Initial Meeting
of the
Consortium for Irrigation Research and Education

College Station, Texas

October 29-30, 2007
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I. Opening Comments

Allan Jones, Director, Texas Water Resources Institute
- Work together with various funded research irrigation projects for a number of years
- Irrigation has always been there and always been important
- Continuing concern that irrigation has not had the visibility it probably deserves
- Need to impress irrigation importance upon agencies and private sector to maximize the benefit either for researchers and educators or the users
- Need to raise the visibility/profile of irrigation; it’s the key to long-term sustainability of agriculture and water supply conservation
- One problem: Major irrigated areas and problems in agriculture are different
- Urban and landscape irrigation different in so many ways
- Several have mentioned we would be well-served to get ourselves organized statewide in order to advocate programs in a more visible way to compete more effectively for resources
- We decided to call you and see if we could facilitate a process by which the researchers and Extension personnel interested in irrigation could come together and meet over a period of time and come to consensus on what you want to see happen over the next several years
- How could we be more effective in promoting your programs and serving the clientele that you serve?
- We want you to give us your input in writing and pull together a statement from the group – these are the directions we need to be headed in next few years, these are the things that are important
- TWRI will facilitate and help communicate it to the right people – deans, state and federal agencies
- The message will come from this group to use it to advocate any changes in direction or increases in emphasis that we need to recommend and use that to eventually develop a statewide effort with regional applications; a statewide lobby for irrigation

B.L. Harris, Associate Director, Texas Water Resources Institute
- First question to respond to: Do we feel like we need an organization of some kind of structure to bring us together
- From TWRI’s perspective, there is a need for better communication
- With so many things going on in Texas and individually, in general, there is poor communication and poor collaboration
- We have big opportunities to get more of the money being put on the table and more opportunities are available if we speak together with one voice

Nolan Clark, USDA Agricultural Research Service
- Multi-state approach has much better chance of getting federal funds
- Rio Grande project between Texas and New Mexico

Harris
- Have to think of more than just individual projects.
- Will this help us out? Or is it going to be a waste of time?
- This is YOUR consortium, not TWRI’s. We’ll work with you individually and collectively to work projects as we have in the past. Will it help you?
- Will it help to have input from others around the state to know what’s going on, sharing of equipment, instrumentation, expert personnel, etc.?
- At this point, looking at forming a professional, informal group
Jones
- Do we need a forum for irrigation workers to use and communicate?
- TWRI or others can facilitate that process; develop a Web site, etc.
- When suggestion came to us, it was suggested we needed a forum

Giovanni Piccinni, Uvalde Agricultural Research and Extension Center
- We have worked with the Bushland ARS group for the last 6 years to develop technology at the Uvalde Center using technology from Bushland; help so we won’t make the same mistakes as made before
- There is expertise throughout state to take advantage of for entire group
- Any collaboration that could be formalized with some type of funding will go further than what we do individually
- All collaboration has been because we wanted to do it. We don’t know what’s available out there and what we could give to other people; some of this work could have been shared with another group.
- First, facilitate internal communication. Must make the interaction happen.

Karl Steddom, Texas Cooperative Extension
- Some things being done at one site would be better to have at more sites, but A lot of times finding the right person to collaborate with is hard, so this consortium could be advantageous

Harris
- Let us know who needs to be added to the CIRE mailing list
- Those brought in would benefit from getting together with a broader group. Get to know each other and know what’s going on; who’s making analytical measurements you could collaborate with

Shad Nelson, Texas A&M University Kingsville
- If we’re really going to have an advocacy group for larger funding sources – there are people interested on Mexico side and states bordering Texas; could all be part of Consortium umbrella?
- When it comes to finding people we can collaborate with, we should seek other states
- One real successes of RGBI is Texas is not only state involved

Don Ethridge, Texas Tech University
- Successful examples focus first on facilitating meaningful discussion and exchange of ideas among people with a defined, common interest; the collaboration and projects tend to flow out of that
- I’m seeing fostering the exchange flow of information to be the first order of priority among different agencies and groups and about different lines of work that may fit together
- Maybe there’s some advantage to people collaborating across regions because some experience in some regions hasn’t developed as it has in others.
- I think the counter-argument trying to go multi-state initially is an organization problem. Difficulty seeing how you start to organize above state level.

