Family Farm ALLIANCE SM

P.O. Box 216 Klamath Falls, Oregon 97601

February 27, 2013

The Honorable Scott Tipton
United States House of Representatives
218 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Re: Support for "Hydropower and Rural Jobs Act"

Dear Congressman Tipton:

On behalf of the Family Farm Alliance (Alliance), I thank you for re-introducing the "Hydropower and Rural Jobs Act of 2013" (H.R. 678). This bill streamlines burdensome and unnecessary federal regulations and rules encountered by many irrigation/water districts and electric utilities that seek to develop hydropower on Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) water canals and pipelines. In the last Congress, the Alliance formally supported an earlier version of this bill, and provided expert witnesses at committee hearings who testified in support of it and other legislation intended to provide regulatory reform for non-federal conduit hydropower generation.

We are pleased that you and your House colleagues are also joined by Sens. John Barrasso (WY), Jim Risch (ID), Mike Enzi (WY), and Mike Crapo (ID), who have introduced a similar bill (S. 306) in the Senate.

The Family Farm Alliance supports your bill, and we urge the House and the Senate to affirmatively pass this important bill.

The Alliance is a grassroots organization of family farmers, ranchers, irrigation districts and allied industries in 16 Western states. Many of our members operate existing irrigation canals and ditch systems that may provide opportunities to develop in-canal, low-head hydroelectric projects that have tremendous potential for producing significant amounts of renewable energy with virtually no negative environmental impacts. There are many other benefits associated with developing projects of this type. Historic irrigation structures can be retained while the system is updated with modern clean-energy producing technologies. Increased revenues from the sale of this renewable energy can result in a new source of funding for operating, maintaining, and rehabilitating our aging water delivery infrastructure at lower costs to farmers. And, importantly, irrigation water delivery services can continue while utilizing flows for clean, emissions-free "green" energy production.

Your bill seeks to promote in-canal, low-head hydropower by:

- Authorizing "power" as a function at Reclamation's conduits.
- Exempting small conduit hydropower generation projects under the National Environmental Policy Act, with the exception of transmission siting on federal land.
- Designating the Power Resources office in Reclamation's Denver headquarters as the lead office for small conduit development. This provision intends to set up a centralized location for uniformity purposes, yet does not prohibit area offices from implementing specific conduit development.

Notably, your bill protects water users in two ways: 1) By specifically re-affirming hydropower development as secondary to water supply and delivery purposes; and 2) Ensuring that there will be no financial and operational impacts to existing water users. Furthermore, the bill protects agreements that the water users have on existing conduit generation projects and provides additional safeguards to ensure such projects do not undermine water deliveries.

As you know, the House of Representatives has already passed H.R. 267, which is intended to streamline similar concerns with existing FERC processes. We are pleased that S. 306 and H.R. 678 change the ceiling from 1.5 megawatts to 5 megawatts for small conduit projects, which matches the provision in H.R. 267.

We support the "Hydropower and Rural Jobs Act" and believe it will reduce costs to foster more conduit hydropower at federal facilities and empower irrigation districts to develop this generation. Thank you for this opportunity to provide support for your bill, which is very important to the family farmers and ranchers of our membership. If you have any questions about this letter, I encourage you or your staff to contact me at (541)-892-6244.

Sincerely,

Dan Keppen
Executive Director