

Modernizing Idaho's Water Infrastructure

An Ongoing Story Series on the Idaho Water Resource Board's Aging Infrastructure Grant Program: ISSUE NO.1

King Hill Irrigation District

Project description: The King Hill Irrigation District has been working for the last 5 years to put together a major irrigationefficiency pipeline project to benefit local irrigators and farmers in the Hammett area.

"When we started this process several years ago, we figured it'd have a \$3 to \$3.5 million price tag. As it is today, it's going to be in excess of \$6 million," said Jeff Blanksma, Chairman of the King Hill Irrigation District.

The project has been completed, just in time for the 2023 irrigation season.

"We're extremely grateful to all of the different agencies that have been helpful in this process," Blanksma says. "The Elmore Soil Conservation District and the Commission for their grant, Idaho Water Resource Board for their grant and loan, and especially NRCS which has been our partner since the beginning. They helped us design and engineer the project.

"And then of course, our water users and producers. Without them stepping up to the plate, helping with the cost-share in the loan, it'd only be a dream if it weren't for them."



- Type of project: Irrigation efficiency: open canal to pipeline, new water pumps
- Location: Hammett, Idaho
- Total project cost: \$6M
- Aging Infrastructure Grant: \$1.9M
- Water Board Loan: \$1.5M
- Local cost-share: \$2M
- Other funding partners: NRCS, Idaho Soil and Water Conservation Commission
- Start date: November 2022
- End date: May 2023

are the water users, it's a win for the irrigation district, and it's going to have positive impact for our community."

year.

Project benefits:

Conservation Team Leader for NRCS,

said the project has

multiple benefits in

reducing water use,

pumping costs of an estimated 4 million

kilowatt-hours per

project all the way

"It's a win from a

shareholders, the landowners who

around," Tharp says.

resource standpoint, it's a win for the

"It's a win-win

improving water quality and reduced

Connie Tharp,

About five miles of irrigation pipeline have been installed from a new point of diversion by the Snake River to reach about 120 different farms and water users spread over 2,000 acres of land. A bank of five large irrigation pumps with variable speed drives will push the water flows to the farmers served by the pipelines.

The new irrigation system replaces an old open ditch system that wasn't reliable, Blanksma said.

"Our infrastructure was over 100

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King Hill Irrigation District (continued)

All told, the project will

might be lost to seepage,

long deliveries, tail water

loss, and evaporation.

result in a 35 percent

increase in water use

years old, conservative estimates we were losing 30 percent of our water before it reached the Hammett Valley," he said.

The WQPA grant of \$275,000 helped make the project balance financially after high inflation drove the cost of

irrigation pipe to a point where the project was in the hole, officials said.

SOV. BRAD LITTLE

The project has multiple benefits: reducing water use, improving water quality and reduced pumping costs

"We were over budget and in a deficit, and then we got the WQPA grant, and that was huge to put everything back in the black," said John Hafen, manager of the King Hill Irrigation District.

By going from an open ditch to enclosed pipeline, the project will eliminate 20-25 percent seepage losses in the open irrigation ditches, Hafen said.

"We've got a lot of great people working with us on this project," Hafen said.

The new irrigation system was completed in April, and it's performing even better than expected, Blanksma said.

"We're pretty happy with the project all the way around," he said.





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