Jones
- Have our focus be Texas, but ask people interested in working with people from other states to invite them to our meetings to bring something we don’t currently have
- For example, folks along the border typically have working relationships with Mexican institutions, which are better handled informally

Harris
- Our perspective includes all disciplines concerned or interested in irrigation: economics, plant physiology, breeding, agricultural engineering, agronomics
- Texas is huge; need to have enough of a focus of like-minded people to make communication and information delivery
- Mixed feelings of broadening scope too much beyond single focus on irrigation, research and education
Steve Amosson, Texas Cooperative Extension

- I see it would be beneficial if I had a book where I knew in a paragraph or two what everyone is doing
- Know NRI, TWDB and other grants come out, funnel this information to us; would be good to know who would be interested in this opportunity
- Would like to see organization come out

Jones

- If we come up with a professional group, TWRI can help facilitate it’s activities as well as some of the grant writing and all that is needed

Amosson

- At some point put together strategic plan of what’s needed to fill in the gaps

Steddom

- Is there a single clearinghouse where people (like small municipalities or water boards) can get information on water?

Harris

- No single source, but various aspects scattered across different sources
- TWRI and other water centers do provide some clearinghouse capabilities
- Rely on agencies, water planning process, water needs population estimates

Jones

- Putting together a list of where you go for different kinds of water information is a frustrating process
- There is a multiplicity of state and federal agencies dealing with water

Steddom

- A lot of these people are making rules about water that they know nothing about. If we can at least give them the science that could help in their decision making.

Harris

- We would like to have the science-based information
- With formation of this group, we could establish the facts that have significant amounts of credibility on given irrigation issues

Piccinni

- If consortium will involve some of these agencies, consortium can have a lot of power in influencing decisions that are made

Jeff Johnson, Texas Tech University

- Do we want to include municipal water policy agencies in the umbrella of this consortium? In my mind that’s a whole different area than irrigation research and education

Piccinni

- In San Antonio, SAWS would be interested in participating and getting expert advice from CIRE
- Working toward water conservation could play an important role in having support of municipality

Harris

- San Antonio is one of few places where you can buy water and bring it into the city

Ted Wilson, Texas Agricultural Experiment Station

- Know who’s who and what the strengths were.
- Urban and rural aspects both should be included
- Announce when funding agencies have requests for proposals – have meeting for those interested

Lloyd Nelson, Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, Overton

- Work with Dallas Center dealing with municipalities and regulation of irrigation
- Need involvement of turfgrass researchers
- Keep water quality involved – using non-potable water but good for irrigation
II. Reporting – Web site and Annual Accomplishment Report

Wilson
- Need a common reporting system (like a Web site) to have a place to go to for finding out who is doing what

Piccinni
- Ongoing, unpublished projects – work together towards common goal
- Example: Work in Uvalde, trying to do similar work with High Plains, work with TWRI to facilitate and put the project together in one report
- Have a central place where we can all look at all ongoing projects
- Increase internal communication – that is where we’re lacking most because we have no idea how we could collaborate with other centers
- Meet to updated us through a central location for easier access (Web, newsletter)

Harris
- There is no place to my knowledge where ongoing work is listed
- A communication device is needed to put this together information
- There are a huge number of projects Don is doing at Texas Tech or other universities throughout state that we don’t know what they are doing

Piccinni
- We need this to know who is doing what throughout the system

Ethridge
- Create some sort of information clearinghouse

Clark
- Working together collaboration will naturally develop

Harris
- Need documentation of project benefits and outcomes – accountability
- Year-end report where each research team puts together 3-5 bullets saying as a result these are the public benefits, project outcomes and significant findings

Clark
- Prepare documentation about what we have accomplished to communicate to each other

Harris
- How can we, on an annual basis, pull together a statement on what we have done

Jones
- Could we put together a Web site with simple forms that anyone in the group could access and fill out for their project (one page)?
- Is it feasible to go in once a year and state that information for your projects?

