Arizona's farm and ranch families and we must withdraw from it entirely."

Arizona Farm Bureau was joined by State Senator Sine Kerr, R-Buckeye, another council member, and dairy farmer, resulting in two key council members stepping away from the council at the same time.

From Senator Kerr's statement, "The Governor's Water Policy Council is nothing more than a forum to rubber stamp the progressive environmental goals of special interest groups."

Arizona Farm Bureau's Reasons for Withdrawing

"Arizona agriculture contributes 23.3 billion dollars in economic benefit to the State of Arizona; contributes to both local and national food security; provides open space; and 24/7, 365 days of on-the-ground watershed management to the state," added Smallhouse. "From the onset, we were optimistic that the RGC presented a unique opportunity to move beyond the contentious debates of the past and foster innovative solutions multiple stakeholders could embrace for safeguarding our rural groundwater resources while ensuring the economic vitality of rural communities."

Smallhouse also highlighted stewardship as a common goal among agriculturalists and that any new regulatory process must be driven by a locally elected planning body, so it represents the home-grown community. "The priorities we have championed for Arizona's farm and ranch families from the beginning of our involvement in this process have been driven by their desire to be good water stewards while protecting current uses and creating opportunities for the future, which enable even greater conservation. First and foremost, we believe that a new and innovative approach for the protection of water users and their uses is a prerequisite for any new regulatory structure in rural Arizona. Secondly, any new regulatory process must be driven by a locally

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NEW CLASS, NEW YEAR: NRCS MENTORING PROGRAM SECURES CLASS 3

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Strategic Communications

Successful American Actor Denzel Washington is credited with saying, “Show me a successful individual and I’ll show you someone who had real positive influences in his or her life. I don’t care what you do for a living — if you do it well, I’m sure there was someone cheering you on or showing you the way. A mentor.” He’s right and the Natural Resources Conservation Service’s (NRCS) mentor program is proof, now in its third year in partnership with the Arizona Farm Bureau.

Last month, in partnership with NRCS, Arizona Farm Bureau hosted Class 2 Conservation Agricultural Mentoring Program (CAMP) graduates during a luncheon event at the Great Wolf Lodge in Scottsdale. In the meantime, at the same event, the partnership hosted a “kickoff” for the new class, Class 3. Like previous classes, Class 3 is comprised of 10 NRCS employees (proteges) and 8 farm and rancher mentors. Class 3 now begins a 12-month engagement effort with their agriculture mentors to learn more about Arizona agriculture.

Arizona Farm Bureau and The National Resource Conservation Service began a partnership in 2021 to engage in a worthwhile program that aids NRCS employees in understanding Arizona agriculture at the ground level. CAMP provides a mentoring structure between farmers and ranchers and the NRCS employees. While several other states have the NRCS CAMP program, Arizona is unique in that it partners with the Arizona Farm

Bureau due to our extensive network of farm and ranch members.

Arizona Farm Bureau and NRCS will continue to shine a bright light on this exciting program and the experiences our mentors and protégé are going through. Watch for protégé/mentor profiles in the coming month with Class 3 on the pages of *Arizona Agriculture*, Arizona’s leading farm and ranch publication.

NRCS’s Arizona producer-employee mentoring effort creates community and NRCS. This effort assists with the completion of the national NRCS’ goal of connecting NRCS employees to local producers for regionalized, hands-on knowledge of production agriculture and local natural resources in Arizona.

The core goals for this partnership effort are that participating NRCS employees (proteges) advance their professional expertise related to:

1. Production of agriculture in their local areas,
2. Local resource concerns, and
3. How NRCS and producers can address local resource concerns.

The outcomes already show a deeper **awareness of the types of challenges and decisions our farmers and ranchers face each day** and enhance their local community relationships and capacity to provide excellent customer service. It’s also fostered great relationships between mentor and protégé. 🚗

