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A CONVERSATION ON CONSTRUCTING GRASSROOTS LEGISLATION: SINE KERR

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Strategic Communications

Serving in the Arizona State Senate, District 25, since January of 2018, Senator Sine Kerr finished her term as the new legislature was sworn in on January 13th. District 25 covers portions of western Maricopa County and portions of Yuma County which have large rural and agricultural areas and includes approximately 220,000 residents.

Senator Kerr, along with her husband, Bill, recently owned and operated a four-generation dairy farm in Buckeye since 1980. They have four adult children and twelve grandchildren that keep their lives full and exciting. Rumor has it that the oldest grandchildren are good at negotiating with their grandparents for all-cousin sleepovers, a possible sign the leadership skills run deep in this family.

Senator Kerr has been reappointed to serve her second three-year term on the Cattlemen's Beef Promotion and Research Board at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

She previously served as State Chair of the Arizona Farm Bureau Women's Leadership Committee, Chair of the Arizona Department of Agriculture's Food and Policy Advisory Committee, Maricopa County Department of Air Quality Hearing Board, and a member of the Buckeye Valley Chamber of Commerce.

Her passion as a small business and dairy farm owner served her well on the Senate committees in which she served: Chair of Natural Resources, Energy, and Water; Chair of Senate Ethics; Member of Transportation and Technology; Appropriations; Joint Legislative Budget Committee; and Joint Committee on Capitol review. She also served as vice chair of Director Nominees Committee and the Education Committee, as well as being elected by her caucus after the 2022 election to serve as Majority Whip.

Now pivoting away from the Arizona legislature, Senator Kerr plans to stay involved in politics and civic engagement. Having known Senator Kerr from her days in Farm Bureau leadership, I can attest that her passion for Arizona's agriculture remains as strong as ever. She is well-prepared for the



Outstanding in her (alfalfa) field, literally and figuratively, Senator Sine Kerr recently retired from her legislative duties but prepares for a future active in local politics and civic engagement. In today's public and political discussions, Arizona alfalfa continues as a central point in debates over water usage for this crop. Senator Kerr and other prominent agricultural leaders firmly assert that alfalfa is crucial for maintaining Arizona's strong economy and ensuring a steady food supply.

new challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

Arizona Agriculture: Reflect on your last 7 years as an Arizona legislator in the Senate chamber. Share how it all evolved, how you shared with your family your conviction to run originally for the House and how the Senate seat opportunity emerged.

Senator Kerr: As I became more involved in leadership positions within Farm Bureau, beginning with Maricopa County Farm Bureau and expanding to the state level, as well as participating in Project CENTRL and other leadership development programs, I became increasingly interested and plugged into public policies that affected agriculture in general and our family farm. During an Arizona Farm Bureau trip to D.C., I remember distinctly thinking, "We need more farmers on the other side of those desks who understand what we're dealing with making policy decisions." I never considered it would be me one day, but that's when the ball really began rolling on my journey to the state Capitol.

On a visit to our state House of Representatives to meet with our representative on a farming issue, I was asked to consider running for his position when he termed out. I said that I would think about it and really didn't give it much more of a thought, other than to mention it to Bill. I took it as a kind compliment. Around the same time, others began asking me if I had any interest in running for public office, so I began thinking about it more seriously and began praying about it and discussing the possibility with my family. As I didn't really know the first thing about running for office, it seemed too out of my comfort zone to truly consider committing. My Representative stayed in touch and provided me with a sort of step-by-step plan to prepare me for filing one day.

It wasn't long after that, I began sensing a strong conviction to run for office if the opportunity arose. It absolutely needed to be a decision that

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LEGISLATIVE PREVIEW: THE AGENDA OF ARIZONA'S 57TH LEGISLATURE

By Daniel Harris, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Manager

The first Regular Session of the 57th Arizona Legislature is underway at the State Capitol. Governor Katie Hobbs attended the opening day ceremonies and gave her State of the State address, setting the tone for what promises to be a dynamic legislative session. With over 800 bills introduced in the first week alone, the session reflects the heightened urgency and diverse priorities of Arizona's policymakers.

In her address, Governor Hobbs reiterated a commitment to bipartisan collaboration, spotlighting key issues such as child-care assistance, housing affordability, and investments in law enforcement and border security. While emphasizing the importance of these initiatives, she also critiqued Republican-led efforts on the state's Empowerment Scholarship Account (ESA) program and the need for long-term funding solutions for K-12 education through Proposition 123.

The Republican-controlled Legislature has countered with an agenda focused on conservative priorities, including school choice, regulatory reform, and fiscal restraint. With both chambers introducing extensive policy frameworks, Arizona's GOP lawmakers aim to assert their vision while challenging the governor on key issues like budget allocations and water policy.

WATER POLICY AND RURAL CONCERNS

Water management remains at the forefront of legislative priorities, reflecting ongoing challenges in balancing urban growth with rural agricultural needs. Building on last year's legislative efforts and dealing with the ramifications of the Executive branch's recent designation of an Active Management Area in the Willcox Basin, legislators must address the controversial issues of Rural Basin Management & resume the conversation of the Ag-to-Urban concept. Proposed localized groundwater

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AGRICULTURE AND THE NEW U.S. CONGRESS: WHAT’S AHEAD FOR 2025

By Chad Smith, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Government Relations

Last month in Arizona Agriculture, we discussed the importance of the farm bill, why it matters to everyone, and what it entails. Building on that discussion, I’d like to provide a high-level overview of agriculture’s role in the new U.S. Congress. As the 119th Congress gets underway, there are numerous pressing issues that will demand attention sooner rather than later.

