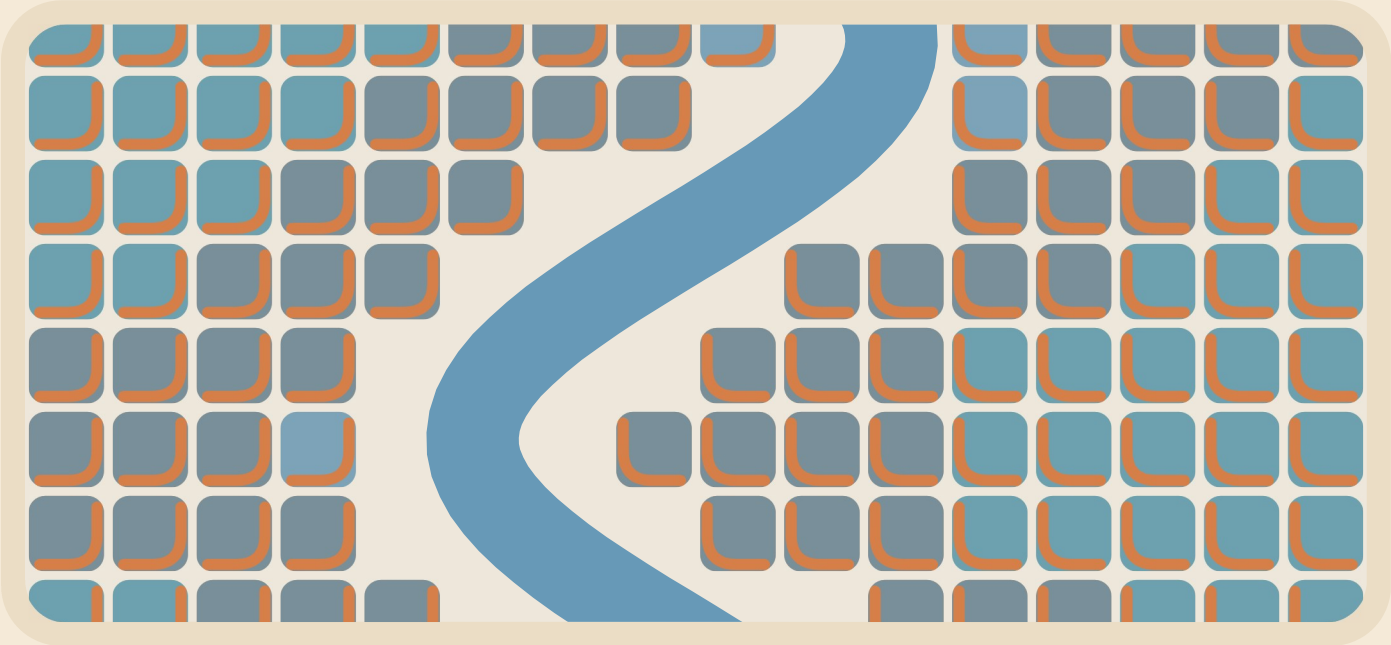
Water idea | Mississippi River | Colorado River | Ocean coasts

What if every acre held its own storm?



A plan farmers can build with what they already own

Swipe →

THE PROBLEM

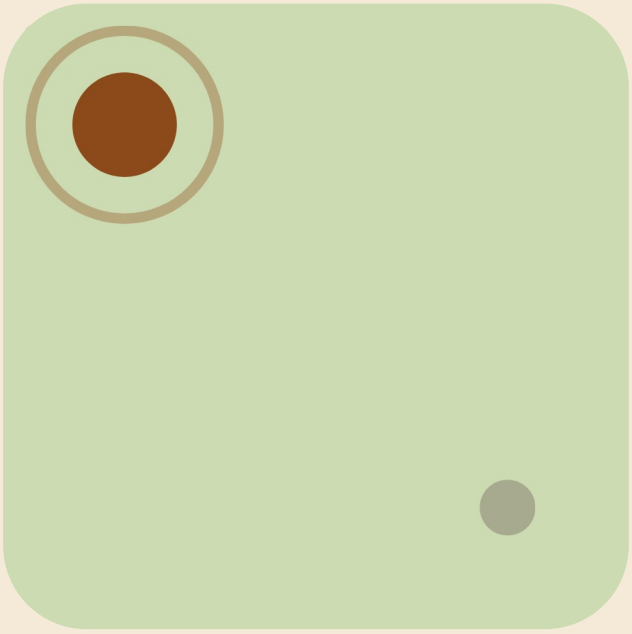
The river is overdrawn. The aquifers are next.

