

# Swaps help the West manage water

By Zack Colman, Christian Science Monitor

When a market for trading water rights opened in central Nebraska last year, one of the initial bidders wasn't a corn farmer, or even a water user at all in the traditional sense. It was the Platte River Recovery Implementation Program, a conservation group investing to replenish the region's major river, the Platte.

By buying some water and then not using it, the group is allowing more to stay in the river.

The move bucked tradition, for sure. Typically, water rights aren't traded at all or they are swapped among farmers. But the West may be at the dawn of a new era in water management.

Markets for water trading are on the rise, backed by many conservationists and farmers alike. They say there's a major opportunity here if done right – the chance to make the most of a precious resource.

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