

How are local recharge facilities helping to conserve water in Cedar Valley?



ANSWERED BY:
PAUL COZZENS
Iron County Commissioner



Iron County Water Stewards

Answering Community Questions

Get to Know Your H2O: Central Iron County Water Conservancy District appreciates questions submitted by community members about the Pine Valley Water Supply Project and local water needs. As part of its role as steward of water in Cedar Valley, the District is working with a group of experts, community members and elected officials to help prepare viable solutions for the future and to respond to community questions and concerns about emergent water issues.

This week's question from the community is answered by Paul Cozzens, Iron County Commissioner, and county liaison to the Central Iron County Water Conservancy District.

Question: How are local recharge facilities helping to conserve water in our basin?

Answer: Since 2018, more than 14,000 acre-feet of water has been conserved by going into recharge pits where it can better percolate into the ground for future use, rather than flowing into terminus lake beds to become stagnant and evaporate. Recharge is one of the tools we have at our disposal to help stabilize the aquifer in our valley.

In 2015, the District along with many others, was able to create the first recharge basin. We saw the water flowing out to Quichapa Lake and Rush Lake and felt it was wrong to allow water that came into our basin to be essentially wasted, and not benefit our residents or our aquifer. Since then, seven recharge basins have been created in Cedar Valley, and several exist in Parowan Valley as well.

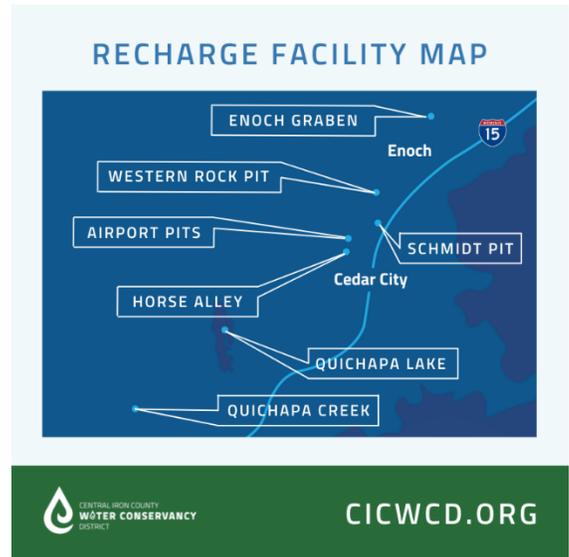
We need to catch every drop of water we can and put it to beneficial use before it evaporates. Some years we have abundant water to recharge but unfortunately, with the drought, it has been scarce. The important thing is to have the recharge systems in place so when we have excess water, we can put it into the aquifer. The recharge projects have prepared us for years when our basin has excess water and help us conserve water that would otherwise be wasted.

In February 2021, the District completed an additional phase of the Quichapa Recharge project, an extensive effort that included the construction of a dike across the dry lakebed, a pipe network allowing excess water to be pumped to where it can be put to beneficial use, and areas to allow the water to be absorbed into the aquifer. It also includes a conservation pond designed in partnership with the Bureau of Land Management, which provides habitat for waterfowl. The excess water pumped from Quichapa can be used on agricultural fields, allowing those farmers to idle their wells which reduces the draw on the aquifer.

Our aquifer is like a bank account, we are currently withdrawing more water than what mother nature is putting in. Recharge allows you to make more water deposits into that account than would naturally take place. The District put measuring devices in all its recharge facilities in 2018 so it can monitor how much water is being conserved through recharge each year.

Throughout the construction of the District's seven recharge facilities, relationships have been developed and the District, communities, the county, and other agencies and organizations have worked together for the health of the aquifer. It has been amazing to see the community come together to help with this effort. Several landowners and business owners have graciously allowed use of their land and equipment for these facilities, and our local municipalities have all donated manpower and equipment to these efforts.

Over the last 10 years in service on the Cedar City Council, the District Board, and Iron County Commissioner, I have enjoyed spending time putting my engineering and excavation background to use to help these projects come to fruition. As riveting as committee meetings can be, I much prefer the several hundreds of hours operating equipment on these projects that help secure the future of our community.



Water is a resource that we need to manage well. No one project or program is enough to solve all our problems. As we continue to find ways to recharge, conserve, reuse, and explore water resources such as the Pine Valley Water Supply Project, we can ensure our current community & children have the water resources they need to prosper. I believe water should be the No. 1 priority for everyone in Iron County.

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Several special interest groups have recently moved their focus to Cedar Valley water and have been spreading misinformation. The Central Iron County Water Conservancy District was created by a vote of Cedar Valley residents more than two decades ago. It has consistently been dedicated to developing and stabilizing the valley's water supply through conservation, recharge, reuse, and importing of water for the benefit of all current and future water users in the region. The District utilizes scientists, experts and professionals to understand the valley's underground aquifer and to determine responsible solutions for the community as it strives to meet local water challenges. For reliable information on the Pine Valley Water Supply Project specifically and the Cedar Valley's water situation in general, please visit <https://cicwcd.org/>. For more detailed information about the Pine Valley Water Supply Project and the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, please visit <https://eplanning.blm.gov/eplanning-ui/project/1503915/570>.

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