One of the first hurdles Congress faces is the budget. As of now, Congress has yet to pass a new budget, opting instead for a Continuing Resolution (CR) that funds the federal government through March 14, 2025. On one hand, this gives President Trump and the new Congress a chance to pass a new budget under his leadership. On the other hand, the CR means that addressing the budget will be one of the first major tasks for Congress, alongside confirming cabinet positions.

While we closely monitor these budget discussions, our attention is also fixed on the future of the farm bill. Unfortunately, instead of passing a new farm bill, Congress has once again delayed the process, extending the current bill until September 30, 2025. While this extension is not ideal, it’s the reality we must contend with as we navigate the political landscape surrounding the farm bill.

This extension, passed just one day before a potential government shutdown, has left numerous agricultural programs unfunded. As we move forward, it’s clear that the farm bill will continue to be a major point of ne-



The Farm Bill remains a top priority this year and will be a major point of negotiation.

gotiation, but the path to a final version may take longer than expected.

While we were understandably disappointed and frustrated that Congress couldn’t finalize the farm bill, we were grateful for the passage of the American Relief Act of 2025. This legislation provides \$31 billion in vital economic and disaster relief for farmers and ranchers across the U.S., a result of extensive lobbying by the American Farm Bureau and State Farm Bureaus. This funding will support producers who faced severe disasters in 2023 and 2024, while offering crucial financial relief to those struggling to stay afloat.

As we look ahead to the new Congress and administration, we are already seeing their impact, even before Inauguration Day. Several

initiatives under the Biden administration have been put on hold, and some rules in progress have been rolled back. We anticipate that more changes will unfold in the coming weeks and months. We view the new administration and Congress as an opportunity to make meaningful progress on key agricultural issues, whether through legislation, agency rulemaking, or guidance.

While we remain optimistic about celebrating successes in the years ahead, we also recognize the challenges that lie ahead—particularly when it comes to agricultural labor. Comprehensive labor reform is essential for agriculture, and while we will continue advocating for it, we’ll need to remain focused on the larger goal, celebrating smaller wins along the way.

Another extremely important measure is the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, which includes provisions vital to agriculture and is set to expire at the end of 2025. We are confident that, with the new administration and Congress, we will be able to secure an extension of these important provisions and continue to receive the relief they provide.

Turning to Arizona-specific updates, we would like to congratulate our Congressional leaders on their successful campaigns. We’re excited to welcome two new members of Congress: Congressman Abraham Hamadeh (R-D8) and Congresswoman Yasmin Ansari (D-D3). Their arrival brings fresh opportunities to engage with new leaders on our priorities for 2025. Additionally, Senator Ruben Gallego has joined the Senate, where he was appointed to the Energy and Natural Resources Committee. This position provides an excellent opportunity to collaborate with his office on critical natural resource issues that impact Arizona. We look forward to working closely with our delegation to emphasize the importance of agriculture and advocate for Arizona’s \$31 billion agricultural industry.

As we look ahead to 2025, we are committed to capitalizing on the opportunities and navigating the challenges that lie ahead. Most importantly, we look forward to working closely with our grassroots community to engage and advocate for meaningful policies that will ensure a sustainable and prosperous future for Arizona agriculture. 🚜

DEADLINE FOR PROJECT CENTRL SIGN-UP LOOMING

By Staff Reports

Now is the time for farm and ranch candidates to take the journey with others to sharpen skills and learn things from different perspectives to strengthen our agricultural industry by applying for Project CENTRL’s Class 34 by March 15.

Project CENTRL is a competitively selected and tuition-free experiential-learning leadership development program for 16 people connected to rural Arizona. Over the course of nine seminars across Arizona, Washington, D.C., and Sonora, Mexico participants build personal leadership skills, learn about the issues facing rural Arizona, and connect with leaders and experts.

“I had Farm Bureau members in my Class 9,” shares the Center’s Board Chair, Glenna McCollum-Could a consultant and Past President of The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. “And as I’ve stayed involved with CENTRL as a volunteer and trainer, I’ve seen Farm Bureau members both teach others about the importance of production agriculture and learn new perspectives from their classmates who are involved with other parts of the rural economy.”

As a public-private partnership between the non-profit Center and the University of Arizona Division of Agriculture, Life and Veterinary Sciences and Cooperative Extension participants and alumni are backed by organizations invested in and committed to rural Arizona.

If building new skills, gaining new knowledge and meeting new people to benefit rural Arizona sounds interesting to you, consider applying for Class 34 by March 15. All the details and application materials are found at www.centrl.org/apply

There are several opportunities to connect with the organization in person during events open to all to learn more from the people in the program now or some of the 700+ graduates since Class 1 in 1983. Calendar and complimentary registration available at www.centrl.org/events 🚜

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CONSTRUCTING GRASSROOTS LEGISLATION *continued from Page 1*

my husband, Bill, agreed with and our family supported. A few months later I received a text from the Representative asking, “are you ready?” The second House seat would become available due to that member choosing to run for a state-wide office. After a couple of days discussing and praying about it, my answer was “yes.” I met with a consultant and filed my paperwork at the Secretary of State’s office. It was one of the most frightening things I have ever done!

