

OWYHEE IRRIGATION DISTRICT

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Comments of Eastern Oregon Roundtable

I believe in the power of conversation.

What the human mind can conceive and believe man can achieve.

Past

- One year ago from July of 2008 this valley celebrated the 75th anniversary of the dedication of the Owyhee Dam
- Story of people who believed
- Today we are enjoying their vision and legacy

Present

- Droughts, shortage of water supply
- Invasive species (mussel, quaqqa)
- Noxious weeds reduce crop production, infesting or fields, water ways and fish habitat
- Water quality, TMDL (Clean Water Act)
- Sub-division below canal system, storm water drains
- Fish flow augmentation issues down stream

Present and Future

- Drought Issues – quantity
 - Water Conservation efforts
 - Flood to sprinkler irrigation
 - Hand lines
 - Wheel lines
 - Pivots
 - Micro drip tape

Millions of Dollars

- Growers capitol cost out of their pockets, some seeking grants and cost share to help defer costs

Water Quality Efforts

- Willow Creek/Vale Oregon Irrigation District pressurized gravity flow pipeline systems to improve water efficiency and water quality

Owyhee Irrigation District canal

- Funding for infra-structure to meet today demands
- Automation system funded under the Bureau of Reclamation conservation and field services program
 - Automated gates and check structures
 - Water measurement SCADA system
 - Records and tracks canal flows (main canal over 70 miles long)
 - It is a management tool

- Local Growers – efforts
 - Sediment ponds
 - Pump back system
 - Straw mulch
 - Pam
 - Filter strips
- Malheur County water analysis – county wide group – irrigation districts
 - Malheur County Soil and Water Conservation
 - Irrigation Districts
 - County planners
 - State of Oregon ODOT
 - Cities
 - NRCS
 - Water Shed Council
 - LIDAR

Inter-agencies Co-operating together

- Monitoring agricultural drains – water quality
- Water use in the valley is very inter-twined
 - Most all irrigation districts get return flow from each other
- We are getting better at what we are doing
- For our efforts we are producing out-put jobs, it is real things, it is measurable – loads of onions, tons of hay, head of cattle, bushels of grain and tons of corn

We must understand our present before we move to the future

- Conservation through sprinkler irrigation can effect wet lands and ground water recharge
- Change takes time, great care must be taken to understand how this system works
- World renown blue ribbon trout stream below the Owyhee Dam has changed things
- Organic growers are becoming more numerous – measures are taken to protect their operations

Most important it is really all about the people

It is about families, business, schools, and communities. There is a value to Oregon and the USA – gross products produced – jobs

Modest, meaningful change so we do not upset reasonable expectations would be the key to success in rural America

We must work together and not let issues divide us

Thank you for this great opportunity to express my thoughts,

Jay Chamberlin
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 Owyhee Irrigation District