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# Safe passage for fish

By T.J. BURNHAM

**A** NEW fish screen in Sisters, Ore., marks the largest installation by the Farmers Conservation Alliance to date — handling 160 cubic feet of water per second.

Since 2006, FCA, a nonprofit in Hood River, Ore., has created the Farmers Screen, a fish screen predominately used in rural communities. To date, the FCA screens are found on 21 Western properties, helping 860 landowners on 22,090 farm acres save fish along with money.

### Key Points

- Fish screen near Sisters, Ore., handles 160 cubic feet of water per second.
- Chinook salmon, inland steelhead and redband trout among the species helped.
- The screen is only one conservation project on the Whychus Creek.

More than \$400,000 in total yearly savings is attributed to the FCA screens in terms of avoided operational and maintenance costs.

"These installations have opened a total

of 141 river miles to safe fish passage," says Genevieve Scholl-Erdmann, FCA outreach manager.

But the Three Sisters Irrigation District screen, finished in April, stands out as the behemoth project for the organization, says FCA's Dan Kleinsmith, project manager. "The project will open 15 river miles to safe fish passage," he notes.

Chinook salmon, inland steelhead and redband trout are among the species that will benefit, as the irrigation water from the facility flows onto 8,000 acres of farmland.

What FCA offers is a way for farmers

to resolve fish issues while saving money, says Julie O'Shea, executive director.

"There are an estimated 300,000 un-screened water diversions in the West," she says. "Most of those are un-screened because conventional screens wouldn't be able to handle the debris loads of the streams and would clog, preventing irrigation water from getting to the farm. Or the screens that could [handle the debris] were simply too expensive."

Marc Thalacker, manager of Three Sisters Irrigation District, says the FCA screen "is a perfect fit" for his needs. "FCA has done a wonderful job on this screen, and I can't say enough good about the organization," he adds.

### Detour for fish

At the Sisters project, water from Whychus Creek, which formerly ran directly into the irrigation canal, now enters the district at headgates and runs through two flumes, which flow across the screens at 4 to 6 feet per second to the irrigation pipe, says Kleinsmith. Fish and debris spill out from the end into a pool, and move via a channel and pipe back to the creek.

A key part of the project is rerouting the river from its former straight run, developed years ago in the belief that a waterway should have fewer turns and twists. "We're returning it to its more natural state," Kleinsmith says of the creek, which now meanders through a forest.

While a major screen project, "this is just a tiny part of a massive Whychus Creek restoration effort," says Scholl-Erdmann.

Although the site for the new screen in Sisters is near a road, many sites are in remote areas. Fortunately, FCA screens do not require electricity, she adds. In fact, the new screen site is designed to support generation of 1.5 megawatts of hydropower, all without harming fish, adds Scholl-Erdmann.



**SCREEN PASS:** While much of the concrete for the Farmers Conservation Alliance fish screen project in Sisters, Ore., was poured last year, the facility was just finished in April, says Dan Kleinsmith, FCA screen project manager, who inspected the site with Genevieve Scholl-Erdmann, FCA outreach manager.

■ For more on the FCA and benefits of its fish screens, see Pages 3-4.

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## NewsWatch

# FCA screens help keep fish safe and farm water running

By T.J. BURNHAM

**F**ARMERS Conservation Alliance is “the first nongovernmental, nonprofit entity that has tackled” the work to find and support solutions that benefit agriculture and the environment,” says Genevieve Scholl-Erdmann, FCA outreach manager.

FCA, based in Hood River, Ore., produces the Farmers Screen, a fish screen that has become a popular choice for many facilities in the West.

“The attraction of our fish screens is they have no moving parts, meaning no power is needed for their operation,” says Scholl-Erdmann.

“This makes our product very useful in remote areas where they are installed.” Also, she adds, there are no wipers or paddle wheels that need to be replaced.

## Key Points

- FCA provides a nonprofit service for rural community ag projects.
- Its fish screen facilities are funded by multiple entities.
- Use of the screens do not require electrical connections.

FCA uses income from the product to facilitate its efforts to resolve conservation challenges in rural settings.

While an FCA fish screen installed near Salmon, Ore., this year does not require power on-site, its proximity to a major road has allowed Three Sisters Irrigation District to run in electricity, which helps Marc Thalacker, district manager, run the gates from his office several miles away.

Video cameras installed at the site



**CREEK REDESIGNED:** The Whychus Creek below the Three Sisters Irrigation District intake has been reworked to conform to more natural bends in the project, which included new fish screen installations.



**GENEVIEVE SCHOLL-ERDMANN**

allow Thalacker to observe the intake area of Whychus Creek, as well as record any possible vandalism.

A major project like the Three Sisters Irrigation District screen requires a brigade of teams, project partners and financial supporters.

Besides the district, the project team consists of representatives of the Deschutes National Forest, consulting engineers and the Upper Deschutes Water Council, which coordinated the effort.

The partners and financiers list includes no less than a dozen entities, such as the Oregon Department of Fish

and Game, the National Marine Fisheries Service, the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the Natural Resource Conservation Service, the U.S. Forest Service and the Deschutes River Conservancy.

