

Irrigation district canal-piping plans up for public input

Three open houses in July; federal funding eyed

By:

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A decade after the first such dispute, some neighbors along the Pilot Butte Canal are opposing the Central Oregon Irrigation District's piping plans.

BEND Ore. – The [Natural Resources Conservation Service](#) is teaming up with Central Oregon irrigators, the [Deschutes Basin Board of Control](#), and the [Farmers Conservation Alliance](#) to develop watershed plans that would help irrigators conserve water, reduce energy consumption, increase irrigation delivery efficiency, improve public safety, and benefit in-stream habitat for threatened and endangered fish species.

As part of that planning effort, these partners are hosting three public open house meetings to discuss proposed irrigation system improvements and collect input from the community and stakeholders.

At these meetings, participants will have an opportunity to learn more about the proposed irrigation improvements and submit their comments, ideas and concerns.

Each meeting focuses on watershed planning within a specific irrigation district — the Swalley, Tumalo and Central Oregon irrigation districts:

- **Tumalo Irrigation District Public Open House: Thursday July 6, 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.** Location: Tumalo Community Church Meeting Room, 64671 Bruce Ave, Bend, OR 97703.

In addition to providing comments at this meeting, individuals may also submit comments during the public comment period, which runs from **July 7 to July 20**. Submit comments to: wsp@tumalo.org.

- **Swalley Irrigation District Public Open House: Thursday July 6, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.** Location: Tumalo Community Church Meeting Room, 64671 Bruce Ave, Bend, OR 97703. In addition to providing comments at this meeting, individuals may also submit comments during the public comment period, which runs from **July 7 to July 20**. Submit comments to: swalleycomments@gmail.com.

- **Central Oregon Irrigation District Public Open House: Monday July 10, 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m.** Location: Redmond Grange, 3152 SW Metolius Pl, Redmond, OR 97756. In

addition to providing comments at this meeting, individuals may also submit comments during the public comment period, which runs from **July 11 to July 24**. Submit comments to: watershed@coid.org.

Comments may be submitted via email (see email addresses above next to meeting dates) or via mail to: Margi Hoffmann, Community Relations Director, Farmers Conservation Alliance, 11 3rd Street, Suite 101, Hood River, OR 97031.

Following the public comment period, NRCS in partnership with FCA and the DBBC, will use those comments to develop a draft watershed plan for each irrigation district in the form of an 'environmental assessment.' The public will have another opportunity to review those draft plans and provide additional input before they are finalized.

The proposed projects would convert open irrigation canals to piped and pressurized systems, which would greatly improve water use efficiency, reduce energy consumption, and improve in-stream habitat for fish — all while sustaining agriculture on family farms and ranches, officials said.

Once complete, these watershed plans will enable NRCS to apply for federal funding to construct irrigation improvements through its Watershed Protection and Flood Prevention program, also referred to as PL-566.

Through the program, NRCS provides technical and financial assistance to states, local governments and Tribes (project sponsors) to plan and implement authorized watershed project plans for the purpose of watershed protection, flood mitigation, water quality improvements, soil erosion reduction, rural, municipal and industrial water supply, irrigation, water management, sediment control, fish and wildlife enhancement, and hydropower.

"In the last 20 years, Central Oregon irrigators and conservation partners have accomplished many successes to improve irrigation water delivery, both on-farm and within their canal systems," said Tom Makowski, assistant state conservationist for watershed resources and planning for NRCS Oregon.

"Developing these comprehensive watershed plans is the next step to advance the region's irrigation modernization efforts on a landscape scale, while providing an opportunity to leverage additional federal funding sources to accomplish work on the ground."

As the lead sponsor for this planning effort, the DCCB is comprised of eight irrigation districts including Arnold, Central Oregon, Lone Pine, North Unit, Ochoco, Swalley, Three Sisters and Tumalo. Collectively, the districts convey water to more than 150,000 acres of working farms and ranches as well as local cities, parks and schools.

DCCB said it is working in conjunction with NRCS, and with planning assistance from FCA,

to complete watershed plans that would eventually cover all eight districts as part of a wider effort called the Central Oregon Irrigation Efficiency Improvement Project.

For more information, visit www.oregonwatershedplans.org or visit the NRCS Oregon public notice webpage here -

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Join the discussion...



jharg • 18 hours ago

This is really a win, win, win deal for everyone in Central Oregon and the state, except for, maybe, a few property owners that are starting to look pretty bad in the public eye.

1 ^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Kay Knott → jharg • 2 hours ago

Except, possibly for neighboring domestic wells and the aquafer.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Blake in Bend • 2 hours ago

What will it take to designate a section of one of the canals for rafting?

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



lapinebob • 14 hours ago

How about putting measuring weirs upstream and downstream from the property owners and assessing them for the difference in water lost just like the water users.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



sagerat • 15 hours ago

Pipe all the canals.

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



hackmo15 • 16 hours ago

Why should private irrigation districts need public input for their privately owned irrigation canals?

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Kay Knott → hackmo15 • 2 hours ago

Very good point!

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



clhuke64 • 17 hours ago

All I see here, is a way for the Irrigation Districts to limit use and to overcharge for water usage.....I remember hearing years ago, that the main reason for covering the canals was evaporation.....what's next, covering the rivers and lakes in Central Oregon ?

^ | v • Reply • Share ›



Kay Knott → clhuke64 • 2 hours ago

Limit use to whom? Water usage is regulated and every water user is allocated X amount of water

based on availability . It may make it easier to insure that each water user gets, as close as



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