

Three Sisters Irrigation District ARRA Project – Stimulus Funding Success in Oregon

Narrator: Thanks in part to federal stimulus funding, Three Sisters Irrigation District has finished phase one of an irrigation canal piping project that will help fish and farmers. It will also generate green energy and stimulate the local economy in a big way.

Marc Thalacker: The \$1.15 million from the Bureau gets leveraged out into about \$4 or \$5 million just on the first two phases and that money is just being spread all over, not only central Oregon but then also places like Kingman, Arizona where we purchased \$2.9 million dollars worth of pipe.

Narrator: For hundreds of residents in the high mountain resort town of Sisters, Oregon this winter that means the buck never stopped coming here.

Pat Thompson, owner of Sisters Rental and town councilman says the cash had an immediate and lasting effect.

Pat Thompson: Every dollar that's kept in our community and spent again in our community usually trades hands about eight times. So, any money we can keep in our community benefits everyone in our community.

Narrator: Scores of businesses and working families are thankful today for the influx of cash into their local economy when the Three Sisters Irrigation District announced plans to spend \$2.4 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act dollars over the next few years, representing half of the project's initial phases.

As work moved forward, piping project money soaked into the local economy in Deschutes County where unemployment was above 16%. For example, stimulus funding allowed TSID to hire new employees to begin work.

Bill McKinney: We've employed 10 people in this project, all local people throughout Sisters. We hired some top-notch equipment operators that were laid off because of the recession. And we had first-hand pick of some great people.

Narrator: Around town stimulus funds are a welcome boost to businesses for truckers, rigging outfitters, rental shops, fuel suppliers, heavy equipment dealers and parts stores.

Brenton Carey: Without Three Sisters Irrigation District, especially for me in my sales territory, it would have made things really difficult because there is just not a lot of stuff going on.

Chris Baxter: It's up about four times what they spent last year year-to-date. So as far as we're concerned it's been a very good thing for us.

Aaron Black: For a small area like this, if that gets pumped into our community it will be cycled around and everybody will win. It's a win-win for everybody.

Pat Thompson: Three Sisters Irrigation project this last winter really helped keep the employees busy, keep the employees on the payroll and helped out with paying the bills.

Narrator: Thalacker says another impact was not just local spending but their order of five and a half miles of pipe from JM Manufacturing in Kingman, Arizona. Crews there were building and delivering the pipe for most of the winter. Today, trucks are still delivering it as TSID welds more pipe sets for work next year.

Mark Thetke: If you can imagine shipping 54-inch pipe as well as producing it. You know, I've got 300 trucks on the road getting all this material here. We've got staff at the factory, we've got support people, we've got fittings, and we've got other things that go along with this. This affected a lot of people.

Narrator: Thalacker plans to pipe the entire canal by 2014 including a hydroelectric powerplant placed in-line with the canal. When fully operational, their hydropower revenue will pay off their loan balance within 20 years.

All in all, Three Sisters Irrigation District's diverse funding sources and planning efforts have delivered stimulus dollars to the local economy.

Aaron Black: We all knew it was going to affect central Oregon in a positive way. Not just conserving the water but actually giving business to the people in central Oregon that need it.

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