

CONSERVATION Showcase

Solar, Wind Power Aid Grazing Management

Grassland conservation requires proper grazing management, and one of the primary techniques in achieving proper grazing management is appropriate distribution of livestock watering facilities. But securing a power source to pump water in New Mexico's wide open spaces can be a tricky business, when distances can make running electrical lines too costly.

Enter solar pumps and wind turbines.

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Carrizozo Field Office, Carrizozo Soil & Water Conservation District, and Upper Hondo Soil & Water Conservation District recently hosted a workshop for ranchers on the "Practical Applications of Alternative Energy." The idea was to keep the presentations practical enough so ranchers could get answers such as 'what is needed for a well this deep' and 'how much is this going to cost' – without getting into the over-the-top technicalities of solar systems and wind turbines.

Area rancher, Stirling Spencer, offered on-site demonstration of both solar and wind equipment, after the group had a sit-down session at the local county commissioners' chambers.

The alternatives to solar systems and wind turbines in settings, where running electrical lines are not practical, include old-fashioned windmills and gas generators. Solar systems and wind turbines offer advantages over both these options.

Like many older technologies, finding skilled personnel when an old-fashioned windmill needs repairs can be



difficult. There are fewer and fewer skilled windmill repair persons available, and older windmills can constantly be in need of repair.

And, gas generators require frequent attention to ensure they are fueled up, necessitating many trips to the well-site.

Stirling Spencer liked the solar system and wind turbines he has installed so well, he became a local distributor. Along with presenters like Roswell Livestock, he offered information to workshop attendees that included local ranchers, county extension personnel, soil and water conservation district participants, Bureau of Land Management staff, and others.

Using solar systems and wind turbines for stock water pumping not only makes use of renewable energy and 'greens' New Mexico, but it helps achieve good grazing management and conservation of a rancher's most valuable resource - healthy grasslands.