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CONVERSATION WITH A PINAL COUNTY FARMER: CASSY ENGLAND

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Strategic Communications

Pinal County agricultural producer, Cassy England, who along with her uncle, manages the day-to-day of their family's row-crop operation is a strong advocate for implementing conservation practices and new advancements to make farming in Pinal County as efficient as possible in this time of uncertainty. As a result, I've been keen to capture her story for some time.

Cassy supports her belief that Arizona agriculture is efficient and essential to our economy and rich history. Serving her third term with the Pinal/Pima USDA board, she strives to promote and inform producers of programs offered. She does this by working to help educate farmers about the various ways they can improve their operations.

If you ask her what inspired her, she'll say, "As a child, I had the incredible opportunity to visit Ak-chin Farms managed by my grandfather. The moment I stepped onto that farm, I was captivated by the sheer beauty and the meticulous management of the land. The vibrant fields and thriving crops showcased the true potential of agriculture."

Her generational farm story is not unlike many others as she adds, "My grandfather's unwavering passion for farming inspired me, urging me to stay connected to the world of agriculture. Every time I think back to those days on the farm, I'm reminded of the boundless possibilities and the deep-rooted connection I feel to the land."

Holding a bachelor's degree in accounting and a life-long learner including recently graduating from Project CENTRL's Class 31, Cassy uses her love of reading to help stay current on drought, conservation practices, and various issues affecting us in agriculture.

Arizona Agriculture: Give us an overview of your farming.

England: Working closely with my family, we've operated our farms in both Pinal and newly in Pima County. Our operations encompass approximately 6,500 acres of cropland. We utilize careful crop rotation strategy, primarily short staple cotton, alfalfa, wheat, barley, corn, and oats. This rotation not only maximizes our yields but also preserves the health of our soil.

Our irrigation techniques utilize tried and true methods to achieve efficient flood irrigation. This allows us to optimize water usage, minimizing waste while ensuring each crop receives the precise amount it needs to flourish. As stewards of the land, we take immense pride in our role as custodians of these acres, using modern practices with age-old wisdom to create a sustainable and prosperous farming legacy.

Arizona Agriculture: What aspect of production agriculture is the most exciting to you?

England: Working in Southern Arizona's agricultural landscape has truly opened my eyes to the incredible process of turning our soil into productive resources. It's remarkable how our careful efforts result in high-quality cotton fiber and nutritious feeds. Being a part of Arizona's farming tradition is something I deeply value, especially as we navigate the challenges of the desert environment.

What I find most satisfying is the tangible impact we make by sustainably producing

crops that thrive in this region. The history of farming in Arizona adds an extra layer of significance to what we do, as we continue the legacy of those who worked the land before us. Despite the harsh conditions, we've managed to not only survive but thrive, using a blend of modern technology and timeless practices.

It's a fulfilling journey, and I'm proud to contribute to the ongoing story of agriculture in this desert landscape.

Arizona Agriculture: Additionally, what is most important to you in production?

England: The key to our success lies in the dedicated individuals who form our workforce. They're not just employees; they're an essential part of our farm family.

Their commitment, hard work, and expertise are the driving forces behind our achievements. We rely on their contributions to overcome challenges and celebrate successes helping us to remain productive.

The most crucial aspect of production agriculture, from my perspective, is creating an environment where exceptional people can thrive, collaborate effectively, and feel valued as integral members of our agricultural endeavor. Their professionalism is the cornerstone of our farm's continued success.

Arizona Agriculture: What are the latest technology innovations that you've instituted to squeeze every ounce of efficiency and cost savings out of your business?

England: Continuous improvement in efficiency is at the core of our farming philosophy. We actively embrace precision agriculture techniques to optimize our operations. This includes laser leveling to enhance water efficiency, carefully curated watering schedules to minimize water wastage, weekly field inspections to promptly address pest and other potential issues and leveraging NRCS programs to further enhance our overall efficiency.

In addition, we are dedicated to actively learning and exploration, constantly seeking out novel and innovative approaches that can bring tangible benefits to our farms. This commitment to staying informed and embracing advancements is integral to our mission of sustainable and efficient agricultural practices.

Arizona Agriculture: Your farming operation is large and would be considered a "commercial" operation by the uninformed. But it's a family-owned and run business. What do you tell the public about your farming practices?

England: Our farming operation at Sierra Farming is indeed substantial, and while it might be viewed as a "commercial" venture, it's deeply rooted in our family values and traditions. We proudly represent the third and fourth generations of our family, and our shared commitment is not only to sustain Arizona Agriculture but also to nurture strong family bonds.

