



# Irrigation Modernization Funding Applications

## Evaluation Summaries – 2025 Funding Cycle 1

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April 18, 2025

### Background

The Water Supply Development Account provides grants and loans for water projects that have economic, environmental and social/cultural benefits (ORS 541.651-696). In 2023, the Oregon Legislature passed House Bill 5030, providing \$50 million to issue grants for irrigation modernization projects and \$10 million for Water Project Grants and Loans. The application deadline for the first 2025 funding cycle was January 15, 2025. The Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) received four complete applications requesting a total of \$16,191,372 in grant funding for Irrigation Modernization projects. OWRD did not solicit Water Project Grants and Loans applications due to insufficient funds.

### Document Description

The following are evaluation summaries for complete grant applications received for the first 2025 Irrigation Modernization Funding cycle. The multi-agency Technical Review Team (TRT) provided comments on each application, scored applications based on the criteria identified within the [Scoring Criteria document](#), and will make a funding recommendation to the Water Resources Commission (Commission) based on that evaluation and available funds. The following evaluation summaries highlight TRT comments gathered by OWRD during the application evaluation process and are prepared for the Commission's consideration and review. Applicants are encouraged to contact the Grants Analyst to request a review meeting and receive additional evaluation feedback. The evaluation summaries are listed in order of the TRT ranking.

The evaluation summary includes a combined public benefit score, which the TRT used to rank proposed projects. A table is also provided that shows a breakdown of the application score by category. An application could score up to 60 points in each of the economic, environmental, and social/cultural public benefit categories. A proposed project could receive up to 30 additional preference points; up to 10 points for legally protecting water instream and up to 10 points for collaboration. Irrigation Modernization projects may receive an additional 10 points for legally protecting water instream commensurate with the amount required under the approach described in ORS 537.470 for a total of 30 preference points. Preference points are listed in the "Other" category. There is a maximum public benefit score of 210 points for Irrigation Modernization projects.

Based on the TRT ranking, the TRT recommends all four Irrigation Modernization projects for funding (Table 1). This funding recommendation considers the public benefits provided by these applications and available funding. OWRD anticipates having \$20.5 million available for 2025 Irrigation Modernization funding cycles.

### Next Steps

**OWRD is soliciting public comment on the TRT ranking and funding recommendation through 5 pm on May 9, 2025.** Information on how to submit a public comment is available [here](#). Public comments submitted on the TRT ranking and funding recommendation will be presented to the Commission who will make a funding decision. The date for the Commission to make its funding decision is June 12-13, 2025.

### More Information

If you have questions please contact the Grant Analyst, Louisa Mariki, at 503-979-9160 or [OWRD.Grants@water.oregon.gov](mailto:OWRD.Grants@water.oregon.gov).

### Irrigation Modernization Applications

**Table 1. Applications Recommended for Funding by the Technical Review Team**

Project Name	Applicant	County	Grant Funds Requested	Total Project Cost	Total Score
East Fork Piping Project	East Fork Irrigation District	Hood River	\$4,942,925	\$18,748,700	119
North Unit Irrigation District Irrigation Modernization and Winter Flow Augmentation Project – Lateral 43, Segment 3	North Unit Irrigation District	Jefferson	\$2,987,447	\$11,969,550	95
Klamath Irrigation District D-System Laterals Project	Klamath Irrigation District	Klamath	\$4,270,000	\$19,581,000	56
Eastside Canal Piping Project Phase 1	Talent Irrigation District	Jackson	\$3,991,000	\$4,991,000	48
<b>Total</b>			<b>\$16,191,372</b>	<b>\$55,290,250</b>	

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## Overview of Application Scoring

The scoring criteria for applications to the Water Projects Grants and Loans and Irrigation Modernization funding opportunities are based on the public benefits a project is likely to achieve. Projects funded are those which are likely to achieve the greatest public benefits. The change in conditions anticipated to result in public benefits must be described and explained in the project application. When evaluating an application, the TRT examines public benefits in three categories: economic, environmental, and social/cultural. The TRT evaluates and scores each application based on the following questions and determines whether the project would provide exceptional, high, moderate, minor, or no public benefits, or minor or medium negative impacts. See the [Scoring Criteria document](#) for more information.

