



# Iron County Water Stewards

## *Recognizing Community Flood Volunteers*

Over the past couple weeks, community members have rallied to serve others who were affected by floodwaters damaging their homes and properties. They have worked to remove mud and water from living spaces, donated items, filled sandbags, and disposed of destroyed flooring, drywall and possessions.

The Sunset Canyon area was hit especially hard July 26, with Enoch getting the worst of the storm Aug. 1. Hundreds of homes were damaged, with many families losing basements and even getting water and sewage into their main levels. Neighbors rallied to help each other through the storm and in the aftermath, with other volunteers coming from surrounding areas.



Tanner Vario is an SUU employee and manager of Stonebrook Apartments. The complex had eight of its 24 units flood, and Vario said he was impressed with the outpouring of support from the community. During the flood, a lot of other students showed up to help get people's belongings out of the apartments, and even though some of the residents weren't home, perfect strangers came to try to save their things. In the aftermath, he was impressed by the number of people who dropped off clothes, pizzas and other food items.



"It was sad that it had to happen under these circumstances, but it was really great to see how the community stepped up to help people out," Vario said.

Iron County has been experiencing an exceptional drought, with only 12.33 inches of water in the 18 months between January 2020 and June 2021. Then, beginning on July 14, summer monsoons brought rain to the Cedar Valley. The area received 4.2 inches of rain in 19 days.



In desert areas, heavy rains often run off quickly instead of having a chance to soak into the ground, and in Cedar City and Enoch muddy rainwater ran down roads like rivers, toppling

fences and destroying landscaping, breaking out basement windows and damaging homes, and in some areas, submerging cars, apartments, and entire basements.

As the rainwaters have receded, the Central Iron County Water Conservancy District has been hearing the question: "Does this mean we're out of the drought?" Unfortunately, the answer is no. The runoff from storms flows out of the cities to Quichapa and Rush Lakes, and carries large amounts of sediment and debris, so it cannot be put into aquifer recharge basins. Most of the water will end up evaporating in the two silty lakes.

District General Manager Paul Monroe took samples of the runoff water and left it sitting in jars for 24 hours to settle. The jars ranged from 30 to 70 percent sediment. That water going onto fields or recharge basins would destroy crops and seal off the recharge basins, with the clay and sediment settling to the bottom of the water.

Some of the stormwater is also going to the wastewater treatment plant, and treated water from that plant goes out onto a field that provides some aquifer recharge, although a portion will evaporate or be used by the vegetation in that area.

On the positive side, rainwater has also been falling on less developed areas where it has been seeping into the ground, and in town it is keeping lawns and yards green. Jessica Staheli, District Public Outreach and Conservation Manager, said one of the biggest benefits of the rainfall is a reduced need to pump water from the aquifer. While groundwater is still needed for indoor use, residents, businesses, and public spaces are asked to turn off their sprinklers and watering systems during periods of rain, which will reduce the draw on the aquifer.

"We can all take advantage of the rainwater by letting it do our outdoor watering for us," Staheli said.

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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 H2O, visit <https://cicwcd.org/>.*

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