

Comments by the IAM President



Alan Peterson,
IAM President

DEAR IRRIGATORS,
Water continues to be a hot topic around the state of Minnesota. Changes in the legislature, as well as the 2012 drought, have brought water issues to the forefront of many discussions. The headline of an article I read last year titled, "The Land of 10,000 Lakes Going Dry," only adds fuel to the fire. It's not just Minnesota focusing on water issues; publications from around the country are running stories about water quality and quantity. As the world's population grows, competition for water will become an ever increasing concern.

This past legislative session there was a bill to significantly increase water permit fees. Through efforts from IAM, as well as several agricultural groups within the state, this fee increase was prevented from becoming law.

There was an amendment to Minnesota Statutes 2012, section 103G.271, that irrigators now need to apply for a preliminary well construction approval before drilling a new well. It reads, "The DNR commissioner shall provide an assessment of a proposed well needing a groundwater appropriation permit." Upon receiving DNR's assessment of the proposed well an irrigation well may be drilled. After the well is drilled, you still need to apply for a water appropriation permit from the DNR. If you have

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Irrigation Stewardship Tips from an Irrigator

By Jim Anderson, ANDERSONS FARM – Belgrade (4th generation farm)

Jim Anderson is an IAM Board Member from Bonanza Valley Irrigators Association

With the 2012 drought, low lake and stream levels through last winter, irrigation water management and increases in water user fees were high on the agenda for the 2013 Minnesota legislature. While there were no reporting fee increases there were many new provisions put into law that grants the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources power to further regulate how we use our state's water resources.

As responsible irrigators we need to do everything we can to efficiently and conservatively use our water, to work with our neighbors and project a positive public image, and work with state agencies to accurately provide information on water usage and insure that there is no contamination of our groundwater.

We can efficiently use and conserve water by:

1. Use irrigation scheduling. Most county NRCS offices have programs available and are a good tool to determine the need for additional irrigation water depending on the crop, stage of plant growth, and weather conditions. Evaporative transpiration values available on the internet, rain gauges, soil moisture blocks, a good sand shovel that can dig a hole as deep as the topsoil, and a couple good weathermen that have been known to tell the truth are also valuable tools for scheduling.

- 2. Conversion of high pressure sprinklers** to low pressure drop nozzles with pressure regulators.
- 3. Fix the leaks.** Leaking pipes, gaskets, and tower boots usually place the water where it is least needed; by tower wheel tracks and at the pivot and do little to grow a crop.
- 4. If water is needed at germination, apply no more than necessary.** Excessive moisture especially applied prior to a rain event can cause compaction and hinder later root growth.
- 5. Allow crops to become rooted** and somewhat stressed during early crop growth. This will provide for stronger root systems later in July and August and reduce problems with root diseases.
- 6. Fix all end gun shutoff valves** and swing tower corner machine shutoff valves to uniformly water all areas of the field and not waste water on non-cropland and roads.
- 7. In the future adopt variable rate irrigation technology.** Even today most computer driven irrigators can be programed to deliver more water to certain quadrants of a field.

With the high commodity prices of the last several years the public has a totally different opinion of us compared to their perceptions of 30 years ago during the farm crisis. The public is not as tolerant of some of the things that happen.

We need to try harder to communicate with our neighbors and maintain a positive public image.

- 1. Talk to your neighbors about their wells and water systems.** Encourage them to contact you if they have problems. Offer your help and expertise if they are experiencing water shortages during a dry year. It may be something as simple as a pump not being set too shallow.
- 2. Respect roads and highways.** Keep end guns from watering roads. Offer to pay to fix a road if it is damaged during harvest. Don't expect to reroute or close a road without due process. Allow cars and other traffic to pass when moving large farm equipment during planting and harvesting.
- 3. During irrigation season** shut off irrigators as soon as possible after a rain event that saturates the soil.
- 4. Stay involved in local organizations,** schools and churches. Donate to local charities and fundraisers.

STEWARDSHIP continued on page 2

Welcome to the Fall 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 mission and 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>
Articles for the newsletter are solicited and gathered by the IAM officers and Membership Secretary, Jerry Wright whom can be contacted at <wrightsj@charter.net> Crow River Press, in Hutchinson, MN manages 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 or IAM, c/o Fletcher, 24 S. Edquist St., Appleton, MN 56208



PRESIDENT continued from page 1

questions about this change talk to your well driller or irrigation dealer.

