



State of Utah

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UDAF Grant Announcement: \$20 Million Available for Agricultural Water Optimization Projects

Taylorville, UT — The Utah Department of Agriculture and Food (UDAF) is pleased to announce the opening of a new application period for the Agriculture Water Optimization Program, offering \$20 million in funding for the improvement of irrigation systems on Utah farms and ranches and water delivery projects.

The Agricultural Water Optimization Program was initially funded in the 2019 Legislative Session with the purpose of reducing consumptive water use while maintaining or improving agriculture production; improving water quantification to provide real-time, accurate measurements; and to improve and protect surface and ground water quality by reducing the overwatering of crops.

“We are excited to continue to aid Utah farmers and ranchers in improving their irrigation practices and optimizing their water use,” said Commissioner Craig Buttars. “Our agricultural producers know the importance of being part of the solution to improving the use of Utah’s water and we expect to see another large influx of applications for this program.”

During the 2022 Legislative Session, the Utah Legislature provided \$70 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding for this program. In 2022, \$50 million of this ARPA funding was distributed to 241 projects; the remaining \$20 million of ARPA funds will be awarded during the Spring 2023 application cycle. Applicants can receive a 50/50 cost share grant up to \$500,000 to complete their projects; a real-time water meter with data storage and retrieval capabilities is required for all funded projects.

The Agricultural Water Optimization program has funded 276 projects with a total of \$53 million in funds distributed. These projects equate to an estimated water savings of 172,847 acre feet a year, or 56 billion gallons of water saved each year from the completed projects.

The Agricultural Water Optimization Program is managed by Hannah Freeze, who was recently selected for the position. Freeze will be a great resource for Utah’s farmers and ranchers in implementing these projects throughout the state. She will be supported by Benjamin Hudson, who will continue working with this program as the assistant manager.

The application period is open from April 17 to May 31, 2023. For more information and to learn how to apply, visit aq.utah.gov/farmers/conservation-division/water-optimization-program/

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