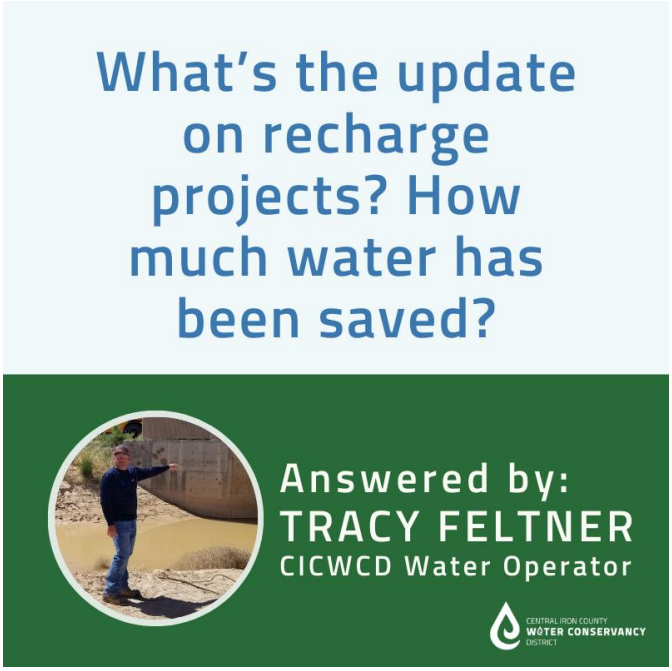


Iron County Water Stewards

Answering Community Questions

Written by Ashley Langston

Get to Know Your H2O: Central Iron County Water Conservancy District appreciates questions submitted by community members about 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 question is answered by Tracy Feltner, Water Operator for the Central Iron County Water Conservancy District.

Question: What's the update on local aquifer recharge projects? And, how much water has been saved through recharge?

Answer: The District strives to improve the Cedar Valley's underground water levels in many ways, and one of the most productive has been its efforts to conserve the water that previously would have evaporated in dry lake beds. That is done through recharge facilities, where the excess surface water is directed to areas where it can soak into the ground and eventually into the aquifer.

This spring the District expanded the Schmidt Pit Recharge Facility, adding two more pits where excess water could seep into the underground aquifer. Tracy Feltner, District Water Operator, said they were able to use the Iron County gravel pit and the Cedar City gravel pit to expand the system. Using pipes to connect the recharge basins, the additional pits now act as overflow to the Schmidt Pit that has been part of the District's recharge efforts since 2017.

Feltner added that there are plans to increase the

size of the intake diversion from Coal Creek to those three pits, allowing them to hold and recharge even more water during future spring snowmelt.

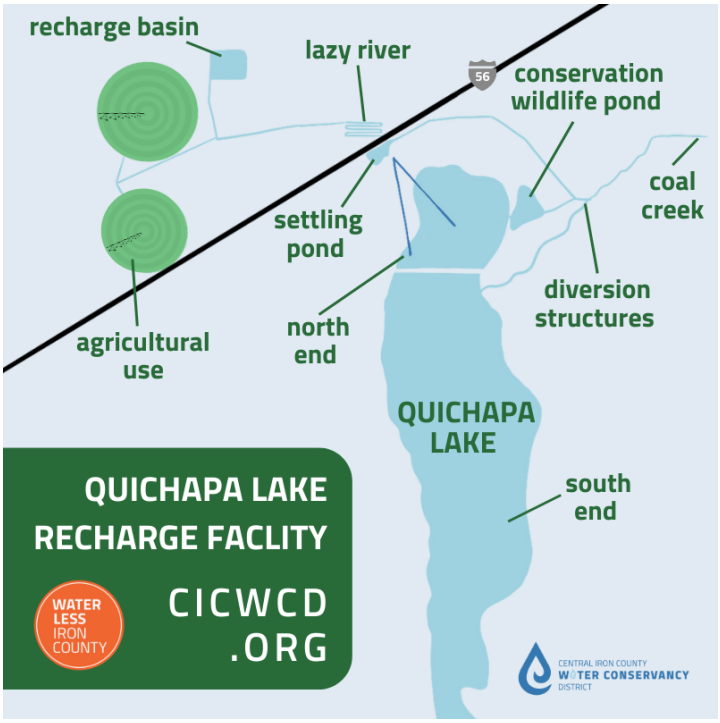
"The future will be that we will increase the capacity and ability of taking excess water out of Coal Creek into those recharge basins," he said.

More than 6,300 acre-feet of water was recharged between October 2022 and June 2023, making the total recharged in the past six years over 20,000 acre-feet, or 6.5 billion gallons.

Before recharge facilities were created, the excess water that came down Coal Creek from the mountain ended up at Quichapa Lake and Rush Lake (west of Cedar City and Enoch, respectively). Both dry lake beds are silty and the water cannot permeate the ground, so it sits on top and evaporates.

As the water sat in Quichapa Lake, tests showed high levels of "total dissolved solids," making the water unusable. Now, an extensive recharge facility at Quichapa Lake allows much of that excess water to go back into the aquifer. In 2021, a dike was constructed in the middle of the lake which allows for cleaner water to flow to the northern end and lower quality water is sent to the south end. Now more water in the northern end can be utilized in the recharge system.

Feltner feels the most exciting part of that project is the ability to pump water from the northern portion of Quichapa Lake to a farmer's pivots. That farmer has not turned on his wells this year, so the water that normally is pumped out of his wells has remained in the aquifer, which is even more beneficial because it is in an area with multiple city wells that put significant strain on the underground supply.



Feltner said this is the first time that water out of Quichapa Lake has been able to be used. The pump in the lake was installed last year, and he has been very pleased with how well it has worked. There are two monitors that ensure the water going onto the farmer's fields does not have high levels of total dissolved solids, and they have been able to pump good water for the entire growing season.

"It's so much fun to get that project completed," Feltner said.

These projects would not be possible without the help of community partners. Western Rock Products owns the Schmidt Pit, and also allows the use of a much larger pit, called the Western Rock Pit, that recharged the most water this year of any of the District's facilities. The District would like to thank the company for its continued support through the use of its gravel pits, as well as using their company equipment and employees to help with levees and dikes during the peak runoff.

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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 sourcing 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 (Basin 14) Water Supply Project specifically and the Cedar Valley's water situation in general, please visit https://cicwcd.org/.

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CENTRAL IRON COUNTY WATER CONSERVANCY DISTRICT