



SAGE SIGNALS

The Voice of the Nevada Livestock Industry

Volume XLVIII, #2 | January 2024

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Happy New Year

By: Martin Paris, Executive Director, Nevada Cattlemen's Association

Happy New Year all! I hope everyone had a great Christmas and is off to a good start to the year. 2023 is in the rearview mirror and 2024 is here to welcome us with open arms. Last year I promised myself I would come up with a New Year's Resolution and actually stick with it, but I regret to inform you that didn't happen. Maybe this year will be the year.

We enter the new year hopeful for a little milder, but still wet winter and the continuation of an overall strong cattle market. Before I turn the page on 2023, I want to thank everyone that consigned cattle to the 21st Annual Silver State Classic Feeder Sale last month. This sale is a major fundraiser for our Association as a portion of the commission is donated to NCA to help carry out our mission. A big thank you to Fallon Livestock LLC for all of their support year after year.

As we turn the calendar to 2024, NCA has our sights set on several high priority issues. These in-

clude BLM's Conservation and Landscape Health Rule, amended Greater Sage-Grouse Land Use Plans, the Solar Energy Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement in response to the Biden-Harris administration's goals of permitting 25 gigawatts of renewable energy on public lands by 2025, potential grazing regulation re-write, and endangered species listings, to name a few. It's important to hear from you should you feel something needs to be brought forward. Remember, NCA works for you and is always looking for engagement on the issues that are affecting livestock producers in our state.

There are also a few noteworthy events taking place in the first part of 2024. The University of Nevada, Reno will again be hosting the annual Cattlemen's Update in person and virtually from January 8-12. The University has hosted these sessions across Nevada for more than 40 years to provide ranchers with current research-based information about issues that

may affect the efficiency, productivity, profitability, and sustainability of Nevada's cattle industry. Please be sure to check out their website, <https://naes.unr.edu/cattlemens/>, for additional information on session locations and times the week of January 8-12.

Lastly, if you're in need of bulls this upcoming season please mark February 17, 2024, on your calendars for the 2nd Annual Great Basin Bull Sale in Fallon, NV at the Rafter 3C Event Center at 1:00 p.m. In the tradition of both the Fallon All Breeds Bull Sale and the Bulls for the 21st Century Bull Test and Sale, there will be a combination of performance tested and range bulls available at the sale. If you're looking to improve the genetics of your operation, there's no doubt you should be able to find what you're looking for at the upcoming sale. For more information about the sale please check out the website at www.greatbasinbullsale.com.

Until next time.

Cattlegirls' Corner of the Corral

— Nevada Cattlegirls Elect New Officers —

By Keri Pommerening, NVCW President

2024 brings some new faces to the Nevada Cattlegirls Executive Board. Officers were sworn in at the 2023 Nevada Cattlegirls General Membership meeting on November 17, held in conjunction with the Nevada Cattlemen's Association Convention and Trade Show in Winnemucca, Nevada.

The new officers are:

Keri Pommerening – President
Charmi Mitchell – President-Elect
Rosealee Rieman – Vice President
Lacey Tom – Secretary
Ana Dagenhart – Treasurer
Julie Irish – Parliamentarian
Madison Bowers – Past President

Pamela Griffin, ANCW President, was there to welcome each officer and offer words of wisdom to each position.

The Nevada Cattlegirls have many great ideas in the works for 2024. In-



Submitted Photo

Nevada Cattlegirls Officers, from left Rosealee Rieman, Ana Dagenhart, Madison Bowers, Pamela Griffin, Charmi Mitchell, Keri Pommerening, Julie Irish. Not pictured Lacey Tom.

— Continued on page 4 —

UPCOMING EVENTS

University of Nevada, Reno Cattlemen's Update 2024

— January 8-12, 2024 —

Virtual and In-Person

For Details:

<https://naes.unr.edu/cattlemens/>

Nevada Cattlemen's Association Future Leadership Luncheon

— January 17, 2024 —

10:00 AM — 1:00 PM

Elko, Nevada

Elko Basque Club

1601 Flagview Drive

National Cattlemen's Beef Association Cattle Convention

— January 31 – February 2, 2024 —

Orlando, Florida

Orange County Convention Center

South Concourse

9899 International Dr.

Great Basin Bull Sale

— February 17, 2024 —

Fallon, Nevada

Rafter 3C Events Center

325 Sheckler Road

NCBA Cattle Industry Summer Business Meeting

— July 8–10, 2024 —

San Diego, California

Hilton San Diego Bayfront



PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE

Hanes Homan, President, Nevada Cattlemen's Association

Season's Greetings Friends, I recently took a trip from Elko, Nevada to Fort Worth, Texas for the National Cutting Horse Futurity. As I drove across the west, I am always amazed at the bountiful agriculture production this country has. Nowhere that I traveled was agriculture not present. Cattle - both in and out of feedlots, corn fields, cotton fields, and tracts of other fairground cover the land.