We expect the 2014 legislative session to see continued discussion of water quality and quantity. The Irrigation Association of Minnesota, working closely with our lobbyist, will be monitoring events at the capital and always trying to keep the best interests of Minnesota's irrigators in mind.

Mark Thursday, February 20, 2014; on your calendar for the 40th annual IAM convention and trade show. The show will be held at the Freeport Community Center. The IAM board is working hard to organize an informative convention.

Alan Peterson, Irrigators Association of Minnesota President
alpetefarm@frontiernet.net or 320-743-2551

BECOME A MEMBER TODAY!
SEE PAGE EIGHT FOR MORE INFORMATION.

**STEWARDSHIP continued from page 1**

We must work with the DNR to report and monitor water usage and comply with the Minnesota Ag Department's fertilization and chemigation requirements.

- 1. Obtain a permit on all irrigation wells** you are using. Check so that the Health Department well number in the field matches the DNR Appropriations permit.
- 2. Check so that all land irrigated** by a particular permit is listed on the DNR Appropriation permit. Sometimes one may have forgotten to amend the permit

if one decided to pump water to a neighboring field from the same well.

- 3. Accurately report all water usage** on the yearly water report that is due in February. The reporting fee is unchanged from last year and is the same whether you pump very little water or up to 50 million gallons so there is no incentive to under-report. The DNR is developing water usage models and accurate information is needed for their validity.
- 4. Offer to allow the DNR to utilize old wells** that have not been sealed to monitor groundwater levels in your area. This



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would save the state a lot of money and allow them real time data on water levels throughout the year.

- 5. Cap off old wells that are not being used** until the time when they are sealed to prevent groundwater contamination.
- 6. If it is necessary to apply fertilizer** through the irrigation system make certain all check valves and equipment is working properly and complies with the Agriculture Department's requirements.

At one time or another many of us have been guilty of not using all the practices available to conserve water and to be good

neighbors. By adopting the latest technology, working with our neighbors, and partnering with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources to accurately monitor groundwater usage we can insure water sustainability in the future with the least amount of government, regulations and cost.

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Farm families impact

By Bev Durgan, Dean, University of Minnesota Extension

Farm families impact Minnesota's economy and rural communities

St. Paul, Minnesota—Agriculture keeps advancing, adapting new technology to meet the needs of an increasingly global economy. Challenges have intensified as well—a lengthy drought, heavy precipitation and uncertain farm policies, to mention a few.

The University of Minnesota started the Farm Family of the Year program 33 years ago to recognize successful farm families for their impact on our economy and rural communities. This year, families from 76 Minnesota counties will be recognized for their contributions to agriculture, the economy and rural communities at an August 8 ceremony at Farmfest, the state's largest farm gathering.

I salute those selected as 2013 University of Minnesota farm families because they represent the ideals shared by all farm families. Minnesota farm families not only persist and endure, but they continually improve the way they manage the land and produce food for the world. Farm families keep pace with change and innovate, while juggling busy lives and unexpected challenges.

Unquestionably, farm families care about the land. As stewards of the land, they know they need to maintain it for future generations, just as they know that their land produces food and energy that must serve a doubling population by 2050.

Farmers contribute in ways that matter to the entire state, providing more than

Irrigated Farms: Awarded the 2013 University of Minnesota Extension Farm Family

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340,000 jobs and \$75 billion in economic activity. They also contribute their time and skills to solve community problems, and keep their schools, businesses and youth organizations strong. Many volunteer for 4-H and other groups, and donate generously to these efforts.

Each year, the University of Minnesota Extension works directly with farm families to understand and address the challenges of farming. I would like to thank all the families who welcome the University faculty onto their farms and share their knowledge and experience with us. Farm families make incalculable contributions to the science of agriculture. We are honored to know them, and to work together to improve our food and energy system.

Note: A brief profile of all 76 University of Minnesota Farm Families of the Year at <http://mnfarmfamilies.cfans.umn.edu/>

Media Contact: Allison Sandve,
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ajsandve@umn.edu

Environmental Quality Incentives Program

The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is a voluntary conservation program of the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) that promotes agricultural production and environmental quality. This program is available to farmers, and offers financial and technical assistance to install or implement structural, vegetative and management practices on eligible agricultural land. Applications for EQIP can be made at your local NRCS office.

The EQIP application is based on assistance and decisions reached with producers during the conservation planning process. EQIP applications are prioritized for funding using state, national and locally developed ranking criteria that consider cost-effectiveness, resources to be treated, meeting national EQIP priorities, compliance with federal, state or tribal environmental regulations or reducing the need for future regulations and, to a degree, the location of the contract.

