

# Farm Field Day showcases water conservation efforts

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CEDAR CITY—Last Friday an Agriculture Water Conservation Field Day was held at Hunter Land and Livestock to showcase research being done on alternate forms of irrigation.

Low Elevation Sprinkler Application and Mobile Drip Irrigation are being tested at Hunter Land and Livestock for agricultural producers in Cedar Valley. Through cooperation between the Central Iron County Water Conservancy District, Sen. Evan Vickers and Rep. John Westwood, both Cedar City Republicans, a \$220,000 grant was obtained from the Division of Natural Resources and the Utah Department of Agriculture to test these irrigation systems.

The Field Day was organized by Extension Agroclimate Specialist Matt Yost, and began with updates on water conservation efforts in Utah and CICWCD efforts to invest in irrigation technologies. A presentation offering information on LESA and other Senninger technologies was provided by Dan Schueler of Senninger Irrigation. Monty Teeter, developer of Dragon-Line, also discussed how his irrigation system functions and its benefits. Aaron McDoughal of Triple C Farms discussed the changes he has seen after implementing Dragon-Line. Following lunch, participants had the opportunity to see both irrigation systems in action and ask questions about the potential advantages and disadvantages.

Both forms of irrigation being tested at Hunter Land and Livestock are modifications to a traditional center pivot or other linear-move machines. LESA is a modification to the sprinkler that allows water to be applied very close to the soil surface and uses a spray head that helps to reduce water loss due to wind drift and evaporation. LESA helps apply water more uniformly than typical sprinklers and uses less energy. Dragon-Line is a form of MDI, a system of irrigation that applies water directly to the soil surface through various forms of hose. MDI helps provide more accuracy and reduce evaporation and wind drift losses as well.

These irrigation systems are being tested due to the growing concern over the water available to Iron County and to Utah. Yost, along with Extension County Director Chad Reid, Extension Agronomist Earl Creech, Extension Forester Darren McAvoy, Extension Irrigation Specialist Niel Allen, SUU Professor Dean Winward and USU graduate student Jonathan Holt, is testing multiple aspects of them. This team is testing things like yields and water application rate, as well as aspects of the soil and combinations of different practices, to discover the most efficient ways to use water for agriculture for overall conservation and to reduce the water deficit in Iron County.

Reid reminded participants that sheep had a large role to play in the founding of Cedar City, and said if all the hogs and sows in Iron County were counted with the cows, sheep and farming acreage, Iron County is the largest agriculture-producing county in the state of Utah.

“Water is our most precious resource and we need to use it as efficiently as possible,” Reid said. “Agriculture is really important to this county and water is really important to this county.”

Chairman of the CICWCD and owner of Hunter Land and Livestock Brent Hunter said he understands the need to conserve water and was willing to let the research be done using his farm to help other understand these irrigation systems. He hopes that this research and new developments in agricultural technology show the efforts of agriculturalists to help in conservation.

“This new technology is coming out, we just need to know if it’ll work,” Hunter said. “I just hope the general public can realize that we’re doing the best we can to try to save the resource.”