A lot of the articles that I have read lately lead me to concerns if consumers will keep up the demand for our product with the higher prices they are having to pay. As I go about my day-to-day chores and isolate myself on the ranch, I have worries about demand issues in the beef industry. As I drove through big cities like Albuquerque, Salt Lake City, Dallas,

and many others the demand issue faded and turned it to concerns of how in the world will we ever feed all these people! Every establishment that we ate at (all of them served beef) was packed with consumers ordering our product and loving the eating experience. At the Big Texan Steakhouse in Amarillo I watched a truck driver in a funny top hat eat a tomahawk steak to the bone and then clean the bone off to nothing left on it. People love beef.

I can't help but ponder this as the "Climate Elites" fly their private jets into Dubai to recommend the west eats less beef. If you research the food vendors at the Summit there is plenty of meat for them (Wagyu burgers and BBQ).

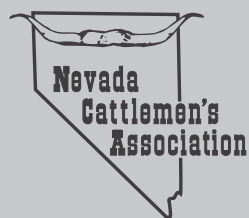
Private Jets are the biggest climate offenders in terms of CO2 that there are but these folks want to blame cows. HUH? If you want this "President's Perspective" I say, "ban private jets and eat more beef to save the planet!"

NCA MEMBERSHIP

We would like to thank the following people for joining or renewing their membership with Nevada Cattlemen's Association between November 25 and December 21, 2023.

(New members are in bold.)

- Bieroth Ranch, Dennis & Marcia Bieroth
- Boss Tanks
- Bottari Ranch LLC
- Dalton Livestock LLC, Brad & Dani Dalton, Vernon & Joanne Dalton, Jay Dalton, Cameron Dalton
- Ebert Fiddes and Dorsa, Tom Ebert
- Eide Bailly LLP
- Estill Ranches LLC
- Mark & Susan Fowler
- W H Gibbs Company, William H. Gibbs President
- Don Hanks D.V.M.
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- Home Ranch, Lloyd Sherburn
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- Little Valley Land Bovine B & B, Daniel Mori
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- Mori Ranches
- Neff Equipment
- **Neogen, Ashley Bradbury**
- Open Box Arrow Ranch, Joe Durant
- Parker Family Ranch LLC, Bart Parker
- Rebel Creek Ranch, Ron & Denise Cerri, Jeff Cerri, Dusty & Stacy Edwards
- Redd Summit Ranches, Steve Redd
- Rockin' T D Ranch, Anthony Stobiecki
- Joe Saval Company LLC, Jerry Annis, Jane Trigero
- LeRoy Sestanovich
- Standish Farms, Kathy Sarman & Kenneth Pawley
- Superior Livestock Auction, Allie Bear
- T I Ranches LLC, Kenneth Jones, Marlow & Stephanie Dahl
- Uhart Home Ranch LLC, L. Domingo & Ruby L. Uhart
- Van Norman Ranches, Inc., Robin & Diane Van Norman
- The Wheeler Ranch, Frank R. Wheeler



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Nevada Cattlwomen: *Continued from page 1*

ing membership, promoting beef through wine and beef pairing events to be held throughout the state, and educating producers on safe livestock handling procedures through Beef Quality Assurance (BQA) activities are just a few at the top of the list. These ideas would not be possible without our great team of Executive Directors. I am a firm believer in shared leadership; therefore, I will highlight each member of our team in the future months. Each of them brings great experience and vision to our association.

