



United States Department of Agriculture

Role of NRCS in Irrigated Agriculture

Keisha L. Tatem
State Conservationist

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What is the NRCS?



- **USDA's conservation agency that works directly with farmers and ranchers on a voluntary basis to address natural resource concerns**
- **Created out of the Dust Bowl**
 - Soil Erosion Service (1933)
 - Soil Conservation Service (1935)
 - Natural Resources Conservation Service (1994)
- **Technical and financial assistance programs legislated in the Farm Bill with annual appropriation in the Federal budget**



Technical Assistance

- **24 Field Offices in Arizona provide technical experts in partnership with other local experts**
 - Natural Resource Conservation Districts (NRCDS)
 - Cooperative Extension
 - Farming Community
- **Conservation Plan: inventory resources, establish objectives with the farmer, identify natural resource concerns, develop alternatives to address resource problems; farmer decides best alternative**



Financial Assistance

- **Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is used by farmers to implement conservation systems outlined in their conservation plan.**
 - Competitive program based upon most environmental benefit
 - Install or implement structural and/or management practices to address resource concerns
 - Irrigation assistance is for improving irrigation efficiency
 - Reimburses portion of cost to install/implement conservation practices that meet NRCS standards and specifications



Where does the irrigation money go?



County	FY 14, 15, 16 Obligations
COCHISE	\$3,358,600.34
COCONINO	\$109,156.00
GRAHAM	\$1,039,219.86
GREENLEE	\$54,240.00
LA PAZ	\$263,312.90
MARICOPA	\$1,382,863.09
NAVAJO	\$33,603.38
PIMA	\$199,855.33
PINAL	\$2,068,278.55
SAN JUAN	\$526,050.00
YAVAPAI	\$53,299.00
YUMA	\$220,529.10
Grand Total	\$9,309,007.55



Where does the irrigation money go?



Practice	FY 14, 15, 16 Obligations
Irrigation Ditch Lining	\$1,578,102.74
Irrigation Land Leveling	\$1,670,818.86
Irrigation Storage Reservoir	\$38,240.00
Irrigation System, Microirrigation	\$1,073,762.17
Irrigation System, Sprinkler	\$3,312,233.64
Irrigation System, Surface and Subsurface	\$10,542.00
Irrigation Water Conveyance	\$1,501,321.94
Irrigation Water Management	\$99,605.20
Irrigation Water Management Plan Written	\$24,381.00
Grand Total	\$9,309,007.55

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Challenges



- **We are the government.**
 - Takes time to develop relationships with farmers and build trust.
 - Our programs are voluntary, but there is fear of regulatory impacts.
- **Program rules has created some barriers that we are always evaluating.**
 - Yuma farmers have not participated at the same rate as others because of issues with control of land.
- **More applications that funding available**
 - 201 out of 439 cropland applications funded in the past 3 years



Looking to the Future

- **Implementing a new strategic approach to conservation that evaluates natural resource concerns at the landscape level**
- **Looking to leverage resources with local partners to have an even greater impact on our natural resources**
 - Regional Conservation Partnership Program
 - Exploring our role in urban farming and urban conservation





Questions?

Keisha L. Tatem, State Conservationist

(602) 280-8801

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