

ARNOLD IRRIGATION DISTRICT INFRASTRUCTURE MODERNIZATION PROJECT – WATERSHED PLAN ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Beginning in March 2018, Arnold Irrigation District (AID) began a federal environmental planning process for irrigation system modifications to improve irrigation efficiencies and promote water savings.

A preliminary report from the initial review was issued on April 2, 2019 with a public scoping meeting held on April 17, 2019 with comments from this meeting accepted until May 15, 2019.

A draft Watershed Plan Environmental Assessment [draft – EA] was then issued in June 8, 2021 with a public meeting held on June 23, 2021. The public comment period was extended to July 23, 2021.

The result of this planning process has resulted in a proposed modernization project to pipe 13.2 miles of the District's Main Canal from the diversion on the Deschutes River to Horse Butte Road. The proposed project would improve water conservation in District-owned infrastructure, improve water supply management and delivery reliability to District patrons, improve public safety, and enhance streamflow in the Deschutes River.

By converting the open-ditch irrigation canal into a buried, closed-pipe system, the proposed Arnold Irrigation District Infrastructure Modernization Project would reduce water loss from seepage, saving an estimated 32.5 cubic feet per second of water or 10,526 acre-feet annually. Water saved from the proposed project would be passed to North Unit Irrigation District during the irrigation season for agriculture. In return, North Unit Irrigation District would release an equal volume of water into the Deschutes River from Wickiup Reservoir during the winter for instream flows. The project would help meet the needs of farmers in Jefferson County while also increasing critical streamflow during the winter months in the upper Deschutes River.

The Deschutes Basin Board of Control is the lead project sponsor with Arnold Irrigation District as a co-sponsor. Funding and technical support is provided from NRCS, the Energy Trust of Oregon, and Farmers Conservation Alliance.

NEXT STEPS

Since the public comment period ending July 23, 2021, the NRCS has been evaluating the comments to incorporate them into a Final Plan-EA. If NRCS issues a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the project, the project can move into final design and construction.

NRCS and FCA are continuing to review and incorporate the more than 1,300 comments received from the public. This step is estimated to take until early spring 2022 and then passed to NRCS offices in Washington, DC for final review and approval. There are usually some changes to the Draft – EA before the Final is delivered to NRCS in D.C., but are not known until that time.

The project may be partially funded through the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention program, administered by NRCS and authorized by Public Law 83-566. Draft – EA total project cost estimates are \$42,759,000 with NRCS funding of \$27,862,000 and Other Funds needed to match of \$14,897,000. Other funds may include various State of Oregon project funding programs and from AID.

Through this program, NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to local organizations (project sponsors) for planning and carrying out watershed projects that help solve natural resource and related economic problems in a specific watershed. These issues can include watershed protection, flood prevention, erosion and sediment control, water supply, water quality, fish and wildlife habitat enhancement, and wetlands creation. The authorized purpose for the proposed project is Agricultural Water Management.

Related web link:

The link below will provide project factsheets, the project overview and description of alternatives with costs considered for the project.

<https://oregonwatershedplans.org/arnold-id#2a7c0804-6109-4150-aa21-a8b54f911999>