Johnson
- We’re already putting that together in another form for someone else, so we just need to pull information out of report already working on (cut & paste)

Harris
- Putting this information together as an accomplishment for irrigation statewide

Johnson
- Reason for this group is to raise information out there about what folks are doing specifically on irrigation in Texas; this report will focus on the irrigation work for Texas

Harris
- TWRI can facilitate listing this on a Web site or putting together a printed accomplishment report

Wilson
- A TWRI Web site to access research being done or outreach issues would be a good resource and wouldn’t require a lot of additional work
At staff conference, everyone could get together and we could go around room saying what they’ve been doing over the past year

Web site can provide additional link to other Web sites for full-fledged reports

Amy Wentz, Uvalde Agricultural Research and Extension Center

Have similar database, two forms: one with accomplishments and another of upcoming projects

This will help communicate among ourselves as to what we’re doing and what we’re looking at

If we develop a Web site and a communications listserv, we can ask the faculty to contribute succinct summary information about what they’re doing and plan to do

Don mentioned Texas Tech has a similar reporting system they use and have been using where faculty go in and summarize what they’re doing

Has capability to generate reports off of it so you can cut and paste off the Web site on any project that are there

Something like that adapted to this format might serve the purpose we’re looking for

Name, affiliation, basic information

How much text would be needed per project? Half-page, paragraph?

What would people be willing to contribute?

Title, PIs, collaborators, funding agencies primary and secondary

Basic information: objectives, accomplishments, publications

Paragraph or two specific to consortium and have link to home site for more information rather than putting everything on there

ARS has four sentence format for accomplishments summary
  - First sentence, why is it important
  - Second, how did you do it
  - Third, what you did
  - Fourth, impact

When you send that out to someone, that’s about all they’ll read

Web base searchable by PI, department, keyword

TWRI will develop a few options for the site

Needs to be very simple to allow us to put information in and needs to include links

We need to be able to use this to brag/communicate to people about what you’re doing

Summary report – have central information then pull together at certain time

Publication of consortium accomplishments – sit down once a year to discuss details

Use consortium objectives and have them defined as obtainable accomplishments

For annual report, go back to basic objectives and report what we’ve done under each one
III. Consortium Concepts & Objectives Discussions

**Note: The final list of Concepts and Objectives can be found on page 11 or [click here]**

*Jones*
- Someone will sit down, collect information and put into a summary, categorized by objectives
- TWRI can do it acting as a facilitators

*Piccinni*
- TWRI can facilitate for now

Future funding for the consortium could fund a person through the project budget to write and fulfill reporting responsibilities

*Jones*
- One thing mentioned is that if we are able to increase communication between the group and then the group and external funding agencies and parties, another result will be to develop funded projects and collaborative relationships with funding agencies
- First focus on internal communication then increase programmatic funding
- If we have a Web site or someone e-mailing group on continuing basis, it could include opportunities for grants and proposals

*Clark*
- Have face-to-face meetings, move from location to location to educate people to different regions of state; include a tour

*Piccinni*
- If the goal is for consortium members to get to know ongoing project and communicate, schedule meeting around interesting RFPs that people could work on jointly. There are some dates we know of major RFPs that tend to come out – schedule around those dates.

*Clark*
- If we’re going to move it from location to location the timing would be different for the Rio Grande Valley than for the High Plains
- Someone will have to sponsor the workshop. Whoever sponsors it is would select the time

*Jones*
- Once a year is all we can really hope for
- Work with funding agencies to serve priority needs and provide focus for discussions
- What do you think about the involvement beyond the research and Extension community?

*Ethridge*
- Invite appropriate outside people as appropriate

*Amosson*
- Have outside people involved as a panel discuss issues, priorities, funding, etc

*Jones*
- Organizers of the annual meeting could invite people they work together with.
- For example, if Uvalde holds the meeting, invite EAA, SAWS, etc.
- Is that a reasonable approach? Not to formalize a set of outside relationships, but be ad hoc and depend on the focus of the meeting and location.

