

Six-Mile Canal Closing

CPNRD & Farmers Work Together to Increase Irrigation Efficiency



(Left): Farmers work to close the Six Mile canal to protect water supplies, future users and endangered species by increasing flows to the river.

“Being able to close the ditch had made these farms much more efficient with longer rows and less turnaround time. I can farm the same amount of land in less time. This increased the productivity and efficiency of our family farm. It also saves fuel and reduces energy costs,” said Dawson County farmer Mark Ostergard.

HISTORY

The Six Mile Irrigation Canal had been in place and diverting Platte River water since 1894, withdrawing an average of 2,377 acre-feet of water annually. After 116 years of use, more than 30 landowners and farmers along the canal were eager to convert their land to groundwater use. The change provides more efficiency and reliability than surface water, helps protect river flows and endangered species along the Platte.

BENEFITS of the PROJECT

- Protects water supplies, future users and endangered species by increasing flows to the river.
- Saves farmers fuel and labor costs, improving their bottom line.
- Farms can use new technology that makes irrigation more efficient and helps protect groundwater.
- Allows farmers to efficiently apply nutrients to crops through chemigation systems using center-pivot irrigation.
- Protects lives, saves the county dollars and improves roads through reduced maintenance costs while removing bridges and other hazards to drivers within the road right-of-way.
- Increases productivity and efficiency of the family farm. By filling in the canal farmers have added land to grow crops and longer, more efficient rows on their property.
- Eliminating the canal, increases flow to the river and irrigates the same amount of acres.



(Above): The Six Mile Irrigation Canal at its peak, provided irrigation water to approximately 1,700 acres and multiple landowners. (Below) After the removal of the canal, field rows are longer which saves farmers time and fuel.

“This project allows us to return water to the river which will help protect endangered species, make irrigation more efficient for farmers, put more land into crop production and improve public safety,” said Ron Bishop, former general manager of the Central Platte NRD.



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“County and state roads also benefited from the removal of the Six Mile canal which makes roads wider and safer. It really has been an improvement for the roads. It was a relief for us. The narrow crossings made roads dangerous and now they are as wide as they need to be,” said Tim Wolf, road foreman for Dawson County Department of Roads.



(Above): The removal of the canal protects lives, saves the county dollars and improves roads through reduced maintenance costs by removing bridges and other hazards to drivers within the road right-of-way.



“I can now irrigate with a touch of a button on my cell phone which can turn my pivot on or off and saves me time and labor,” said Roger Wahlgren, Six Mile Canal Board Member.



(Right): Farmers can now take advantage of new technology such as using cell phones to operate pivots and check fields.

“Fields are now more aesthetically pleasing and level since the canal has been pushed in. Also, it was difficult to irrigate when there was no water in the ditch. With groundwater I don’t have to worry about reliability of surface water during early season irrigation,” said Pat Hecox, Dawson County farmer.



(Above): Diversion gates from the Platte River to the Six Mile Canal.

(Right) Map of the Six Mile Canal.