■ **Go to Page 4 to read about the benefits of the FCA fish screen.**

## Flood leads to better device

**T**HE Farmers Screen is a new patented technology invented by the Farmers Irrigation District near Hood River, Ore. It is marketed via the Farmers Conservation Alliance in Hood River, a nonprofit “social enterprise,” providing technical support for screen installations.

Users like the screens, which allow them to divert fish and debris from irrigation canals and provide a safe

passage for fish entering intake areas to return to the natural waterways.

Basically, screens are horizontal, flat-plate devices that are self-cleaning. The screens were developed by FID following a 1996 flood, which destroyed its water delivery infrastructure, including existing fish screens. The district set out to develop a better screen, working for a decade with agencies, tribes and communities.

## News Briefs

### Forests sequester carbon at higher level than thought

A research group has concluded that forests and other terrestrial ecosystems in the lower 48 states can sequester up to 40% of the nation's fossil fuel carbon emissions, a larger amount than previously estimated — unless a drought or other major disturbance occurs. Widespread droughts, such as those that occurred in 2002 and 2006, can cut the amount of carbon sequestered by about 20%, the scientists concluded in a recent study that was supported by the National Science Foundation and U.S. Department of Energy.

### \$1M grant funds garden project

Washington State University Extension is the lead institution on a new “Healthy Gardens, Healthy Youth” project, funded by a \$1 million grant from the USDA Food and Nutrition Service. The grant was announced by Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. Aimed at addressing childhood obesity and improving nutrition, the pilot project spans four states, will serve an estimated 2,800 students at 70 elementary schools, and will engage low-income students in the physical activity in-

involved in growing food, learning life skills, and teaching science and math. The Cooperative Extension Services of Iowa State University, Cornell University and the University of Arkansas are collaborating with WSU Extension on the project. “School gardens hold great promise for educating our kids about food production and nutrition,” says Vilsack. “Learning where food comes from and what fresh food tastes like, and the pride of growing and serving vegetables and fruits that grew through your own effort, are life-changing experiences. All of us at USDA are proud to make this possible.”

### Report on Oregon ag, energy

Some Oregon farms are doing well in becoming energy efficient; others have even started undertaking renewable energy projects. However, most farmers and ranchers across the state can and want to do a lot more in making efficiency improvements in their operation, according to a new report issued this week by the Oregon Department of Agriculture. “The take-home message in this report is there are a lot of energy-efficiency opportunities still out there for Oregon farms to take

advantage of,” says Stephanie Page, ODA's renewable energy specialist who wrote the report. “They want to be energy-efficient, but they are just finding it difficult, especially with the upfront costs of some energy improvements.”

### Loan program popular in Montana

Participation by Montana's agricultural producers in the USDA Farm Service Agency's Farm Storage Facility Loan Program has jumped considerably in the past two and a half years, with the program helping to finance new and improved storage capacity for an additional 2.2 million bushels of commodities, says FSA State Committee Chairman Steve Carney, who hopes all producers are aware of the program's availability. “This program helps ensure that producers have adequate capacity to store their harvested production until they sell it on the open market,” notes Carney, of Scobey, who earlier this year was reappointed to his second term on the five-person state committee. “In Montana, FSA has administered more than \$4 million in storage facility loans since October 2009, nearly \$2 million of which was disbursed in the past six months.”

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## NewsWatch



**SCREEN EXPONENT:** Three Sisters Irrigation District Manager Marc Thalacker explains how projects to protect fish in his water zone are an important proactive effort on the part of farmers he serves.

# Price, features sell FCA screen

By T.J. BURNHAM

**F**CAS efforts in fish screens have been very successful," says Dan Kleinsmith, manager of the Farmers Conservation Alliance Screen Project.

Since launching operations in 2006, FCA has expanded its staff from four to six, with two new sales and outreach officials, a testimony to the popularity of the nonprofit's efforts. The sales team has been traveling throughout the West, as far as Wyoming and Montana, to market the no-moving-parts screening technology.

"Our newest exciting news is a potential for micro-hydropower generation on existing irrigation canals," says Genevieve Scholl-Erdmann, FCA's outreach manager in Hood River, Ore.

"We're able to generate power in an absolute fish-free environment on irrigation canals downstream from screens, providing a new revenue resource for irrigation districts and farmers," she says.

One of the most important products by FCA — the Farmers Screen — is a small modular fish screen, which can be quickly installed in remote irrigation intake areas, without the need for poured concrete.

FCA has worked with irrigation districts in Oregon, Idaho and Montana to install 21 fish

## Key Points

- Farmers Conservation Alliance works in many Western states.
- No moving parts, self-cleaning considered pluses of screens.
- One district cut cost in half by doing its own construction.

screen projects, running from 0.5 to 160 cubic feet per second.