From humble beginnings, we've grown over the years, but our core principle remains which is efficiency. We firmly believe that by running our farm efficiently, we can ensure the sustainability of our operations and contribute to the quality of Arizona's agricultural products. We are proud to

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Says England, "What I find most satisfying is the tangible impact we make by sustainably producing crops that thrive in this region."

ADVOCACY IN ACTION

By Chad Smith, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Government Relations

Arizona Farm Bureau President Stefanie Smallhouse, along with second Vice President, Richie Kennedy, and five county Farm Bureau leaders spent several days on Capitol Hill in D.C. Congress just returned from August recess, which made for an extremely busy week for elected officials and congressional staff. The Arizona delegation had the opportunity to meet with our entire delegation except for Congressman Grijalva, whose office was unresponsive to multiple requests made. The group was able to discuss many important issues with lawmakers, while many were regulatory, the request for regulatory oversight was part of our ask.



The Arizona Farm Bureau delegation had the opportunity to meet with the House and Senate Agriculture Committee staff.

The following highlights our major accomplishments during the regular D.C. Fly-In in September.

The BLM Rule

Yavapai County Farm Bureau Vice President and rancher Tim Peterson had the opportunity to discuss in detail his experience with Bureau of Land Management (BLM) grazing leases and expressed concerns over the BLM conservation rule as well as the solar variance issue. In addition to sitting down with lawmakers to discuss concerns over the rule, we had the chance to sit down with BLM Director, Tracy Stone-Manning, for a deeper dive into the rule. Director Stone-Manning assured the group that our concerns were heard loud and clear, and that the intention of the rule is not to impede grazing leases. We expect major reform to the final rule as we continue to advocate for the protection of current and future grazing leases.

Wolf Depredations, Plus the Adverse Effect Wage Rate

Apache County Farm Bureau President and rancher Haley Andrus was able to participate in the fly-in, providing firsthand experience with wolf depredations. As we advocate for the Wolf Act and inclusion into the Farm Bill, Haley was able to tell her story, expressing the importance of getting relief through the Wolf Act.

County Farm Bureau leaders Myrle Marlatt, Sonia Gasho and Sherry Saylor were also on the trip. Other important issues discussed included the Adverse Effect Wage Rate (AEWR), which there has been recent

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AIMING TO SUPPORT EFFECTIVE STEWARDSHIP AND LEADERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

By Devan Hunt, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Grassroots Engagement

Vice Admiral James Stockdale was held as a prisoner in Hanoi during the Vietnam War for over seven years repeatedly tortured and kept in solitary confinement. In one instance he cut and disfigured his own face so that he could not be used for propaganda. When discussing why he was able to survive the harsh conditions when many of his prison mates did not, he accredited his survival to how he chose to approach the situation. His approach has become what is known as the *Stockdale Paradox*: *“You must maintain unwavering faith that you can and will prevail in the end, regardless of the difficulties, and at the same time, have the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be.”*

It is not a secret that the challenges facing agriculture are brutal, and while many look at the future of agriculture with trepidation I see this as an incredible opportunity to prevail. Albeit intense, the potential for the Voices of Agriculture in Arizona to be an authority that the rest of our country can look to, take seriously, and follow when it comes to sustainability in farming, ranching, and food production in the U.S. isn’t just possible, it’s incredibly vital to our survival.

I, like Stockdale, am not naive. As the Director of the newly established Grassroots Engagement, I feel the weight and responsibility to advocate for our ag producers in a meaningful way, AND I am here for it.

If you were able to make it to an annual meeting this year where our Arizona Farm Bureau President Stefanie Smallhouse spoke, I imagine you were as inspired as I was. In Yavapai County she made the following statement: “...you’re talking about an issue, and they say, ‘we’ve been dealing with that for years, there’s nothing you can do... that’s just the way it is.’ I hate that! There’s always something that you can do...and I just refuse to accept that.” I refuse to accept that too, even though there is much to be done.

Generation gaps, value differences, sustainability and how that will be defined, conservation, natural resources, weather, politics, social systems, and culture, are only a few of the overwhelming influences that are knocking on the door of ag production, some of which we will never be able to control. We will have to elevate the work we do with grit, determination, realism, as well as unwavering faith and discipline.

The Arizona Farm Bureau Federation is in a unique position to collaborate with, provide resources to, and advocate for the county board and their members by developing

programs and processes from the ground up. I am intently listening to the needs and voices in Arizona counties and working to provide opportunities for county programs of work and voice engagement. As of now we plan to:

- Offer updated and relevant training to county Farm Bureau leaders at annual meetings and beyond.
- Create a member onboarding experience for member growth and retention.
- Create a library of online resources for leadership to utilize in a way that makes sense to them and their busy time frames.
- Create a series of mental health training, support, and community resources across Arizona .