STRATEGICALLY COMMUNICATING WITH THE PUBLIC ABOUT WHAT YOU DO

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Strategic Communications

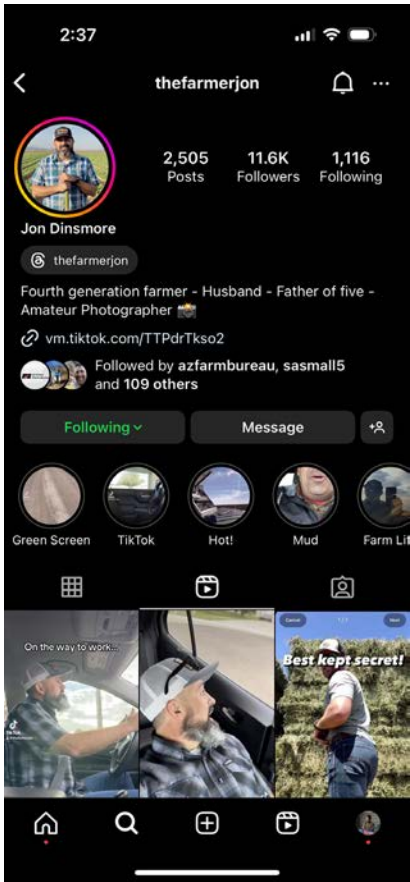
During County Farm Bureau Annual Meeting season a few years back, one of our county leaders reminded fellow farmers and ranchers, “We need to communicate better with the public about what we do.” Impassioned and clear, he was simply saying to the agriculture community, “We’re not doing enough.” So, what is enough? Or what should we do?

Farmer John or Jane’s story and their explanation of “ag life” will always resonate with the public more than the Arizona Farm Bureau’s strategic communications director telling their story for them. At Arizona Farm Bureau, the Advocacy, Outreach, and Ag Education teams take pride in elevating the Arizona agriculture story to our various audiences. And we’re constantly told we’re doing a bang-up job (thanks for all the encouragement and compliments).

Here’s proof that you’re more popular with the public than anyone on staff with Arizona Farm Bureau: In 2021, Yuma farmer Jonathan Dinsmore’s TikTok account exploded with likes and followers. At last count, Farmer Jon has 350,000 followers on TikTok. His account had generated 12.3 million “likes” by 2022 as the result of his #GreenScreenFarmer campaign.

A Yuma native, Jon Dinsmore, along with his family, owns and operates Dinsmore Farms. Between farming, family, and community engagement, you can find this young farmer engaging on social media to tell his personal agriculture story and even help his TikTok and Instagram followers understand Arizona farming. His photos and videos along with attention-grabbing captions have been shared far and wide on social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. On Instagram alone, Jon has close to 12,000 followers: 7,000 on Facebook and close to 3,000 on X, formerly Twitter.

Managing his social media presence for several years now, he’s known better to his followers as @TheFarmerJon. He’s always been willing to engage with those who comment on his posts and does so in a positive, engaging, and sometimes humorous manner. In 2021, many commenters on Jon’s TikTok videos began debating whether the lettuce fields in the background



Between farming, family, and community engagement, you can find this young farmer engaging on social media to tell his personal agriculture story and even help his TikTok and Instagram followers understand Arizona farming.

were real or a green screen, Jon leaned into the concept and began setting up his shots specifically to create this effect.

The idea worked and the ensuing videos went viral bringing a lot of attention to Yuma agriculture, specifically produce farming. Additionally, Jon began using the hashtag “#GreenScreenFarmer,” which had never been used before 2021. The hashtag has been linked to 40 or so of Jon’s videos and has been viewed 86.5 million times.

Obviously, Dinsmore is one of Arizona’s more prolific social media influencers. He is also Arizona Farm Bureau’s 2022 Ag Communicator of the Year.

STEPS TO GETTING TO THE “DO”

Our family farmed up until 2005. So, I get how hard it is to even conceive of launching a social media channel (X, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, and more). Or tolerating a media query. Or, pausing long enough to go into

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gricultural production, and keeping Arizona producers competitive in a global market. Other accomplishments include our food safety work with the leafy green industry, contributions to climate science, and our new programs, which include the Natural Resource Users Law and Policy Center and Beginning Farmer and Urban Agriculture initiatives. I could go on, but I assure you, there are many aspects of Arizona Extension, even those outside the area of agriculture, where others across the nation look to us as a model.

Arizona Agriculture: Additionally, what’s important to you and the Extension staff? With this platform, what do you hope to convey?

Dr. Martin: As the head of UArizona Cooperative Extension, it is critical for me and the Extension faculty and staff in the state to prioritize several key aspects of the Extension mission. First and foremost, we are committed to providing high-quality, research-based information and education to support the needs of our community, particularly in the agriculture sector. We hope to convey the importance of accessibility and inclusivity in our programs, ensuring that everyone can benefit from our resources regardless of their background or location.

