

Eagle County Conservation District's (ECCD) Irrigation Asset Inventory Program

An Innovative Approach for Engaging the Agricultural Community

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Brendon Langenhuizen is submitting this abstract for consideration as an oral presentation. Overall this project was learning how to support proactive upgrades to failing irrigation systems of the ECCD members (prior to failure). The result of this project demonstrated an interest among some of the participants to act on improving their system and education of opportunities to collaborate with regional partners. A lesson learned was that this methodology can be shared to support other irrigators across the Colorado River Basin by considering the sensitivity of the collected information.

Project Overview and Background

The Eagle County Conservation District's (ECCD) Irrigation Asset Inventory Program was identified as one of the Colorado River Basin's Top Projects for the Eagle County sub-basin in the Basin Implementation Plan (BIP). This presentation will highlight the project development, implementation, results and lessons learned from the Irrigation Asset Inventory pilot project and how it can benefit other similar organizations in the Colorado River Basin

Colorado's agricultural industry is at-risk for losing lands to competing water demands that will buy out and fallow these green spaces. Water policy advisers recognize that more input and engagement is needed from the agricultural community to help support this critical industry as our State and communities come to terms with meeting our water demands. Eagle County Conservation District decided to respond to these questions and step forward in connecting the dots they saw between the agricultural aging ditch infrastructure and regional entities looking to partner on water projects.

ECCD developed a project concept that offered free assessments and summary report on 25 ditch systems to identify top regional agricultural needs and regional issues. The project then connected the agricultural community to project assistance for implementing top infrastructure maintenance assistance that isn't currently supported through the District or the NRCS services. The program focused on interviewing ditch owners followed by a tour and assessment of the ditch system structures from the diversion structure to the last lateral.

Project Challenges and Next Steps

There is a strong recognition among the agricultural community that the information collected as part of this project is sensitive. This presentation will review how ECCD obtained interest and buy-in from their members to participate in the program. The ECCD felt they have the support they need to successfully accomplish this mission within the geographical diversity of the ECCD and current good relations with community agricultural owners regardless of this concern. A

balance of keeping sensitive information private while still reporting on the project needs to regional funding partners was developed and found to be successful.

ECCD is now in the process of supporting the top ranked projects with funding partners and regional collaborative efforts.