	Question
<b>Economic Public Benefits</b>	a. Does the project create or retain jobs?
	b. Does the project increase economic activity?
	c. Does the project result in increases in efficiency or innovation?
	d. Does the project result in enhancement of infrastructure, farmland, public resource lands, industrial lands, commercial lands or lands having other key uses?
	e. Does the project enhance economic value associated with tourism or recreational or commercial fishing, with fisheries involving native fish of cultural significance to Indian tribes, or with other economic values resulting from restoring or protecting water instream?
	f. Does the project result in increases in irrigated land for agriculture? (which may include increasing irrigated acres, agricultural economic value, or productivity of irrigated land)
<b>Environmental Public Benefits</b>	a. Does the project result in measurable improvement in protected streamflows?
	b. Does the project result in water conservation?
	c. Does the project result in measurable improvement in groundwater levels that enhances environmental conditions in groundwater restricted areas or other areas?
	d. Does the project result in a measurable improvement in the quality of surface water or groundwater?
	e. Does the project increase ecosystem resiliency to climate change impacts?
	f. Does the project result in improvements that address one or more limiting ecological factors in the project watershed?
<b>Social/Cultural Public Benefits</b>	a. Does the project promote public health and safety and of local food systems?
	b. Does the project result in measurable improvements in conditions for members of minority or low-income communities, economically distressed rural communities, tribal communities or other communities traditionally underrepresented in public processes?
	c. Does the project promote recreation and scenic values?
	d. Does this project contribute to the body of scientific data publicly available in this state?
	e. Does this project promote state or local priorities, including but not limited to the restoration and protection of native fish species of cultural significance to Indian tribes?
	f. Does this project promote collaborative basin planning efforts, including but not limited to efforts under Oregon's Integrated Water Resources Strategy?

## East Fork Piping Project

**Applicant Name:** East Fork Irrigation District

**County:** Hood River

**Funding Requested:** \$4,942,925

**Total Project Cost:** \$18,748,700

**Project Summary:** The primary goals of the project are to increase the long-term reliability and efficiency of irrigation water supply, increase summer stream flows for threatened salmon and Steelhead, and improve water quality. To achieve these goals, the project would replace approximately 12 miles of failing, leaky pipe (primarily wood and unreinforced concrete) with new high-density polyethylene pipe; pipe approximately 5 miles of open canal; eliminate an estimated 23 end spills; eliminate open water boxes; and add pressure reducing valves and turnouts for patrons. The project would save an estimated 3.2 cubic feet per second (cfs) of water. The applicant would legally protect 75 percent (approximately 2.4 cfs) of the conserved water instream in the East Fork Hood River through the Department's Allocation of Conserved Water program. Twenty-five percent (approximately 0.8 cfs) of the conserved water would be used by the applicant to improve water supply reliability for irrigators.

### Technical Review Team Score and Comments

**TRT Recommendation:** Recommended for Funding

#### Public Benefit Scores:

Total Score	Economic	Environmental	Social/Cultural	Other
119	30	28	31	30

#### Economic Public Benefits:

The review team found the proposed project would likely result in:

- High public benefit from this project through the creation or retention of 178 temporary jobs. The review team also noted the high number of indirect jobs the project would support in other sectors.
- High public benefit from an increase in economic activity in Hood River County. The review team noted the reliance on agricultural industry and water availability in the local area. The proposed project would also benefit from agritourism and related recreation.
- High public benefit in increases to efficiency and innovation through improvement of East Fork Irrigation District's (EFID) water delivery infrastructure, which would help to eliminate seepage, evaporation, and end spills in the project area. The project would create district-wide energy savings and reduce EFID's operation and maintenance costs.
- High public benefit as the project would result in the enhancement of infrastructure for EFID, including new screens to reduce sediment and debris in irrigation water.
- Moderate to high public benefit in the enhancement of economic value associated with tourism and native fish of cultural significance to the Confederated Tribes of Warm

Springs, including Chinook salmon, steelhead, rainbow and cutthroat trout, and pacific lamprey.

- f) High public benefit to the increases in agricultural economic value and productivity of irrigated land with more reliable water supply, improving irrigation water delivery, reliability, and quality overall.

#### **Environmental Public Benefits:**

The review team found the proposed project would likely result in:

- a) Exceptional public benefit from the project's proposal to legally protect 75% of conserved water through the Department's Allocation of Conserved Water program. The review team noted that the amount of water, approximately 2.4 cfs, will have a significant ecological benefit, particularly for salmon and steelhead fish species.
- b) Moderate public benefit to water conservation. The project would irrigate the same acreage with 14.5% less water.
- c) No public benefit to the improvement of groundwater levels.
- d) High public benefit to water quality as a result of increased streamflow and elimination of end spills.
- e) Moderate to high public benefit for increase in the ecosystem's resiliency to climate change from the increased streamflow during critical summer months, which would decrease water temperatures and reduce risk of drought on aquatic species, plants and wildlife.
- f) High public benefit to limiting ecological factors related to the increased flows and improvements to water quality, temperature, and habitat for native species in summer.