We aim to convey our dedication to innovation and adaptability through this platform. Agriculture constantly evolves, and we want to be at the forefront of emerging trends and technologies. We also need to emphasize our commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship, as these are integral to the future of agriculture in Arizona.

Arizona Agriculture: I ask the same question, but now on behalf of the producer class.

Dr. Martin: We understand that producer’s needs are at the heart of our mission to be a reliable source of support and information for farmers and ranchers. What’s important to us and the Extension faculty and staff, specifically for the producer class, includes:

- Timely and relevant information: We want to provide producers with the latest research, best practices, and market insights directly impacting their livelihoods.
- Collaboration and engagement: We are committed to listening to the voices of producers and actively involving them in shaping our programs and initiatives. Their feedback and input are invaluable.
- Economic viability: We understand that agriculture is a business, and the financial well-being of producers is essential. We’ll work to provide resources and strategies that help them remain profitable and sustainable and support their growth.
- Resilience and adaptability: Agriculture faces various challenges, from climate change to market fluctuations. We aim to convey the importance of resilience and provide tools to help producers adapt to changing circumstances.

Ultimately, our goal is to empower our producers, ensuring they have the knowledge and resources needed to thrive in a dynamic agricultural landscape.

Arizona Agriculture: So much of what Extension does requires extended collabo-

ration with all types of stakeholders. Where do you think we can improve and how do we achieve that?

Dr. Martin: We need to continue building and nurturing our stakeholders’ trust in Extension. Over the years, we have been a trusted partner for Arizona agriculture. We need to be mindful of the trust we have developed and ensure that we never lose that, because trust can be gone in an instant.

We must continue to have conversations and seek out input from our stakeholders. Whether it is a new grant to address issues facing Arizona agriculture or even hiring the people working with our producers, we must be more intentional in getting feedback from our stakeholders. One of Extension’s strengths is our ability and willingness to listen to our stakeholders’ concerns and act on their comments as a trusted partner. The key here is communication and transparency. Communication ensures stakeholders are kept up-to-date, and transparency assures our partners better understand the operations of Extension. Without consistent and open communication and transparency, we lose that trust we worked so hard to build.

Arizona Agriculture: This position can be demanding. How do you plan to balance it all?

Dr. Martin: To be quite honest, I have one of the best teams and support systems in the state. Our state Extension office continues to work as a team, helping support our county faculty, staff, state Specialists, and Tribal Extension Programs. In addition, the county staff, those who support their programs, also help keep us balanced and on track. And I must say I have received outstanding support from our academic unit heads and the upper administration in CALES and the division. Everyone has been so supportive in helping me stay on top of things.

Finally, I cannot dismiss the support I get from home, from my wife, Tonya, and our kids, whose understanding and support help get me through every day.

Arizona Agriculture: There’s been shifts and changes in the research world including trying to adapt to the expectations and expediency of what is needed for application in production agriculture. Where can Extension help this effort and some things for the urgent expectations of farmers and ranchers?

Dr. Martin: We are currently working on a new strategic positioning plan. This is akin to a typical strategic plan but with an emphasis on getting Cooperative Extension in the proper “position” to address the ever-changing landscape of agricultural production and other challenges across the state. In the coming months, we’ll be asking many of your readers to attend listening sessions, engage with our Strategic Position Committee, and help with the Extension plan for the next five to ten years. We want to make sure that Extension can address new threats and challenges to agriculture production in the state as they arise.

We recently received a one-time increase from the state legislature, allowing us to invest in innovations within Extension. We have hired new employees to expand Extension impact across the state. We hope to make this new funding ongoing, so we don’t lose the moment we have built and can address the needs of agricultural production across the state in both the short and long term.

Arizona Agriculture: What have I not asked that you’d like to talk about?

Dr. Martin: Since taking on the role of Interim Director in June of 2021, Arizona Cooperative Extension has been working *See CONVERSATION WITH DR. MARTIN Page 5*

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CONVERSATION WITH DR. MARTIN *continued from Page 4*

on a three-phase approach to improving our program delivery and meeting the expectations of our stakeholders.