I began meeting with as many people and organizations as I could. I knew it would be an uphill battle due to my low name recognition in the legislative district. We were committed, though, and hit the ground running! This all occurred in the spring of 2017. I was grateful to have a solid 18 months before the November 2018 election.

Well, as it goes in the world of politics, circumstances change on a dime! In December of 2017, the Senator in my district resigned to run for a congressional seat. The resignation kicked off a time clock for the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors to appoint a replacement. I wasn’t originally considering applying for the appointment, thinking the House was a better fit for me being a novice to politics, but after several calls from fellow farmers and agriculture organizations, I decided to apply for the appointment. It was a huge advantage that I had just completed American Farm Bureau’s Women’s Leadership Communication Boot Camp in October where I learned how to put together a concise three-minute speech. After being selected by our precinct committeemen along with two others to be considered by the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors, I was ultimately appointed on January 4th, 2018, and was sworn in on January 8th as the Senator for LD13. It may sound a bit simplistic, but in between decisions and changing circumstances, there was a whole lot of anxiousness, uncertainty, and downright fear! This wasn’t part of my plan, but thankfully, God’s plan was different!

Arizona Agriculture: What drew you to making this level of leadership, civic commitment?

Senator Kerr: I was drawn to this level of leadership and civic commitment because of my passion for our industry and my desire to do all I could to ensure a strong and vibrant future for agriculture for generations to come and knowing it is at the policy-making level where impactful influence and decision making are key.

Arizona Agriculture: What factors in your life do you feel prepared you for this very important commitment?

Senator Kerr: Factors that prepared me for this important commitment stem back to my love for my community and livelihood. In addition to my dad’s 21 years of service in the Army that was deeply inspiring, my mother played a large role in teaching me and modeling what servanthood looked like. Being civic-minded began all the way back to my grade school years. As a 4-H member, I loved the community service projects I participated in. I was elected to student council in the 8th grade and continued in student government through high school, ultimately being elected senior class president. (I met Bill in high school student government!) I learned at an early age in order to make a difference you need to get involved and commit to serving in various roles. As a young farmer and business partner, I loved diving into policies that affected our farm as well as the agriculture industry as a whole. It is a passion I will always carry with me.

Arizona Agriculture: I know you are disappointed and frustrated with the outcome of SB1221 — where do you see this going from here?

Senator Kerr: SB1221 was the most incredible piece of legislation I had the privilege to be part of. It truly was built from the grassroots up. I believe strongly that this is how legislation should always be constructed. While it was disappointing that we didn’t have enough Republican members present on Sine Die to get the bill up on the governor’s desk, it was a huge success. We chose to put the SB1221 up on the board for a vote in the House because we knew it was important to show the public and those who worked tirelessly on the bill that we had every single Republican member vote in favor. But for the absences, the bill would have made it out of the legislature.

I believe SB1221 is a great starting point for rural groundwater basin management moving forward. Where it goes from here depends on the members who will champion the next iteration. No doubt there is great potential for common sense, implementable basin management tools that will preserve and protect basins in peril and protect our rural economies

without being detrimental to our farmers and ranchers who keep our rural communities thriving.

Arizona Agriculture: If we don’t get the water issue right, what’s at stake?

Senator Kerr: Getting water policy right is imperative for Arizona agriculture to thrive and remain viable. Water policy that targets large water users is coming from many directions with no consideration for who benefits from that water use. The anti-ag groups only see an amount or percentage of water being used by agriculture and don’t consider that every drop we use for crops is consumed by the public as well as the recharge that benefits aquifers when we irrigate. They don’t recognize that the majority of our rural communities depend on agriculture to be successful for their economic survival. For some rural counties up to 90% of their economies depend on agriculture’s success.

Arizona Agriculture: Moving away from the water issue, what is one thing that you’re extremely proud of that took place in the 7 years you were in the legislature?

Senator Kerr: I’m most proud of protecting Arizona agriculture during my tenure in the Senate by not only supporting and sponsoring sound legislation but also stopping bad legislation. Additionally, I’m extremely proud of the times I was able to convene the right people or groups of people to solve an issue. It didn’t always require a statutory fix, sometimes it was a matter of sitting around the table and talking it out. It was surprising to me that this doesn’t take place more often. Several groups I convened commented that they had never sat together to hammer out a solution. It wasn’t always pleasant or successful, but it was always worth the effort!

Arizona Agriculture: You recently talked about a time when you’d sometimes need to leave the floor and just make a call to family. Talk about this and how it shored you up for debate or for the challenging legislation about to take place. What is the counsel for others in the thick of a crisis?

Senator Kerr: In the heat of the battle on certain issues, I needed to step back a minute, take a breath, clear my mind so I could get back in the battle. It was during those times that I would either text my family asking for specific prayer and/or calling Bill to chat about something other than what I was working on. Bill knew instinctively what to do and would tell me about his day and what he was doing on the farm. It was crucial for me to be able to do that. It helped me stay focused on the issue before me without getting caught up in the emotion or the politics. I always strived to be measured and thoughtful when making difficult policy decisions or in the middle of tough negotiations. Stepping back for even a few minutes was a key strategy that worked very well for me.

Arizona Agriculture: What would you say to others thinking of running for political office?

Senator Kerr: For anyone considering running for office, I say, “Do it!” I frequently encourage others to run for office or to take the opportunity if it arises even if it’s never been a goal or something they thought they would ever want to do. Each of us is equipped with perspectives, experiences, and passion that would serve the people of Arizona and the legislative body as a whole well and I believe it is one of the most profoundly humbling experiences I’ve ever had. To be a participant in our constitutional republic as an elected official is so incredible!