Funded EQIP applications result in a contract which lists the practices to be applied along with an application schedule and federal funds committed. Conservation practices applied with EQIP funds are to be maintained for the service life of the practice, which may be longer than the term of the EQIP contract. The minimum contract length is one year after the implementation of the last scheduled practice.

All contracts have a maximum contract length of ten years. Implemented practices are subject to NRCS technical standards. Farmers may elect to use NRCS or a

Technical Service Provider for EQIP technical assistance.

Applications for EQIP are accepted on a continuous basis. However, a cutoff date has been established for the ranking of EQIP applications. April 19, 2013 marks the cutoff date for the 4th ranking period for EQIP. Subsequent statewide cutoff dates to rank additional new applications may be established.

Interested in learning more about EQIP? Stop by your local NRCS Field Office in Minnesota or visit our website at Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)



Cover Crop Soil Health Initiative

The USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Minnesota is encouraging producers to sign up for a special cover crop initiative offered through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

Instead of leaving fields bare, producers can enroll acres in the Soil Health (Cover Crop) Initiative to plant cover crops to reduce the probability of erosion, increase soil health, and provide cover and food for many wildlife species.

Producers interested in the initiative should be aware that they will have to plant a multi species mixture of cover crops for five years on the same acres.

Cover crops are grown between regular crop rotations such as corn, soybeans, and wheat. Examples of cover crops are cereal ryegrass, clover, oats, oil seed radishes, and barley. Cover crops are not intended as a harvestable crop, but are grown to enhance productivity. Benefits of cover crops include: improving soil structure by increasing soil organic matter and root penetration; protecting otherwise bare soil from wind and water erosion; using nitrogen left in the soil, preventing sediments and nutrients from polluting waterways; and cycling nutrients back into the soil that will be available for future corn and soybean crops.

EQIP has other scenarios for cover crops including chemical kill, mechanical kill, legume nitrogen fixation, and organic. These scenarios are not a part of the Soil Health Initiative, but can be a valuable addition towards addressing cropland resource concerns.

Landowners interested in planting cover crops should visit the local NRCS office for more information on the best solution for their operation.

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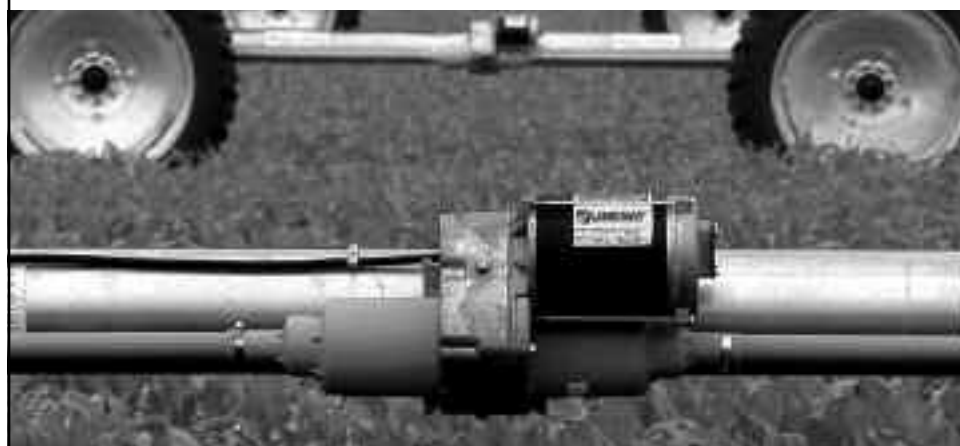
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Your Fertilizer Dollars

Bruce Montgomery, MN Dept. of Agriculture

YOUR FERTILIZER DOLLARS ARE HARD AT WORK

Hopefully the term “AFREC”, or Agricultural Fertilizer Research and Education Council, is not a new term to you as a subscriber to the *Minnesota Irrigator*. We have provided a number of related articles since the conception of the program. Just as a quick refresher, the Council was created by the 2007 Legislature and was enacted in early 2008. The Council has an important mission: identify and fund soil fertility research so Minnesota farmers can optimize fertilizer use efficiency. The Council also recognizes the need for education and outreach to ensure that you, as the end-user, can quickly assess and implement these findings. Implementing the most advanced science and technology frequently translates into the best of both worlds between profitability and protecting the environment.