With Lake Mead and Lake Powell low, farms lean harder on groundwater. Rain is rare and comes in bursts, so most of it flashes off the land.

Most of this land is privately owned. So the fix has to start with landowners.

1 STEP ONE

Find the field's high corner.

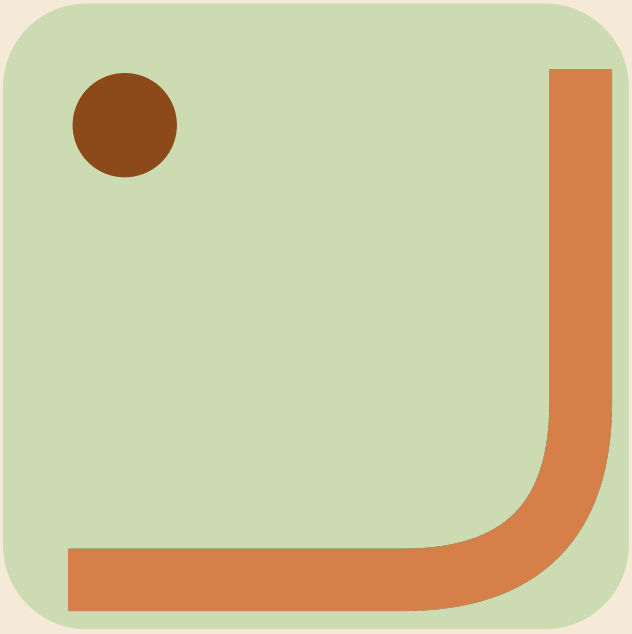


Every field and pasture tilts a little. Water always leaves through the low side.

That high spot is where the soil comes from.

2 STEP TWO

Push it to the two low edges.

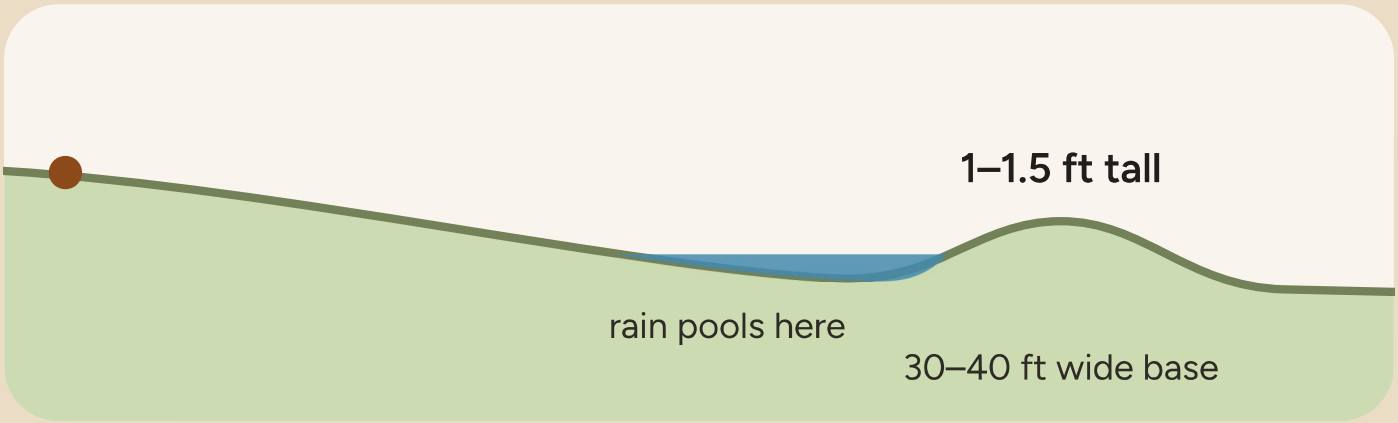


Shape a low, rounded berm along both low sides, with a wide curve at the corner.

A box blade or scraper you already own can do it.

BUILT TO FARM OVER

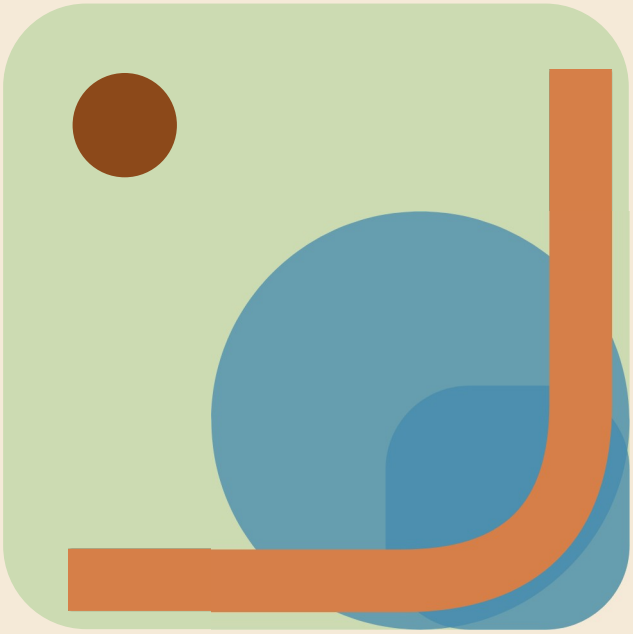
No sharp edges. Rolling country.



