

Oregon Water Resources Department
Water Conservation, Reuse and Storage Grant Program
Evaluation for September 2, 2008 Applications

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| APPLICANT: | Malheur County Soil and Water Conservation District | | |
| STUDY TYPE: | Water Conservation | | |
| APPLICATION NO.: | GC0006 09 | | |
| STUDY NAME: | Owyhee/Malheur LIDAR Assistance | | |
| BASIN: | Owyhee/Malheur | WRD DISTRICT: | 9 |
| WRD FUNDS REQUESTED: | \$192,456 | TOTAL COST: | \$472,537 |

APPLICATION DESCRIPTION:

Malheur County agriculture accounts for 85 percent of the economic activity in the county. To meet agricultural needs, the water delivery systems of the Owyhee Irrigation District, South Board of Control, Warm Springs Irrigation District, and Vale Irrigation District were constructed in the early 1900's. These water delivery systems are aging and cannot be expected to provide reliable water to farmers. Although some on-farm water conservation practices have been implemented, no conservation associated with the delivery systems have been undertaken because of the huge costs associated with such projects.

The goal of this study is to develop a system-wide conservation plan. The conservation plan consists of two central elements. First, an on-going inventory using Global Positioning System (GPS) technology will provide digital reference and attributes for Owyhee Irrigation District, South Board of Control, Warm Springs Irrigation District, and Vale Irrigation District. Second, high accuracy Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) data will be purchased through outside contractors. Using these two elements local, state, and federal agencies will be able to accumulate, organize, maintain and create a conservation plan. The conservation plan will give the irrigation districts the tools, information and research needed to secure funding to renovate the aged water delivery system, conserve water, and improve water quality.

APPLICATION REVIEW TEAM EVALUATION:

The Application Review Team understood that Malheur County has the most irrigated acres in the state. The team recognized that this was a worthwhile project and that there is a state consortium headed by the Oregon Department of Geology and Mineral Industries to collect Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) data. The team discussed the advantages of LIDAR, including providing elevation data to within six inches, which can allow preliminary designs. The team also recognized that there was a huge potential to conserve water and that water quality issues are significant in Malheur County.

The team had concerns that there was not a clear feasibility study goal, only data collection. The team would have liked to have seen a better defined conservation goal with a clear end date. While the team supported the collection of data, they did not feel it was appropriate to fund it through this feasibility study grant program. The team also understood that the in-kind match for the GIS data collection had been modified from \$98/hour to \$14/hour (to reflect the Malheur County Soil and Water Conservation District's actual cost, rather than what a consult might charge). This changed the total match for this item from \$163,072 to \$23,296.

The team felt that given the limited funding associated with the Water Conservation, Reuse and Storage Grant Program, and the severe water quantity problems facing the state, that other applications should be funded prior to this application.

The study is a priority for funding under SB 1069 because it is identified on the Department's statewide water assessment and inventory of potential conservation opportunities. The study could begin in December 2008 and be completed by January 2011.

Application Review Team Funding Recommendation: Do Not Fund.

COMMENTS:

None received.

RECOMMENDATION:

Do Not Fund.