The first was to perform an economic impact analysis of Extension’s work within the state, with the full report available online for all to read: [The Economic and Functional Impact of Arizona Extension.pdf](#). This analysis showed that for every dollar of ongoing funding from the state, Extension has a \$4.87 economic impact. This is one of the highest returns on investment of any Extension system in the country. The report also lists the functional impacts, including dollars saved in reducing pesticide applications due to our Integrated Pest Management team, dollars saved in healthcare costs due to our nutrition programs, or even the impact of our 4-H program on the youth of Arizona.

The second phase was a recently completed needs assessment survey. Results from [Statewide Needs Assessment](#) | [Cooperative Extension](#) | [The University of Arizona](#) survey can be found online [as well](#) and include county and state-level data. Not surprisingly, water was one of the highest priority issues identified. In addition, childcare and K-12 education also ranked very high.

Now, with these two phases complete, we will begin our strategic position process. We will need feedback from your members and others across the state so we can position Extension to meet the needs of our stakeholders.

I also would like to thank everyone in the agricultural community for their support of Extension, as it ensures that Extension will continue to be a relevant, trusted source of research-based information that improves people’s lives, communities, the environment, and the economy of Arizona. 🚜



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WATER POLICY COUNCIL continued from Page 1

ected planning body. This is by no means an unusual concept. Several of these entities currently manage natural resources in Arizona and have been very effective with local direction and accountability for decades.”

She went on to say, “After months of deliberation, the committee’s direction, and thereby the outcome of the greater Council, appears to be pre-determined as essentially a cross between the seriously flawed attempts of the past and an AMA. At best, our priorities have been given very little committee consideration or, at worst, have been totally dismissed. This is unacceptable to our members, farm and ranch families who will undoubtedly be impacted directly and immediately by any rural groundwater regulatory framework.

“Arizona Farm Bureau exists to solve problems. We have quite a bit of experience in bringing together disparate views and collaborating towards solutions. Therefore, we intend to press on with advocating for reasonable, innovative, equitable, and common-sense alternatives to the current regulatory frameworks. An alternative that can better address the needs of rural areas, protect groundwater users, and promote economic incentives for conservation rather than relying on heavy-handed and unaccountable regulation.

“Although we must withdraw to turn our attention and time towards an effort where we can be heard, we appreciate the Governor’s invitation to serve on the Council and value her leadership initiative. We have extended an offer to Governor Hobbs to convene a diverse group of agricultural stakeholders from around the state to meet with her directly. In the interest of Arizona’s food security and water future, we hope she accepts.”

Arizona Farm Bureau will continue to advocate for the protection of agriculture’s water. 

COMMUNICATING WITH THE PUBLIC continued from Page 2

your child’s classroom to read in the class an ag-accurate book. There is hope though and for even the busiest of us, it can be done.

- 1. **Be original, be you.** Your best focus for the context of telling farming and ranching is your story. Begin to accept that even what seems mundane to you is fascinating to someone in the public who has no concept of farming or ranching. Saddled up a horse all your life to ride fence? Dull to you?! Not to Joe or Jane Public.
- 2. **Pick just one channel in social media in the beginning:** Decide if you are more comfortable using Instagram, X, or Facebook. Not to brag but Arizona Farm Bureau is on every channel imaginable, well except TikTok and Snapchat. If you have questions, call one of us on staff.
- 3. **Dedicate a time each day, week, or month:** One of our winegrower members once told me, “Julie, I devote about 15 to 20 minutes early in the morning to my social media channels then I’m done for the day, and I don’t worry about it for the rest of the time.” Most in the retail farming and ranching space get it, but others should too.
- 4. **Employ a younger family member or friend who’s a whiz at social media engagement:** More than one farmer or rancher has told me they have assigned social media engagement to one of their kids to post regularly on the channels to tell the farm or ranch family story.