Since the start of the program, AFREC has funded over \$2.7 million for soil fertility research and educational programs. The governing Council is made up of twelve members who are farmers, fertilizer retailers, and consultants with the charge of directing future soil fertility research and educational programs in Minnesota. Familiar names to many irrigators – *Norm Krause (Staples) and alternate Jim Anderson (Belgrade) represents IAM. Additionally, Paul Gray (Clear Lake) and alternate Tom Hammer (St. Cloud) represents the potato industry.*

With the diverse farming conditions across the state for major and minor crops, identifying key research issues is a huge challenge for the Council. As a producer, is it important that your ideas and

questions are heard. This type of discussion will hopefully take place in the future at your local irrigation chapter meetings and your state conferences. You can also contact your representative directly (see the attached listing of AFREC members and contacts).

The money that pays for the research comes from the fees collected on fertilizer sales so this is your money at work. Nineteen projects were awarded a grand total of \$800,000 this spring. Roughly half are multiple year continuation projects. Most projects will enhance fertilizer recommendations and profitability for virtually all cropping systems statewide.

New projects that might be of significant interest to you as an irrigator are:

- “Optimizing use of polymer-coated urea for irrigated potato production and effects on nitrate leaching”; Project Leader: Dr. Carl Rosen, UM Dept. of Soil, Water and Climate;
- “Efficient nitrogen fertilization for cultivated wild rice varieties”; Project Leader: Dr. Raymond Porter, UM Grand Rapids
- “Evaluation of variable rate nitrogen technologies for corn in Minnesota”; Project Leader: Jeff Vetsch, UM Waseca

If you would like to know more about any of these research and educational projects, please visit our website at:
<http://www.mda.state.mn.us/chemicals/fertilizers/afrec/researchprojects.aspx>

For more information about the program, please contact:
Russ Derickson, MN Dept. of Agriculture
Russell.Derickson@state.mn.us
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Sidebar 1: Council Membership 2013

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Nitrogen Fertilizer Management Plan

By Jennifer Gallus, Minnesota Department of Agriculture

Revised Nitrogen Fertilizer Management Plan Draft Released for Public Comment

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA) released a draft revision of the Minnesota's Nitrogen Fertilizer Management Plan (NFMP) for public comment on August 2, 2013. The NFMP is the state's blueprint for prevention or minimization of the impacts of nitrogen fertilizer on groundwater.

In 2010, MDA began the revision process to reflect current activities, interagency water protection programs and implementation work, and to better align it with current water resource conditions and programs.

MDA convened a multi-stakeholder Advisory Committee and conducted a detailed analysis of issues related to nitrates in groundwater. Nitrogen management can be problematic on coarse textured soils particularly under irrigated, high input cropping systems.

Representatives from Minnesota irrigators and potato growers provided considerable input and knowledge into the review process.

The revisions were based primarily on input from the Committee with consideration for past NFMP implementation experience, input from related programs, increased knowledge about occurrences of elevated nitrate in groundwater, and advances in agricultural technology and management practices.

The revised NFMP includes the following:

An emphasis on prevention of groundwater contamination by promoting fertilizer BMPs and other beneficial practices;

- Extensive testing of private wells in areas with row crop agriculture and vulnerable groundwater;
- A new phased approach to assessing and prioritizing areas with nitrate contamination in groundwater, with guidance for determining each phase;
- An emphasis on involving local farmers and communities in problem solving for local groundwater concerns; and,
- Consideration of alternative land management and cropping practices in highly vulnerable areas.

To assist the public in understanding these issues and the NFMP, MDA will be hosting a series of public meetings across the state during the month of September. Locations and times of the meetings, the revised plan, and other supporting information will be posted on the MDA website: www.mda.state.mn.us

The public comment period will end November 1, 2013.

Submitted by: Annie Felix-Gerth,
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Do I need a Chemigation Permit from the Minnesota Department of Agriculture (MDA)?

By Jim Freilinger, MDA Chemigation Consultant

The answer is "YES" if you are a person wishing to apply fertilizer or pesticides through any system connected to a water supply (well or surface water).

You must complete and submit a chemigation permit application with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture along with the required fee(s).

If you are only applying a fertilizer the fee is \$50.00, on the other hand if you are applying a pesticide or pesticide and fertilizer combination the fee is \$250.00 for each individual water supply.

Along with an approved chemigation permit for each water supply, all antipollution devices must be installed and operational prior to a fertilizer or pesticide application.

