



Central Iron County Water Conservancy District  
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## **PRESS RELEASE**

**September 13, 2021**

### **Governor visits Cedar Valley water projects**

Gov. Spencer Cox and his staff members visited the Cedar Valley Sept. 7 to see water research and conservation sites and talk with local partners about the area's efforts.

Cox said he appreciates the leadership local government officials and the Central Iron County Water Conservancy District have shown, and believes other areas of the state can implement projects similar to those being done in the Cedar Valley to optimize the water received.

"I've actually pointed to Iron County many times over the past year when talking about innovation and things that you're doing to help with water in the state, specifically recharging aquifers and the great work you're doing around that," Cox said.

He said he was glad for the opportunity to see the facilities. He visited a research field on the Southern Utah University Farm as well as the Quichapa Recharge Facility.

Cox spoke with representatives from the Central Iron County Water Conservancy District, Iron County Commission, Utah State University Extension, SUU Farm, municipal governments, and the media before going to the sites.

Data shows that the state is in an extreme, prolonged drought, despite monsoonal moisture that has been received, he said. The hydrology of watersheds in the western United States is deeply concerning, and the issues are complicated.

"We have to figure out ways to make what little water we have go further," Cox said.

CICWCD General Manager Paul Monroe said the District has been working toward solutions for decades, and has been using the best research available to it to find a solution and ensure the community can continue to thrive.

Monroe said there are three projects that need to be at the forefront of people's minds. They are flood control for managing monsoon rain, treatment plans to make wastewater more usable, and the Pine Valley Water Supply project to import more water to the area.

Fortunately, the PVWS project has been a priority for several years and is ready for adoption by city governments. He said these projects are expensive, but it is crucial the area begins to invest in its water future.

“At the end of the day, we’re resilient and we’re going to be OK,” Monroe said.

Utah State University’s Dr. Matt Yost spoke about an extensive research project he leads, which is testing multiple water optimization practices, such as irrigation technologies, deficit irrigation strategies, drought-tolerant crop genetics, reduced and no-tillage practices, cover crops, and alternative crops with lower water requirements.

Yost said a lot of people have studied different water-saving methods individually, but the USU Extension wanted to put together a research project to identify which combinations of water, soil and crop management result in the best use of water. He said it is important to them to identify ideal combinations and practices in terms of cost to the producer and water use efficiency.

“We want to find out what the maximum potential is for agriculture. If we give it the best irrigation technology that we have, the best crops, the best crop genetics, and the best management, if we put all those things together, what’s our potential for water use in agriculture?” he said.

The project has test sites in Logan and Vernal, as well as a new location at the SUU Farm in Cedar City. It looks at five different ways to apply water, as well as deficit irrigation, drought tolerant crop genetics, reducing or eliminating tillage, cover crops, and alternative crops that could be feasible.

The governor was able to see the linear pivot used in the study as well as the crops it is irrigating, and Yost answered questions from Cox and his staff members, as well as others in attendance.

Cox said since such a high percentage of water in Utah is used for agriculture, it is important to find ways to optimize that water.

The group then drove to the Quichapa area where they were able to see the diversion structure, the new conservation pond on the north end of the lake and the dike that now divides the lake into north and south sections.

Monroe explained that historically when water goes into Quichapa Lake it cannot seep into the ground and just evaporates. It has not been usable because in the lake it picks up high counts of Total Dissolved Solids.

He explained that the Quichapa Recharge Facility has been developed with multiple steps over the past few years, starting with a “lazy river” settling pond and a recharge area, as well as a diversion structure to channel flood water thick with sediment and debris to the dry lake bed and better water to the settling pond.

A dike now separates the north and south ends of the lake, since water on the north side has been tested to be much cleaner than that on the south end. Usable water now goes into a conservation pond for wildlife, then spills over and ends up being put onto fields across the highway, allowing those farmers to idle their pumps and not withdraw water from the aquifer.

Monroe said the tour was a good opportunity to help state officials be more aware of the efforts being made in Iron County to meet water challenges.

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**Photo Captions:**

1 - Gov. Spencer Cox speaks during a visit to the Southern Utah University Farm. He visited the valley to see an agricultural research project at the farm and an aquifer recharge project at Quichapa Lake.

2 - Central Iron County Water Conservancy District General Manager Paul Monroe shows Gov. Spencer Cox and others the Quichapa Recharge Project, which is the most extensive aquifer recharge facility the District operates.

3 - Gov. Spencer Cox shakes hands with Central Iron County Water Conservancy District General Manager Paul Monroe during a visit to the Cedar Valley to see an agricultural research project at the SUU Farm and an aquifer recharge project at Quichapa Lake.

**Photo Credit:**

CICWCD

**Who We are:**

The Central Iron County Water Conservancy District is charged with conserving, developing and stabilizing the Cedar Valley water supply for the benefit of all current and future water users and consumers in the region. The Water District educates residents about conservation, reuse and water import strategies as it strives to meet the challenges of declining water levels and community growth.

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