How does the program work?
Applications for AWEP are ranked according to resource conservation benefit. Producers whose applications are selected enter into individual contracts with the NRCS. Services provided include conservation planning and technical design, as well as financial assistance for project implementation.

How do AWEP payments work?
Total project implementation costs are shared with the landowner, with the amount of the AWEP payment depending on the specific practice.

Am I eligible?
Agricultural producers and landowners with irrigated cropland in the watersheds listed on the front panel are potentially eligible for the Central Coast AWEP initiative. Contact your local NRCS or FSA office for more information on maximum payment and income limitations.

For more information or to apply for AWEP, contact:

NRCS
65 S. Main St. Ste., 106
Templeton, CA 93465
805.434.0396 ext. 3

Upper Salinas-Las Tablas RCD
65 S. Main St. Ste., 107
Templeton, CA 93465
805.434.0396 ext. 5

Coastal San Luis RCD
805.772.5623

Central Coast Irrigation and Nutrient Management Program

Assistance for Agricultural Landowners and Operators
Supported by the USDA Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)

New financial assistance for voluntary, confidential implementation of practices to improve irrigation and nutrient management on your farm.

Available for growers in the Pajaro River, Salinas River, Santa Maria River, and Coastal San Luis watersheds!

Central Coast AWEP Project Partners:

NRCS
Natural Resources Conservation Service

Resource Conservation District
Cachuma RCD
Coastal San Luis RCD
RCD of Monterey County
RCD of Santa Cruz County
Upper Salinas-Las Tablas RCD

Resource Conservation District

AWQA
Agriculture Water Quality Alliance

Program goals:
• Improve water quality through reduced runoff and leaching of nutrients
• Conserve surface and groundwater through efficient irrigation water usage
• Provide yield and cost benefits through efficient input management

USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.
**What is the Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP)?**

The Agricultural Water Enhancement Program (AWEP) is a voluntary conservation initiative that provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to implement activities on agricultural land for the purposes of conserving surface and ground water and improving water quality. As part of the NRCS Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), AWEP operates through contracts with producers to plan and implement conservation practices in project areas established through partnership agreements.

Nationwide, the USDA has selected 63 projects, including California's Central Coast Irrigation and Nutrient Management Initiative, to work with the NRCS toward mutual agricultural water enhancement goals.

**AWEP is a non-regulatory program. Participation is entirely voluntary and confidential.**

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**What is the Central Coast Irrigation and Nutrient Management AWEP?**

Resource Conservation Districts located on California's Central Coast have partnered with several regional Technical Service Providers to work closely with the USDA-NRCS in assisting you, the landowner or operator, with:

- Conservation Cover
- Residue Management
- Cover Crops
- Sediment Basins
- Field Borders
- Riparian Cover
- Filter Strips
- Grass Waterways
- Irrigation Water Conveyance
- Irrigation Storage Reservoirs
- Micro Irrigation Systems
- Sprinkler Irrigation Systems
- Irrigation Tailwater Recovery
- Irrigation Water Management
- PAM
- Irrigation Land Leveling
- Precision Land Forming
- Land Smoothing
- Lined Waterways
- Mulching
- Pond Sealing or Lining
- Pumping Plants
- Irrigation Regulating Reservoirs
- Structure for Water Control
- Nutrient Management
- Pest Management
- Salinity and Sodic Management
- Underground Outlets
- Waste Treatment
- Water Harvesting Catchments

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**Why irrigation and nutrient management?**

This project aims to conserve the California Central Coast's limited water supply and improve the quality of agricultural runoff. Project goals include restoring beneficial uses of local waterways and protecting unique marine and aquatic resources, such as the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary, the Morro Bay National Estuary, and the Guadalupe Dunes. This project will assist willing growers in improving the efficiency of their operation, leading to water savings and water quality improvement. Additionally, this project aims to provide yield and cost benefits through efficient input management.

**What makes this program unique?**

This program is unique in that it addresses water quality and quantity issues on a regional scale, and it brings together a broad suite of partners in collaboration with landowners and operators. The selection of this partnership for AWEP funding reflects the strength and value of collaboration on the Central Coast.

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Improving irrigation and nutrient efficiency on your farm can lead to cost savings. These practices benefit your bottom line, and the environment.
Systems efficiency does not always remain constant. It depends more on the system maintenance and management than on age.

FACTORS AFFECTING EFFICIENCY
These 4 factors can cause non-uniformity:
1. Pressure differences.
2. Manufacturing sprinkler variation, plugging and wear.
3. Schedule sprinkler timing systems.
4. Topography, climate, and soil type.