We are here to help you continually develop the resources, programs, and networks to grow your brand, business, and voice in Arizona agriculture. We also invite you to reach out and make suggestions on topics you believe would be helpful in your grass-roots leadership role.

Our field managers will be utilizing the most up-to-date resources, governance, and effective procedural operations used by our county farm bureaus. We are collaborating as a state staff to increase county media presence through specific branding, media, and marketing education. We are assessing ways to broaden and strengthen our membership and business networks for our producers, assisting them in their desires for success.

The sustainability of agriculture in Arizona begins with strong, effective county stewardship, and a desire to leave our organization better than we found it for the benefit of our members and successors.

Assessing strengths and areas for improvement in each county and addressing those areas with brutal reality as well as unwavering faith and discipline that we are going to prevail is both intimidating and exhilarating. I do believe we are going to look back on this specific time in Arizona Agriculture history and be thankful for the experience that has given Arizona Farm Bureau this opportunity to remain the authority as the Voice of Arizona Agriculture. 🚜

THIRD QUARTER 2023 REGULATORY COMMENT REVIEW

By Ana Otto, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Manager

As the third quarter comes to an end, there has been no slowdown in responding to regulatory proposals. In this quarter, you will see a couple of comment letters responding to state-level issues. Below is a summary of the regulatory dockets AZFB responded to during the third quarter of 2023 (July -September).

Environmental Protection Agency – Draft Occupational and Residential Risk Assessment for Dimtheyl Tetrachloroterephthalate (DCPA) – AZFB provided comments to EPA highlighting the important role DCPA plays as a herbicide in the production of certain crops in Arizona, including broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower and other Cole crops, as well as onions. AZFB’s comments urge EPA to carefully consider the benefits of DCPA as it moves forward with this registration review.

Arizona Department of Agriculture (AZDA) – Environmental and Plant Services Division proposed rulemaking to modify administrative rules under Title 3, Chapter 3, Articles 1 through 5 and 7 through 10 – AZFB provided comments to AZDA noting support for rule modifications, in particular those which modify current rules to comply with federal requirements that must be in place for AZDA to maintain primacy over federal programs related to pesticides and worker protection standards.

Bureau of Land Management – Conservation and Landscape Health – BLM’s proposal included new regulations, including applying land health standards to all BLM lands, elevating “conservation” to a “use” under the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLMPA), and prioritizing the designation and protection of Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs). AZFB’s comments strongly opposed BLM’s proposal to define conservation as use and stated our serious concerns with proposed conservation leases. The comments also noted concerns with BLM’s process in developing the proposed rule, as well as their determination that the rule qualified as a categorical exclusion and is not a major rule. Additionally, AZFB joined a coalition letter with 57 other organizations that explained in greater detail issues and concerns with BLM’s proposed rule.

Environmental Protection Agency – Vulnerable Listed Species Pilot Project: Proposed Mitigations, Implementation Plan, and Possible Expansion - The EPA’s Vulnerable Species Pilot describes how the agency proposes to mitigate pesticide exposure to 27 vulnerable listed species. Although the stated 27 species, including their habitat or range, are not present in Arizona, we are concerned with several elements of the proposal should this pilot be expanded in the future to other species present in Arizona. AZFB’s comments addressed the following concerns: mitigation measures, application rate reductions, and the requirement to coordinate with Fish and Wildlife Services prior to application in locations where species have designated critical habitat or range.

Bureau of Reclamation – Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement and Notice to Solicit Comments on the Development of Post-2026 Operational Guidelines and Strategies for Lake Powell and Lake Mead – AZFB’s comments emphasized that BOR’s EIS analysis include a comprehensive and refined analysis of impacts to agricultural production and its inclusion in the planning discussions. Our comments also advocated that BOR encourage conservation and efficiency measures by all users, augmenting water supplies where fea-

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sible, and evaluating increased storage capacity to capture seasonal precipitation in sub-watersheds.

Bureau of Land Management – Solar Variance Application for Chuparosa Solar Project (Navajo County) - AZFB’s comments urged BLM to disapprove the Chuparosa Solar Project that would allow for the siting of a solar installation on grazing allotments in Navajo County. The proposed solar project would take valuable agricultural land out of production, as well as negatively impact allotments with significant ranch infrastructure.