I'll start with a little about myself for those who don't know me. I am a wife, mother of two, and grandmother of four (and maybe more to come). I'm a retired educator. I spent thirty years as a teacher, principal, teacher-trainer, and district curriculum director. In my career I focused on inspiring the next generation, which I continue to do in the beef industry and agriculture. The cattle industry and ranching have always been my passion. When people ask me what I love most about retirement, I tell them I don't have to raise cattle and irrigate in the dark and on weekends, now it's a 24/7 job. I grew up on the Dangberg Ranch in Carson Valley, Nevada, cowboying with my dad, Dennis Jen-



Submitted Photo

Nevada Cattlwomen President
Keri Pommerening

sen, learning as much as I could about the past and future of the cow business. When I met my husband, Dan Pommerening, we continued to grow our own herd, two-legged and four legged. We now raise Angus cross commercial cattle with our children and their families. We also raise a few cow horses (enough to keep the grandkids mounted), and always have a herd of border collie dogs to help. We are blessed to have a ranch in the beautiful Smith Valley that takes a lot of our time but makes for great family memories. I'm also a brand inspector, a job I enjoy because I can connect with other cattle producers and feedlot owners. My hobbies include western photography and showing reined cow horses. I also like to dabble in drawing and writing. My favorite pastime is spending time with my four "grandboys" and teaching them about agriculture. This industry may not make you rich at the bank, but it is rich in tradition and teaching the next generation to take care of the land and animals. When I think of cattle women, I think all of us cherish our past as we look to the future.

So, until next month, here's to a prosperous 2024. If you are traveling to Cattle Con in Florida, here's to safe travels and many new connections.

Cattlwomen – a voice from the past with a vision for the future.

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Applications Open for Voluntary Water Rights Retirements in Central Nevada Groundwater Basins

By Jeff Fontaine, Executive Director, Humboldt River Basin Water Authority & Central Nevada Regional Water Authority

The Central Nevada Regional Water Authority (CNRWA) and Humboldt River Basin Water Authority (HRBWA) were recently granted \$15 million to purchase and retire groundwater rights from willing sellers.

Applications are now open for willing sellers to apply to voluntarily retire their water rights in these basins.

The program, the Nevada Water Conservation and Infrastructure Initiative, is meant to purchase and permanently retire groundwater rights from willing sellers in groundwater basins with insufficient water supply to serve all water rights and domestic wells.

Funding is to be used for over-appropriated and over-pumped groundwater basins in the Central Hydrographic Region and Humboldt River Basin.

Applications for the Humboldt River Basin are available here: <https://hrbwa.com/grrp/>

Applications for the Central Nevada Hydrographic Region are available here: <https://cnrwa.com/grrp/>

Applications are also available in most member county administrative offices.

The deadline to apply is January 22, 2024.

A list of over-pumped and over-appropriated basins is online here: https://cnrwa.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Over-pumped-and-over-appropriated-groundwater-basins-11_22_23.pdf

Over-pumped basins are allocated \$900 per acre-foot, and over-appropriated basins that are not over-pumped are valued at \$350 per acre-foot. Water rights in the Diamond Valley Basin are valued at \$800 per acre-foot.

“The program addresses and avoids conflicts with existing rights or detriments to the public interest and natural resources,” said Jeff Fontaine, the Initiative’s director. “Retiring groundwater rights will help stabilize groundwater levels.”

Funding priorities are for retiring irrigation rights in over-pumped basins subject to curtailment. Purchasing groundwater rights in other over-appropriated basins will also be considered if such purchases mitigate conflicts with existing rights or if there are detriments to natural resources.

Groundwater right holders in the portions of the Humboldt River Basin and Central Hydrographic Region located in CNRWA and HRBWA member counties are eligible to apply. Those counties include Churchill, Elko, Esmeralda, Eureka, Humboldt, Lander, Nye, Pershing and White Pine.

“We encourage those interested in retiring their water rights in these basins to apply sooner rather than later, as it is expected that available funds will exceed the program’s demand,” Fontaine added.

Additional information is available online: https://cnrwa.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Water-Rights-Retirement-Program-FAQ-final11_14_23.pdf

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NDOW Releases Newest State Wildlife Action Plan

ndow.org

The Nevada Department of Wildlife (NDOW), Wildlife Diversity Division, proudly announces the final 2022 iteration of the Nevada State Wildlife Action Plan (SWAP), a forward-facing blueprint, guiding not only NDOW but also engaging all partners and concerned citizens in a collective, proactive effort to conserve the state's native wildlife and habitats over the next decade.

The SWAP is intended to be an all-inclusive, statewide roadmap for protecting 367 iconic species, as well as, more obscure species, all of which have been identified as Species of Greatest Conservation Need along with 20 critical habitat types. Collectively, this plan represents the most important wildlife and habitats we must protect over the next 10 years, to ensure those species and landscapes are here for future generations. States are required to have these plans to be eligible for State Wildlife Grants, the major funding source that implements the plan. Plans are developed in coordination with other state and federal agencies, non-governmental organizations, universities, and the public.