#### **Social/Cultural Public Benefits:**

The review team found the proposed project would likely result in:

- a) Moderate public benefit from the impact to local food systems and the high value fruit crops grown in the region.
- b) High public benefit to the improvement in conditions for Oregon's environmental justice communities through the protection of instream water supporting tribal fishery recovery efforts. Additionally, the project supports the migrant workforce of the growing Hispanic community representing 30% of the total population in Hood River County.
- c) Moderate to high public benefit from increased streamflow for recreational activities such as rafting, kayaking, and swimming, or to fish populations for sport fishing. Agritourism related to scenic pear, apple, and cherry blossoms would also benefit from the project.
- d) No public benefit to the contribution of new scientific data.
- e) Exceptional public benefit because the project promotes several state and local planning efforts related to increasing summer flows benefiting fish species and habitat and enhancing tribal priority and recovery efforts.

- f) Exceptional public benefit because the proposed project supports collaborative basin planning efforts. The proposed project is identified in multiple collaboratively developed Hood River plans and is in alignment with Oregon's Integrated Water Resources Strategy.

## North Unit Irrigation District Irrigation Modernization and Winter Flow Augmentation Project – Lateral 43, Segment 3

**Applicant Name:** North Unit Irrigation District

**County:** Jefferson

**Funding Requested:** \$2,987,447

**Total Project Cost:** \$11,969,550

**Project Summary:** The proposed project would enclose a portion of Lateral 43, a 7.3-mile open, porous irrigation canal into leak-free HDPE piping to conserve approximately 5.3 cubic-feet-per-second of water previously lost to seepage according to the District's System Improvement Plan. The District would release an equivalent amount of the conserved water saved during the winter season in Upper Deschutes River protected from Wickiup Dam to Lake Billy Chinook via a secondary use right for flow augmentation. The water conservation achieved by this project would: (1) eliminate water delivery and operations inefficiencies; (2) improve water quality; (3) improve and stabilize agricultural production through water supply reliability; and (4) improve conditions for Endangered Species Act-listed species including the Oregon spotted frog.

### Technical Review Team Score and Comments

**TRT Recommendation:** Recommended for funding

#### Public Benefit Scores:

Total Score	Economic	Environmental	Social/Cultural	Other
95	27	19	24	25

#### Economic Public Benefits:

The review team found the proposed project would likely result in:

- High public benefit from the creation of approximately 65 temporary construction jobs. These jobs hold a significant value in a small, rural community.
- Moderate public benefit to economic activity. The project will stimulate the local economy through job creation and support for local services. Additionally, increased water reliability is anticipated to result in higher hay yields.

- c) High public benefit in increased efficiency due to the conservation of 37% of water currently lost to seepage, significantly improving irrigation efficiency and drought resilience.
- d) High public benefit as the project would result in improved functionality and reliability of essential infrastructure for the North Unit Irrigation District (NUID). The conserved water would be available to patrons during the irrigation season and would reduce the need for fallowing, allowing for the continued production of high value and specialty crops.
- e) Moderate public benefit in the enhancement of economic value associated with recreation or fishing.
- f) High to exceptional public benefit to the increase in agricultural value and productivity of land by conserving 5.3 cfs of water, addressing the district's vulnerability due to junior water rights and helping to prevent land fallowing.

#### **Environmental Public Benefits:**

The review team found the proposed project would likely result in:

- a) High public benefit from the project's proposal to release an equivalent amount of the conserved water saved during the winter season in Upper Deschutes River from Wickiup Dam to Lake Billy Chinook via a secondary use right for flow augmentation. This additional instream water would improve habitat conditions for fish and the ESA-listed Oregon spotted frog.
- b) High public benefit in water conservation from 37% reduction in seepage losses.
- c) Minor public benefit to groundwater levels due to surface-groundwater interaction.
- d) Moderate public benefit in the improvement of surface water quality by reducing sediment and turbidity in the Upper Deschutes River during the non-irrigation season.
- e) Moderate public benefit to the increase in ecosystem resiliency due to winter flows supporting habitat and climate adaptation for the Oregon spotted frog.
- f) Moderate public benefit to limiting ecological factors. The project supports winter habitat improvements but does not directly address summer streamflow or temperature issues affecting salmonids during the irrigation season.