## Fish screen projects

Those projects include the following (some represent more than one project):

- Hood River at Tony Creek, Ore., 5 cfs, six river miles opened for fish passage
- Hood River at Davenport, Ore., 85 cfs, opened five more miles
- Hood River at Eliot Creek, Ore., 30 cfs, two miles opened
- Herman Creek near Cascade Locks, Ore., 15 cfs, opened two river miles
- Fish Haven, Idaho, 10 cfs, opened two miles
- Crabtree Creek near Lacombe, Ore., 65 cfs, 17 miles opened
- Wolf Creek near Drewsey, Ore., 4 cfs, five miles
- German Gulch near Butte, Mont., 10.5 cfs, 10 miles
- East Fork Weiser River near Weiser, Idaho, 15 cfs, 20 miles
- Widows Creek near John Day, Ore., 5.5 cfs, nearly 14 miles
- Glendale Ditch near Council,

Idaho, 4 cfs, five river miles

- Jordan Ditch near Council, Idaho, 7.5 cfs, 20 miles
- Whychus Creek near Sisters, Ore., 160 cfs, 160 miles
- Coe Creek near Parkdale, Ore., 36 cfs, more than three miles
- Deadpoint near Parkdale, Ore., 15 cfs, 8.5 miles
- Forebay plant at Hood River, Ore., 75 cfs (canal only; no river miles opened)
- Trout Creek near Cody, Wyo., 2 cfs, 28 miles
- Berry Creek near Canyon City, Ore., 1 cfs, six miles
- North Greenpoint near Dee, Ore., 15 cfs, 15 miles

Pricing is one reason the Farmers Screen is chosen for so many projects.

The Whychus project was originally slated to cost about \$2 million, says Marc Thalacker, Three Sisters Irrigation District manager, but that cost was cut in half by the in-house construction done by the district.

"The Farmers Screen is one of the most well-priced products on the market," says Thalacker. A key factor in his decision to go with the FCA product, he says, is its lack of moving parts and its self-cleaning ability.

"In a system like ours with heavy debris, the self-cleaning factor is essential," he adds.

■ For more on this topic, visit [www.FarmProgress.com](http://www.FarmProgress.com).

## Western Close-up

### Montana FSA director to be acting head of agency

USDA Montana Farm Service Agency State Executive Director Bruce Nelson has been appointed as acting administrator of Farm Service Agency, the Obama administration announces. "It has been an honor and privilege to work for the hardworking farmers, ranchers and FSA employees across Montana," Nelson says. "While Montana has always been our home and always will be, I'm thankful for the opportunity to work for agricultural producers here at home and across this great country."

### Oregon foundation names new executive director

The Agricultural Research Foundation at Oregon State University has named Cynthia Cox as its executive director. The private nonprofit organization supports agricultural research in Oregon. Cox has been the foundation's finance manager since 2008. Sonny Ramaswamy, dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences and ex-officio board member of the foundation, says Cox's accounting background was attractive to the board, but it was her ideas for the future that made her stand out.

### UW ag instructor receives top teaching honor

An instructor in the University of Wyoming's College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, whose nominations are peppered with "very best," "wonderful," "passion" and "enthusiasm," has received the John P. Ellbogen Meritorious Classroom Teaching Award. Rachel Watson, lecturer in the Department of Molecular Biology, was tapped for the award, established in 1977 by businessman John P. "Jack" Ellbogen to "foster, encourage and reward excellence in classroom teaching at UW." "I would rank her as among the very best instructors at the University of Wyoming," says Mark Stayton, associate professor and chairman of the department. "Her biochemistry class has proven so popular we have been forced to limit enrollment beginning next summer."

### Wheatland, Wyo., producer receives ag award

Pat Cullen, a Wyoming producer with a long list of contributions to his community and industry, received the 2011 Outstanding Agriculturalist Award from the Wyoming Chapter of Gamma Sigma Delta, the international honor society of agriculture. Cullen farms and ranches near Wheatland with his wife, Sherri.

### UW student receives Goldwater Scholarship

This year's Goldwater Scholarship recipient at the University of Wyoming earned high praise from the professor who nominated her. "Mary Centrella is simply the best undergraduate student I have mentored in 21 years teaching at UW," says Scott Shaw, a professor in the Department of Renewable Resources in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. "I can't imagine a student who better deserves recognition with this scholarship." Centrella, of Jackson, is a junior with double majors in zoology and Spanish, and is a member of the university's Honors Program. The scholarship covers tuition, fees, books, and room and board up to a maximum of \$7,500 per year.

## Calendar

### JUNE

**10-12:** American Shorthorn University, American International Charolais Association, Kansas City, Mo. Website: [www.shorthorn.org](http://www.shorthorn.org).

### JULY

**21-22:** The Irrigation Association/American Society of Irrigation Consultants Water for the Future conference, Omni Interlocken Resort and Spa, Broomfield, Colo. Registration and information website: [www.irrigation.org/waterconference](http://www.irrigation.org/waterconference).

### NOVEMBER

**29-Dec. 1:** 2011 Range Beef Cow Symposium (developed by Colorado State University, University of Wyoming, South Dakota State University and University of Nebraska), Chadron, Neb. Contact: Karla Jenkins. Phone: 308-632-1245. Email: [kjenkins2@unl.edu](mailto:kjenkins2@unl.edu).