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## **Adams County News and Information**

### **USDA, Interior Announce More Than \$47 Million in Investments for Water Conservation, Energy Efficiency, Drought Response & Agriculture Operations Across the West**

Adams County Commissioners welcomed Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and Bureau of Reclamation Commissioner Estevan López to the Adams County Regional Park today. The officials and local farmers used the beautiful backdrop to announce a multi-million dollar federal investment in order to better conserve water resources in 13 Western states.

U.S. Departments of Agriculture (USDA) and Interior announced more than \$47 million in investments to help water districts and producers on private working lands better conserve water resources. The funds include \$15 million in USDA funds and \$32.6 million from the Bureau of Reclamation for local projects to improve water and energy efficiency and provide a strengthened federal response to ongoing and potential drought across 13 states in the West.

The Bureau of Reclamation funding will support 76 local projects through the Department of the Interior's WaterSMART program. Funding from USDA's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) will support on-farm water delivery system improvements through its Environmental Quality Incentives Program, in tandem with the 76 Interior-funded projects. Vilsack and Lopez were joined by a local water authority and landowner who spoke about the importance of the federal funding in the cost share program.

“By working with communities and producers to more wisely manage the water they have, we help ensure that this and future generations will have sufficient supplies of clean water for drinking, agriculture, economic activities, recreation, and ecosystem health,” said Secretary Vilsack. “As drought continues across the west, our farmers and ranchers are stepping up to the plate to partner with communities and strengthen efficiency to better conserve our water supply.”

“Water and energy efficiency are intricately linked,” Commissioner López said. “When we conserve water, we also conserve the energy it takes to move it. One way we can achieve these efficiencies is to bring federal resources to the table for local projects that focus on saving water. This program represents one more way we're focusing resources on projects to provide resiliency in the face of drought.”

Interior's funding is made available through competitive grant programs, which are part of the WaterSMART sustainable water initiative. The grants and selection process are managed by Interior's Bureau of Reclamation, which is the nation's largest wholesale water supplier, providing one in five western farmers with irrigation water for 10 million acres of farmland and potable water to more than 31 million Americans across 17 western states.

Of the 76 new projects announced today, Reclamation has selected 53 projects in 11 states to receive a total of \$25.6 million in WaterSMART Water and Energy Efficiency Grants which, when leveraged with local and other funding sources, will complete more than \$128 million in efficiency improvements. In addition to the new grants announced today, Reclamation will provide \$2.1 million to support previously selected WaterSMART projects. Together, these projects are expected to enable water savings of more than 123,000 acre-feet. More details on the program and projects announced today can be found on the WaterSMART [Water and Energy Efficiency Grants website](#).

Alongside the 53 water and energy efficiency grants, Reclamation also selected 23 additional cost share grants through its WaterSMART Drought Response Program, totaling \$4.9 million, which when leveraged with cost-share funding will provide a total of \$23.5 million in efforts associated with the program. More detail on the program and the projects announced today can be found on the [Drought Response Program website](#).

Through its EQIP program, NRCS is investing \$5.2 million in on-farm assistance to complement several projects that have been funded previously by BOR, and will provide an additional \$10 million in 2017 to support some of the Reclamation projects announced today. NRCS is able to complement WaterSMART investments by targeting assistance in areas where WaterSMART sponsors indicated that water delivery system improvements might facilitate future on-farm improvements. NRCS will work with producers in select WaterSMART project areas to offer financial and technical assistance for practices that increase on-farm efficiencies, such as improving irrigation systems.

USDA works with private landowners to implement voluntary conservation practices that conserve and clean the water we drink. USDA support—leveraged with historic outside investments—boosts producer incomes and rewards them for their good work. At the same time, USDA investments have brought high quality water and waste services to rural communities, which are vital to their continued health and economic viability. For information on USDA's drought mitigation efforts, visit [USDA Drought Programs and Assistance](#). To learn more about how NRCS is helping private landowners adapt to changing climate conditions including drought, visit the [NRCS' drought resources](#).

This partnership is a priority action identified in the President's Memorandum [Building National Capabilities for Long-Term Drought Resilience](#) and accompanying the [Federal Drought Action Plan](#). USDA, as permanent co-chair, is working with DOI and other members of the National Drought Resilience Partnership to better coordinate drought-related programs and policies, help communities reduce the impact of current drought events and prepare for future droughts.

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