

Public Comment Period Extended for Arnold Irrigation District Infrastructure Modernization Project

Public Comment Period Extended to July 23, 2021

Contact: Marla Keethler, Farmers Conservation Alliance
Communications Director
Email: marla.keethler@fcasolutions.org
Phone: 541-716-6085

Bend, OR – (July 8, 2021) – The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is extending the public comment period for the Arnold Irrigation District Infrastructure Modernization Project Draft Watershed Plan-Environmental Assessment (Draft Plan-EA), which was made available for public comment beginning June 8, 2021. The public comment period for the Draft Plan-EA was to complete on July 8, 2021 and has now been extended to close on July 23, 2021. This extension is being made in response to a public request for additional review time.

System modifications to improve irrigation efficiencies and promote water savings in Arnold Irrigation District are under review through a federal environmental planning process that began in March 2018.

Arnold Irrigation District proposes to pipe 13.2 miles of the District-owned Main Canal from the diversion on the Deschutes River to Horse Butte Road (12.2 miles of open canal and 1 mile of open flume). 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.

Public comments on the Draft Plan-EA may be submitted **through July 23, 2021**. Comments may be emailed to arnold.id.comments@gmail.com, submitted online at oregonwatershedplans.org, submitted via phone at (541) 716-6085, or mailed to: Farmers Conservation Alliance, 102 State Street, Hood River, OR 97031.

After the public comment period, NRCS will evaluate the comments and incorporate them into a Final Plan-EA. If NRCS issues a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) for the project and authorizes the Final Plan-EA, the project can move into final design and construction.

The project may be partially funded through the Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention program, administered by NRCS and authorized by Public Law 83-566. 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.

To view the Draft Plan-EA and for more information about other irrigation modernization projects in Oregon, visit oregonwatershedplans.org or visit the NRCS Oregon public notice webpage at nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/or/newsroom/pnotice/. A printed copy of the Draft Plan-EA is also available at the Deschutes Public Library (601 N.W. Wall St, Bend, OR 97703).