

Minnesota Irrigator

PUBLICATION OF THE IRRIGATORS ASSOCIATION OF MINNESOTA **SPRING 2018**

Comments by the IAM President



Dear Irrigators,
This past winter IAM has been very active. Our annual meeting in Freeport, on February 15, was well attended.

A year ago, many irrigators expressed an interest in learning more about technology in irrigation, and the convention committee responded by organizing speakers who addressed these issues. New this year, we had a panel of irrigators that used soil moisture monitoring probes. The panel members shared their experiences using these probes. A round of thanks goes to the convention committee for organizing an information filled day.

IAM hosted a day on the hill, in February, at the Minnesota State Capitol. Twenty-three irrigators participated. We met with thirteen legislators. Some of the issues that were discussed included DNR overreach, property taxes, and health care costs.

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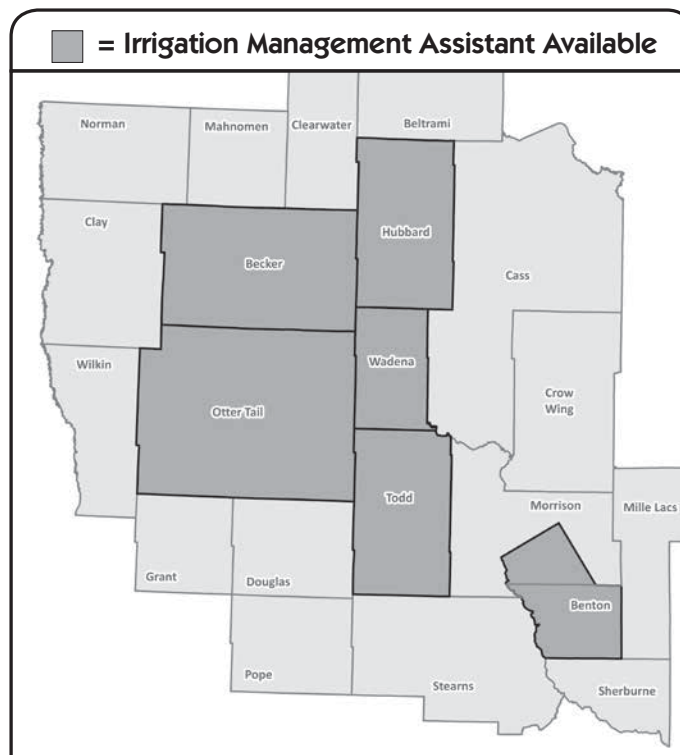
New for 2018: The Minnesota Irrigation Management Assistant

Perham, MN – The East Otter Tail Soil & Water Conservation District (SWCD) is thrilled to announce the expansion of the Irrigation Management Assistant. The tool will be available for the summer of 2018 and will now serve Otter Tail, Becker, Hubbard, Todd, Wadena, Benton and a portion of Morrison county.

The Irrigation Management Assistant is an online tool that allows you to track your crop water use and irrigation needs. It does this by:

- Using local soils data to calculate the water holding capacity of the soils in your field.
 - Using local precipitation data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
 - Using local crop water use (evapotranspiration) from our Ag Weather Network
 - A modified version of the University of Minnesota's checkbook irrigation scheduling method.
- This tool will give you a second opinion on when to irrigate and the amount to put on. It will also give you a warning if your soil moisture levels are below the recom-

mended depletion amount. Users have the option to update rain, irrigation, and crop maturity information to reflect field-specific conditions. It is available on desktop and mobile devices.



The expansion of the Irrigation Management Assistant tool is a collaborative effort between Benton and East Otter Tail SWCDs. The RESPEC consulting firm originally developed the tool for the Benton SWCD and has continued working

MGMT ASSISTANT continued on page 5

The Ag & Energy Center is 50 years old

If you are over 60 years old, what do you remember about the '60s in the greater Staples area? If you are under 60, what have you been told about that era and before?