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- 5. **Celebrate.** New achievements on the farm and ranch? Are market prices finally coming up? Anything new or different becomes something to tell. Even if you don’t want to explain it call us at Arizona Farm Bureau and we’ll help you celebrate a win. We need more of those in agriculture right now.
 - 6. **Especially for Retail farmers, make a small sign with your company logo that you place next to the produce and/or animal ag when you are on your channel or about to take a photo.** Don’t just take a picture of tomatoes. They could be anyone’s tomatoes. But, if you grew them, place the sign by your wonderfully grown tomatoes so viewers know for sure they are yours.
 - 7. **Engage.** So, I can’t convince you to open an Instagram account (or use the one you opened but never posted on). Fine. But remember every conversation you have with a supplier, family friend, colleague or new acquaintance might be an opportunity to talk about your farming and ranching life. Don’t preach, just listen, and find that opening to tell your agriculture story.
- Just can’t tolerate the idea of engaging the public? The Arizona Farm Bureau and your commodity-specific associations will still be here for you and help you. We always want big wins when it comes to connecting with the public but like dating, it’s usually a series of tiny steps that lead up to helping the mutual parties discover there is truly something there. 
- Editor’s Note:** To get your story told, contact Julie Murphree at juliemurphree@azfb.org. She’ll help you determine a plan of action.

CLIMBING THE HILL TOGETHER

By Devan Hunt, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Grassroots Engagement


Data from a recent study conducted by the Arizona Suicide and Prevention Coalition reports that 1 in every 10 adults has experienced a noticeable and significant increase in psychological distress within the past two years. Working in agriculture continues to be extremely stressful. According to AgWeb.com, the startling reality is that the rate of suicide among farmers and ranchers is 3.5 times higher than the general population. The Action Plan for Suicide Prevention in Arizona states: “Major statewide risk factors for suicide include (and are not limited to) ...lack of access to rural primary and behavioral health care. Challenges facing Arizona relate to a lack of care providers statewide and navigating the significantly different environments of urban and rural populations.” Discussing emotional and mental distress as well as seeking treatment remains largely stigmatized even with this stark data justifying a critical need. Prevention starts

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with education and advocacy and connection to programs that understand and support a rural lifestyle, traditional values, beliefs, and a certain way of life. For hard workers, who understand that they reap what they sow, it can be a difficult thing to accept that we cannot control and that we may need help. We need a community of members who understand and support each other through these struggles and make resources available in rural areas where access to care is difficult physically and financially. When you can trust that someone understands what your land, livestock, water, farm, ranch, county, country, and livelihood mean to you, it can be helpful to know that you are not alone.

There is good news. Another recent poll by the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) and conducted by Morning Consult indicates that farmers and ranchers are more willing to talk about their struggles. In their latest poll asking about mental health, Farmers and people in rural areas are more comfortable talking about stress and mental health challenges with others, and stigma around seeking help or treatment has decreased in rural and farm communities, but it is still a factor. AFBF’s back-to-back polls on this have allowed them to witness slight improvements in people’s willingness to communicate and overcome the stigma. This is good news but only the beginning. The National Institute of Health released a study that suggests our literal physical, visual, and emotional perception of difficulty and pain registers significantly less when we believe we have help and support. When we face a difficult climb, there is proof that having those you trust in the process can make the mountain seem less treacherous. If you or someone you care about is exhibiting symptoms of suicidal ideation, depression, or anxiety please utilize the free resources in the nearby graphics. 



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HOW DID ARIZONA CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS VOTE

By Chad Smith, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Government Relations

As we watched Congress avert another government shutdown at that last hour, we continued to watch politics play out on Capitol Hill. Prior to passing the continued funding, now set to expire in November, the House took up the Ag appropriations bill.

Then we watched Congress mark another historical event, where Speaker McCarthy was removed as Speaker of the House. As of this writing, the outcome is still unknown; however, a lot of work is yet to be done, including passing a budget and a farm bill, all of which are in limbo until a new speaker is elected. Then we witnessed from across the world a war breakout where any hopes of U.S. aid were also in limbo because of a vacancy in the speaker’s office.

Considering everything that is going on I wanted to take a moment and share with you how our delegation has voted on some of these key measures over the last few weeks:

Vote to Remove Speaker McCarthy

With a vote of 216-210, the House voted to remove Speaker McCarthy. This leaves a vacancy but also prevents the house from taking up any legislation until a new speaker is elected. With a 45-day window to pass a budget to avoid a shutdown along with the need for a Farm Bill or even an extension of the current farm bill, things on Capitol Hill will be a bit chaotic. Both Biggs and Crane banded together with 6 other Republicans and with a unified Democratic party to remove the speaker.