Fish and Wildlife Service – Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Regulations Pertaining to Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants (4(d) Rule) - AZFB’s comments supported the comments developed by the American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) and the National Endangered Species Act Reform Coalition (NESARC), of which AFBF is a member. We concurred with AFBF and NESARC regarding concerns and opposition to reinstating the blanket 4(d) rule. Under the proposed rule, the practice where the FWS promulgates appropriate regulations that put in place prohibitions, protections, or restrictions tailored specifically to the threatened species would be replaced with the blanket 4(d) rule.

Fish and Wildlife Service/National Marine Fisheries Service – Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Revisions to Regulations for Interagency Cooperation – AZFB’s comments supported the more technical comments developed by AFBF and NESARC. Our comments addressed changes that would prolong the approval of projects and opposed changes to environmental baseline provisions and elements of Reasonable and Prudent Measures.

Fish and Wildlife Service/National Marine Fisheries Service – Endangered and Threatened Wildlife and Plants; Listing Endangered and Threatened Species and Designating Critical Habitat - AZFB’s comments supported the more technical comments developed by AFBF and NESARC. The proposed rule addresses elements of the ESA related to listing, delisting, and reclassifying species, as well as designating critical habitat. Our comments opposed a number of elements in the proposal, including restoring the phrase “without reference to possible economic or other impacts of such determination; the Service’s interpretation of “foreseeable future;” changing delisting criteria and broadening the approach to designating critical habitat.

United States Department of Agriculture, Risk Management Agency – Request for Information and Stakeholder Listening Sessions on Prevented Planting – AZFB’s comments supported the comments and concerns shared by individual members during RMA’s Listening Session in Maricopa, AZ. Of significant concern was the 1 in 4 rule, as well as using the base harvest price as opposed to projected prices, reinstating the Prevented Planting buy-up 10% option, and expanding eligible crops to include alfalfa. A thank you to the Arizona Cotton Growers for sharing information gathered during the Listening Session.

Arizona Farm Bureau staff is continuing to work on additional comment letters due later in September; details of those letters will be shared in the next quarterly update article.

If you come across an issue that you feel is important that Arizona Farm Bureau engage in, please do not hesitate to reach out to staff to make sure it is also on our radar.

For more information about a specific comment letter, contact Ana Kennedy Otto at advocacy@azfb.org. 🚜

Coverage When It Matters Most



We can help protect your grazing or haying acres against a lack of rainfall with Pasture, Rangeland, and Forage (PRF), and protect your livestock herd from the risk of declining markets with Livestock Risk Protection (LRP).

Contact your Farm Bureau agent to learn more about these programs and to discuss options before the December 1 PRF sign-up deadline.



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FROM FARM FIELDS TO FOOTBALL FIELDS
TAKES THE FIELD AND THE CLASSROOM

By Staff Reports

Last month marked the Kick-Off of College Football and our Ag in the Classroom From Farm Fields to Football Fields program. Agriculture plays a large role in the game from the grass they play on to the player uniforms to the footballs to the gameday snacks fans enjoy. This 3-month program will introduce over 5,000 students to the farm and football connection focusing on cattle, turf, and cotton.

September kicked-off the program as students learned about cattle, ranches, and the Arizona ranchers who dedicate their lives to caring for both. Students were even able to participate in a Live Virtual Tour with Ben and Ashley Menges of the Menges Ranch.

What is one of the most common misconceptions held by students and even adults about agriculture and the game of football? According to Director of Education Katie Aikins, “it is that the pigskin actually comes from the hides of cattle and not pigs.” In fact, you can produce 20 footballs from 1 cowhide. So, just how many cattle are needed for an NFL Season? To produce the 700,000 footballs needed by the NFL for one season requires the hides from 35,000 cattle; 22 of those hides are used to make the footballs for February’s Big Game.

This month is all about turf and the surface the players need for the game! Students will be able to interact with Bob Flake of Cedar Ridge Sod during a Virtual Tour as well as experience plenty of facts, lessons, and activities incorporating turf.

The From Farm Fields to Football Fields program will end in November with a crash course in Arizona cotton and the importance it has to not only the game of football but also our everyday lives! Be on the lookout for the Virtual Tour with Arizona cotton farmer, Cassy England.

For more information on the program visit <https://www.azfb.org/Agriculture-in-the-Classroom/Resources/From-Farm-Fields-to-Football-Fields>

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From Farm Fields to Football Fields

Genesis Smith #12 Safety

Football: The leather football is made from cowhide (20 footballs can be made from 1 cowhide).

