

## Comments by the IAM President



**Alan Peterson,**  
**IAM President**

Dear Irrigators,  
What a difference a year makes. Last year, in my area, potatoes were being planted, small grains were being seeded, and

there were thoughts of planting corn. It's quite different this spring. I still have snow on the ground and nobody is thinking of planting yet. I'm still praying for good spring rains that will recharge our top soil moisture and keep our aquifers with plenty of water.

On Tuesday, April 2, the governor and the DNR proposed a new fee increase plan (HF 1679) on all water users in Minnesota. For irrigation the new fee would be 35 dollars per million gallons of water pumped. Under the new fee rate your average fee will be raised 4 times what you previously paid. On Thursday, April 4, I testified in the House Environment, Natural Resources, and Ag Finance Committee against this fee increase. On Tuesday, April 9, the bill was amended and the fee lowered to 22 dollars per million gallons. Your IAM board continues to work on this bill. There is another bill (HF 1100) which would require an irrigator to get permission from the DNR before being able to drill an irrigation well. The IAM is also working on changing this bill.

I have been notified of situations where the DNR is requiring longer pump tests, and in some cases aquifer

**PRESIDENT continued on page 2**



## INSIDE

ADVERTISERS	2-8
Directors	2
SWCD News	3
Commissioners Column	5
Ground Water Concerns	6
Registration	8

## Permit Requests in 2012

**At the 2013 Convention the Minnesota DNR announced that 250 irrigation permits were requested in 2012**

Sauk Centre, Minnesota — The Minnesota DNR is experiencing a jump in irrigation permit requests as forecasts call for continuing droughty conditions.

Typically, the DNR processed around 45 permits a year, said Princessa VanBuren Hanson at last week's Irrigators Association of Minnesota convention in Sauk Centre. For the past few years the DNR has had 200 permits a year. It jumped last year with 250 permit requests, she told the 180 IAM members.

The permits aren't spread uniformly across the state, she said. There are pockets of irrigation use based on landscape, soil types and aquifers.

Irrigation uses the most groundwater which is also shared by people, nature and business. But in times of severe drought, the public will be the first to have water access, she said.

There are a handful of watersheds that are suspended from irrigation activity, Hanson said. And, if the drought would continue and grow in 2013, the DNR has a firm plan in place to limit or suspend irrigation activities.

Restricting water use is not on state lawmakers' dockets, said ag lobbyist Bruce Kleven.

But the challenge continues for irrigators to get the word out to the legislature on how irrigators use the resource, said IAM president Alan Peterson in an interview following the convention. It's especially important with drought conditions. It's now known how a state legislature, that has shifted from a rural to more metropolitan one, will react to irrigation concerns.

But Hanson applauded irrigators' use of the resource. "You are all doing a better job with the water you are using to get better crops," she said. "Pat yourselves on the back."

Researchers are studying irrigation and soil fertility, said Bruce Montgomery of the Minnesota Department of Agriculture. At the Herman Rosholt farm, researchers are studying nutrient recommendations, looking at best management practices for irrigation. The research is also ongoing in Dakota County. It is part of a public-private effort.

Research results from the Rosholt farm in 2012 showed a moderate loss of nitrogen due to drought, said researcher Josh Stamper. Major precipitation events drive N loss due to leaching.

There is a portion of the nitrate that is going to lost no matter what when it comes to row crop production, he said. The slow release and nitrification inhibitors did not reduce N loss to leaching more than a split application of nitrogen.

An irrigation project in East Otter Tail uses the factors of evapotranspiration in determining water use for irrigation. The EOT SWCD received IAM's service award for their efforts.

Farmers can use the information gathered by the SWCD to determine if and how much irrigation should take place.

The state has three weather stations in East Otter Tail and is looking to expand its efforts in the state. Every station would cover 20 miles of irrigated area.

IAM members were encouraged to learn that funding has been included in the state budget for a University of Minnesota

Extension irrigator position. The position has been vacant since the retirement of extension specialist Jerry Wright.