#### **Social/Cultural Public Benefits:**

The review team found the proposed project would likely result in:

- a) High public benefit to local food systems as lands served by the district are dedicated to high-value crops. The application describes how the proposed project promotes public safety by addressing canal-related drowning risks and dust-related hazards.
- b) Moderate benefit for Oregon's environmental justice communities. NUID serves Jefferson County, which has a higher proportion of low-income populations and environmental justice communities.

- c) Minor public benefit for recreational and scenic values. The project plans to plant native grasses to improve scenic views but lacks measurable outcomes.
- d) Minor public benefit to the contribution of scientific data. While the application indicated some stream gauge monitoring is planned, it is unclear whether it adds new, meaningful data beyond existing efforts.
- e) High public benefit because the project supports numerous state and local priorities related to water conservation goals.
- f) Exceptional public benefit due to strong integration with broader basin-scale conservation and planning initiatives, demonstrating proactive and coordinated efforts to protect water.

## Klamath Irrigation District D-System Laterals Project

**Applicant Name:** Klamath Irrigation District

**County:** Klamath

**Funding Requested:** \$4,270,000

**Total Project Cost:** \$19,581,000

**Project Summary:** The goal of the proposed project is to improve water management within the Klamath Irrigation District to benefit agricultural producers, native endangered fish species, and overall Klamath Basin water supplies. To achieve this goal, the project would replace 11.4 miles of open earthen channels with gravity-fed pipelines and line 1.1 miles of the District's D-System. The project would: (1) improve water delivery reliability for agricultural producers within the District and downstream irrigation districts; (2) save approximately 4,021 acre-feet per year by eliminating water lost to seepage and evaporation; (3) retain more water in Upper Klamath Lake later in the summer, supporting resident fish species; (4) reduce demand for supplemental inputs from the Lost River; (5) reduce pumping costs for adjacent districts due to decreased spill; and (6) improve irrigation water quality for agricultural use.

### Technical Review Team Score and Comments

**TRT Recommendation:** Recommended for funding

#### Public Benefit Scores:

Total Score	Economic	Environmental	Social/Cultural	Other
56	24	6	21	5

#### Economic Public Benefits:

The review team found the proposed project would likely result in:



- a) Moderate public benefit due to the 133 temporary construction jobs that would be created as a result of this project and the 29 permanent agricultural jobs that would be retained.
- b) Moderate to high public benefit to economic activity. The project would spend more than \$19 million in a rural community and increase the long-term economic viability of agriculture in the area.
- c) High public benefit in increases in efficiency. The proposed project would enhance irrigation efficiency in the Klamath basin and eliminate water loss.
- d) High public benefit due to infrastructure improvements. Piping 11 miles of open canal would conserve water and enhance agricultural reliability. This would support more consistent crop production and use of higher value crops in an area where land is often fallowed due to water shortages.
- e) Minor public benefit in the enhancement of economic values identified in statute. The review team found it is unlikely the water savings would benefit native fish.
- f) High to exceptional public benefit to the increase in agricultural value. The project would save approximately 4,021 acre-feet per year through piping and lining canals which would increase the productivity and agricultural value of over 5,000 acres.

#### **Environmental Public Benefits:**

The review team found the proposed project would likely result in:

- a) No public benefit as the project is not proposing to legally protect water instream.
- b) Minor public benefit in water conservation. The project anticipates reducing water use by 5.3% because of the irrigation infrastructure improvements.
- c) No public benefit from improvements to groundwater levels.
- d) Moderate public benefit from improvements to water quality. The proposed project would result in some improvement to agricultural water quality within the district but is unlikely to benefit water quality in Upper Klamath Lake.
- e) Minor to moderate public benefit to the increase in ecosystem resiliency to climate change impacts due to the possibility of retaining conserved water in Upper Klamath Lake for longer periods during the irrigation season.
- f) No public benefit from addressing limiting ecological factors. The conserved water would be utilized primarily for irrigation water.

#### **Social/Cultural Public Benefits:**

The review team found the proposed project would likely result in:

- a) Moderate to high benefit to public safety and of local food systems. The project supports local food systems by enhancing irrigation systems for 5,550 acres, improving food security and farm viability. The project would also reduce risks associated with open canals, such as drownings.