Eye Black: Can be made from beeswax or an eye patch is used. Cattle byproducts can be used in the adhesive.

Arizona Football Shirt: Many t-shirts are made from cotton or a cotton blend.

Turf: The grass is grown by turf farmers.

Helmet: A cotton buffer can be used to remove decal adhesives and buff the helmets. The paint on the helmet contains fatty acids and protein meal from cattle to give the paint its glossy finish. Sandpaper is used to remove paint for refurbishing. Bone glue from cattle and pigs is used as a sticking agent between paper and abrasive material.

Socks: Game day socks are made of a blend of cotton and other materials.

Cleats: All cleats used to be made from leather. Today, you might find stearic acid (a fatty acid from livestock) is used in the adhesives that hold the bottom of the cleat to the upper.

Arizona Farm Bureau

COUNTY FARMER: CASSY ENGLAND *continued from Page 1*

play our part in preserving the legacy of Arizona’s farming heritage.

Arizona Agriculture: You farm in Pinal County, what does the future look like to you considering the county’s water challenges and even land availability for ag leasing?

England: Pinal County finds itself in a dynamic phase of growth, with new opportunities emerging on the horizon. While the scarcity of CAP water resources does pose a significant hurdle for farmers within the region, I maintain an optimistic outlook. I believe that adversity often serves as a catalyst for innovation and growth.

Farmers are inherently resourceful and adaptable, and these challenges are compelling us to bring out the best of our capabilities. We’re embracing our innate spirit of innovation, recognizing that we can enhance efficiency and achieve more with every precious acre foot of water at our disposal.

It’s an opportunity for us, as farmers, to showcase our resilience, resourcefulness, and determination. As we navigate the evolving landscape of Pinal County, I remain hopeful that these challenges will help us to achieve greater heights in sustainable agriculture.

Arizona Agriculture: Overall, the future of agriculture in Pinal County has its challenges. Maybe another way to ask the question: What will we see in Pinal County in 10 years on the agriculture front?

England: In the coming decade, agriculture in Pinal County is set to undergo notable changes. Expect to see a shift toward more diverse, high-income crops that use water and acreage more efficiently. Precision farming and sustainability will be paramount, potentially leading to a smaller overall agricultural footprint in the region. Collaboration and research will play a crucial role in navigating these challenges and securing a resilient agricultural future for Pinal County.

Arizona Agriculture: Who have been your greatest mentors and why?

England: Without a doubt, my grandfather stands out as my most cherished mentor. He was not only the finest person I’ve had the privilege of knowing, but his legacy also casts a long, enduring shadow. His wisdom remains a constant presence in the recesses of my mind, guiding and inspiring me in all that I do.

Arizona Agriculture: You’re a recent graduate of Project CENTRL. What was your biggest takeaway and how do you hope to apply what you learned?

England: Being part of Project Central was truly amazing – one of the best experiences in my life. I felt such a strong bond with my classmates, and I grew personally and professionally in ways I never thought possible. I have a feeling that the folks from Class 31 will be my friends for life. This program taught me something important: even though I live in a rural part of Arizona, my opinions and voice matter. They gave me the tools and the confidence to make sure my voice is heard where it needs to be. Project Central has been a game-changer, reminding me that no matter where I am, my voice can make a difference.



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ADVOCACY IN ACTION

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efforts to introduce and pass a Congressional Review Act (CRA) that would ultimately stop AEWR. Sticking with the labor issue, we also shared concerns over several rules coming out of the Department of Labor (DOL) including the heat stress standards that are expected to be released in the very near future. Second Vice President, Richie Kennedy, did an excellent job explaining the rule and how it will impact farmers who use H2A labor.

The EATS Act and Joint Efforts with the National Pork Producers

National Pork Producers (NPPC) also hosted their Legislative Action Conference at the same time, which gave us the opportunity to talk about California’s Prop 12 and advocate for a solution. The Ending Agricultural Trade Suppression (EATS) Act that was introduced earlier but was met with opposition, does not appear to have the votes to pass. However, we still used it as part of our discussion, and if it’s not the EATS act, then what is the solution?

We cannot afford to operate in a patchwork of regulations from one state to the next should we be forced to live with the consequences of Prop 12. Cochise County Farm Bureau Leader Sonia Gasho did an excellent job advocating for a fix and expressed to lawmakers the impacts to Arizona agriculture. The group, for the first time in quite a while, also met with the Mexican Embassy. We had a very worthwhile conversation with our neighbors to the south, which is an important trade partner for agriculture. They too are concerned about the implications of Prop 12 and how it will impact the United States Mexico Canada Agreement (USMCA), a trade agreement between the three countries designed to promote and improve trade within this trading block. We were able to continue to build our relationship with the Mexican Embassy’s Agricultural Department and encouraged them to reach out to members of congress to express their concerns with Prop 12.

