

## **Farmers Irrigation Receives Stewardship Honor**

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Farmers Irrigation District of Hood River received an Oregon Water Resources Department Stewardship and Conservation Award for 2005 in a recent ceremony on the State Capitol steps.

The district was honored for implementing more efficient irrigation and making more water available for fish and farms.

The May 18 award was part of an event called by Gov. Ted Kulongoski and legislative leaders to celebrate the achievements of more than 30 citizens, public servants, landowners, industry leaders, conservation organizations, tribes and local governments committed to restoring watersheds and recovering salmon.

Farmers Irrigation District provides water to 6,000 acres of land and 1,600 users. The original mode of delivery to orchards and power plants via open canals and ditches was generally unreliable, and operation and maintenance assessments were insufficient to enhance the irrigation water delivery system.

The District implemented a project to give irrigators low-flow sprinkler heads, allowing for more efficient irrigation and more water available for fish and farms.

Working with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, Oregon Water Resources Department and federal fish agencies, the District proposed a project that would optimize hydropower production and also address in-stream needs for fish.

In 1990, the District was granted hydropower water rights and agreed to install fish screens on all diversions to improve fish passage. As more pipes were installed and pressurized water became available without pumping, the District not only produced electricity but also reduced electric consumption.

Two of the District's growers installed one of the first horizontal fish screens, which worked well, required little cleaning and allowed fish passage upstream. In 2001, the District constructed the first full-scale version of this screen on their Hood River diversion.

The inventors of the fish screen patented the technology and signed it over to the Farmers Irrigation District. The District has established the Farmers Conservation Alliance and dedicated screen proceeds to projects of a sustainable nature.

The Oregon Plan for Salmon and Watersheds is the state's effort to restore healthy watersheds, clean water and salmon to productive and sustainable levels in a manner that provides substantial environmental, cultural and economic benefits.