



For Immediate Release
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NEWS

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East Fork Irrigation District Celebrates Project to Modernize 56 Miles of Irrigation Canals

Ten-year plan will conserve water in the Hood River watershed while saving more than \$300,000 per year for farmers

Hood River, Ore. (May 19, 2020)

The East Fork Irrigation District (EFID) celebrated a project underway to pipe and pressurize 56 miles of open-ditch irrigation canals. Modernizing their irrigation infrastructure will conserve water, reduce energy use, improve reliability, increase public safety, and enhance fish and wildlife habitat in the Hood River watershed.

"This marks a significant step forward for our patrons, our natural resources, and for the entire Hood River Watershed," said John Buckley, East Fork Irrigation District Manager. "By working together we are saving money and increasing the reliability of our irrigation systems at the same time. The improvements we are making today will benefit generations of water users."

Once the ten-year project is completed, EFID will save more than \$300,000 in patron pumping costs while improving the overall efficiency and reliability of the entire irrigation system.

By converting open-ditch irrigation canals into underground, closed-piped systems, the project will eliminate water losses from end spills, saving an estimated 16.6 cubic feet per second, or 5,287 acre-feet annually. The District will allocate 75 percent of the saved water, or up to 12.45 cubic feet per second, to instream use during the irrigation season.

"This project supports the span of diverse agricultural producers in the Hood River Watershed who rely on irrigation, enabling them to produce more efficiently and cut costs," said Jason Jeans, NRCS Oregon acting state conservationist. "The vast benefits to landowners and the environment are significant and quantifiable."

"Farmers Conservation Alliance is honored to help the East Fork Irrigation District - right in our backyard - take steps towards a more efficient and reliable irrigation system," said Julie O'Shea, Executive Director, Farmers Conservation Alliance (FCA). "And to recognize visionary leaders like

Senator Merkley, East Fork's John Buckley and Energy Trust of Oregon's Peter West. Without Sen. Merkley's leadership on PL-566, projects like this would not be possible. Access to funding from PL-566 has made things we never thought possible a reality. This plan will save more than \$300,000 a year for EFID's farmers, conserving water, reducing energy use, improving reliability, and enhancing fish and wildlife habitat in the Hood River watershed."

"In the time I have been here we have piped over 37 miles – they've been anything from a little ditch to a large canal," reflected Buckley. "I didn't think I'd ever see the day when we'd have an open system that would ever be closed." John Buckley is retiring after 41 years with East Fork Irrigation District; he has been manager of the district since 1996.

"There are now 25 different projects in this state with FCA, in 14 different counties, representing 55% of the irrigable land in Oregon. It has been my joy and pleasure to be a part of these solutions," said Peter West, Energy Trust of Oregon's Director of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Generation. With the support of Energy Trust of Oregon, FCA launched the Irrigation Modernization Program in 2015 to support farmers in their pursuit of comprehensive irrigation improvements. The IMP delivers full modernization strategies that identify infrastructure improvements, funding sources, and strategic partnerships that enable projects to become shovel ready.

The project is a joint effort among NRCS, East Fork Irrigation District, Bonneville Power Administration, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, Hood River Watershed Group, Energy Trust of Oregon, Farmers Conservation Alliance and in coordination with other agencies, stakeholders, and the public.

For more information on the project, please visit: fcasolutions.org/EFID-celebration

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Farmers Conservation Alliance (FCA®) is a 501c3 nonprofit organization that is championing irrigation modernization strategies to achieve agricultural resilience and conservation benefits. Formed in 2005, FCA is currently partnering with farmers throughout the west to install fish screens and develop and implement customized approaches for broad-scale irrigation modernization. Learn more at fcasolutions.org

Energy Trust of Oregon is an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to helping utility customers benefit from saving energy and generating renewable power. Our services, cash incentives and solutions have helped participating customers of Portland General Electric, Pacific Power, NW Natural and Cascade Natural Gas save nearly \$1.9 billion on their energy bills since 2002.