I stand in awe of the wisdom and conviction of our founding fathers in putting together our representative form of government. To know that you have been entrusted to carry the weight of representing the voice and vote of the people in your legislative district and the state is a responsibility not to be taken lightly but rather to be done with much thoughtfulness and consideration. It is truly one of the greatest honors of my life.

Arizona Agriculture: Okay, the question we’re all wondering, and I get to ask: What are your aspirations for the future?

Senator Kerr: As I write answers to these questions, it has only been four days since my term ended. I find myself still “catching my breath” from the past seven years. I will consider all my options and make a prayerful decision in the coming months. At this time, I don’t believe my time of public service is over and all options are open for discussion and consideration. One thing I have quit saying to myself is, “I will never.....”. My faith guides my decisions, and I will trust the Lord’s guidance for direction in my future endeavors. 🙏

LEGISLATIVE PREVIEW *continued from Page 1*

management frameworks, such as Basin Management Areas, which have offered a potential compromise, to secure sustainable water use while respecting rural interests.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Rural Arizona stands to benefit from a renewed focus on infrastructure and workforce development. Investments in road maintenance, broadband expansion, and reliable energy access are critical to supporting agricultural operations and fostering economic growth. Addressing workforce shortages through targeted apprenticeship and training programs remains a central theme in both the governor’s and the Legislature’s agendas.

ELECTION REFORM AND RURAL ACCESSIBILITY

Proposals to expedite vote counts and tighten voter regulations are also on the table. While these measures aim to enhance electoral integ-

rity, rural voter accessibility remains a critical consideration. Ensuring that these reforms do not disproportionately impact rural communities will require thoughtful debate and bipartisan cooperation.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITIES

For Arizona’s agricultural community, the 57th Legislature represents an opportunity to influence policies that safeguard water resources, sustain rural economies, and support infrastructure needs. Lawmakers must balance ideological divides with the urgent need to address pressing challenges, from budgetary constraints to long-term water security.

As the session progresses, the interplay between Governor Hobbs and the GOP-led Legislature will shape Arizona’s future. With the stakes high and the issues complex, the ability of state leaders to navigate these challenges collaboratively will determine the outcomes for Arizona’s diverse ecology, and communities. 🙏

2025 AG FEST GARNERS TOP BILLING ONCE AGAIN

By Ana Otto, Arizona Farm Bureau Government Relations Manager

Arizona Farm Bureau’s Legislative Ag Fest took place on Wednesday, January 15. Nearly 200 Farm Bureau members, Arizona legislators, and guests participated in the event. This annual event is a big hit with our Arizona Capitol crowd with one legislator expressing, “It’s my favorite event to attend since I get to meet our state’s farmers and ranchers.”

Arizona Farm Bureau members from across the state were on hand and hosted 42 legislators or their assistants throughout the event site. Legislators were able to visit county Farm Bureau booths to learn about our priority issues relevant to the current legislative session. Everyone was also treated to a delicious BBQ meal and homemade desserts provided by the Women’s Leadership Committee where more than 200 people were fed.

During Ag Fest, ABC 15 interviewed Arizona Farm Bureau CEO Phil

Bashaw and Ashley and Ben Menges about Arizona’s Farm State of Mind and the new AgStress Helpline created for the agriculture community. Of note, the hotline is reached by calling or texting 833.897.2474.

Thank you to all our members for taking the time to leave your farm or ranch to share the importance of agriculture with our legislators. This event would not have been possible without you. We look forward to another great event next year! 🙏



Ag Fest has become easy to find with our distinguished red top tents up and down the Wesley Bolin Plaza.

ARIZONA FARM BUREAU CELEBRATES ITS CENTURY FARMS AND RANCHES

By Staff Reports

Arizona Farm Bureau celebrated three families during its Annual Meeting last November that earned Century Farm and Ranch recognition, an evergreen program the organization will celebrate each year.

Arizona Farm Bureau launched the Century Farm and Ranch Program to recognize those Farm Bureau members who have a Century farm or ranch in the state. In our inaugural year and during our 100-year celebration in 2021 we recognized seven families. This year, Arizona Farm Bureau features three families, and all are from the ranch side of the equation: Moore, Noon and Grantham.

MOORE FAMILY



Lawrence Ellis, better known as "Larry," Moore Jr. and his wife, Anne Marie Accomazzo, are descendants of early Arizona ranch and farm pioneers.

Larry's great-grandfather, Canadian born Peter Moore, came to Arizona Territory in 1893. He ranched in Rucker Canyon in Cochise County, branding the F Fire Hook. Peter later purchased the Whitewater Ranch in 1897 with his son Franklin. They

stocked the ranch with cattle purchased from John Long and branded with the Rafter X. The Rafter X Ranch celebrates its 127th Anniversary this year.

Born in Douglas in 1944, Great-grandson to Peter Moore, Larry, attended the University of Arizona where he studied Animal Science. While at the University, he was a member of the Livestock Judging Team. Fondly known as "Lariat," Larry served in the Army Reserve for six years. In 1974, Larry married Anne Marie Accomazzo, a graduate of Arizona State University and the Home Economics teacher at Willcox High School.

Anne, the daughter of Mark and Betty Kruse Accomazzo, was raised on a cotton and cattle farm in Laveen. She and her sister Peggy could set up a hundred irrigation tubes in record time. One of Anne's favorite chores was raking hay in the morning dew.