*Piccinni*
- That helps a lot to keep with regional groups, but key people that act more at the state level that would be part of the group could benefit group as a whole. Larger, statewide agencies that focus on whole state – Comer with TWDB; NRCS; etc.
James Gilley, Texas Agricultural Experiment Station, College Station
- We need to list specific achievable and measurable goals – simplify

Jones
- TWRI’s reason for being is to help foster communication and bring resources to bear for the faculty
- Danielle Supercinski and Cecilia Wagner, two of five TWRI project managers, work with faculty, facilitate projects resulting from proposals and manage projects. They wake up thinking about writing proposals and how to work through deliverables.
- If this group takes off and you guys are really interested, we would like to dedicate project manager to this group – ideally a PM for irrigation – one central point of contact to make sure information flows and there is one person who knows what’s going on

Daniel Leskovar, Agricultural Research and Extension Center, Uvalde
- There is the possibility of getting involved in training courses, seminars and courses in various countries...don’t know if that could be part of the educational component

Jones
- We would like to see component dealing with short courses
- No matter where they’re offered – face-to-face or distance – because if you train people in a two, three or four day short course, it creates identification with the program
- From a marketing standpoint of science, short courses are good way to market science we are doing

Cecilia Wagner, Texas Water Resources Institute
- TWRI currently facilitations a grant through TWDB, Irrigation Training Program, to create a cumulative compilation of everything we have on irrigation – crop- and equipment-specific
- Highlighting 6 areas of the state: Amarillo, Lubbock, Uvalde, Weslaco and Wharton
- Dana Porter has gathered a lot of information that already existed and put it together in a manual-type format to offer to growers to work on it and do activities and learn as they go; hands-on
- Grew out of the strategic plan of the agency to do a better job of compiling irrigation programs we have into a succinct manual
- Focusing on major crops; we hope to add to it in the future
- Modular format to cater to different sites

Jones
- If this group really develops, a few years down the road I see being able to offer/market a whole variety of activities, including Extension programs and more in-depth short courses targeted to different audiences
- The group could have a series of courses all marketed at the same time so people know what is being offered when

Wagner
- Didn’t want to recreate the wheel because there are already great Extension programs out there
- Where possible, want to tag on to those programs, be a part of them, add to them, use them, but don’t want to step on toes
- NRCS and TSSWCB also involved. Hopefully eventually NRCS would see this program to be a prerequisite for getting EQIP dollars to give growers incentive to attend

Harris
- Working with NRCS to try to develop a program where there would be an incentive payment to participate to become “certified” and in essence “precision irrigators” in an effort to provide the means for educational process for growers
- Working with USGS on internship program to go around and work for USGS
- Looking for ARS to do a similar thing for students in irrigation/water to send around the state
- With your interest and support we could pull together a program with more students involved for internship programs
IV. Who should be involved in the consortium?

Jones
- University faculty, experiment station, Extension, ARS
- Do we make TWDB a member or bring them in as special guest?

Johnson
- As special guests to facilitate at meeting, but keep focus on research and education

Jones
- Invite outside guests (other states, agencies) as we see fit
- If High Plains wants to invite Ogallala group from Kansas, invite them – not as members of consortium, just special guests

Piccinni
- TWDB, NRCS part of group because they can influence the rest of the state

Jones
- Have them on the e-mail list and include them in our meetings if there’s going to be continuing collaboration with those agencies; make sure agency participants are invited
- Assume we’d pick two or three people that you’d interact with at state agencies

Amosson
- Don’t want as part of meeting all the time; control it. Add them later on as needed.

