

CONSERVATION *Showcase*

Orchardist saves time, money, natural resources through NRCS program

Juan De LaTorre is a hard working, practical business person. So three years ago when he learned that the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) might be able to provide technical and financial assistance to help him install a more efficient irrigation system in his orchard, he decided it was worth looking into.

Today, Mr. De La Torre has a cost-share contract through NRCS' Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) to install a new sprinkler irrigation system in his 15-acre orchard. "This was something I would have had to pay for on my own," he says. "But with just a couple of hours of meeting with the NRCS, I'm receiving about half of the cost of installation of the system," Mr. De La Torre says.

When he first applied for the program three years ago, Mr. De LaTorre's application – based on local resource priorities – did not rank high enough in the selection process for funding. But this past year it did.

Once the system is completed, Mr. De La Torre says he will have improved irrigation

water efficiency, better frost control, and improved equipment management. With the new system, he says, "you just flip a switch and there you go."

Mr. De La Torre says many other producers could benefit from the programs and



Juan De La Torre is saving time and money with help from the NRCS.

services offered by the NRCS. "Unfortunately, what scares some people about getting help through farm programs," he says, "is the idea that there's a lot of paperwork involved. But it's not that much of a hassle at all." Working with the NRCS, Mr. De La Torre says, is just common sense. "It's a really simple process," he says, "and it has saved me thousands of dollars."

NRCS Resource Conservationist Sergio Paredes says, it's gratifying to provide technical and financial assistance to pro-

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Juan De LaTorre

ducers as they work to improve their agricultural operations and protect natural resources. “Mr. De La Torre is among a growing group of Hispanic producers who are benefiting from the help the NRCS offers,” he says. “Once they’ve



Juan De La Torre (left) and NRCS’ Sergio Paredes go over the conservation plan.

had a chance to work with us,” Paredes says, “I think they’ll find we’re a good group to work with.”

*Ron Nichols, NRCS Washington
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