

CONSERVATION Showcase

Instilling “Tried and True” Into Technology

NRCS has a reputation for bringing “tried and true” technology to New Mexico’s farms and ranches. But, to make that technology “tried and true” sometimes NRCS is the innovator who is testing new ideas and options. A case in point is a field trial of a plastic-lined steel water tank with a false bottom.

The Deming Field Office has launched a demonstration to test the value of false bottom water tanks because such tanks weigh significantly less than traditional tanks and are relatively easy to install. These factors make the materials for false bottom tanks easier to transport to remote locations and put in place – an important factor in New Mexico’s vast stretches of rangeland.

False bottom water tanks are tanks that have steel walls that support a plastic liner which contains the water. The site is prepared so the plastic liner rests on a six to twelve inch bed of sand. The tank operates as usual for a livestock watering system - with a windmill or solar power unit used to pump the water, water stored in the tank, and a pipe that feeds a water trough which is regulated by a float.

While many are familiar with the use of false bottom tanks in urban settings during mild weather conditions, NRCS New Mexico wanted to test the applicability in a more severe rural environment.

To test the tanks after installation, NRCS is monitoring the tank over a two-year period. The monitoring for this demonstration started three days after installation that occurred in the fall of 2006. Checks continued once a week for three weeks and then moved to every three months. Monitoring continues every three months for a minimum of eleven times over the two-year period. Checks may also



occur at any other times deemed necessary, or as required to inspect reported problems.

The results of the demonstration have been favorable thus far. Concerns that were raised initially and which are being watched closely are the possibility of rodent damage, protection of the liner from ultraviolet rays, and freezing and impact damage. The final analysis is due in the fall of 2008.

The goal of the demonstration is to develop NRCS standards and specifications for the bottomless tanks that may be used in cost-share programs like the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) that helps so many farmers and ranchers with conservation improvements.

Stay tuned for the results of this work that could bring ranchers an easier way to install a tank in remote locations.