In SLO County
Contact:
Upper Salinas-Las Tablas RCD
65 South Main Street, Suite 107
Templeton, CA 93465
434-0396 ext. 5
Coastal San Luis RCD 775 52 23
In cooperation with:
Cachuma Resource Conservation District 920
E. Stowell Rd. Santa Maria, CA 93454 805-928-9269 phone • 805-928-9644 fax
cachumarcdl@ca.nacdnet.org
SYSTEM EFFICIENCY

The system efficiency depends on two important concepts:

A – The plants receive water when they need it (perfect timing is when the soil in the root zone of the areas that receive the least amount is drying below a chosen minimum moisture content allowable); and in the amount they need it (enough water applied in the root zone which is stored until the next irrigation) – SCHEDULING.

B – Every plant receives, ideally, the same amount of water. Distribution Uniformity of water application – DU.

By improving and obtaining better scheduling (timing and duration) and higher uniform water application, over-irrigation and under-irrigation are minimized, benefiting the following:

1. Potential plant growth and quality improvements of the under-irrigated areas – with higher DU and better timing.

2. Water losses decrease due to less over-irrigation. This is addressed for 3 factors: by having perfect timing, correct duration and with higher DU.

3. Improvement in fertilizers management. Fertilizers, pesticides and other products requirements should be based on the amount and timing of vegetation needs. They should be efficiently applied with the irrigation water to limit leaching and runoff.

4. The potential for improved water conservation and surface water quality.

5. Subsurface water quality is improved by reducing the transport of salts and chemical components (water and chemical losses targeted for the plants) by reducing the irrigation duration and improving the DU.

IMPORTANT COMPONENTS

Soil: The plants take water from it. The Available Water Holding Capacity (AWHC) is an important characteristic to consider when scheduling.

Water: Reducing pollutants such as fertilizers/pesticides from entering surface and groundwater is necessary in maintaining and enhancing water quality which is a benefit for everyone.

Weather: Local weather conditions will determine the necessity for irrigation.

Improvements

- All irrigation systems should be planned by a certified designer.
- Causes of poor DU’s are relatively easy to correct. For drip and microirrigation systems typical problems are uneven pressures, emitter plugging, inadequate system flushing or filtering, and inadequate water treatment.
- Do not over irrigate when incorporating pesticides and fertilizers.
- When scheduling consider: plant type and stage of growth, application rate (average and minimum), soil water holding capacity, leaching fraction and evapotranspiration.
- A source of weather information is the CIMIS network of weather stations located throughout California. The computed rates should be adjusted for each plant type.
- Irrigation evaluations, especially for older systems, should be encouraged.
- Adjust, evaluate and tune-up the scheduling in your landscape system.

IRRIGATION EVALUATIONS

The Cachuma RCD provides this service for free to farmers and communities located in San Luis Obispo County (in cooperation with the Upper Salinas-Las Tablas RCD and San Luis Coastal RCD).

For a Free Audit:
Call 805-928-9269 x106
The Cachuma Resource Conservation District offers free irrigation system evaluations to turf irrigators, evaluating systems individually and making recommendations to improve performance.

Participation in this program is voluntary and all evaluation results are confidential.

By applying the proper amount of water, you may be able to:

- Improve turf quality
- Reduce bacterial and fungal diseases
- Lower pesticide and fertilizer costs
- Reduce water usage and loss
- Decrease pollution
- Decrease leaching of plant nutrients
- Save money by reducing water and energy usage
**ABOUT THE PROGRAM**

Free on-site Mobile Lab services are available to Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo County growers. Over 800 evaluations have been performed on over 70,000 acres.

To schedule a turf evaluation, call the Cachuma Resource Conservation District at (805) 928-9269, x. 106.

The Mobile Irrigation Lab is staffed by trained professionals from the Cachuma Resource Conservation District (RCD). Irrigation evaluations use standard procedures developed by California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo and the California Department of Water Resources.

**THE EVALUATION**

The Mobile Irrigation Lab comes right to your property. All you need to provide, if possible, is a layout of your irrigation system and information on your irrigation schedule. We provide:

- **Distribution Uniformity (DU):** Sprinkler application rates, pressures, and flow are measured.
- **Sprinkler Inspection:** Proper sizing and operation are evaluated.
- **Soil Survey:** The soil type, depth, and texture are identified to determine water holding capacity.
- **Controller Settings:** Your irrigation schedule is compared to actual water requirements, and seasonal controller settings are recommended.

You will receive recommendations on system design, operation, and maintenance, including a projection of potential savings that could result from implementing recommendations.

**WHO PARTICIPATES**

Any property manager with large areas of turf to irrigate can benefit from a turf irrigation evaluation.

Properties that could benefit from a turf irrigation evaluation include:

- School playing fields
- Parks and open space areas
- Homeowners associations
- Condominiums
- Large commercial landscapes
- City and County landscaping
- Large residential landscapes
- Golf courses
- Cemeteries

**IRRIGATION EVALUATION RESULTS**

Average Water Savings = 1.4 million gallons per year