- Side slopes 8:1 or flatter
- Tractors cross at field speed
- Crops grow right on the berm
- No ditches, no square corners

3 STEP THREE

Let the rain stay and soak in.

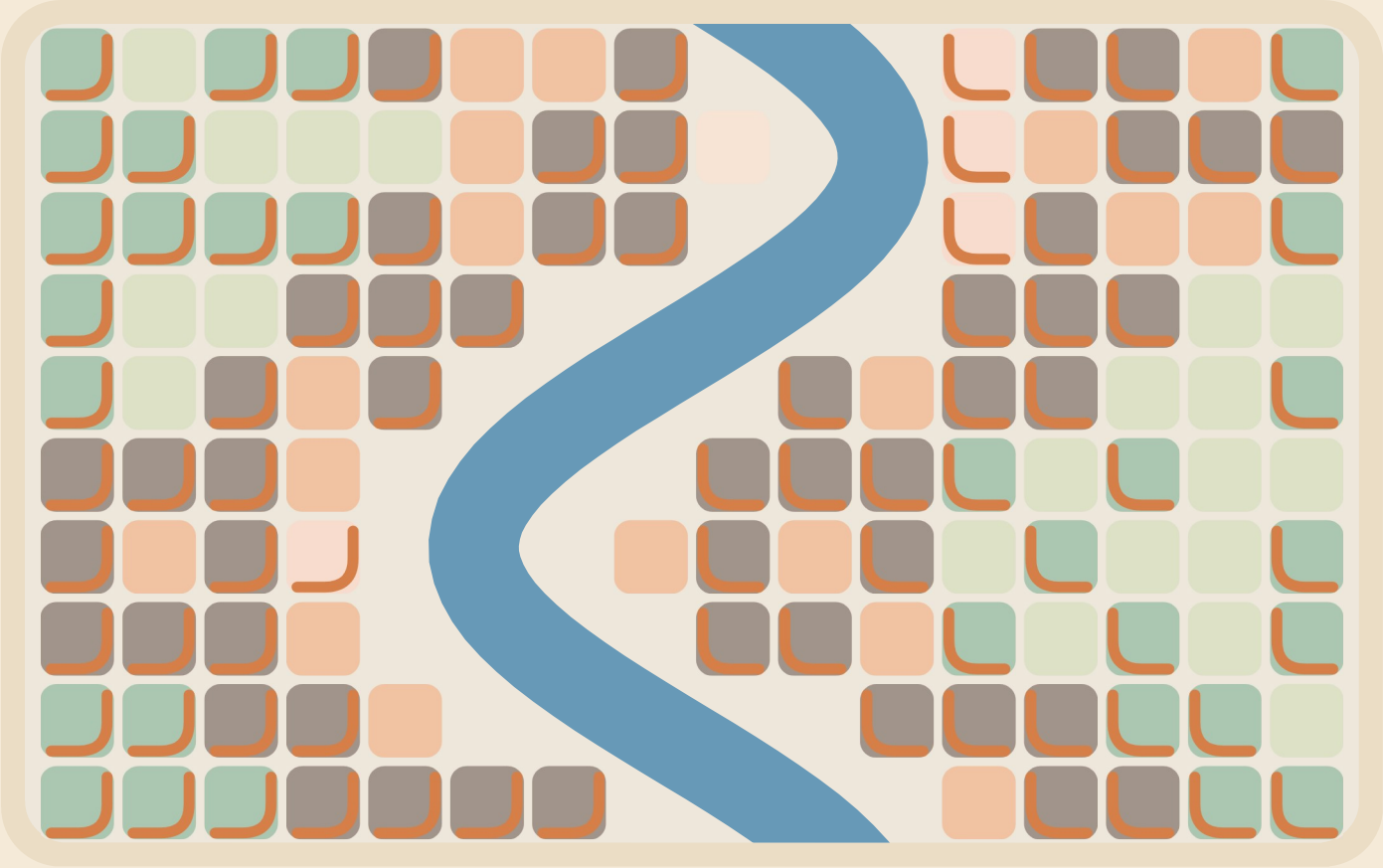


Monsoon and snowmelt runoff stops at the berm instead of flashing into the wash.