Organization members also support an initiative calling for digital photos of copper taken to scrap dealers. Currently the law calls for dealers to get the person's name, vehicle type and license plate from those selling copper. While the information is good, a digital photo would be beneficial to catching and prosecuting those stealing copper.

Copper thefts are an issue in the farming community, including the theft of irrigation equipment that may contain copper.

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*cstender@agrinews.com or (218) 998-3081*



**Sherburne County Sheriff Joel Brott thanks the Minnesota Irrigators for their support in moving forward in the Minnesota Legislature a proposed revision to the Scrap Metal Dealer MN Statute 325E.21 record keeping requirements of purchased material such as stolen copper wire.**

## Daily Crop "ET" 2013 Available

*By: Jerry Wright, Agricultural Engineer*

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## Welcome to the Spring 2013 Newsletter



**Jerry Wright,**  
**Membership Secretary**

This newsletter comes to you thanks to the support of the enclosed advertisers and the current IAM irrigator and industry membership and those extra mile supporters listed in the newsletter.

The IAM Board of Directors encourages you to seriously consider becoming a member if you have not already joined.

The Directors feel that we all need each other's ideas, experience and support to continue the IAM activities into the coming year especially in keeping

a watchful eye on your irrigation water rights and user fees as well as represent the interests of irrigation practices across the state and at the Minnesota Legislature.

To become a member return the application form included on the last page of this newsletter with a check made payable to the "IAM". There are many benefits in belonging to IAM with the best one being simply knowing that you have joined in partnership with your neighboring irrigators in supporting your IAM officers and the board of directors' legislative and agency contact activities. As a member you can also be placed on the IAM email alert list if you submit your email address.

If you have a topic that you would like to see discussed in a future newsletter issue, drop a note to IAM president, Alan Peterson at [<alpetefarm@frontiernet.net>](mailto:alpetefarm@frontiernet.net)

Articles for the newsletter are solicited and gathered by the IAM officers and Membership Secretary, Jerry Wright who can be contacted at [<wrightsj@charter.net>](mailto:wrightsj@charter.net) Crow River Press, in Hutchinson, MN manages the advertiser space and edits, prints and mails the newsletter.

*If you are not interested in receiving future mailings from Irrigators Association of Minnesota (IAM), please send a note to: [wrightsj@charter.net](mailto:wrightsj@charter.net) or IAM, c/o Fletcher, 24 S. Edquist St., Appleton, MN 56208*

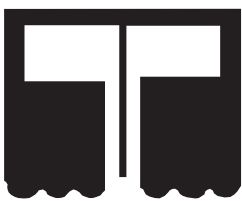
PRESIDENT continued from page 1

pump tests. While I don’t support the way the DNR is handling some appropriation requests; it is reality they are requiring them. These tests can be very expensive; so make sure you visit with your irrigation dealer before starting a project.

The Irrigators Association of Minnesota is working tirelessly on your behalf. If you are a member; thank you for your continued support. If you are not a member; become active and fill out the membership form in this newsletter. We need your support now more than ever.

Hve a safe spring.

Alan Peterson, Irrigators Association of Minnesota President



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Irrigation Scheduler Program offered to Irrigators in Benton County and portions of Morrison County

As irrigators your plates are full with many daily decisions: when to start irrigating, when and how much to apply, when to stop irrigating, how fast to run the pivot, how uniform does the pivot apply water, how much water does and is the soil holding, how much water did the crop use today/last week? Benton Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) offers a FREE Irrigation Scheduling Program to irrigators in Benton County and portions of Morrison County (Figure 1) to assist in answer a few of the previously stated

questions.

The Irrigation Scheduler Program is designed to give the irrigator a second opinion on in-field soil moisture status that can assist the irrigator’s decision on if and when to irrigate. The program is designed to prevent crop yield loss due to insufficient moisture and prevent groundwater contamination due to over application of water and leaching of nutrients and sustainable water use.