“While NDOW is the lead agency for the Nevada State Wildlife Action Plan, the SWAP is not a single-agency strategy. Ultimately, success in preserving and managing Nevada’s fish, wildlife, and habitats depends on many

organizations working together across borders and jurisdictions,” said Jennifer Newmark, Wildlife Diversity Division Administrator. “This plan is our vision of what conservation will be over the next decade. All wildlife matter and this plan represents our best opportunity to ensure species and their habitats are healthy and stable for generations to come.”

The last Nevada Wildlife Action Plan was submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and approved on March 1, 2013. For almost two years, NDOW staff, as well as an external team of professionals and organizations, systematically reviewed and revised the 2012 SWAP. Major components of this comprehensive revision incorporate evaluating over 600 species as potential Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) and increasing holistic efforts to connect individuals to nature through nature tourism, volunteer research, and education. The SWAP was created in true partnership between more than 15 federal, state, tribal, and non-governmental entities with direct input from over 80 contributors and will guide the collective conservation actions for the next 10 years.

Learn more and view the Nevada SWAP here- <https://www.ndow.org/blog/nevada-wildlife-action-plan/>.





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USDA Launches Workshops on Livestock Risk Management Products

The “Livestock Roadshow” Features In-person and Virtual Events

WASHINGTON, Dec. 18, 2023 – The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is hosting more than a dozen in-person and virtual workshops this winter for producers to learn about new and expanded livestock risk management products. The “Livestock Roadshow,” hosted by USDA’s Risk Management Agency (RMA), will highlight policy improvements based on feedback from America’s livestock producers as part of the agency’s broader outreach and education efforts.

“Listening to farmers and ranchers, learning about their needs, and using feedback to make improvements to risk management options is a top priority for Risk Management Agency,” said RMA Administrator Marcia Bungler. “We are committed to expanding the reach of crop insurance, especially to producers who haven’t previously participated. The Livestock Roadshow is one of our many efforts to provide outreach and education to America’s agricultural producers.”

Improvements to livestock insurance options have led to tremendous growth. For example, Livestock Risk Protection grew by 250% in two years, with about 27 million head of cattle insured in 2023. Meanwhile, Livestock Gross Margin grew by 600% in two years, with about 14.5 million head of cattle insured in 2023.

To ensure livestock producers across the country can attend a livestock roadshow event, two virtual livestock roadshows are scheduled for January. To learn more about the virtual roadshows, and to see the full listing of upcoming in-person roadshow events, visit - <https://rma.usda.gov/en/Topics/Livestock-Roadshow>.

Producers attending the Livestock Roadshow events can expect to learn more about:

- Annual Forage
- Dairy Revenue Protection
- Livestock Gross Margin
- Livestock Risk Protection
- Pasture, Rangeland, and Forage
- Weaned Calf Risk Protection

The Livestock Roadshow builds on other recent outreach and education efforts. Earlier this year, RMA held a roadshow highlighting insurance options for specialty crop, organic, and urban producers, drawing more than 3,000 attendees. Additionally, since 2021, RMA has invested around \$13 million in partnerships to advance risk management education. Learn more on the Outreach and Education webpage: <https://rma.usda.gov/en/Topics/Outreach-and-Education>.

More Information

Livestock producers can learn more by visiting the Livestock Roadshow webpage (<https://rma.usda.gov/en/Topics/Livestock-Roadshow>) or by contacting a RMA Regional Office (<https://rma.usda.gov/en/RMALocal/Field-Offices/Regional-Offices>).

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Endangered Species Act at 50: Almost 60% of Claimed Species ‘Recoveries’ Were Falsely Listed, Western Caucus Foundation Report Shows

WASHINGTON - Nearly 60% of species purportedly “recovered” under the Endangered Species Act (ESA) should never have been listed in the first place, and were disguised as successes when taken off the federal list, an extensive study of federal ESA data by the Western Caucus Foundation (WCF) finds.

This further calls into question the effectiveness of the law, under which only 3% of approximately 1,700 species have been officially delisted as ‘recovered’ since the Act was signed into Law on Dec. 28, 1973. The WCF analysis puts the number of actual recoveries at less than 2%.