Continuing Resolution to Avoid a Shutdown

Arizona			
Yea	AZ 1 st	R	Schweikert, David
Yea	AZ 2 nd	R	Crane, Eli
Nay	AZ 3 rd	D	Gallego, Ruben
Nay	AZ 4 th	D	Stanton, Greg
Yea	AZ 5 th	R	Biggs, Andy
Nay	AZ 6 th	R	Ciscomani, Juan
Nay	AZ 7 th	D	Grijalva, Raúl
Yea	AZ 8 th	R	Lesko, Debbie
Yea	AZ 9 th	R	Gosar, Paul

Continuing Resolution Vote

are funded appropriately.

The last few weeks have been interesting to say the least, while we hope a new speaker is elected by the time you are reading this, the work continues. We continue to advocate for the passage of a farm bill before 2024, knowing a budget must be passed before they can even consider a new Farm Bill. We also know that removing the speaker could very well lay out how the rest of this Congress will go, but we hope that they will come together, find compromises, and do the work of the people. 🛠️

With a vote of 335 to 91, both Senator Kelly & and Sinema voted in favor of the CR, while House members Crane, Biggs, and Gosar voted against the CR. The 45-day extension of 2023 level funding passed, and so we will again be watching the same debate take place as we near the holidays.

Ag Appropriations Vote

With a vote in the House of 191-237, the measure failed. Now, I will preface this with the fact that there were approximately 14% in cuts to the bill prior to making it to the House floor for a vote. On one hand, some are concerned with spending while others want to ensure programs

REVISED WOTUS RULE CHOOSES TO CONTINUE GOVERNMENT OUTREACH

By Daniel Harris, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Manager

This fall, in a move that has left the agricultural community disappointed, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently unveiled its revised Waters of the U.S. (WOTUS) Rule, which has fallen short of addressing the concerns of farmers and ranchers. EPA had an opportunity to write a Waters of the U.S. Rule that’s fair to farmers and stands the test of time, but instead chose to continue government overreach and revise only a small slice of the rule that was rejected by the Supreme Court.

We’re pleased the vague and confusing “significant nexus” test has been eliminated as the Supreme Court dictated, but EPA ignored other concerns raised by the Justices, 27 states, and farmers across the country about the rule’s failure to respect private property rights and the Clean Water Act. While an improvement, it was far from the clarification we were seeking.

The Arizona Farm Bureau, like many others, expressed our disappointment with the direction taken by the EPA. This revision has failed to provide the fairness that farmers and ranchers had hoped for, leaving them in a state of uncertainty and confusion. EPA continues to attempt to expand its jurisdictional reach, particularly through the “relatively permanent” standard, which the agency has intentionally kept vague.

The EPA’s attempt to rewrite the WOTUS Rule was seen as a crucial opportunity to create a fair and durable regulatory framework that would benefit the agricultural community. Unfortunately, the revised rule has fallen short of these expectations, and the Arizona Farm Bureau is disheartened by the direction taken by the EPA.

One of the main concerns that we raised is the lack of clarity and certainty in the new rule. While the EPA has made efforts to address some of the contentious issues stemming from the Supreme Court decision, such as eliminating the problematic significant nexus test, it appears that the agencies are using other elements of the rule to expand their jurisdictional reach. This continued streak of ambiguity in policy leaves landowners grappling with ongoing confusion and uncertainty.

Despite the incredible progress made with the Sackett decision, the EPA and related agencies continue to maintain vague and amorphous policies, further contributing to the challenges faced by landowners. The agricultural community has long called for a durable and transparent rule, but it seems that the current rulemaking has missed the mark.

For our members, understanding the specifics of the WOTUS rule in their respective states is crucial. With ongoing litigation that has halted the 2023 WOTUS rule in 27 states, it is imperative that agricultural professionals are well-informed about the regulations applicable in their regions. Farmers and ranchers share the goal of protecting the nation’s waterways. They deserve rules that don’t require a team of attorneys and consultants to identify “navigable waters” on their land.

The focus now shifts to ensuring that members of organizations like the Arizona

Farm Bureau are equipped with the knowledge and resources needed to adapt to this evolving regulatory landscape. In the wake of more legislation challenging the Navigable Water Provision, we strive to stay ahead of the regulatory actions to ensure the shroud of uncertainty can never again be placed on such a key issue. 🛠️



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