



General Takeaways

- A majority of interviewees have had their water rights for over 20 years
 - A handful have had these rights for fewer than 10 years
- Most ranchers use their irrigation rights for hay and alfalfa, grazing pastures, and stock water
- Many responded that they are receiving their full decree
 - A couple mentioned that they get their full decree at the headgate, but not by the time it reaches them
 - About 1/3 responded that they did not receive their full decree
- Many interviewees record their decree with the water commissioner, from the reading at the flume/headgate, or on a notepad
- When asked what would be helpful for recording their decree, many agreed an app/database would be helpful
- The top 3 responses to how the ditches benefit the ecosystem are: greenery (aesthetically pleasing valley), habitat for wildlife, and return to the aquifer or river
- A majority of respondents mentioned working with NRCS and would work with them again
 - A few responded have had very negative experiences with the county and/or state government
- Many ranchers want to be able to leave their children the ability to ranch and the ability to maintain the lifestyle, or worth of some kind

- Many of the fears associated with achieving this stem from it becoming too expensive, losing property rights or the ranch, losing too much water, and development
- Some ranchers concerned with costs mentioned wanting help writing grants
- Many ranchers mentioned that the county/state already had a map of the ditches
 - Some did not think a new map was necessary, while some thought the preexisting map was incomplete, and needed a new, accurate map
- A majority of ranchers are interested in a workshop on water rights and would submit questions
- The top threats identified include: people (e.g., front range and other users), lack of understanding, developments, and the valley drying up
- The top two responses to what the ranchers wished the community knew were: the rights of the property owner and everything

Ditch-Specific Projects

- Remove the invasive plants (poison hemlock, water grasses) - #1 priority
- Put in a smaller retention pond
- Switch from flooding to overhead sprinkling
- Greater usage of funds towards lining or piping ditches

- Invasive species (water grass, pondo weed, elodea)
- Pipe/line the ditch - can help reduce invasive plants
- Install a camera at the weir (don't have the funds)

- Install a new pivot system

- Extend the pipe on the ditch

- Access to equipment
- Labor to maintain the ditch

- Wants to conduct own study on fluctuations in water over the years
- Install automatic measuring devices on flumes
- Pipe the ditch

- Line ditches
- Install sprinklers (although that introduces the issue of less return to the aquifer)

- Measure the amount of water going through Sand Park
 - Put devices on each end and determine if water is lost going through Sand Park
 - Potentially pipe the ditch going through Sand Park (would hurt the aquifer recharge)

- Help with ditch maintenance
 - More in the vein of gaining access through education on the rights of the ditch owner
- Help writing grants

- Gated pipe

- An automated/digital flow reader that is accessible through a smartphone (*pie-in-the-sky*)
- Help with ditch maintenance, especially with big machinery experience, and repair various sections of the ditch
 - Several breached sections of ditch that need to be revitalized
 - Section above [REDACTED] property that runs through the trash dump needs to be rerouted (too steep and need an engineer)
- Have to pay to get people in to clean up the ditch and this could help free up money for legal fees
- Remove the small culverts put in by the county
 - Will most likely require a water lawyer
- Ditch in [REDACTED] that would benefit from the Hands for Lands group

- Line or pipe the ditch
- Help with measuring water flow along various points of the ditch--would like to see where water loss occurs

- Pivot irrigators--some just need new nozzles (Lockwood)
 - Important to match the type of irrigation to the crop
- Piping projects
- Maintenance program
 - Ability to loan/lease heavy equipment

- Pipe section on hillside (hill is sloughing off into the ditch)

- Pipe some critical sections
 - Has legal concerns that it may cause willows and cottonwoods to fall, and people will sue them
 - Wants to preserve the beauty of the valley, while also losing less water
- Has benefitted from the Hands for Lands volunteers (and is extremely grateful)--would love to make it a paid position and have more consistent, paid workers to help maintain the ditch (5 days rather than 3 hours)
 - Mentions it could be beneficial to offer course credits for students
 - Maybe offer tax credits to retired folks