The ESA’s delisting process has been used by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to pass off species added to the list in error as successful ‘recoveries.’ In reality, more than double the number of species were actually removed from list because they were mistakes and not actual recoveries, the report, entitled “The Endangered Species Act at 50,” says. The report relies almost entirely on federal register notices and agency reports.

“This report documents that the Endangered Species Act in its present form is ineffectual at best, and that its dismal record has been hidden,” said Rob Gordon, an ESA expert and the report’s author. “The Act desperately needs modernization for species and people, in terms of how the program is implemented, and to ensure that accurate, reliable and sufficient data are used in decision-making rather than advocacy presented as science, which harms Congressional oversight, misleads the public, and hinders the Act’s very purpose.”

The deceptive practice of misrepresenting mistakes as successes has gone on for decades, hiding the waste of conservation resources, and imposing regulatory burdens based on erroneous data.

“For far too long, this administration’s desire to empower D.C. bureaucrats at the expense of local wildlife experts has allowed the ESA to be the death knell of local communities bound by its outdated policies,” said Senator Cynthia Lummis (WY), who is WCF Honorary Co-Chair. “Now more than ever, we have a responsibility to modernize the ESA so it not only better fits its intended purpose but empowers our landowners and businesses to be partners in species recovery, not the enemy.”

The ESA’s effects are consequential to landowners and taxpayers, who bear the burden of species listed based on insufficient or erroneous data or analysis – species that are later misleadingly claimed to have ‘recovered’ as well as other species that remain wrongly listed. Two-thirds of endangered species habitats are on

“The Endangered Species Act at 50” report is the most complete and current analysis of Law’s conservation record and relies on government’s own data.

Species were routinely listed in error, magically ‘recovered’ to hide the errors as well as wasteful costs imposed on private property owners and taxpayers.

private lands.

“This year marks the 50th anniversary of the ESA, and it has been a disappointing 50 years,” said Rep. Dan Newhouse (WA-04), Honorary Co-Chair of WCF and Chairman of the Congressional Western Caucus. “With a less than 5% success rate, it’s clear that the ESA as enacted has failed its mission of actually recovering species. Furthermore, the finding that more than half of the alleged recoveries are the result of data error or manipulation is a damning indictment of the effectiveness of this law and its implementation. This report shows we must improve transparency of the data used by the Fish and Wildlife Service, and will help inform the work of the ESA Working Group that I co-chair in the House of Representatives.”

Attempts to modernize the ESA have met with stiff resistance in the past.

“It’s to be expected that certain interests will characterize this report as a threat to endangered species or an attempt to roll back environmental regulations,” WCF Executive Director Darrell Henry said. “It’s only in the environmental arena that any effort to bring a program into the future – or even the present – and make it effective is referred to as a rollback. Updating the ESA for the better would only turn its long-term failures into successes for truly endangered or threatened species.”

The full report is available at <https://www.westerncaucusfoundation.org/esa-report-2023/>.

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- ▶ **Thursday, January 4**
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WVM Headquarters – Cottonwood, CA
- ▶ **Thursday, January 25**
Consignment Deadline: January 17, 2024
Tehama District Fairgrounds – Red Bluff, CA
- ▶ **Thursday, February 29**
Consignment Deadline: February 21, 2024
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BLM to Analyze Potential Changes to West-wide Energy Corridors as Part of President Biden's Investing in America Agenda

Work will support transmission siting to speed clean energy production across the West

WASHINGTON – Today, the Bureau of Land Management announced that it will begin assessing targeted updates to energy corridors across the West, to help speed deployment of transmission infrastructure. The analysis will examine potential changes to the designations that could strengthen energy security, promote renewable energy development in the West, improve reliability, relieve congestion, and enhance the capability of the national grid to deliver electricity. Approximately 673 miles of seven designated energy corridors may potentially be modified.

“Transmission is a vital piece of moving our country to a clean energy economy,” said BLM Director Tracy Stone-Manning. “These updates will help plot a course for successful transmission deployment in order to bring renewable energy to markets across the West.”

The BLM will use a \$1.2 million investment from President Biden's Inflation Reduction Act to support this effort. This work is central to the Investing in America agenda and supports broader Biden-Harris Administration efforts on efficient siting and permitting of transmission lines.

These corridors, known as West-wide energy or Section 368 corridors, stretch across Western states and help guide responsible buildout of transmission lines and other uses to balance the need for delivering clean energy with protecting America's lands, water, and wildlife habitat.

