

O · R · E · G · O · N Conservation showcase



Larry McFetridge: With NRCS assistance, McFetridge significantly reduced water and power consumption on his property.

Larry explains, “With the project completed, I have 30 pounds of pressure at the pump and can irrigate some fields with gravity flow” His irrigation water use has dropped significantly and his power bill will drop by half or more. “Because of this NRCS program we are benefitting economically,” he says with a broad smile.

Wildlife in the Wallowa River benefit as well because water formerly used for irrigation in Prairie Creek remains in the Wallowa River for fish habitat. Endangered species in Prairie Creek and Wallowa River include bull trout, steelhead and Chinook salmon. A more consistent water level in Prairie Creek will also lessen the chance for stream bank cutting which releases sediment into the waterway decreasing water quality.

The project enclosed a spur of Big Bend Ditch to save water and power. Water once delivered to pumps by an earthen ditch is now transported in a pipeline. Water is not lost to seepage or evaporation, and excess water doesn't flow past the pumps into Prairie Creek. The elevation change in the pipeline creates pressure in the pipeline, smaller pumps can be used, saving

Enterprise, Ore. —

Larry McFetridge starts his pump with the flip of a small silver switch. According to Tom Smith, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) District Conservationist, “Larry used to run two 75 hp pumps. With the installation of the Prairie Creek Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI) project through NRCS, Larry only needs two 40 hp pumps, so he’s using significantly less energy. That is a significant reduction in his annual pumping costs.”

*CCPI
Conservation
Program Cuts
Need for
Water and
Power*



Variable Speed Drive (VSD) Pump: New VSD pumps on the McFetridge property save water and increases control over water application.

energy. Taking the conservation improvements a step farther, the new pumps incorporate a variable speed drive (VSD). The VSD matches the pumps output to meet system demand. If a wheel line is shut off the VSD will reduce the pumps output, saving water and energy. A partnership of funding sources helped make the upgrades affordable for landowners like Larry. Along with NRCS's CCPI program, the effective partnership is administered by the Wallowa Soil and Water Conservation District with funding received from Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Energytrust, and Pendleton Grain Growers. Tax credits also add to the feasibility. According to Larry, "Within five years we will have made up the cost of the pumps and pipeline installation."

“*Within 5 years, we will have made up the Cost of the pumps and pipeline installation.*”

— *Larry McFetridge*

A partnership of funding sources helped make the upgrades affordable for landowners like Larry. Along with NRCS's CCPI program, the effective partnership is administered by the Wallowa Soil and Water Conservation District with funding received from Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, Energytrust, and Pendleton Grain Growers. Tax credits also add to the feasibility. According to Larry, "Within five years we will have made up the cost of the pumps and pipeline installation."

Larry has lived on his ranch for 52 years, raising six children with his wife Davise. He irrigates 330 acres on land where he raises timothy, orchard grass and a mix of alfalfa and grass hay. For many years Larry raised hogs, with as many as 60 sows in production.

The McFetridge family has a legacy of conservation work on their land. In addition to converting from flood to sprinkler, and installing the pipeline and VSD pump, Larry uses grass strips along the creeks, rotates pastures and lets pasture grow up so when the cows come home for the winter there is plenty of pasture. On the range land, Larry lets the grass go to seed to keep weed growth at bay.

Larry's father had worked with NRCS in the past, but Larry hadn't implemented any of the programs until this year. Larry says he's involved now "because today's NRCS programs are a better match for the conservation needs we have here." Larry explains that he plans to continue his legacy of conservation and offers this advice from his 52 years of farming:

"You've got to take care of the land or it won't be very good to you."

NRCS

Helping People Help the Land

Scenic Views: *The conservation practices implemented on the McFetridge property significantly improved the landscape, and continue to contribute to the sustainability of the land for years to come.*