

Belding & TWT Launch Irrigation Trial to Conserve Water *Sprinkler System Designed for Efficiency*

FORT STOCKTON, Texas (April 15, 2022) — Belding Farms, one of the largest pecan growers in Texas, and Texas Water Trade, a nonprofit water-conservation organization, have launched their first joint project in Pecos County to save irrigation water through low-evaporation sprinklers.

The project is being carried out on 96 acres of Belding Farms' trees and is designed to determine whether they produce more pecans using the sprinkler system, whether less labor is required for the irrigation process, and how much water may be saved. The trial started on April 15.

"This irrigation trial is part of our ongoing effort to save water as a sound business practice and as a good steward of our aquifers," said Ernie Cockrell, the Chairman of Cockrell Investment Partners, the owner of Belding Farms. "We will consider expanding the sprinkler system if it proves successful."

The trial is being conducted in collaboration with Texas Water Trade, an organization that promotes voluntary water conservation as a way of helping to restore Comanche Springs. Texas Water Trade is covering about 20 percent of the \$500,000 cost of the trial and Belding Farms is covering the remaining 80 percent.

"We are delighted that Belding Farms is our first agricultural partner to undertake a program aimed at reducing groundwater pumping in an effort to sustain the aquifer and restore these springs," said Kinnan Golemon, chairman of the board of Texas Water Trade. "The less water we draw out of the aquifer, the greater our chances of returning Comanche Springs to more continuous flow."

The low-evaporation sprinklers spray large droplets from risers that are connected to a network of lateral lines, valves, and main lines. The rest of Belding Farms' 2,200-acre orchard is irrigated by the flood method.

The farm's entire irrigation system draws water from the Edwards-Trinity, Rustler and Capitan Reef aquifers.

ABOUT BELDING FARMS

Belding Farms (beldingpecanfarms.com) is owned by the Cockrell Family and has operated for more than 55 years in Pecos County. The farm produces an average of 5 million pounds of pecans a year on 2,200 acres of land. The operation invests \$2 million annually in employee

payroll and processing plant and has invested millions of dollars in irrigation efficiency over the years. Belding Farms is one of the oldest commercial establishments in Fort Stockton.

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ABOUT TEXAS WATER TRADE

Texas Water Trade (texaswatertrade.org) is a non-profit water-conservation organization unleashing the power of voluntary water markets in Texas to ensure clean, flowing water for people and nature. By enabling market-based water solutions, Texas Water Trade is ensuring economic growth, ecological resilience, and abundant water for present and future generations of Texans, no matter their income or zip code.

Funding for this irrigation trial was made possible by grants from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the USDA National Resource Conservation Service.

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