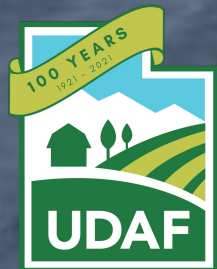


Agricultural Water Optimization Moving Forward S.B. 277

Utah Water User's Conference
March 22, 2023



Candice Hasenyager, P.E.- Director-Utah Division of Water Resources (DNR)
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Jim Bowcutt- Director- Utah Division of Conservation (UDAF)

Water Optimization Program

Funding Moving Forward:

- \$20 million will be awarded this spring to optimization projects.
- An additional \$200 million was appropriated to the Agricultural Water Optimization Program, and will be allocated to projects over the next 5 years.
- With large sums of money, comes the responsibility of documenting that the projects are actually accomplishing the goals of the program, and helping optimize the amount of water that the agricultural community is using.

Looming Questions

- How can we document the actual amount of water savings achieved by the projects?
- What will happen to the water that we conserve?
- How will I make sure that my water right is protected?
- What mechanisms exist to shepherd the water I save?



Senate Bill 277

- **Developed The Agricultural Water Optimization Committee**
 - The commissioner of UDAF
 - The director of the division of Water Resources, or the director's designee;
 - The director of the Division of Water Rights, or the director's designee;
 - The dean of the College of Agriculture and Applied Science from Utah State University, or the dean's designee;
 - One individual representing local conservation, appointed by the executive director of the Department of Natural Resources;
 - One individual representing water conservancy districts, appointed by the executive director of the Department of Natural Resources;
 - And three Utah residents representing the interests of the agriculture industry appointed by the executive director of the Department of Natural Resources.

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- Appropriated an additional \$200 million to be used for Water Optimization projects across the state.
- Funding pots for projects
 - \$25 million general water optimization
 - \$25 million subsurface drip irrigation
 - \$25 million surge irrigation systems
 - \$25 million delivery, measurement, and reporting of water use data, including telemetry
 - \$25 million on canal improvements

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- Applicants will be encouraged to do a pre-application consultation with the Division of Water Rights to determine if a change application is needed or recommended.
- Filing of change applications can help protect water rights, while allowing the producer the opportunity to determine how the water saved can be used, with potential monetary gains.
- Allows “saved water” to be considered a beneficial use.
- Additional points awarded to individuals willing to file a change application with the State.

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- Pre consultation with the Division of Water Rights is not binding on the parties (applicant or State Engineer) and allows the parties to explore the options.
- “Depletion reduction” means a net decrease in water consumed accomplished by implementing water optimization practices during beneficial use of water under an approved water right.
- “Diversion reduction” means a decrease in net diversion amount from that allowed under a water right accomplished by implementation of water optimization practices.

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- “Saved water” means the water quantified as depletion reduction or diversion reduction in a final order approving a change application filed in conjunction with an agricultural water optimization project.
- A change application is required is changing the source of water, beneficial use of water, point of diversion, place of use, period of use, or storage.
- Processing time.
- State Engineer to make rules for the implementation of 73-10g-208.

Senate Bill 277 - Reporting

- **Water Resources (in coordination with Water Right and UDAF) will analyze and report on completed projects annually.**
- **This will include:**
 - A summary of the program and applications received
 - Estimate the saved water made available from the agriculture optimization projects
 - Effectiveness of the funding program
- **Present annually to:**
 - Legislative Water Development Commission
 - Natural Resources, Agriculture, and Environment Interim Committee
 - Utah Water Task Force within the Department of Natural Resources
 - Utah Watersheds Council.

