**WATER DESK SCRIPT: Cutting back on irrigation (Jerd Smith)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **VIDEO** | **AUDIO** |
| **SUGGESTED LEAD-IN**  Matt Rice  American Rivers  **Track 1**  Paul Bruchez  Rancher, Project Coordinator  **Track 2**  Kelly Ferrell,  Rancher  **Track 3**  Paul Bruchez  **Track 4**  Wendy Thompson  Rancher, Project Monitor  Jerd Smith  The Water Desk | **As a searing drought engulfs the American West, a groundbreaking experiment is underway on some of Colorado’s most remote, high-**  **altitude ranches. This research may make it easier for farms and**  **cities to share water in the Colorado River Basin. This kind of**  **science has never been done on this scale before. The big question:**  **will it work?**  **In this special report from the Water Desk, Fresh Water News’ Jerd**  **Smith reports.**  **------------------------------------------------------------------------------**  (Nat)  0:59 Forty million people depend on the Colorado River and its getting hotter and drier. There is less water in the river. We have to figure out how to do more with less.    **This summer, with nearly $1 million in funding, ranchers and researchers are seeing what happens when hay meadows aren’t irrigated, how much water is saved for the river under different weather conditions, and with different kinds of hay.**  8:33 We’ve spent generations learning how to irrigate these fields. Now we’re learning how not to irrigate them.  **Agriculture uses 80 percent of the water in the Colorado River.**  **The knowledge these researchers gain could give ranchers from Arizona to California tools to help conserve their water as well**.  3:00 We’re concerned we might see water separated from agriculture.  We just want to know there is a back-up plan. We’re raising food  here. We need some answers.  **To find out, 9 ranch families with property along the river**  **have coordinated planning, installing measuring devices and**  **monitors, the turning off headgates, and closely monitoring the wandering cattle and broken diversion structures that can skew**  **results.**  3:20 There are so many variables.    **Still, faced with yet another drought year and what could become an opportunity to earn money for sharing their water, most ranchers**  **were willing to put in the time and field work necessary.**  1:18 It’s important to get scientific data before we can make decisions  on the Colorado River. With the data, we can make decisions based on science, not a gut feeling.  **Ahead lies months of work, and years of seeing if results can be replicated. Still, that these ranchers, conservationists and**  **researchers were able to come up with the cash and the**  **commitment to the work, is exciting for people who care deeply**  **about agriculture and this river.**  **Jerd Smith, Fresh Water News, reporting for the Water Desk** |