Services provided by Benton SWCD are: weekly visits to check soil moisture (includes a rain gauge for the season),

provide weekly computer soil moisture graph illustrating current soil moisture deficit and projected deficit, provide access to the daily crop water “ET” via telephone message, e-mail, internet, provide a year-end summary (graph) showing irrigation total(s), rainfall amount(s), and potential leaching events, provided instructions on how to use the program to effectively manage soil moisture.

PROGRAM continued on page 8

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## Assistance Available for Irrigation Efficiency Improvements

*Brad Wenz, Stearns County Soil and Water Conservation District*

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), partnering with Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCD's), is expanding programs designed to help producers improve irrigation efficiency, protect groundwater, and save energy. These programs offer technical and financial assistance to eligible producers. In addition, USDA Rural Development (RD) and many local electric companies offer grants and loans for energy saving components of irrigation systems.

NRCS continues to help irrigators through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP). EQIP has expanded significantly in 2013 to help producers access new, water and energy saving technology. As in previous years, eligible applicants can receive funding for low pressure nozzle conversions, pumping plant modification, and irrigation water management. Low pressure nozzle conversion components consist of installed sprinkler packages, pressure regulators, pressure gauges, and/or drop tubes on existing center pivots. Pumping plant modification is limited to the addition of a variable frequency drive (VFD). Assistance with component modifications in the pump has been discontinued.

Irrigation Water Management (IWM) is a critical component of efficient and profitable irrigation. It is also a required practice for low pressure nozzle conversion funding through EQIP. Eligible scheduling methods include the Irrigation Checkbook and other approved systems based on soil moisture measurement and prediction. Technicians in your local NRCS and SWCD offices can help you select and set up the IWM system that will work best for your operation. Incentive payments may be available for up to 3 years for this practice.

Assistance for IWM was vastly expanded in 2013. NRCS initiated an increasing payment rate based on the level of scheduling technology planned in the contract. These levels range from "Basic" (using feel and appearance for soil moisture testing and paper versions of the Checkbook scheduler) to "Intermediate" and "Advanced" scheduling with the use of soil moisture sensors, telemetry, data loggers, and computerized spreadsheets. NRCS also added separate funding for soil moisture sensors, data recorders, and sprinkler uniformity testing. There is also funding available through EQIP to hire a certified Technical Service Provider (TSP) to write your IWM plan.

NRCS also offers assistance for energy conservation practices through the EQIP On-Farm Energy Initiative. Applicants would start with an NRCS approved on-farm energy audit. Funding is available to hire a TSP to complete these audits if desired. After the audit is performed, producers can apply for financial help with eligible energy improvements recommended in the audit. For irrigators, this includes variable speed drives for existing electric motors, and electric motor upgrades.

Producers can apply for EQIP funds at any time through their designated USDA-NRCS office.

All applications will be scored and ranked according to how well they meet certain national, state, and local resource criteria. This ranking will help NRCS select successful applicants within funding pools with limited allocations. Producers have until the end of the NRCS work day on April 19, 2013 to submit their EQIP application to be considered for funding in 2013. We realize that this date is close to the time this article reaches you. However, we anticipate a similar program next year so contact your local NRCS or SWCD office to start the planning process and be ready for the next EQIP funding period.

Another program that irrigators can utilize is the Rural Energy For America Program (REAP) administered by USDA Rural Development. This program offers assistance to ag. producers and rural small businesses to complete a variety of projects including renewable energy systems, energy efficiency improvements, and energy audits. Producers that spend at least \$6,000 on eligible projects

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can be reimbursed up to 25% of the associated costs in grant funds. They can also apply for guaranteed loans up to 50% of eligible costs. Like EQIP, all REAP applications will be subjected to a scoring and ranking process to select the best applications for funding. For more information, visit the USDA Rural Development website at: [www.rurdev.usda.gov/mn](http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/mn). Go to the Minnesota Energy Programs section. You can also call Ron Omann, USDA RD, at 651-602-7796.