Making revisions to these corridors, originally designated in 2009, requires interstate coordination and national-level planning to be implemented efficiently and effectively. BLM began internal planning for this effort using BLM's Regional Review Final Report. The seven prioritized, specific energy corridors will affect 19 resource management plans across Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming.

In January 2009, the BLM and the Forest Service issued land-use planning decisions designating approximately 6,000 miles of West-wide energy corridors, consistent with the direction in Section 368 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005. These designations are intended to serve as preferred locations on Federally managed lands for the siting of electric

transmission and distribution lines and pipelines, including hydrogen pipelines.

As part of a settlement to resolve a lawsuit challenging the corridor designation decisions, the BLM and Forest Service agreed to review and consider recommendations for revisions, deletions, and additions of the corridors. The BLM's current planning effort will evaluate the recommendations to modify some of the designated West-wide corridors, in part to ensure avoidance of significant known resource and environmental conflicts. The project's total cost is \$1.9 million.

The BLM will hold four in-person and two virtual public scoping meetings to collect comments and local input. (Locations and times follow, and all times are Mountain Standard):

In-Person Meetings:

- **January 9, 2024** – Cedar City, UT: Cedar City Heritage Center, 96 N. Main St. (4 p.m. to 7 p.m.)
- **January 10, 2024** – Laughlin, NV: Laughlin Regional Government Center, 101 Civic Way (4 p.m. to 7 p.m.)
- **January 11, 2024** – Phoenix, AZ: BLM National Training Center, 9828 N. 31st Avenue (4 p.m. to 7 p.m.)
- **January 17, 2024** – Craig, CO BLM Little Snake Field Office, 455 Emerson Street (4 p.m. to 7 p.m.)

Virtual Meetings: Visit EplanningUi (blm.gov), <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2022227/510>, to register

- **January 9, 2024** (10 a.m. to 11 a.m.)
- **January 18, 2024** (10 a.m. to 11 a.m.)

For more information, please visit the Section 368 Energy Corridors Regional Review Revisions ePlanning website <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/2022227/510> at the West-wide Energy Corridor Information Center website at <http://corridoreis.anl.gov>, or contact Crystal Hoyt, BLM National Project Lead, at choyt@blm.gov or 307-352-0322.

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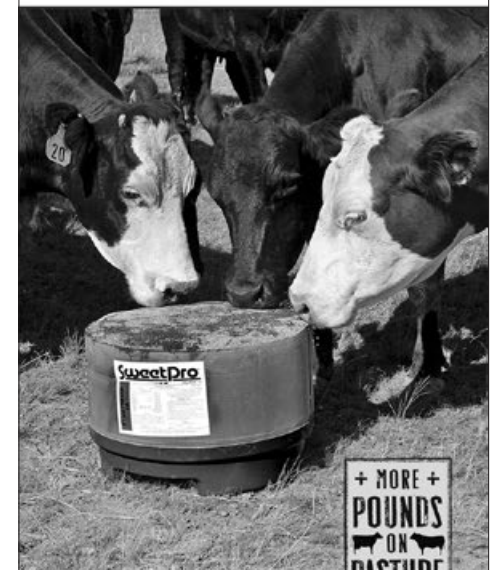
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The Extension Punts Farm Bill Fight to 2024

By the National Cattlemen's Beef Association

In November 2023, President Biden signed a continuing resolution into law avoiding a government shutdown and extending the 2018 Farm Bill through Sept. 30, 2024. Now, lawmakers will have a few extra months to work on crafting the next Farm Bill, but not in the best of times.

“Right now in Congress, the majorities in both chambers are hairline fracture thin between Republicans and Democrats. Many Republicans are hesitant to vote for big ticket bills that they have to go home and discuss with their constituents,” said NCBA Executive Director of Government Affairs Allison Rivera. “With continued inflation and a need for strong safety nets for producers, we have to stress to policymakers why these Farm Bill dollars are an important investment to avoid much larger spending in the future.”

One of the clearest examples of this investment is the money funding the National Animal Vaccine and Veterinary Countermeasures Bank (NAVVCB), which currently houses the foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) vaccine. The investments Congress made to stand up the bank in 2018 and the additional investments to maintain it are miniscule compared to the billions of dollars the economy would lose if a FMD outbreak were to occur in the U.S.

While the Farm Bill extension prevents the expiration of many risk management and voluntary conservation programs, the pause also delays Congress’ action to improve upon the last Farm Bill and make it even stronger and beneficial to cattle producers.

