



March 2, 2012

### **ATTEND IRRIGATION MEETING MARCH 21ST**

Water is the life support for dryland and irrigated agriculture in Nebraska. Contrary to conventional thought, irrigated corn in Nebraska can be highly efficient in the use of energy, water and fertilizer, according to a new study by Professor Ken Cassman. He found that increased yields more than offset the energy cost. Now we have a growing number of producers in the Gage, Jefferson and Saline County area that are using new irrigation management technology to produce high yields with less water.

Any irrigator is invited to the regional Irrigation Cooperator Meeting on Wednesday, March 21, 2012 at the Plymouth Community Center, sponsored by the Lower Big Blue NRD. We start at 12:00 noon with a provided lunch and conclude at 2:30 p.m. Please call ahead at 821-2151 by Thursday, March 15th for a meal count.

A survey of 208 irrigators from 36 Nebraska counties has revealed the advantages of using irrigation management technologies. Total cropland acres reported by responding producers were 342,250 acres while crop consultants/agri-business and public agency representatives reported managing 333,667 acres. On average they reported a water savings of 2.4 inches per acre on corn and 2.1 inches per acre on soybeans. When asked if they will continue, 98% of the participants responded yes.

With the recent surge in energy prices, using an irrigation scheduling technology can save you money. With the recent positive global economic news, that continues to fuel the fire on the demand side for fuel. The advantage is it enhances your knowledge of soil moisture status during the growing season, one to three feet in the soil.

At the meeting in Plymouth, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Educator Gary Zoubek and I will be covering what we have learned about irrigation scheduling using ET gauges and watermark sensors. Gary will also report on the Nebraska Ag Water Management Network survey.

Scott Sobotka and Tyler Weishahn, Lower Big Blue Natural Resources District, will be talking about water levels in the Lower Big Blue, NRD cost share options, and other water management programs. Cost share for the ET gauges, watermark sensors and soil probes is available for the 2012 growing season. The cost share forms are due March 31st. Contact our office, the NRCS or the NRD for additional information.

The NRD discount will be 50% of the total selected irrigation management equipment cost up to \$300.00 per producer per year. If applying for cost-share, the form must be signed and submitted by March 31st, along with a W-9 and U.S. Citizen Attestation form. These forms are available at the NRD office or online at [www.lbbnrd.org](http://www.lbbnrd.org). I also placed the 2012 cost share form on the front page of our Extension website at [saline.unl.edu](http://saline.unl.edu).



Paul Hay, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension Educator, will lead a group discussion of farmer experiences using the ET gauges, watermark sensors, data loggers and hand-held readers. Irrigators are asked to bring any records or charts from their summer 2011 irrigation season. In this way it will help with questions you have for the presenters.

For more information on the irrigation meeting and the cost share available from the NRD water quality fund, to all that qualify, go to [saline.unl.edu](http://saline.unl.edu) or call 821-2151.

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