Larry and Anne officially purchased the Rafter X Ranch in 1980 from the family. The Rafter X operation was expanded to take in two neighboring ranches. They acquired several brands, the "CJ" and "Bench S" and created the Bar M Bar Cattle Company. Larry was proud to involve his children as the fifth generation in the day-to-day operations on the ranch.

In 2006, Larry and Anne made the decision to move closer to town rather than the fifty-mile drive from Rucker Canyon. They purchased a small ranch operation in Dos Cabezas and spent three years setting up a new Bar

M Bar headquarters, Hacienda, barn and corrals. They leased their Rucker Canyon ranches and moved their Red Brangus herd to Dos Cabezas along with some horses and Border Collies. The ranch is called "Rancho Hacienda."

While 127 years of ranching cannot be fairly and truly told in just a few minutes, we can certainly celebrate this couple's commitment to their family legacy and the rich history of ranching in Arizona.

THE NOON AND GRANTHAM FAMILIES



We Recognize these two ranch families together as they are from the same family tree. This Century Ranch story, like so many, is a story of adaptation, including following the wise counsel of a forebearer. It is the story of the Noon and Grantham ranch families from Pima County who share the same grandfather, Arthur Noon. As a result, we're recognizing these two families together as their family roots intersect.

The Noon and Grantham ranch families heeded the directive of Grandfather Arthur Noon, who said on his deathbed, "Never, never sell." Their Century story is proof of Grandpa Noon's counsel.

The Noon and Grantham ranch history in Arizona dates to October 1879 when Great-Grandfather Dr. Adolphus H. Noon and his oldest son, Alonzo, arrived in Southern Arizona. He located a homestead near the town of Oro Blanco, 8 miles south of Arivaca.

Oro Blanco was mining and ranch country, so Dr. Noon improved his homestead in 1892 by cattle ranching, all the while practicing medicine and doing some prospecting.

As the mines played out in the Oro Blanco area, Adolphus was able to obtain several other parcels of land in the vicinity. Thus, the town, now considered a "ghost town," became part of the Oro Blanco Ranch by 1919.

While Adolphus and Emma moved to Nogales in 1898, where Dr. Noon could develop a bigger medical practice, he left the ranch in the hands of the eldest son, Alonzo. The third son, Arthur, took over running of the Oro Blanco Ranch, when Alonzo died unexpectedly in 1903. Between 1914 and 1929 they raised cattle and cultivated crops on the floodplain.

Arthur and Martha Noon had five children: Fred, Helen, John, Katherine, and Horton.

Arthur passed away in 1944 at the age of 74. The management of the ranch passed to Fred, the

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AN OPEN LETTER TO ADWR FROM THE COLLINS FARM FAMILY

By Staff Reports

Editor’s Note: Since the Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR) announced the designation of the Willcox Groundwater Basin as an Active Management Area (AMA) on December 19, 2024, a significant and historic step in the state’s water management strategy. This marks the first AMA established outside the framework of the 1980 Groundwater Management Act.

The Willcox AMA encompasses parts of Cochise and Graham Counties, a region historically reliant on agriculture. Over decades, the basin has faced substantial groundwater declines along with land subsidence and the formation of earth fissures. While the designation reflects an urgent need to address these issues, the Arizona Farm Bureau and many stakeholders are voicing concerns about its potential impact on the agricultural community when other solutions better tailored to the specific needs of the Willcox Groundwater Basin are being pursued.

The designation certainly cannot represent a sense of the concern faced by our Cochise County farmers and ranchers. The following letter by a Cochise County generational farm family certainly does. The letter was written and read at a public hearing just prior to the designation.

THE LETTER

Quoting E.M. Tiffany, “I believe in the future of agriculture, with a faith born not of words but of deeds.”

We are concerned about the availability of water, our future depends on it, just as the future of our towns depends on it. Water is a necessity of life.

We also believe in the future of a safe and abundant life in our valley.

Our family has been farming our farm since 1952 and we hope to be able to pass the farm to the 4th and 5th generations.

We have a son moving home to the farm in 2026. Joshua is a licensed plumber, and his wife is a registered nurse. Our youngest son, Jonathan is on a mission for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. Upon his return in two years, will continue his education at the University of Arizona in agronomy and has plans to live in Willcox after his graduation. Our oldest, Paul, has spoken to us about the plan to keep the farm for future generations. He wants it to be here for his children and grandchildren. Our daughter has plans to build a small cottage to use when they visit. Lastly, our son Jacob, and his family, moved here 3 years ago this summer. He is an Empire CAT certified technician. His wife is an ACRO certified gymnastics instructor. Having completed three years of experience working on the farm, he is preparing to use the first-time farmer services at the US Department of Agriculture. He has been planning to make some improvements on our farm to increase viability and sustainability for the future. These plans do not include drilling new wells but using land in different ways.

So, as you see, our future does depend on there being water for many years to come in this valley. Pumping water to the crops we grow is very expensive, as a result we are extremely judicious about our application of water. We are committed to being a part of the solution as all water users should be.

In 2022 the local community spoke, and an AMA was voted down in the Willcox Basin. The process was followed by putting it on the ballot and more than 61% of the voters voted to not have an AMA in the Willcox Basin. The decision was made by those who live and work in the Willcox Basin. Willcox Basin voters do not want those who live and work in the Phoenix Valley to come here and overturn what the voters put in place.

