

North Plains Groundwater Conservation District

TEEA 2018 Winner: Agriculture



Master Irrigators Protect and Conserve Groundwater

The North Plains Groundwater Conservation District's (NPGCD) Master Irrigator Program is twenty-four hours of intensive irrigation education. The purpose of the program is to teach producers irrigation management and conservation practices to save water, conserve energy, build soil health, and enhance their own profitability.

In 1955, NPGCD became the second groundwater conservation district in the state. Their purpose is to protect, conserve, and manage groundwater resources in the North Texas Panhandle. As the demand for water increases, the district's purpose becomes increasingly important.

The NPGCD's Master Irrigator Program inspires participants to be stewards of the environment. The curriculum covers topics such as rain gauge monitoring, drought-resistant planting, low-energy irrigation methods, and conservation tillage practices. All the courses are designed to help participants use less water and to maximize their return on investment for every drop of water they use.

Through an agreement with the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service, participants who complete the course, and receive their Master Irrigator Certificate, have priority access to the NPGCD Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) cost-share fund. This fund provides producers with financial resources and one-on-one help to plan and implement practices on their own operations that they learn during the program.

The irrigation program started in 2016. Since then, 45 participants have earned their certificates. These Master Irrigators have contracts for \$795,000 worth of conservation equipment through EQIP.

Additionally, graduates of the program contribute to the protection and conservation of 127,000 acres of irrigated crop-land in the district.

NPGCD leads the way, not only in sustainable agriculture and water conservation, but in successfully providing education and training resources for producers in the North Texas Panhandle.