USDA NRCS
United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service

RECOVERY.GOV

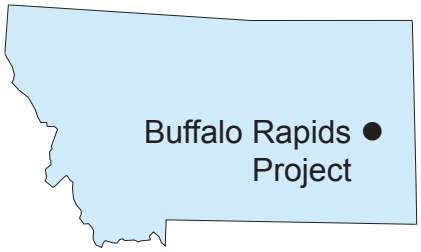
Watershed Operations

August 2009

Investing in the Buffalo Rapids Watershed Project, Montana

Introduction

This watershed project will contribute to the economic growth of the area. The project provides irrigation systems that improve water quantity and quality to residents within the project area.



The Bu□alo Rapids Project is located in Custer, Prairie, and Dawson Counties in eastern Montana and parallels the Yellowstone River for 64 miles.

Funded through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, this project is part of the Obama Administration's plans to modernize the nation's infrastructure, jump-start the economy, and create jobs. NRCS is using Recovery Act dollars to update aging flood control structures, protect and maintain water supplies, improve water quality, reduce soil erosion, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, and restore wetlands. NRCS acquires easements and restores floodplains to safeguard lives and property in areas along streams and rivers that have experienced flooding.

Project Description

- **Location:** Custer, Prairie, and Dawson Counties, At-Large Congressional District
- **Federal Funding:** $281,000
- **Sponsor Funding:** $203,000

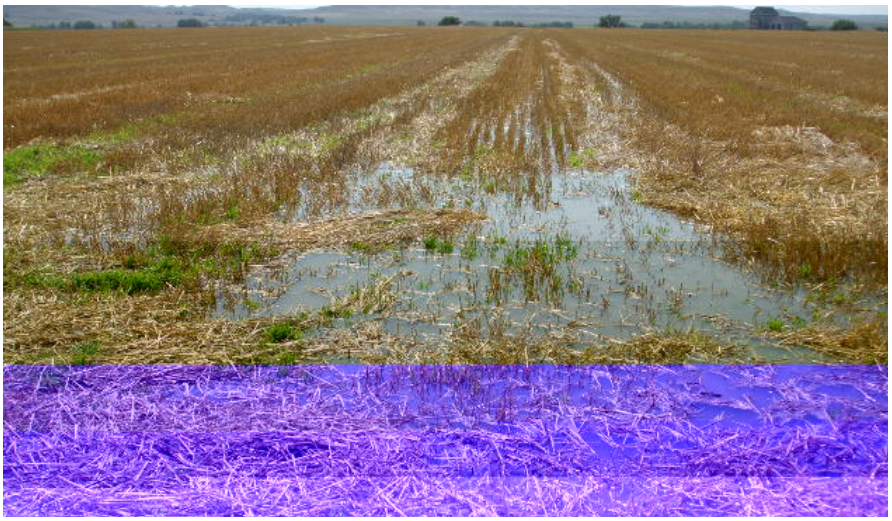
An earlier construction phase of this project improved efficiency of both the water delivery process and on-farm irrigation systems. In this phase, the practices will address farm management and usage of irrigated water to cut cost, conserve water, and prevent soil erosion.

Partners

- USDA, Natural Resources Conservation Service
- Buffalo Rapids Irrigation District
- Custer County Conservation District
- Prairie County Conservation District
- Dawson County Conservation District
- United States Department of the Interior-Bureau of Reclamation

Bene□ts

This project will conserve over 400 acre feet of water a year. Increasing on-farm irrigation efficiency in the project will save significant amounts of water that will remain in the Yellowstone River rather than being pumped for irrigation use.



The existing system of □ood irrigation will be replced by a sprinkler system to conserve approximatelly 400 acre feet of water annually.

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Economic Opportunities

This watershed project will improve economic viability to the agricultural sector by reducing the amount of energy needed to pump irrigation water thereby reducing electrical costs. An estimated 450 residents in the project area will benefit directly or indirectly. Water saved is allowed to flow to the Yellowstone River, thus increasing opportunities for local businesses involved in tourism and recreation on the river. Once completed, this project will provide $2.3 million in average annual benefits.

Statewide Perspective

Increased water flow in the Yellowstone River benefits threatened and endangered species such as the pallid sturgeon. Downstream communities that depend upon the river for their water supplies also benefit from the increased river flow, particularly during the summer irrigation season. Agriculture is important to Montana's economy; a viable agriculture sector contributes significantly to the economic health of the state.

For More Information

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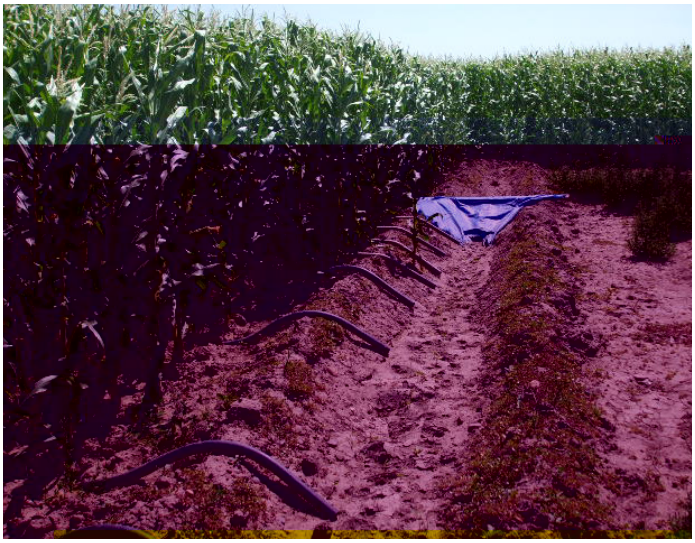
Currently, combinations of gated pipe (above) and siphon tubes are used to distribute the □oodwater within each □eld.



The existing system of □ood irrigation. Ditches are used to transfer water between □elds. Tarp dams and other types of check structures are used to elevate ditch water for distribution at □eld level.

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