We strongly believe that it is wrong for someone from a government office in Phoenix to completely ignore the results of an overwhelming legal vote and mandate a rule that will not improve our current situation.

I am here to state that an AMA will not solve or help our water problems in this valley. An AMA will not make the earth fissures close up or the earth repair itself where subsidence has occurred. The AMA will not curtail current water use levels.

DON’T DO THE AMA. Let’s pursue some legislation that can really help. We agree that some regulations should be put in place. These regulations should address directly the use of water in the valley. One solution could be monitoring wells and charging fees that would be used to help homeowners with their water needs. Our valley needs the fees collected to pay for planning and projects to improve our water outlook and alleviate our homeowner’s worries. Designating an AMA does not create any type of framework for innovation and developing solutions.

We believe that our farm has a bright future. The future will bring changes in our farming practices and the crops we grow. We look forward to the challenge and the changes.

Land use choices will be taken away by the implementation of an AMA. An AMA is a permanent STOP to our future plans to have our sons return to the area and be allowed to make decisions for their family’s future on our family farm.

We are concerned about those who do not have access to water at their homes. These are conversations we should be having to come up with solutions. The formation of stable and honest water companies have been discussed in the past. This could be a great alternative to the cost of drilling or deepening a private well. There are companies that have carried out plans for water companies in other areas of the country and feel they would work in our area.

We see why an AMA sounds like it will solve problems that we are having. But an AMA, to us, is just a way for the government to take our choices away and squelch the ability for the local community to find workable, useful, localized solutions.

We ask that Director Buschatzke and any advisors he may consult; make this decision with careful consideration to the ramifications for the future of our valley’s economy and residents. 🚜

Sincerely,

David and Cathy Collins

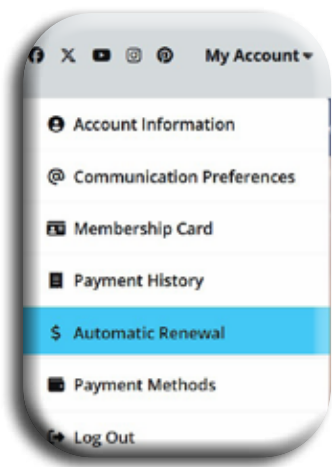
AUTOMATICALLY RENEW YOUR FARM BUREAU MEMBERSHIP

By Staff Reports

Beginning in January, Arizona Farm Bureau now offers **automatic renewal for the convenience of our members.**

Farm Bureau’s **Automatic Renewal** program allows you to enjoy uninterrupted access to our exclusive discounts, programs and services while avoiding the hassle of manually renewing each year. Plus – there’s no risk to enrolling. Farm Bureau will always notify you about your upcoming renewal – 30 days in advance. And, you can cancel automatic renewal at any time.

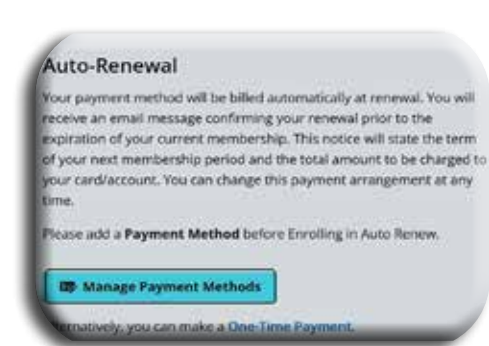
To sign up, first make sure that you are logged in with your membership account. When you select the dropdown called “My Account” select the “Automatic Renewal” tab and follow the prompts from there.



One member shared, “Well it’s about time. I’ve been wanting to automatically renew for some time. I have another membership with another organization that allows me to do the same thing and the convenience of this for me is a game changer as I use the benefits regularly and a lapsed membership does nothing but mess things up.”

Thank you again for your membership. We’re so glad you are part of our Farm Bureau family. 🚜

Editor’s Note: If you have questions or want help setting up your automatic renewal, contact Katie at 480.635.3605.



PORK MAKES ITS WAY INTO ARIZONA CLASSROOMS

By Katie Aikins, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Education

Thanks to a partnership with the Arizona Pork Council (APC), students across Arizona are learning about the importance of pork! The Arizona Farm Bureau Ag in the Classroom (AZFB AITC) Program and the APC have teamed up to develop pork lessons and resources to bring pork into the classroom.

“It’s important that students know the research and science that goes into setting the standard for care on the farm,” says Katie Aikins, Director of Education for the Arizona Farm Bureau. “Science and research drives everything that happens on the farm.” Additionally, “by bringing pork education into culinary classrooms we are able to show both the nutritional benefits and the versatility of cooking with pork.”

Check out a few of the resources and programs that have come from this partnership.

CLASSROOM COOKING GRANTS

How old were you when you first learned to cook with pork? Hopefully no older than Jr high! The goal of the Classroom Cooking Grant is to provide the opportunity for Jr High and High School culinary and agriculture teachers to bring pork into their classroom teaching. This program highlights the benefits and ease of cooking pork. Grant recipients receive \$150 to purchase pork to utilize in their classroom learning.

PORK FIRST READER

Farmers Care: On a Pig Farm is a First Reader Book designed to foster a love of reading and agriculture at an early age. Ideal for ages 4 through 6, the book can be downloaded at <https://www.azfb.org/Agriculture-in-the-Classroom/Resources/Teacher-Resources/FARM-Early-Reader-Books>

PORK PUZZLER

Have you ever wondered where a pork chop comes from? How about bacon? These are questions that are answered by the Pork Puzzler. This interactive resource helps students and consumers identify where both primal and retail cuts of pork come from. 🚜



Young readers can now learn about pork as they practice the ever-important skill of reading.