Air Quality, Plus the new National Monument

Air Quality, specifically PM 2.5 and EPA’s proposal to increase the standards, was dis-

cussed during our visits, stressing the fact that agriculture is a very small contributor to this. The fact is, that in a state like Arizona, even if we went to extreme measures to augment industry practices, we would never meet attainment goals. Therefore, we cannot issue a one-size-fits all rule. We were pleased to hear that the Arizona House GOP sent a letter to Administrator Reagan, sharing their discontent with EPA and the rulemaking.

We have also been hearing discussions among lawmakers around the newly declared Baaj Nwaavjo I’tah Kukveni Grand Canyon National Monument and a move to not fund the monument in the appropriations. While we were concerned with the idea of no funding and how that might harm our allotment owners, we were assured that even without funding, funding would remain to support practices associated with managing allotments.

The Farm Bill

And, of course, you cannot go to Capitol hill on the heels of a farm bill and not advocate for passage of a farm bill while stressing Arizona Farm Bureau priorities. Unfortunately, everything we heard on the hill leaves very little optimism of getting a farm bill passed before the end of the year. Congress is debating the budget and with a government shutdown looming, it is very unlikely that we will get a farm bill passed before 2024. Instead, we are expecting an extension of the current farm bill.

Plus, More

The delegation also had the opportunity to meet with both the House and Senate Ag Committee staff as well as House Natural Resources staff. The group had a very good and encouraging discussion with Deputy Secretary Xotchil Torres Small, who is working diligently to streamline processes within the USDA programs making them more easily accessible to farmers and ranchers. She mentioned that we have been operating on an outdated system when it comes to applying for various programs, and simply by updating and enhancing those programs, it will eliminate some of the cumbersome processes involved in accessing USDA programs. The delegation visited USDA National Agricultural Statistics Services (NASS) and got to experience a mock lock-up, understanding the process and the data that goes into over 400 reports that NASS publishes.

Government Relations Manager Daniel Harris was also on Capitol Hill attending the National Pork Producers Council (NPPC) Legislative Action Conference. Through our partnership and on a scholarship offered by NPCC, he was able to attend and build upon our relationship while helping advocate for NPCC and Arizona Farm Bureau. The group rounded out the trip by joining our partners at NPCC at their annual BaconFest, which was hosted in the Library of Congress. With over 1,000 attendees, we were able to show our support and appreciation of the partnership while connecting with industry partners and legislative staff.

It was an extremely busy week but overall, very productive in advocating for Arizona Farm Bureau and our members. Trips like this would not be made possible without our Farm Bureau members, and while we work hard at both the state and national level, we are reminded of who we are working for. I would be remiss if I did not say thank you to all our members across Arizona – THANK YOU!

I will end with a reminder to all that after spending the week with our elected officials, elections do have consequences. This is why we host our campaign school, to help those that support agriculture prepare to run for office. If you know anyone interested in running for office, being a campaign manager or anyone involved in advocacy campaigns, please encourage them to sign up. The school will take place November 16 - 17 at the office in Gilbert. Visit our website www.azfb.org for more information or to register.

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MEDIA RELATIONS SHORT COURSE: HOW TO THINK LIKE A REPORTER

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Strategic Communications



Project CENTRL’s Class 32 acquires media skills during a panel interview at AZTV in Prescott with local media personality Brad Perry. This training prepares our rural leaders to get a taste of the media environment. In 2024 Arizona Farm Bureau will host its own media training. Watch for the coming information in the new year.

Your volunteer leadership position, whether for the Farm Bureau or another agriculture group in the industry, requires a lot from you. Often, it means talking to the media. Even with media training, the experience can be intimidating. Like any area, “tricks of the trade” exists. One of the best strategies for understanding the media is trying to think like the media.

A few years ago, I had a conversation with Ilana Lowery former editor-in-chief of the Phoenix Business Journal and now Arizona Director of Common Sense Media. Her overall advice suggests that we try to put ourselves in the

place of the reporter. Understanding what motivates and drives the reporter’s focus gives you an inside track of how to work with them.

The five points below are the big takeaways from our conversation and a tool I regularly use when helping the Center for Rural Leadership’s Project CENTRL Effective Communications classes. As a leader in your industry, these points will help you as well.

