

NRCS grant awards announced

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Capital Press

Dave Leckey of Oregon Small Trees is one of 10 Oregon recipients of the 2011 Natural Resources Conservation Service innovation grants. The grants are designed to help bring new technologies to Oregon farms and ranches.

Leckey was awarded \$17,682 of \$2.5 million total awarded in Oregon. The grant is helping fund the installation of a low-water use irrigation system.

Leckey theorizes he can irrigate his plants by using gravity to move rainwater from a catchment through pipes to a series of sand beds. A mixer adds fertilizer to the water as it moves from the catchment to the beds.

After the irrigation season, he will move the used water through a drainpipe to a bioswale, where it will be filtered before entering a stream.

"Low technology approaches to things are what I really like," he said. "We have so many high-tech solutions, sometimes we forget to look for the simple solution."

Leckey, 62, said he gained an appreciation for low-tech solutions after spending five years abroad after attending the University of Oregon.

"It opened my eyes in that the way you grew up doing things isn't necessarily the best way to do things, and certainly isn't the only way," he said.

Other grant recipients in Oregon include Food Alliance, IRZ Consulting, Ecotrust, Oregon State University, Clean Water Services, Renewable Energy Solutions, Northwest Sustainable Energy for Economic Development, The Freshwater Trust and Northwest Natural Resource Group.

A complete listing of the 2011 national conservation innovation grants can be seen online at www.nrcs.usda.gov