PUBLIC LANDS: TEACHING THE PUBLIC TO RESPECT THEM

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Strategic Communications

In agriculture we all know that our public lands are more than just scenery. They are home to wildlife, cattle, history, and our shared heritage. Today, the public has lost some of the appreciation and respect that goes along with maintaining our public lands. But the ranchers haven't forgotten.

One area where heavy and abusive use of public lands is showing severe signs of overuse is the public's use of off-highway vehicles (OHVs).

This year, the Arizona Farm Bureau is joining with other agriculture organizations to introduce legislation that should address and mitigate the problem (more on this to come). In the meantime, Arizona Farm Bureau is also attempting to connect with the public on this issue by using digital media including creating a video that's geared to the public. Below are a few of the areas we plan to highlight and discuss with the public.

LEAVE NO TRACE

Leave No Trace means taking your trash with you. Every piece of litter you remove keeps our lands – your lands -- pristine. Instead, ranchers sometimes find themselves picking up after others, including non-designated camping areas that others have literally left trashed.

RESPECT WILDLIFE

As our state and federal agencies like to suggest, we hope to remind the public to observe wildlife from a distance. Do not feed or disturb them. Remember, you're a guest in their home.

RESPECT CATTLE

Multi-use public lands mean ranchers are using the land to graze cattle. We can help them keep water tanks pristine and full for wildlife and cattle.

We hope to highlight that "if you come upon closed gates, close them after going through them. And stay on designated roads with your off-highway vehicles."

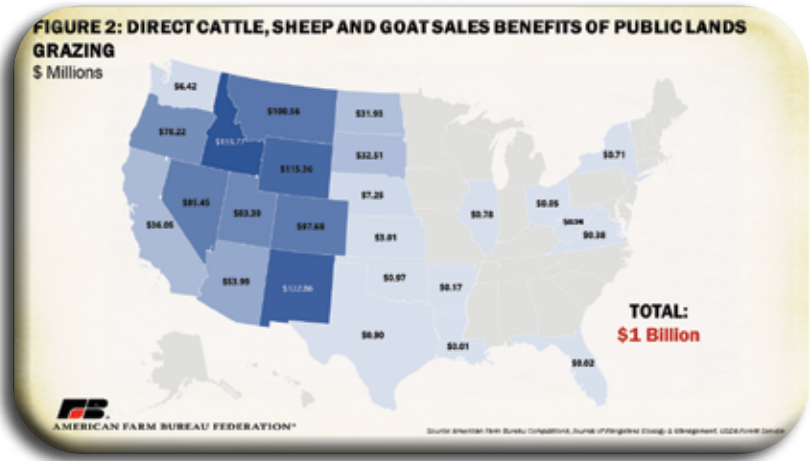
Most people don't know that cattle turn otherwise unusable grasses and shrubs into food for everyone and reduce fuels on forest floors that feed wildfires. Yes, cattle are better than Smoky the Bear at preventing forest fires.

REMEMBER WHAT RANCHERS DO FOR YOU ON OUR PUBLIC LANDS

Ranchers love the land. They love making it work for you and their cattle. They reseed with native grasses to reintroduce grasslands. They thin and remove invasive species. They develop and maintain water resources. In fact, they develop and maintain water sources for cattle and wildlife. If they come into management of public lands that need some tender loving care, they naturally restore to its natural beauty.

For generations, ranchers have contributed far more than their job titles indicate. They are county commissioners, teachers, bankers, truck drivers, energy workers, hunters, sportsmen and more – contributing directly to the stability and longevity of the communities in which they live and certainly the public lands they manage.

Agencies administer permits that allow ranchers to graze livestock on specified public lands for a fee.

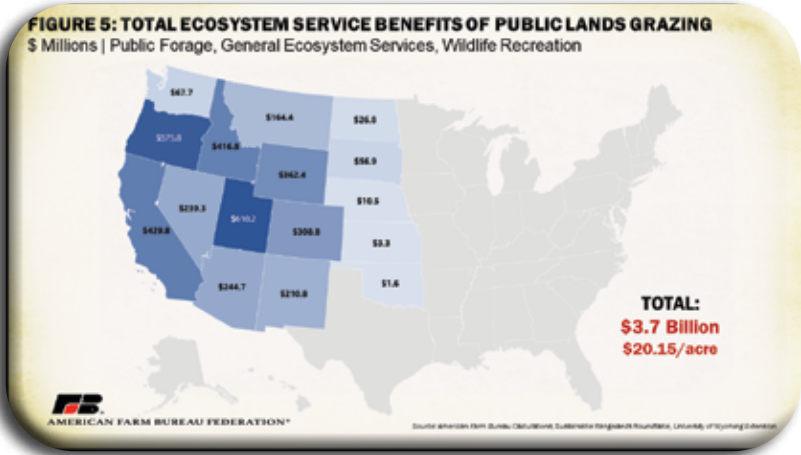


In a recent study by the U.S. Forest Service, researchers focused on quantifying economic contributions of federal grazing at the state and national level by adjusting sales values reported by the census of agriculture. This methodology allows us to estimate the value of livestock sales directly attributable to public lands forage. The graphic displays the combined value of cattle, sheep and goat sales linked to public lands grazing. In total, over one billion dollars in livestock sales value is attributable to public lands forage. Arizona comes in at nearly 54 million dollars.

