

CONSERVATION *Showcase*

Making strides in conservation step by step

Yakima Valley producer Erasmo Cerda made the transition slowly – first converting 10 acres of his vineyard from rill irrigation to sprinkler irrigation. When he saw the dramatic improvement in his irrigation efficiency, he converted another 40 acres. Then another 25 acres.

All told, Mr. Cerda has now converted more than 100 acres to sprinkler irrigation.

“I wanted to use my first experience as a learning one,” he says, “It started with an idea that I wanted to make a change in my irrigation system,” Mr. Cerda says. His next step was to call the Natural Resources Conservation Service for some help and some advice.

“I talked with Oscar Tobias about it,” he says. “And he treated me really well.”

Like dozens of other Yakima Valley producers, Mr. Cerda applied for and received funding to help him install and manage the new irrigation system through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program

(EQIP). Through the program, producers can receive up to half of the cost of installing the system.

And in addition to a marked improvement in his irrigation efficiency, he’s also noticed some other environmental benefits. “With the sprinklers,” Mr. Cerda says, “there’s



Erasmo Cerda, a Yakima Valley producer, is improving his vineyards and his natural resources through EQIP.

almost no erosion and no sediment in the tail water.” As a result, Mr. Cerda is having a positive impact on improving water quality in Sulfur Creek.

Another benefit of the new system he says, is time savings. “It used to take almost 24 hours to complete the irrigation of his vineyard and asparagus fields. “Thanks to the sprinklers,” he says, “I’ve cut that down to

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Erasmo Cerda

about 12 hours and now I’m not spending time clearing ditches like I used to do with the old system.”

Mr. Cerda estimates that he’s improving his irrigation efficiency by nearly 50 percent, and the energy costs associated with water delivery and system maintenance has been dramatically reduced, too.

Converting his vineyard from rill irrigation to sprinklers, Mr. Cerda has improved his irrigation water efficiency by 50 percent. The conversion to sprinklers has resulted in reduced erosion and improved off-site water quality.



“I’d recommend that other producers take a look at getting assistance from the NRCS,” he says. “I’ve told friends that if they see something they’d like to improve, to give the NRCS a call and ask some questions,” Mr. Cerda says. “It’s really easy to get the help you need,” he says.

*Ron Nichols, NRCS Washington
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