L. Nelson
- Involve regional commodity groups and issues

Wilson
- If talking about specific agenda items that affect commodity groups, then get them aboard early to identify scope of proposal but as a person who buys in and is behind it.
- Having them at every meeting, don’t see focus, but when going after grant or at regional meeting, invite stakeholders in that area

Ethridge
- At this stage, not ready to make final decisions on these things; just start with core group
- If it’s successful, it won’t stay static; it will evolve.
- If we include too many people at the outset, we could work against our longer-term objectives

Jones
- As a consortium, we could write grants to fund a series of students, an annual meeting and management and administration of the group and program
- We need one meeting a year, need to have someone volunteer to take first one, and we’ll rotate them around the state, focusing on research and education programs and needs in that region
- It will take four or five rounds to hit all areas
- Discretion of group organizing it locally whether it will be beyond Extension and research personnel, involving others out of state and other agencies on invitation basis
- Make sure certain agencies are always involved
- We will have the selected leadership committee until the next meeting – someone to focus and make sure we get things done
- Have a small group to help make decisions chair needs help with in organizing next meeting
- Identify five priority needs at the next annual meeting and include in the annual report

Piccinni
- Each year rotate chair, vice-chair and secretary, and have a few extra committee members so it’s not burdensome on one person
- Person who hosts does not have to be chair; can be, but does not have to be
  - First chair and vice-chair will come up with and announce a procedure for electing future chairs and vice-chairs at the first meeting in Uvalde
• We have a major opportunity for communication and collaboration, but a lot of work too
• Need a logical way of getting attention of people of who’s attention we need

V. Collaboration Ideas
• Consider possibilities of linking across the state (one research unit to another) and expand joint projects
• Look for RFPs for collaborative, joint programs
• Water experts listing/directory on TWRI Web site with research interests to use as a guide

VI. Conclusions
• CIRE section/article will be added to the “tx H2O” newsletter
• Possibly add some producers and niche publications to newsletter mailing list: Southwest Farm Press, Texas Farm Bureau, Progress Farmer, Farm Journals
• Annual Report – compile summary of irrigation impacts and accomplishments into a four-color bulletin of accomplishments; also have an electronic version for the Web
  o TWRI will collect information on your programs and will organize by objective
  o Have some kind of a summary report before the next meeting
  o TWRI will put together a Web site and work on a listserv and at some point will declare the first annual report due
• Three groups to communicate to:
  o 1) Peers – technical
  o 2) Administration
  o 3) People providing funds – has to be very clear and short (1/2 page)
• * Piccinni volunteered the Uvalde/San Antonio area to organize our first meeting
  o Tentatively mid- to late-May 2008 because that is the full swing of the growing season for tour purposes (all row crops – drip, sprinkler, etc.)
  o May 13 – ASCE Irrigation Conference; late May conflict with school-end events for those with kids; don’t want to conflict with RGBI conference
  o Date options will be sent out to the listserv
• Format: a day and a half – 8:00-5:00 day 1, 8:00-12:00 day 2, tour ½ day
• CIRE Committee selected:
  o Chair – Bill Harris
  o Vice-Chair – Giovanni Piccinni
  o Secretary – Danielle Supercinski

--------- Here ends the general discussions of the consortium format. ---------

The CIRE Concepts & Objectives as developed at the meeting are on the next page.
VII. CIRE Concepts & Objectives
As developed at the initial CIRE meeting October 29-30, 2007

CIRE Concepts

- Facilitate internal communications among irrigation research and Extension education projects

- Expand collaboration and development of new joint projects and grant proposals (multi-disciplinary)

- Provide broad-based water use education (general public)

- Develop and provide comprehensive training programs for irrigators

- Compile and deliver outcomes, benefits and accomplishments

CIRE Objectives

Communications

- Establish CIRE Web site

- Develop a list serve of research and education personnel

- Conduct an annual face-to-face meeting and tour to rotate locations

- CIRE update/column in existing TWRI newsletter

- Compile an annual report (electronic)

Education

- Expand funding for supporting graduate students and/or post-doctoral scientists

- Facilitate training courses, workshops, short courses and internships

- Provide scholarships for water research and education projects
Funding

- Seek funding support for ongoing and new programs
- Expand collaboration to reach additional and new sources of funding
- Focus on priority needs of funding agencies
- Identify 5 priority research and education needs annually

Organizational procedures

- Rotate chair, vice-chair and secretary annually
- Subcommittees
  - Web site development
  - Annual report
  - Annual meeting
- Rotate annual meeting and tour location