Notably, ruminants like cattle use forage on otherwise marginal lands to convert low-quality forage into high-quality nutrients humans can consume.

RANCHERS PROVIDE ECOSYSTEM SERVICE BENEFITS BY GRAZING CATTLE

Nationally, it's estimated that federal rangelands contribute \$3.7 billion in ecosystem services which translated to \$20.15 per public acre grazed. For comparison, after adjusting for the approximately \$26 million ranchers pay in grazing fees each year, taxpayers support appropriations for rangeland management programs at about 30 cents per acre. Excluding all other benefits of public-lands grazing, consumers have a net return of \$19.85 per 30 cents spent to support federal lands grazing. Arizona contributes \$244 million



YOU PLAY IN THE WATERSHED

Our efforts at public outreach will include how we all get to play in a watershed. Those open space areas you play in outside of Phoenix are also the watershed for the Phoenix Metro area; it's part of the water system that provides water for us. Grasses slow rainwater and filter it instead of creating erodible areas that take soil with it. This is more reason to stay on the roads or existing camp spots to prevent expanding potential erosion. Together, we can keep these lands beautiful, productive and multi-use for future generations.

As we continue to engage in this topic, reach out to us at outreach@azfb.org for more information and suggestions especially if you are interested.

CENTURY FARMS AND RANCHES

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eldest son.

In 1956 the surviving children of Arthur Noon divided the private ranch property amongst themselves.

When Fred passed away in 1996 at the age of 88, the Running N Ranch was divided again.

Today, James Grantham and his wife, Malisa, now live at Arthur's original homestead in Arivaca and continue to raise black angus cattle on the south side of the valley. James acquired the G Lazy J brand as well in the 1980s and it is also in use on the ranch.

On the Noon Ranch, Mary runs Red Angus, Black Angus and Hereford crosses. She is a board member of the Altar Valley Conservation Alliance. She has also been working with the NRCS to manage the land, which includes a portion of the riparian area of the Arivaca Cienaga.

Together these two families with common roots are ensuring a 146-year ranching legacy and counting.

Editor's Note: This program of the Arizona Farm Bureau (AZFB) is evergreen. The organization makes the application available on azfb.org every year and asks our Arizona farm and ranch families to apply if their family runs a century farm or ranch. Go to <https://www.azfb.org/News/Century-Farms-Ranches> to download an application and submit for the 2025 year's recognition.



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ARIZONA FARMERS AND RANCHERS HAVE STAR POWER ON INSTAGRAM

By Julie Murphree, Arizona Farm Bureau Director of Strategic Communications

This coming May, Arizona Farm Bureau will have hosted the #TalkToAFarmer, #TalkToARancher live on Instagram **for six years**. The question to my farmers and ranchers, "Have you ever been one of my guests on this live and in-person show?!" We'd love to have you on the show.



Through Instagram's "Live," split-screen feature, we're taking the time to visit with our Arizona farmers and ranchers from all over the state. We've interviewed Arizona farmers and ranchers in Buckeye, Yuma, Prescott, Tucson and Marana, Willcox, Queen Creek and as far south as Patagonia.

Additionally, since last year, we've made more trips to the farms and ranches of our guests. These personal meetings on the farms, ranches and dairies of our guests creates a deeper connection for our regular viewers of the show. Says one regular viewer, "I feel like I understand the agriculture in Arizona so much more partly because you go to the farms."

Arizona Farm Bureau's Talk to a Farmer Friday program launched so our Instagram followers to our @AZfarmbureau social media account could talk to Arizona farmers and ranchers live on their farms and ranches by posting a question on the Instagram Live feed. We now have built a regular following. And while most of our viewers watch the video after the live, those we encounter regularly mention the shows they've watched.

Last year, one of our more successful runs of guests was our Arizona-based agriculture leaders. We did a Futuristic series about Arizona agriculture that garnered thousands of views. One of our guests in that series was former President of the Arizona Farm Bureau, Stefanie Smallhouse. Her words ring true more than ever: "We don't farm in this desert state despite of it, we farm in Arizona's desert climate because of it."

During the first Instagram Live six years ago, 200+ Instagram followers logged on to view the conversation we had with Trevor Bales, an alfalfa and Sudan grass hay farmer from Buckeye, Arizona. Bales has already attracted quite a following with friends and fans that watch him daily on Instagram



talk about Arizona farming and his family-owned and operated business, Bales Hay Sales.

In 2025, we hope to do several series. For example, we're planning a six-week series on "Artists from Farm and Ranch Country." Our current series is about the Farmer/Rancher hunter. And this is just the beginning.

Mark your calendar for every Friday morning between 10:00 and 11:00. We've already visited with more than 200 Arizona farmers and ranchers (and yes, some of them are regular guests). During the 25 to 40-minute live sessions with our farmers or ranchers, you'll have a chance to pose a ques-



tion if you follow Arizona Farm Bureau on Instagram:

One of our more recent "Talk to a Farmer" sessions was with Noah Hiscox, Pinal County cotton, wheat and alfalfa farmer. Join us and stay connected to your Arizona farmers and ranchers that love to share their stories about farming and ranching in this vast and diverse agriculture state!

If you would be interested in being a guest, contact us at outreach@azfb.org.

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