“The reliance on extensions means Congress is ‘kicking the can down the road’ and that creates real uncertainty for cattle producers across the country. When you’re wondering every few months whether or not critical Farm Bill programs will be available and have the funding they need, it is difficult to plan for the future,” Rivera said.

One example NCBA frequently points to is the popularity of programs like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Livestock Risk Protection (LRP).

“Both EQIP and LRP provide important support to cattle producers,” Rivera said. “EQIP provides technical and financial assistance to producers’ voluntary conservation efforts while LRP protects against declines in the market. With their popularity, Congress should continue to protect and bolster these programs, which is what we continually ask for.”

While the Farm Bill extension relieves some of the pressure on Congress to craft the next Farm Bill, it pushes these debates to an even more politically charged time. Next year is a major presidential and congressional election year, which means policymakers will be highly focused on winning elections and the ramifications of the votes they take in an election year.

tions of the votes they take in an election year.

While the Farm Bill contains many important agricultural provisions, the vast majority of the legislation focuses on food and welfare programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). These issues are always politically charged, and passage of the Farm Bill is usually seen as a compromise between elected officials who represent urban and suburban districts voting for the bill for the food programs, while rural officials are voting for the farm programs. These federal nutrition programs also dominate the campaign trail conversations around the Farm Bill.

The margins in Congress have become even tighter in recent weeks. Previously, Republicans in the House of Representatives could only afford to lose four votes, which created numerous challenges during government funding negotiations because a small group Congress members were willing to vote against appropriations bills due to the price tag. With the recent expulsion of one member and several announced resignations, the majority is getting even smaller. Still, NCBA remains optimistic about our ability to achieve important Farm Bill provisions for cattle producers.

“NCBA is up on Capitol Hill every day advocating for you — our members. You also continued to talk to your representatives and senators about the Farm Bill provisions that are important, and this is still extremely crucial. I urge you to continue having those conversations, and NCBA will keep fighting for a strong Farm Bill that supports cattle producers,” Rivera said.



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Optimism for the Future

By Todd Wilkinson, NCBA President

As I write this column, winter meeting season is in full swing, and I've had the opportunity to speak to state cattlemen's groups across the country. The New Year often comes with a renewed sense of optimism and that has certainly been on display for several sectors of our industry. Calf prices are at record levels and profit margins are strong; there's continued demand for the high-quality product we produce, and there's optimism around young producers entering the business.

These meetings also reaffirm for me that our national and state organizations are the sword and the shield. Associations shield us from government overreach and activist attacks which have become all too common in the past several years. Yet, what motivates me is that we're the tip of the sword. We don't bow to pressure. We focus on creating opportunities for years to come and doing what's right for our families, our communities and the consumers who purchase our product.

Part of NCBA's role, and an important part of our success, is the ability to identify and develop leaders

while also preparing them to meet industry challenges head on. NCBA's flagship program for leadership development is the Young Cattlemen's Conference (YCC). Participants of this program experience nine days of intensive leadership training and a four-city tour, which showcases every facet of the beef industry. They are also exposed to the policy process and learn how young leaders can engage and make a positive impact when working with decision makers at every level of government.

NCBA, as a contractor to the Beef Checkoff, also hosts the Masters of Beef Advocacy program and the Trailblazers top advocate program. These Checkoff-funded advocacy programs are also intensive leadership development endeavors focusing on helping emerging and current young leaders to better communicate with consumers while also developing skills for correcting misinformation about beef and beef production practices.

These leadership programs give young producers a chance to build their network. They are encouraged to come together to work toward common sense solu-


tions. It's vital our producers from every sector of our industry work together as public interest in our way of life increases.

The cow-calf sector offers a good opportunity for young producers to enter the industry or grow their businesses in the next couple of years. With tight cattle supplies and continued pressure from drought, profits to cow-calf operations are expected to reach levels near \$500 per head in 2024. Herd rebuilding is going to take a few years, but this process will put the cow-calf producer in a sound position with better rates of return as we head into the New Year.

Looking toward 2024, I'm optimistic it will be a year of growth not only for our industry but for our associations. I'd like to invite you all to attend CattleCon in Orlando, Florida, Jan. 31-Feb. 2.

CattleCon is the place to share ideas, find out what is happening on operations across the country, and move our industry forward. What I enjoy most about this week is the opportunity to network with people because no other event brings the industry together like CattleCon.

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