



Natural Resources Conservation Service  
6200 Jefferson NE, Room 305  
Albuquerque, NM 87109  
Phone: (505) 761-4402 Fax: (505) 761-4463  
Web site: [www.nm.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nm.nrcs.usda.gov)

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## **News Release**

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Contact: Barbara Garrett, public affairs specialist  
(505)761-4406

### **New Mexico Garners Four AWEP Awards**

ALBUQUERQUE, NM-New Mexico recently garnered four Agriculture Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) awards to improve water quality and water quantity in the state.

AWEP is part of the 2008 Farm Bill, and a Request For Proposal process was conducted this spring that featured a national competition. Selection of projects was completed by the Chief of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS).

Eight applications were submitted by New Mexico applicants, and the four successful grantees are as follows:

The **Black Range Resource Conservation & Development Area, Inc.** and **Deming Soil & Water Conservation District** will be initiating the \$2,400,000 Deming AWEP project which focuses on water quantity and subsurface drip irrigation (that is one of the most efficient irrigation systems available). Subsurface drip irrigation is expensive to install, but yields great results in water conservation and crop yields. The project will convert flood or pivot sprinkler irrigation to the more efficient drip irrigation method, increase automation and monitoring of the drip systems for increased effectiveness of the irrigation water, and reduce the amount of water pumped which has historically shown an effective water conservation (reduction of 40 percent on average). The project will include 24 fields and 21 producers.

The **Pueblo of Sandia** identified approximately 129.6 acres of currently irrigated agricultural land whose irrigation efficiency could be improved through laser precision land leveling. Additionally, the Pueblo identified approximately 1,158 feet of on-farm earthen ditches whose irrigation water conveyance efficiency would be greatly improved through concrete lining, thereby reducing the associated seepage losses related to unlined ditches. These improvements in water conservation and water quality protection will directly benefit five Pueblo agricultural producers and help to improve the overall understanding of water conservation and water quality in the community as a whole by increasing public awareness and involvement with these issues.

The project is being undertaken by the Pueblo rather than individuals, and the Pueblo is contributing 10 percent of non-federal funds generated by Tribal Enterprises to match the 90 percent AWEP monies. The total AWEP award is for \$89,727.

The **Fort Sumner Irrigation District** will work in partnership with the **De Baca Soil & Water Conservation District** on this project to increase irrigation efficiencies with the installation of irrigation infrastructure such as concrete ditches, irrigation pipelines, and land leveling. These practices will decrease water loss by reducing runoff and seepage.

The agricultural water quality and/or water conservation issues to be addressed by the partnership are inefficient water use on irrigated lands, chemical runoff, and pollution of surface water, sedimentation, and threatened and endangered species. The irrigation system is in operation for approximately 8.5 months annually. Implemented conservation practices will help to conserve a significant amount of water annually. These practices will also reduce the amount of chemical runoff and pollution of surface water that can directly affect threatened and endangered species such as the Pecos bluntnose shiner. The total number of acres anticipated to need conservation treatment is approximately 7,152 acres involving 25 producers at a cost of \$100,000.

Currently, most of the **Pueblo of Santa Ana**'s irrigation ditches and canals are unlined, dirt conduits. These structures waste an enormous amount of water through seepage and transmission losses, and often contaminate adjacent fields with sediment that erodes from the banks. The Pueblo will be lining approximately 4.2 miles of on-farm ditches and laterals in an effort to improve irrigation water conveyance by reducing the seepage losses associated with unlined on-farm irrigation ditches. This proposal also identifies approximately 40 acres of irrigated, agricultural lands that will greatly benefit from precision land leveling. Additionally, the Pueblo has approximately 20 acres of land whose turnout locations and elevational water head will facilitate the replacement of on-farm ditches with low-pressure perforated pipelines as an alternative to ditch lining. The use of underground irrigation pipe will aid producers in a more efficient on-farm application of water while reducing seepage and evaporation losses. The project will affect approximately 40 producers at a cost of \$738,810.

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