It has days, not minutes, to sink toward the aquifer.

4 STEP FOUR

Neighbors join in.



One acre does little. Farms and ranches across the basin act like one big sponge.

EVERY BASIN, TWO WINS

Water that stays can't flood a town or wash out to sea.

Refills aquifers

Water held for days has time to sink instead of running to the ocean.

Cuts flood peaks

Thousands of small basins slow the rush, so creeks and rivers crest lower downstream.

Biggest effect in ordinary and moderate storms. Major river floods still need levees and wetlands.

WHERE THE RUNOFF GOES NOW

One idea, three places

Mississippi River

Farm runoff rides the river to the Gulf, carrying soil and fertilizer with it and swelling spring floods.

Colorado River

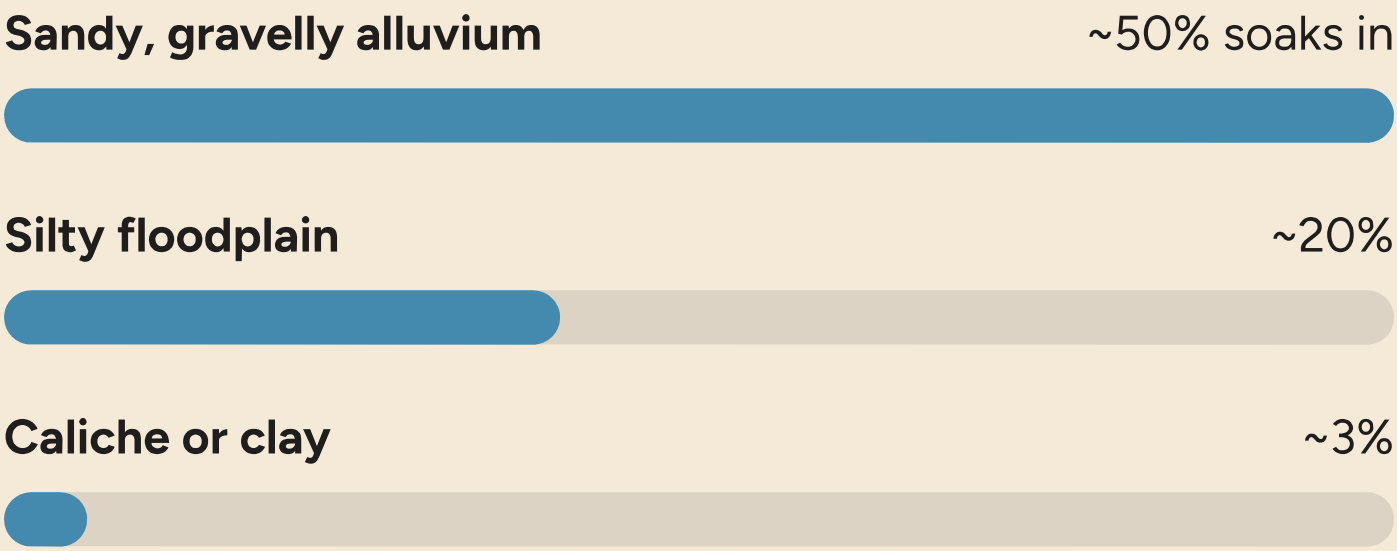
The river rarely reaches the sea anymore. Here the loss is flash floods tearing through washes, then evaporating.

Coastal farmland

Storm water goes straight to the ocean. Recharge also helps push back salt water creeping into coastal wells.

THE HONEST CATCH

Soil decides where the water goes.



Desert sun evaporates water fast. Gravelly basin soils let it drop quickly. Caliche hardpan stops it cold unless it is ripped open.

Illustrative estimates, not site data.

CHECK FIRST

Out West, the runoff may already belong to someone.

Basin states run on "first in time, first in right." Water held on your land can count against downstream rights holders, and some states limit capture.

- Talk to your state water office and conservation district before moving dirt.

HOW TO MAKE IT WORK

Four moves for conservation districts

Target

Fund alluvial fans and sandy benches first.

Clear the rights

Set up a simple state permit path for holding runoff.

Link up

Credit on-farm recharge in existing water-banking programs.

Pay per acre

Cost-share makes it worth the landowner's time.

YOUR MOVE

The land is ours. So is the fix.

Would you shape your field or pasture if a cost-share covered the dirt work?

- Try the interactive map: link in the first comment