UTAH Conservation SHOWCASE

Century Farm Gets its First Center Pivot Irrigation System

Northern Utah Farmer Shane Holmgren grew up watching his father meet with the local conservationist and carry out plans to improve his rangeland in ways that would benefit and improve their cattle and waterfowl habitat.

As a relatively new farmer he recently began meeting with conservation planners from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to develop his own conservation plan, which included the installation of a new 1,400-foot center pivot irrigation system that will save water and improve irrigation on 140 acres of farmland that his father and grandfather had struggled to water for so many years.

The Bar H Ranch is located 23 miles northwest of Tremonton and sits along the edge of Utah's Great Basin, in a place called Salt Wells. Carrying on the legacy left behind by his father, Shane is determined to grow his cattle herd by improving carrying capacity on his grazing land.

Benefits of a Pivot System

Center pivots typically use less water compared to surface irrigation and are very effective on his rolling pastures. Shane has already planted two different test plots to see which pasture type will be most productive in such a hot, dry desert climate.

Important benefits of a center pivot irrigation system are consistent application of water to crops, reduction of water evaporation and wind drift with drop nozzles. And, best of all, he noted no need for a shovel as the high spots will always get water. Shane knows this kind of irrigation also lets him decide when to water and allows the best chance for success in a land that's dry and has an unforgiving climate.

Salinity reduction is another important benefit. Applying just the right amount of water avoids deep peculation that leaches through the salt-laded soil and deposits salts in nearby streams and underground aquifers.

Shane Holmgren (below) worked with NRCS to install a new center pivot irrigation system (above) on his ranch in northern Box Elder County. His conservation goals are to increase the cattle herd and decrease the area's salinity.

A Conservation Legacy

Shane hopes his children will look back on their conservation efforts and resolve to keep up the conservation legacy established by those who have gone before them. He hopes to continue these efforts during his time on the land and already has plans for a couple more center pivot irrigation systems, plus other conservation measures that will benefit wildlife as well.