

# Farms, Water and Dreams

Jay Gordon

# Farms, farmers and families

- We have lost most of our farm families
  - 3-40 farmers grow chickens in Washington
  - 400 families make the milk and cheese
  - 12 families and companies feed the beef
  - 500 larger ranches supported by beef sales

# Hopes and Dreams

- Farmers every morning and worry:
  - What will the Weather do to my farm today?
  - Will the market hold, rise, fall or crash?
  - Is a looming disease threatening my cows or my crops?
  - Do we have enough feed for the winter?
  - Will my machinery & buildings hold together today?
  - Will my banker stay with me? Will the help show up?
  - How many Inspectors today? And what regulations will I violate today?
  - Does my wife have enough money to pay the creditors, or pay the property taxes?
  - Is the electricity on, or the milking parlor and the irrigation pump running.

All before the first cup of coffee is down.

# Water...is one piece

- Most farmers don't get up every morning and wonder if they have enough water, or worry about it being taken away by a judge or by a change in the law.
- Pretty basic: Irrigation needs papered, cows and kids are exempt.
- It's only recently an issue; farmers, their bankers, the county, and well drillers understood, as Ecology once did, that a farmer can drill a well, as seldom as that is, to provide water for their family, to water the yard and for their cows or chickens to drink. We don't question the fact that a house and a family need water or that cows need to drink and we need to clean up after them.

# Dreams

- Farm and Ranch families don't farm because it's the path to riches.
- Its almost impossible/folly to expect our kids to stay farming;
  - there's too much work, too much stress, the jobs off farm are more secure, farming is for "low class bumpkins", American kids don't dream of working with their hands or working the dirt. Our youth started to mutiny years ago.
- Culture and society has flooded us with these messages since the depression or the potato famine: Success is seeing the farm in the rear view mirror!
  - Hank Williams, Dolly Pardon, John Melencamp, Jeff Foxworthy, The US Army

# Dreams

- How many farmers really hope our kids want to stay farming?
- Employers from the Army to Boeing want these farm kids for their work ethic, values, muscles and/or adaptive, intuitive problem solving skills.
- So, now we have something less than 1000 farm families, every day trying to figure out how to stay in business, and provide the bulk of the meat, milk, eggs and beef for the citizens of our state.

# So What...

- 1000 families lose the water for their animals, so what?
- Add this, another reason, why our children won't stay in Agriculture.
- Where do our rural schools get their kids from, or their taxes, or their support. Rural business lose another farm account.
- Bankers will pull financing for livestock farming (how do you appraise a barn full of cows with no water?)
- Where are we going to get your food from when the water is gone, the bankers have left and the mutiny of our kids is complete?