Advancing Water Resilience in the West

" I was totally astounded about how much water I could cut back."

- Water Resilience Field Day Attendee

Background

Advancing Water Resilience in the West is a collaboration between the American Farmland Trust (farmland.org), the Dry Farming Institute (dryfarming.org), USDA Climate Hubs (climatehubs.usda.gov/), OSU (smallfarms.oregonstate.edu/smallfarms/dry-farming), the Washington Water Trust (washingtonwatertrust.org/) and ORCAN (oregonclimateag.org/). The original project goal was to **strengthen peer-to-peer producer communities** of practice across Washington, Oregon, and California to advance landscape level agricultural and **food system resilience** in a water limited future.

As drought and extreme weather events intensify conflicts over water along the west, collaboration on climate smart agricultural solutions across state boundaries has been limited. The partners involved in this project sought to address the **need for more water resilient strategies** on working lands while supporting small and mid-scale underserved producers, communities, and agricultural professionals to connect across state boundaries, access resources, and learn from one another.



This collaboration supported this overarching goal by delivering on the following:

- Coordinated a **better approach to research, education, and outreach** on water and climate resilient practices in Oregon, California and Washington by fostering a community of practice and sharing events in the community.
- Hosted six virtual sessions attended by 238 agricultural professionals focused on **best practices for supporting farmers and land stewards** with water resilient strategies. Sessions focused on water rights, rainwater harvesting, and catalyzing collaborative partnerships.

- Co-created **regional demonstrations** by partnering with 6 regional farms to demonstrate water resilience on their land and co-hosted field days attended by 150+ farmers.
- Increased knowledge, access to resources, and confidence related to climate change, climate stress as well as other water-resilience-building practices for 80+ beginning, small scale, veteran, and women producers via **peer-to-peer learning circles** hosted across the region.
- Amplified **farmer-led innovations** from the project by developing shareable case studies and storytelling from six demonstration farms.

Future Collaboration

Peer-to-peer communities of practice demonstrate that we are **stronger together**. Farmers will continue to innovate as they face more extreme weather events, navigate water laws, and other challenges. Advancing Water Resilience brought together a collaborative team of agricultural professionals, farmers, land stewards, and others interested in fostering a more water resilient future. We will continue to identify resources so we can **expand this effort** in new ways.

There is more work to be done to meet the water resilience needs of our communities. We suggest the following approaches, as lessons learned from the Water Resilience Collaborative, to guide future work:

- Focus on co-creating virtual workshops for technical service providers to ensure their unique needs and interests are met
- Emphasize soil moisture monitoring with accountability & partnership
- Focus on community building through collaborative design of demonstrations and learning circles
- Share farmer stories via case studies and other storytelling tools
- Develop creative cost-sharing to support on-farm demonstrations that help share the risk of adopting new practices with farmers

Contact Us

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