It was a pivotal time. There was major concern about losing the historic railroad presence in the city, how the workforce would fare and how it would affect the community. It was also a time that found school and community leaders stepping up to make a difference.

The Ag & Energy Center began operations in 1968. In the early years, it was known as the "School Farm." The official name was the "Central Minnesota Demonstration Research and Irrigation Farm," or "CMDRIF"...often shortened to "Irrigation Farm." As time went on, the name changed to "The Irrigation Center," then to the "The Ag Center," and finally to the current "Ag & Energy Center."

People may have heard the name, seen the combines and tractors in a parade, visited a field day or Living Legacy Gardens...but what is it really?

To begin, one must look at what farming was like in the 1960s. The average yield for corn was about 40 bushels per acre. (The state average yield was over 60 bushels per acre.) That yield was only on part of the total acres planted because much of the crop only made silage due to lack of rain. Soils in this area are often sandy and do not hold water after a rain like heavier soils.

Most farms had livestock, much of which was dairy, so that the silage could be fed to the cows to help earn a living. Farming often did not generate enough income for more than the very basics of family living.

Agriculture was critical to the area. Much of the population that sent children to the school and did business in town lived in the country. The Chamber of Commerce hosted the "Farmers Night on the Town" for many years during that era. School leaders at the time saw that finding a way to enhance the economics of farming would benefit the whole community.

Irrigation had been a topic of discussion for several years. A small number of farmers in the area had been irrigating for a few years with real success. But low farm incomes did not allow for the average farm to be able to borrow enough money to get into irrigation, especially when you were

AG & ENERGY CTR continued on page 2

Welcome to the MN Irrigator's Spring Newsletter

Jerry Wright, IAM Membership Secretary



Wish you the best in your crop planting and irrigation management. This newsletter comes to you thanks to the support of the enclosed advertisers, current IAM irrigators & industry membership and those Extra Mile Supporters listed.

Directors on the IAM Board welcome and encourage you to become a member if you have not already joined. We all benefit by each other's ideas, experiences and support to continue the IAM activities in the new year including keeping a watchful eye

on MN Irrigation Water Rights; telling personal stories about benefits of irrigation with Legislators as well as represent the interests of irrigation practices across the state.

To become a member, simply return the application form included on the last page of this newsletter. 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 are not interested in receiving future newsletters from Irrigators Association of Minnesota (IAM), "please send a note to wrightsj@charter.net or IAM, 24 S. Edquist St., Appleton, MN 56208

If you have a topic that you would like to see discussed in a future 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 manages the advertiser space and edits, prints and mails the newsletter.

PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS *continued from page 1*

I have heard many positive comments regarding our day on the hill. Watch for it again next year.

We have amended three pieces of language onto HF 3679, Representative Steve Green's bill. One of the amendments deals with making irrigation water permit transfers easier. If permits don't transfer with the property being sold it can negatively affect the value of that property. The second amendment asks that the DNR consider the economic impact to an area before making any changes to appropriation

amounts. Lastly, we want the DNR to disclose all data used in making any decisions to reduce appropriations. The DNR wasn't supportive of these amendments. We hope to get this bill through the legislature, but will need to be vigilant throughout the legislative session.

As of this writing, the spring weather has not been cooperative. When the weather finally changes and you are able to get out into the field, please be careful and have a safe planting season.



IAM members visited the capital on February 27th to meet with several area Legislators



IAM President Alan Peterson addressed lawmakers

MANAGEMENT ASSISTANT *continued from page 1*

with local partners to expand the project. Benton SWCD received funding for this project from the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF).

If you farm in Benton or Morrison County, you can register for the tool at www.soilandwater.org. If you farm in the five county area to the northwest, you can find the tool at www.eotswcd.org or at ima.respec.com/eot.

If you have questions, please contact the Benton SWCD at 320-968-5300 ext. 3 or the East Otter Tail SWCD at 218-346-4260 ext. 3, Brittney Johnson, EOT District Technician



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