Also don't forget to contact your local electric company if you are contemplating any energy saving projects on your farm, including those related to irrigation. There is a surprising array of loans, grants, and rebates available from these companies depending on who serves your farm.

The USDA and their SWCD partners remain committed to helping irrigators efficiently apply water to maintain profits and protect our natural resources. Visit with the NRCS and SWCD folks in your local USDA Service Center to find out how they can help you with your irrigation improvements.

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### Drought information website

<http://mndnr.gov/climate/drought>

### Water conservation

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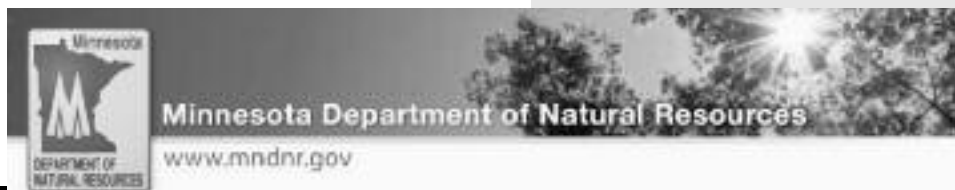
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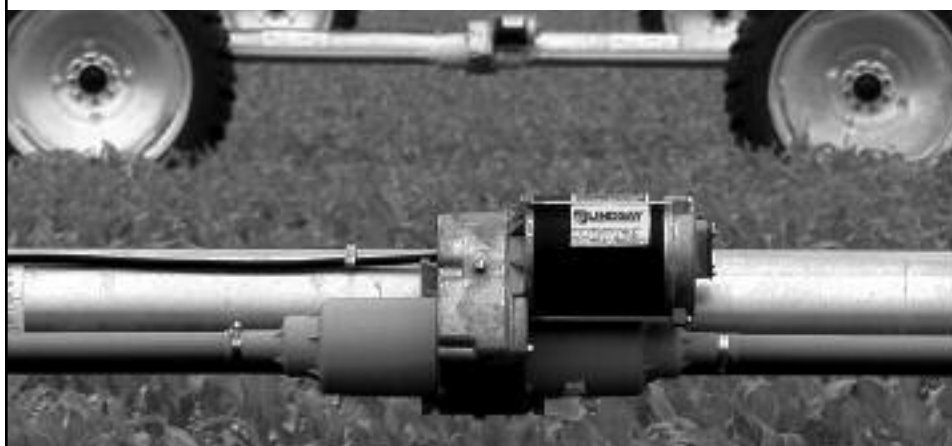
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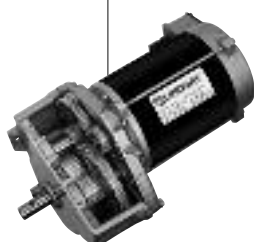
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IAM Bruce Kleven, Ag Lobbyist, sharing key issues and special points of the upcoming MN Legislature Session.



Mark Seeley—Extension Climatologist - University of Minnesota discussing the past weather patterns and the impacts of the current drought situations in numerous counties.



Long-time IAM members Jerome Edling, Clear Lake and John Carruth, Danvers—sharing irrigation stories at the IAM Annual Convention.



MN Department of Agriculture, Assistant Ag Commissioner Matt Wohlman, sharing thoughts on MDA programs and responding to questions from IAM Convention attendees. Wohlman owns and operates a fifth-generation family farming operation based in Renville County. He also serves on the University of Minnesota Extension Citizen Advisory Board and on the board of directors for the University of Minnesota College of Food, Agriculture and Natural Sciences Alumni Society.



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## Recent irrigation workshops well attended

By Jennifer Gallus, Minnesota Department of Agriculture

While fields lay dormant beneath a blanket of snow, irrigators in central and northwest Minnesota made time to participate in recent irrigation clinics sponsored by East Otter Tail Soil and Water Conservation District (EOT SWCD) and the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA). The workshops took place in late February and early March in Osage, Parkers Prairie, and Staples.

