



Iron County Water Stewards

Recognizing Ramon Prestwich

The irrigation of agricultural fields in the Cedar Valley is a complex process, dependent on each farmer, soil type, the size of the field, and much more. One crucial aspect is the water that runs through irrigation canals throughout the communities and county.

While most farmers own groundwater rights that allow them to pump water from the underground aquifer, many also own shares in an irrigation company, which allows them to use the mountain runoff water to help them start their season without drawing from the underground aquifer. The irrigation companies own water rights, and farmers own shares in the companies.

The Coal Creek Irrigation Company was incorporated in 1920 and has the biggest flow and biggest water right of any irrigation company in the valley. Brent Hunter said the company has a water master, Ramon Prestwich, who also serves as president of the Board. His responsibility is to manually change the headgates and make sure the water is distributed correctly according to the shares owned.

“He’s the one that’s out there doing the work,” Hunter said.

Serving as president for the Board also involves plenty of meetings and collaboration, and the job includes continually working with the Central Iron County Water Conservancy District, municipal governments, the Utah Department of Transportation, Iron County government officials, and more.

Hunter said Prestwich has been president of the Coal Creek Irrigation Company for close to two decades, and has been a dedicated supporter of irrigation companies in the valley.

“He looks out for the irrigation company and their rights,” Hunter said. “He’s done a lot of service for the irrigation companies.”

Prestwich also serves as president for the Kanarrville Reservoir and Irrigation Company. He is a former president of the South and West Field Irrigation Company, which is used to water gardens and lawns in the older parts of Cedar City. His engineering background has been important to his service on these boards.

During his time as Coal Creek Irrigation Company president there have been six significant design changes to the canals, three of which have been major headgates. “The headgates are the major control devices on Coal Creek, and we created the conceptual design of the headgates to increase water efficiency and conservation,” he said.

Headgates control the flow for the irrigation company, and they are “designed based on the number of shares of stock on each leg going off from each headgate.” The Woodbury Split, between the Bicentennial Park and Coal Creek Road, is based on the highest anticipated flow of Coal Creek. It splits the water so one portion goes north and one goes west, to help control flooding and to help regulate the streams for the downstream water users. Each headgate in the different Coal Creek Irrigation Company channels is designed based on flood control and splitting the channel for the use of the various shareholders and the water conservancy district, Prestwich said.

The major headgate redesigns he has been involved in include the Woodbury Split, one at the intersection of Highway 56 and Westview Drive, which is a unique teardrop design that never plugs, and one near Gemini Meadows.

Prestwich has lived and farmed in Iron County his entire life, except when he was attending school at Brigham Young University, where he earned a bachelor's degree in physics with a math minor, and a master's degree in mechanical engineering, with a composite civil engineering and math minor.

"I've farmed my whole life since I was a little boy, and I enjoyed farming," he said. "Most of the jobs in mechanical engineering are in cities, and I wanted to have a rural life."

Prestwich said all the irrigation company board members put in a lot of time and work and deserve recognition. The board members of the Coal Creek Irrigation Company also include Vice President Dan Sherratt, Brent Hunter, Craig Jones, Kennan Imlay, Brent Jones, and Dean Lamoreaux. Previous members included Joe Melling and Kirt Bussio.

The purpose of the Iron County Water Stewards program is to recognize community members for contributing to the effort to optimize every drop of water in Iron County. The Central Iron County Water Conservancy District (CICWCD) is actively engaged in education, conservation, reuse and import projects to meet the growing demands on local water supply.

For every effort you make to conserve, we consider you a water steward, too. To Get to Know Your H2O, visit <https://cicwcd.org/>.

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