Chemigation permit applications and information on antipollution devices may be obtained directly from the MDA's web site at www.mda.state.mn.us under the Chemigation Permit Program or by calling Jim Freilinger, MDA Chemigation Consultant at (320) 243-7382.

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When can one stop irrigating!

By Jerry Wright, Associate Professor, Retired Extension Engineer

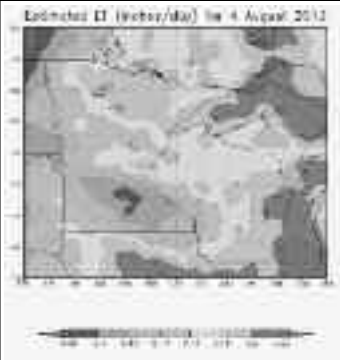
CROP "ET" SLOWLY REDUCES AS MATURITY NEARS

Keeping track of daily crop water usage (ET) for the past 2 to 5 days can greatly assist an irrigation manager in deciding when to startup the next irrigation and when one can start to think about stopping for the season.

Daily water usage for most crops slowly starts reducing in mid August as they work themselves towards maturity. However, daily ET can still reach rates of .25 or higher at any time through mid September if air temperature spikes into the upper 80s to low 90s and the sky is cloud free.

Under normal temperature conditions however a corn crop generally will need only 2 to 2.5 inches of additional soil water after first dent to come to full maturity. For a soil holding at least 3.5 inches of available water at first dent there should be no additional irrigation needed if temperatures

remain at or below normal. Lighter soils however may need one or two more irrigations while a heavier soil may tolerate even an earlier cutoff time.



As irrigated corn and soybeans near maturity, the field's soil moisture level generally can be allowed to decrease to greater limits without causing stress to the crop. For corn starting

to dent, research has shown that the soil moisture deficit can be allowed to start increasing to 50-65 percent by maturity time without reducing yields under normal late summer temperatures.

Table 1 lists estimated average crop ET requirements for corn and soybeans under normal September weather conditions within central Minnesota from different growth stages to maturity:

Regular in-field soil moisture checking with a soil probe and keeping track of a crop's daily ET use can go a long ways in helping an operator optimize a crop's growth as well as utilizing the irrigation water most efficiently.

Real time daily estimated crop ET potential for the past days at different locations across the state can be easily viewed on the Internet at:

http://www.soils.wisc.edu/uwex_agwx/ and once you found the colored state map just simply click on your site location to get ET values going back in time for the past 30 days.

Several local daily ET information services also exist for specific Minnesota counties in Table 2.

Source: Jerry Wright, Associate Professor, Retired Extension Engineer, wrightsj@charter.net



TABLE 2
Daily Crop "ET" 2013 Available

By Jerry Wright, Agricultural Engineer

Wisconsin & Minnesota Crop ET
http://www.soils.wisc.edu/uwex_agwx/

Benton SWCD
<http://www.soilandwater.org/>
320-968-5300 ext 3

East Ottertail SWCD
<http://www.eotswcd.org/>
218-346-4260 ext 3

Pope County SWCD
<http://www.popeswcd.org/weatherstation/>
320-634-5327

Sherburne SWCD
<http://www.sherburneswcd.org/>
763-241-1170 ext3

North Dakota Ag Weather & Crop ET
<http://www.ndawn.ndsu.nadak.edu/>

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New Extension Irrigation Specialist Position in the Works

By Bruce Montgomery, MDA

For many seasoned irrigators, names of Extension staff such as Jerry Wright and Fred Bergsrud will be very familiar. These educators played key roles in assisting many of you with numerous engineering and water scheduling support since the 1970's. As funding support declined over the past decade, much of this support vanished. Now, thanks to recent funding from the Clean Water, Land, & Legacy Amendment, we are once again moving forward with an Extension Irrigation

Specialist. We hope to have the position filled before the end of the year.

This position will be responsible for helping irrigators adopt the latest technology, promoting sound water and nitrogen management practices, and developing irrigation management practices. With the large surge in new irrigators, there will be plenty of work to do.



Funds for the position will be routed through the Department of Agriculture to the University of MN Extension. The position will be housed on the St. Paul Campus within the Department of Soil, Water and Climate under the direction of Dr. Carl Rosen.

This position is just one example of how the Clean Water Fund is assisting irrigators. In future editions of the Minnesota Irrigator, we will provide overviews on a variety of projects which focus on improved fertilizer and water use efficiency.

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