

NEWS

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Farmers Irrigation District puts energy projects to work for farmers and fish

185 landowners benefit from project that saves energy and water, and generates electricity and revenue for the district

Hood River, Ore. – December 17, 2009 – For 40 years, the nonprofit Farmers Irrigation District has had a vision to replace its leaking, gravity-fed, open canals with below-ground pressurized pipe. That vision is rapidly becoming a reality thanks to a recent project that not only contained the last of the lower district's open ditches, but is saving 185 local orchardists and landowners an estimated \$35,000 per year in energy costs. In addition, the project is generating renewable energy valued at an estimated \$34,000 per year and boosting in-stream water flows that will benefit fish in the Hood River.

To help bring the \$3.24 million project to fruition, Farmers Irrigation District received \$379,067 from Energy Trust of Oregon, which awarded the district cash incentives for energy efficiency and renewable energy. The district also expects to receive a percentage of its investment back through the Oregon Business Energy Tax Credit pass-through option, which allows a nonprofit to transfer a project's energy tax credit eligibility to a third party in exchange for a discounted cash payment.

A new pipe delivers much of the water by gravity feed. Because some areas require pumping, the district installed two energy-efficient 125-horsepower pumps with variable frequency drives. The pipes and pumps eliminate the need for individual landowners to operate their old, energy-consumptive pumps, collectively saving them an estimated 481,458 kilowatt hours a year as well as on-going maintenance and replacement costs.

The buried pipe eliminates canal evaporation, leakage and end spills; and flow restrictors make irrigation readily available up to each user's individual legal water right. As a result, the project saves at least 4.9 cubic feet per second of water during the irrigation season. The district runs the extra water through its existing small hydroelectric system, generating approximately 465,747 additional kWh annually, before returning the water to the Hood River. Revenue from generated electricity is helping the district make payments on the project's low-interest loan.

"Energy Trust incentives and the Oregon Business Energy Tax Credit pass-through truly made an impossible project become a financial possibility for us," said Jerry Bryan, project manager, Farmers Irrigation District. "Over the years, we've been setting aside revenue from our hydroelectric system to help pay for the conversion from wasteful, open canals to pressurized piping. But generating enough revenue has been a slow

process. Incentives from Energy Trust and the State of Oregon are enabling us to finish this project years ahead of schedule and at a time when orchardists are feeling the effects of a strained economy and could use the cost savings. By reducing water losses, this project also helps us meet our sustainability goals of watershed restoration and in-stream flow enhancement.”

“Energy Trust is very excited because this is our first combined energy-efficiency and small hydroelectric project,” said Kim Crossman, senior manager, industrial and agricultural sectors, Energy Trust. “We know there are many more potential projects out there among irrigation districts, and Energy Trust is committed to helping them make cost-effective energy improvements that lower costs for farmers and deliver environmental benefits for Oregonians.”

Farmers Irrigation District is embarking on another, similar project that will install buried pipes in its last major section of open canals. The district plans to build energy efficiency and renewable energy into that project as well and has applied for incentives from Energy Trust and the Oregon Department of Energy.

Energy Trust of Oregon is an independent nonprofit organization dedicated to helping utility customers benefit from saving energy and tapping renewable resources. Our services, cash incentives and solutions have helped customers of Portland General Electric, Pacific Power, Cascade Natural Gas and NW Natural save more than \$440 million in energy costs. Our work helps keep energy costs as low as possible, creates jobs and builds a sustainable energy future. Learn more at www.energytrust.org or call 1-866-368-7878.

Farmers Irrigation District, which was founded in 1874, provides water to 5,800 acres of land and 1,722 users in the Hood River Valley.

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