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## Deschutes County invests \$1.45 million in relief funds for water conservation project



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The Deschutes County Commission has approved an additional American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) investment of \$1.45 million for an On-Farm Efficiency Water Conservation Investment project with the Deschutes River Conservancy, Deschutes Soil and Water Conservation District, and Central Oregon Irrigation District. The project will support on-farm water conservation within all County irrigation districts.

“This investment will help to accelerate existing water conservation work at a critical time,” said Commissioner Tony DeBone. “As we navigate a historic drought, it’s urgent that we figure out how to do more with the water we have available.”

Eighty percent of project funding will go to leverage water conservation work within COID’s Smith Rock-King Way project to complement the first phase of main canal and lateral piping. Partners will work with private landowners adjacent to the project to pipe private laterals and upgrade on-farm efficiency infrastructure from flood to sprinkler irrigation. An estimated half of the 4,000 irrigated acres in this area are flood irrigated, which is generally inefficient, so the goal is to target farmers still using flood irrigation and do projects to help reduce waste and accelerate water conservation. Saved water can be made available to junior irrigation districts and the river.

“This project is a great example of many local partners coming together to create tangible water conservation outcomes both for local farmers and rivers at a time when we need it most,” said Commissioner Phil Chang. “This is a unique opportunity to contribute a local match for existing federal, state, and local funds.”

The remaining twenty percent of project funding will be available to private landowners in other areas of Deschutes County on a cost-share basis to convert from flood to sprinkler irrigation or to implement other water conservation activities.

“If we are able to help these landowners make their systems more efficient, we can hopefully have water for longer periods of time through the summer for their crops,” said Erin Kilcullen, the general manager of the Deschutes Soil and Water Conservation District at the Board of County Commissioner meeting on August 4.

“We’re in the third year of a historic drought,” said Commissioner Patti Adair. “It’s important that we do whatever we can to improve irrigation operations.”

Deschutes County will receive more than \$38 million in ARPA funds. The County received the first half of the funds in May and expects to receive the remainder of the funds next year.

“We are thrilled that the County has invested in solving critical water issues in our basin. This funding will greatly accelerate ongoing water conservation work, helping our farmers and our rivers,” said Kate Fitzpatrick, executive director of the Deschutes River Conservancy. “We appreciate the County’s leadership in recognizing that investing in water conservation benefits our community, our economy and our ecosystems.”

Commissioners had previously allocated \$2.85 million in ARPA investments in July. To learn more about the County’s ARPA investments, visit [www.deschutes.org/arpa](http://www.deschutes.org/arpa) [2].

“The money couldn’t come at a better time as Central Oregon endures another year of extreme drought,” Fitzpatrick concluded. “Impacts are being felt in every stream and every irrigation district throughout the Deschutes Basin.”

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**Links**

[1]

[https://www.deschutes.org/sites/default/files/styles/gallery500/public/imageattachments/bcc/page/20731/1300\\_wall\\_2.jpg?itok=TmINMHMQ](https://www.deschutes.org/sites/default/files/styles/gallery500/public/imageattachments/bcc/page/20731/1300_wall_2.jpg?itok=TmINMHMQ)

[2] <http://www.deschutes.org/arpa>