- 1. Answer the question.** Try to answer the question, “Who Cares?” Every time someone pitches a story, the overriding, nagging question in a reporter’s mind is, “Who cares?” Why should the reporter cover this story? When you write your pitch or press release or are simply jotting down a “talking point,” be sure you can answer that question. This is about the content the reporter or blogger provides to their core demographic, their audience. Consider this powerful statement: “How does my story affect and impact their audiences?” If you can understand their audience (readers and viewers), you can probably satisfy the reporter’s “who cares.”
 - 2. Understand the medium.** Some stories have great visuals and are perfect for TV, video, or print. For example, the demolition of a sporting arena is visually appealing but isn’t as impactful for radio news. Think about the elements available to you and how they can complement your words and storytelling.
 - 3. Put a face to your story:** News is about people. People love remarkable stories. Yes, a quote from an author, CEO, or board member can suffice, but it’s dull. Look for a person who has been directly affected by your news. They will tell a much better and different tale. They can get to the emotion because they experienced something. It’s the connection to the audience. It’s all about the human factor. What’s your story? Your experience? Often, it’s compelling when you explain your own personal experience as it relates to the issue the reporter is trying to gather.
 - 4. Find something new.** A good reporter will ask the question, “What’s new here?” Has something happened that we haven’t covered yet?” Look for new statistics, updates, or a fresh angle. Clue: In the word “news” is the word “new.”
 - 5. Give them the right tools.** Like you, news decision-makers want things to help make their jobs easier. If a radio reporter, they need a voice or a sound bite for an on-air newscast. They don’t need a cheesy photo. It’s radio!
- Finally, if you find yourself regularly interviewed by the media because of your leadership position, or simply because you have a compelling story, below are questions you should ask every time the media calls and before the interview takes place.
- **What is your deadline?** This lets you know the time constraints and whether you can even accommodate the reporter.
 - **Can you share one or two of your questions in advance, so I have an idea about your story angle?** This is fair to ask since you need to understand what they are trying to learn from you.
 - **When will the story come out?** This allows you to watch for when the story airs or drops in the publication.
 - **So I understand, can you explain your audience and main viewers?** This will also help you tell the story.

See MEDIA RELATIONS Page 8

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MEDIA RELATIONS *continued from Page 7*

These pre-questions before an interview have always helped me make the process and experience so much more effective for myself and the farmers and ranchers I connect with the media.

Editor’s Note: Watch for Arizona Farm Bureau to feature a new Effective Communication Seminar in 2024 to be made available to all our volunteer leaders. 🚜



THE VALUE OF MEMBERSHIP;
DEPENDS ON WHO YOU ASK

By Philip Bashaw, Arizona Farm Bureau CEO



I was at a seminar recently and the subject was how to recruit new members to the Farm Bureau. I was tasked with coming up with a short “elevator pitch” for the value of membership. This seems like an easy task, but it is much harder than you would think. It’s not difficult because there is no value, it’s difficult because the value depends on who you ask.

As someone who spent many years serving the organization as a lobbyist, the advocacy work of the organization is the area where I am well versed in discussing the value. All our members benefit directly and indirectly from our efforts at the state capitol and in congress. The value is so tangible that in my elevator pitch I share real numbers.