- b) Moderate benefit for environmental justice communities. The project has consistently engaged the Klamath Tribes. The region is economically distressed and drought-prone, therefore induced benefits from agricultural improvements would provide value.
- c) No public benefit from recreational or scenic values.
- d) No public benefit to the contribution of new scientific data.
- e) High to exceptional public benefit from alignment with state and local priorities. The project supports state goals around agricultural resilience and water supply reliability, aligning with the Integrated Water Resources Strategy and receiving broad support, including from Tribes.
- f) High public benefit for collaborative basin planning efforts. The application provided evidence of public engagement and alignment with broader basin goals.

## Eastside Canal Piping Project Phase 1

**Applicant Name:** Talent Irrigation District

**County:** Jackson

**Funding Requested:** \$3,991,000

**Total Project Cost:** \$4,991,000

**Project Summary:** The goal of the proposed project is to improve water management within the Talent Irrigation District to benefit agricultural producers and overall Rogue Basin water supplies. To achieve this goal, the project would convert the first 4,363 feet of the open earthen Eastside Canal into 72-inch diameter pipe. The project would: (1) save approximately 437.6 acre-feet per year by eliminating water lost from seepage and evaporation; (2) improve water delivery reliability and irrigation water quality for agricultural producers within the District and for downstream irrigation districts; (3) retain more water in Emigrant Lake, extending the District's irrigation season during drought; (4) reduce operations and maintenance costs for the District; and (5) contribute 25 percent of the water savings instream in Emigrant Creek to improve water quality and the recovery of the federally listed Southern Oregon/Northern California Coast coho salmon in the Bear Creek watershed.

### Technical Review Team Score and Comments

**TRT Recommendation:** Recommended for funding

#### Public Benefit Scores:

Total Score	Economic	Environmental	Social/Cultural	Other
48	22	6	15	5

#### Economic Public Benefits:

The review team found the proposed project would likely result in:

- a) High public benefit from the 32 construction sector jobs that would be created or retained by the project. The project would indirectly support 50 jobs within the local economy for the duration of the project.
- b) Moderate public benefit from increases in economic activity due to the increased long-term viability of businesses and water reliability for agricultural operations.
- c) High public benefit to increased efficiency by replacing the open Eastside Canal with pipe, which would reduce water loss through seepage, and increase infrastructure reliability.
- d) Moderate public benefit in the project's enhancement of infrastructure by piping the first 4,363 feet of the Eastside Canal.
- e) Minor public benefit from enhanced economic values identified in statute from the proposed project. The basin is a significant area for fisheries involving native fish and sensitive species, but the review team noted multiple downstream diversions would likely divert the conserved water since the mechanism to legally protect the water is unclear.
- f) High public benefit due to the increase of the economic value and productivity of 10,977 acres of agricultural land. The review team noted drought conditions have significantly impacted Jackson County.

#### **Environmental Public Benefits:**

The review team found the proposed project would likely result in:

- a) No public benefit to the measurable improvement in protected streamflows. While the review team appreciated the applicant's commitment to protect 25% of the conserved water, the legal mechanism by which the applicant would do so was not clearly identified or deemed feasible.
- b) Minor public benefit from water conservation. The project would reduce water use by 5%.
- c) No public benefit from improvement in groundwater levels.
- d) Moderate public benefit to the measurable improvement of water quality. The review team noted claims to improve water quality in Bear and Emigrant Creek would be strengthened with a clear mechanism for protecting water instream.
- e) Minor public benefit to increased ecosystem resiliency to climate change impacts.
- f) Minor public benefit to addressing limiting ecological factors due to the uncertainty of how the conserved water will be protected instream.

#### **Social/Cultural Public Benefits:**

The review team found the proposed project would likely result in:

- a) Moderate public benefit to the promotion of public health and safety of local food systems. The project would support agricultural tourism as Talent Irrigation District provides water to irrigated farmland that produce high value crops produced. Public safety would be improved through the elimination of harmful algae blooms.
- b) Moderate public benefit due to this region being economically distressed with high unemployment rates. Increased water security and support of agricultural industry will help benefit the conditions for Oregon's environment justice communities.

- c)** Minor public benefit to the promotion of recreational or scenic values through improved agricultural tourism.
- d)** No public benefit to the contribution of new scientific data.
- e)** Moderate public benefit in the promotion of state and local priorities. The proposed project would promote priorities including infrastructure modernization, economic resiliency, and agricultural efficiency.
- f)** High public benefit to collaborative planning efforts. The project supports recommended actions in Oregon's Integrated Water Resources Strategy and the application included several letters of support.