

How will the Pine Valley Water Supply Project affect the environment?



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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 Kelly

Crane, Professional Engineer for Ensign Engineering and District Engineer for the Central Iron County Water Conservancy District.

Question: How will the Pine Valley Water Supply Project benefit the environment?

Answer: The Pine Valley Water Supply Project (PVWS) is designed with detailed attention to possible environmental impacts. It is currently in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process with the Bureau of Land Management, and has been since 2019.

The PVWS Project will be the first of its kind, as it is designed to be fully powered by a renewable solar power generation system. When the sun is shining water will be pumped up to a large storage tank, and then transported to Cedar Valley where it could be distributed to communities within the valley. The solar generation system would be installed on land purchased by the District from the Utah School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration.

Wildlife would see benefits from the project, as it would include watering stations for big game, sage grouse and livestock. Providing water at the surface would allow for better range management and less stress on the few watering areas currently located in the middle of the basin.

Working with the Bureau of Land Management, the project would help improve habitat for sage grouse, a protected species, by enhancing and establishing wet meadows. The District is committed to providing up to 300 acre-feet per year of water to support wet meadow development. Surface water and wet meadow habitat is currently limited within the Pine Valley area, and the project is expected to provide substantial benefits to Sage Grouse and other wildlife. This development of habitat would help create breeding grounds for sage grouse in an area that has not seen active breeding in recent years.

The Cedar Valley will also see environmental benefits from the project, such as restoration of aquifer levels in an area that has seen extensive groundwater decline. A declining aquifer can cause soil compaction, fissures,

loss of storage, and more. The project could also help preserve agricultural operations in the valley which, when sustainably managed, can preserve and restore critical habitats, protect watersheds, and improve soil health and water quality.

When the water rights in Pine Valley were approved for the District, they came with a monitoring plan in place. The proposed project would include several monitoring wells around the Pine Valley basin to see if there are any signs of over-drafting the aquifer, and the District would be held to whatever amount is sustainable for the aquifer's health.

Hydrologic models have been created to show all possible environmental impacts, and the data has been collected and presented using the most current and best science available. The latest report was produced by Transcon Environmental and Formation Environmental with review from the leading scientists from the United States Geological Survey and Bureau of Land Management.

The District is committed to ensuring that the PVWS project is environmentally sound, so it can provide a sustainable source of water for the future of Cedar Valley. It has been and will continue to be a long process, but we are embracing that process as it will ensure that things are done legally and correctly.

ENVIRONMENTAL BENEFITS OF THE PINE VALLEY WATER SUPPLY PROJECT

- WET MEADOW HABITAT AREA FOR SAGE GROUSE
- POWERED BY A FULLY RENEWABLE SOLAR POWER SYSTEM
- SUPPLEMENTAL WATER FOR BIG GAME AND OTHER ANIMALS

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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>.