"This was our fourth year of workshops," EOT SWCD and Wadena SWCD District Manager Darren Newville said. "Attendance is climbing. Last year, we probably reached 50 producers, whereas this year we reached 90 producers and an additional 25 agency staff."

With eight irrigation related specialists on hand to not only share the most recent irrigation technology along with environmental awareness, but also provide a hands-on learning demonstration where irrigators could get their hands dirty while fine-tuning soil moisture skills, the program was packed with utility.

"Feedback after the clinics has been very good," Newville said. "Producers are thankful that we are doing this, plus we are bringing light to groundwater issues across the state, as well as the possible issues that could affect them."

Workshop presenters included Dr. Dean Steele P.E., Associate Professor at North Dakota State University, who discussed irrigation water management in irrigated sandy soils; EOT SWCD Irrigation Scheduler Technician Arnold Rethemeier who shared how the EOT SWCD Irrigation Scheduler Program works; MDA Soil Scientist Luke Stuewe who discussed nitrogen issues in Minnesota, as well as the geological background of the central sands; and MDA Research Scientist Joshua Stamper who shared an understanding of how crop physiology fits into nitrogen and irrigation management. Hands-on and visual presenters were

Arnold Rethemeier and NRCS District

Conservationist Bruce Becker who provided the hands-on soil moisture testing demonstration; EOT SWCD Technician Aaron Salo, NRCS Soil Scientist Thomas Champa, and EOT SWCD Ag Inspector Cassie Waltz presented a visual of groundwater flow and contamination sources; and Champa also demonstrated a powerful soil health visual with regard to soil organic matter and aggregate stability.

"We want to keep informing growers of the latest issues, and provide them with the best tools for managing irrigation in the most economical and environmentally safe way possible," Newville said. He added that the workshops will continue in the future, although they may be scaled back to one or two clinics next winter due to decreased funding availability.

**Web sites referenced at the workshops can be found on the EOT SWCD's web site at [www.eotswcd.org](http://www.eotswcd.org) under the irrigation tab at the top of the page.**



Service to Irrigators Award

### IAM 2013 Awards

On a related note, the EOT SWCD was chosen for the Service to Irrigation Award from the Irrigators Association of Minnesota at its annual meeting in February. The honor was awarded the SWCD for work with its irrigation scheduling program, the irrigation clinics it hosts, the new weather stations that have been recently installed, and for its helpful irrigation web site.

"We felt honored for being recognized," Newville said. "We weren't expecting it!"

**SERVICE TO IRRIGATORS AWARD** was presented to Dale Schock, by Alan Peterson, IAM president at left.

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## MDA PROGRAM TRANSFER

MDA's Pesticide & Fertilizer Management Division's Reorganization

*By Jane Boerboom, Facility Response Supervisor, Pesticide & Fertilizer Management Division*

As a result of the MDA's Pesticide & Fertilizer Management Division's Reorganization implementation, Jane Boerboom-Facility Response Unit Supervisor will now be supervising the MDA's Chemigation Program. Jim Freilinger will be involved in the program assisting both Jane and Stacy Weldon-Franco, our office administrative assistant, with conducting inspections, reviewing applications and being involved in compliance and enforcement issues.

**Jane Boerboom**

PROGRAM QUESTIONS  
(651) 201-6540

jane.boerboom@state.mn.us

**Jim Freilinger**

TECHNICAL/REGULATORY QUESTIONS  
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jim.freilinger@state.mn.us

**Stacy Weldon-Franco**

PERMIT APPLICATION QUESTIONS  
(651) 201-6696

stacy.weldon-franco@state.mn.us

For program questions, contact Jane. For technical/regulatory questions, contact Jim. For permit application help, contact Stacy.

Because the chemigation program operates with very little revenue annually, the MDA encourages persons wishing to obtain a chemigation permit to apply online at the MDA website. Hard copy permit applications will still be accepted; however, they generally require longer to process.