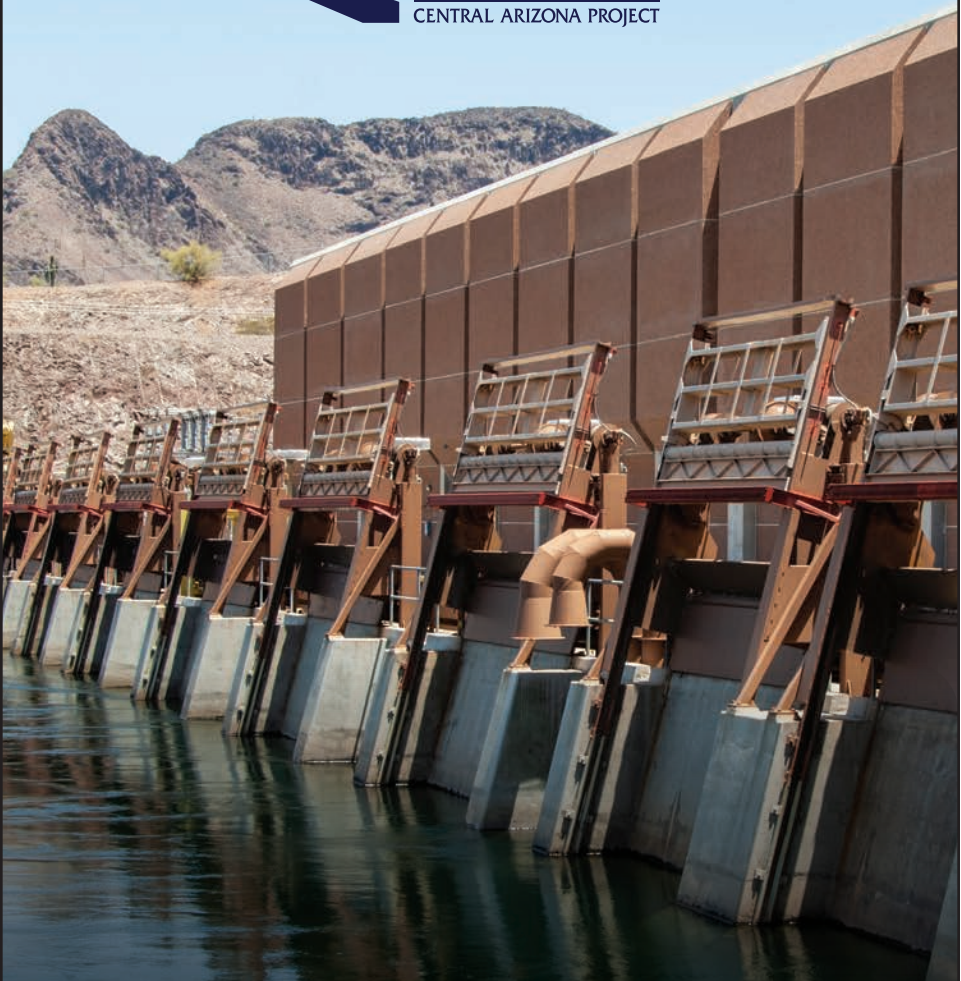

FARM BUREAU ADVOCACY

For some of the most tangible and valuable examples, I direct you to real-world legislative fixes. We have worked hard to protect our agricultural tax valuation and indeed have worked to extend that to new and emerging sectors of the industry, like commercial equine facilities and agritourism. Additionally, we worked with others on a program to secure \$46 million in irrigation efficiency funding and the development of a \$1 billion fund to secure new water resources with the Water Infrastructure Finance Authority.

Advocacy is not always about what passes, but what doesn’t. We have been instrumental in ensuring policy that threatens our access to water is stopped cold. We worked with several other groups to ensure that harmful changes to critical tax policies like stepped-up basis, 1031 exchanges and estate tax were not successful in Congress. We also willingly jump into the fray when environmental policies like WOTUS, ESA and NEPA threaten to limit our ability to produce food and fiber.

FARM BUREAU STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS

There is no doubt that advocacy is an important part of being a member of the Arizona Farm Bureau, but we are so much more than grassroots advocacy and politics. The voice of agriculture reaches millions of consumers every year with positive mes-



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sages about agriculture. Last year, we had over 17 million in impressions and engagement through our social media, marketing and traditional media relations channels. Our members are also well informed on the latest developments in the industry and our communications team is without equal in providing our grassroots members with a platform to tell their story.

FARM BUREAU AG EDUCATION

We are not only making connections with our Arizona consumers, but we are also educating the next generation of consumers through our Ag in the Classroom programs. Because of AZFB’s efforts, 150,000 children PER YEAR are connected with a positive experience in agriculture. Our highly trained educators are crisscrossing the state and connecting students with agriculture, many of which would make that connection no other way.

FARM BUREAU THERE FOR YOU IN CRISIS

AZFB is also there when the worst happens, and our members are in need. When tragedy struck the communities of the White Mountains during the Wallow Fire, we worked with others to coordinate emergency relief for ranchers impacted by the fires.

Our insurance products are also a critical part to protecting the livelihoods and futures of our members. We are proud of our track record of standing behind our members when tragedy strikes, and they need some help to keep going. Our company and our agents are first on the scene after any storm, fire or other incident and they take their responsibility to protect farmers and ranchers seriously.

THE FARM BUREAU FAMILY

One of the benefits of membership that all our members can agree on is the sense of community and leadership opportunities farm bureau provides. Whether it’s your county farm bureau, our Young Farmer and Rancher Committee or Women’s Leadership Committee, there is a way for everyone to be active in the Farm Bureau. No matter how you choose to participate, you will find a sense of community, a chance to network with other ag professionals and contribute to making agriculture stronger for a more prosperous future. It’s no wonder why our members compare farm bureau to a family.

The farm bureau is for everyone, so take a moment to ask someone to join us! 🚜



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