



# Iron County Water Stewards

## *Recognizing Kelly Crane*

With southern Utah experiencing its worst drought in 127 years, leaders in the Cedar Valley community are looking to solutions for the future with elevated urgency. For 15 years the Central Iron County Water Conservancy District has been working on a project designed to help replenish Iron County's declining aquifer and to bring additional water to the region.

As the District progresses through the planning phase for the Pine Valley Water Supply Project, the expertise of District Engineer Kelly Crane is one of its biggest assets.

Crane, of Ensign Engineering, has been with the District since August 2004 and has been involved in major infrastructure work throughout the valley, aquifer recharge projects, and the PVWS project, which will import water from a valley about 60 miles northwest of Cedar City.

Over the years the District has been approached by various neighborhoods in the unincorporated county areas that were having problems with their water systems or that didn't have capacity for firefighting. The District has taken over those systems, providing water service throughout the valley, as far as the Three Peaks area to the west, Cedar Highlands east of Cedar City, and Chekshani Cliffs south of Kanarrville.

It has rehabilitated springs, built water tanks, and installed pipe to connect neighborhoods and ensure residents have a reliable water supply. Crane has been integral to those projects, and he said he is proud of the infrastructure that has been installed.

He is also proud of the recharge work that has been done, which has put more than 14,000 acre-feet of additional water into the aquifer since 2016.

"Really, I think the biggest, most important thing for people in the Cedar Valley to understand is that we have challenges with our water resources, and the Water Conservancy District has worked for many years to make sure that we have solutions for those challenges. We do have some of those solutions," Crane said.

“Some of that is recharge, some of that potentially could be reuse from the water treatment plant, some of that is conserving water, and some of that will be the Pine Valley Water Supply project, which will bring additional resources in,” he added. “So, it’s really a big undertaking, but we try to watch all the different aspects of where things are going and how they’re being done so that we can meet the needs of the consumers here.”

He said the PVWS project is necessary because of our overdrawn aquifer and limited water supply. Comparing the aquifer to a big underground bathtub, he said it’s like everyone who lives in the valley is drawing water from that same bathtub, and the water that comes into the aquifer from Coal Creek and a few other small tributaries is not enough to replenish what is being taken out.

As the aquifer continues to decline, geographical issues like subsidence arise. Subsidence is the ground sinking as portions of the aquifer collapse, which permanently affects it and reduces its capacity, and also potentially damages infrastructure in the basin. Crane said the Pine Valley Water Supply project is so important because it will “bring additional water resources into the valley and be able to provide for the future growth of the valley.”



He pointed out that every major community in the state that does not have a significant supply of water has imported water from other areas.

“It’s happened throughout the whole state, from St. George to Logan to the Salt Lake Valley. All of them have done the same types of projects,” Crane said. “This one’s a little unique, but it’s a fun project to work on.”

Crane received his engineering degree from Southern Utah University, graduating in the first class after the engineering program was started. His degree was in integrated engineering, but he leaned toward civil engineering, choosing to focus on water resources for his career.

Growing up in Richfield in the construction industry, designing and physically installing pipelines fed his interest in engineering, and while he went to college he worked at a plumbing supply company, designing sprinkler systems and other irrigation systems.

“That gave me a really strong background in all kinds of municipal plumbing and fixtures and everything that we use for pump houses and everything like that,” he said. “It was a pretty easy transition.”

District General Manager Paul Monroe said Crane has been the District Engineer for longer than he or any of the current staff members have been there, and his understanding and expertise are an irreplaceable asset for the District.

“Kelly has been a consistent and stable voice in helping direct the District”, said Monroe. “He has a great understanding of water in our valley and has helped with many essential water projects throughout the years.”

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*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 H<sub>2</sub>O, visit <https://cicwcd.org/>.*

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