When submitting a permit application remember that all antipollution equipment required by the chemigation rule must be in place and operational BEFORE applying for a chemigation permit. This includes the mainline check valve, injection line check valve, low pressure shutdown switch and interlock between the injection unit and the water supply.

Good luck and have a safe and productive season!

*For more information, contact  
Jane Boerboom, Facility Response Supervisor,  
Pesticide & Fertilizer Management Division,  
651-201-6540*

## Results

*By Ron Struss, MDA Fertilizer Field Unit Supervisor*

### Survey results encourages MDA to explore ET weather station expansion

More than two-thirds of Minnesota irrigators who are not using ET (evapotranspiration) information to schedule irrigation said they would likely use it if it was available in their area, and they would like to receive ET information in a variety of ways, including e-mail, text message, and website download.

Those are two main messages learned from a survey completed by 106 irrigators at the IAM convention and three central sands irrigator workshops this past winter. Note that this was not a scientific survey as it did not randomly sample all irrigators across Minnesota. However, it provides the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA), who conducted the survey, with useful guidance on a project that would increase the number of ET weather stations in irrigated areas across Minnesota.

The project would expand on the four ET weather stations already installed by East Otter Tail SWCD to an approximate total of 12, so that all major irrigation areas of the state would have an ET weather station within 20 miles. Clean Water Funds would be used and the stations would piggyback as much as possible on existing weather stations, such

as weather stations operated by MDOT at airports. MDA is interested in helping growers better schedule irrigation to prevent over-irrigation which can transport nitrate from nitrogen fertilizer below the crop rooting zone and into drinking water supplies.

### Here is more input growers shared on the survey:

- The most common methods of scheduling irrigation are condition of the crop (75% of respondents) and feel of soil (also 75% of respondents). Thirty percent (30%) of respondents use daily ET calculations, and 13% use a scheduling service.
- The majority of respondents (60%) are not using a computer based irrigation scheduling tool. Of those who are, 18% are using the UM checkbook spreadsheet, 4% are using the NDSU checkbook spreadsheet, and 9% are using "other".
- As mentioned before, 67% of respondents not using ET information to schedule irrigation would if it was readily available. Sixteen percent (16%) are uncertain if they would use it and 7% thought they are unlikely to use it. Ten percent (10%) responded that they are already using ET information.

*RESULTS continued on page 8*

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**RESULTS continued from page 7**

- As for how growers would like to receive ET information, 51% of respondents said by e-mail, 44% said by text message and 37% said by website. As these add up to over 100%, it indicates growers would like several options for receiving the information.
- Thirty percent (30%) of respondents have rain gauges on all their irrigated fields, 38% have rain gauges on several irrigated fields, and 27% have rain gauges on one irrigated field.

MDA thanks all who completed the survey! Based on the results, MDA staff are continuing to explore expanding the number of ET weather stations in irrigated areas of Minnesota. MDA has contacted other state agencies to see if the extra instruments needed for ET calculations can be added on to existing weather stations, and initial responses have been encouraging.

*For more information, contact Ron Struss, Fertilizer Field Unit Supervisor. Minnesota Department of Agriculture, 651-201-6269 / 651-280-0171 (cell) or ron.struss@state.mn.us*

**PROGRAM continued from page 2**


**Irrigators play an interactive role, being responsible for:**

- Notifying the SWCD office of weekly irrigation and rainfall amounts
- Inform SWCD office of crop emergence dates
- Inform SWCD of spraying dates (when pesticide application may restrict re-entry)
- Harvesting dates/Alfalfa cutting dates.

Benton SWCD's Irrigation Scheduler Management Program is currently being offered free of charge and does not require a contract. To be eligible for the program the land must be located in area illustrated in Figure 1. To sign up for the program or for additional question please contact Katie Winkelman with Benton Soil and Water Conservation District at 320 968 5300 X3 or katie@soiland-water.org.

If you are not located in the specified area other surrounding SWCDs have similar programs/services that are offered.

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