



Texas Irrigation Expo | 2010

Local Farmers Named “Texas Irrigators of the Year”

Hoffman and Pawlik Honored During Texas Irrigation Expo

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Two Rio Grande Valley farmers were named “Texas Irrigators of the Year” by the Texas Water Conservation Advisory Council (WCAC) during the Texas Irrigation Expo last week in Mercedes. Jimmy Pawlik and Jim Hoffman were honored because of their contributions to the state’s Agricultural Water Conservation Demonstration Initiative (ADI Program).

“We’ve been extremely fortunate to have Jim Hoffman and Jimmy Pawlik partner with us on the ADI Program,” said Wayne Halbert, the general manager of HID-CC1. “They agreed to install different types of irrigation tools on their farms, and they allowed us to collect information showing the impact different types of irrigation can make on a wide variety of crops.”

Hoffman grows citrus on his farm north of McAllen. Like many farmers, he once used the traditional method of flood irrigation, but he began using drip irrigation in 1993. He converted all of his acreage to drip irrigation four years ago, after he became an ADI cooperater. He said he uses approximately 30 percent less water because of drip irrigation, it helps him better manage nitrogen applications, and it also requires less labor once installed.

Hoffman said he would encourage other farmers to join the ADI Program. “You learn how to manage your water much better,” he said. “I don’t like to be the first one out of the gate on new technology, but if someone can show me there’s a better way to do something, I’d like to try it.”

Pawlik grows a wide variety of vegetables, citrus, grain, and herbs on his family’s farm south of McAllen. He’s been concentrating his water conservation experiments on onions and citrus, including the use of narrow border flood irrigation under citrus trees. He said being part of the ADI program has given him critical information that helps him evaluate his farm’s productivity. He said, “You want to compare your techniques, your style, with others to know is it really good or are you fooling yourself. This is the only way to compare.”

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As "Texas Irrigators of the Year," Hoffman and Pawlik received plaques from one of the most well-known advocates for water conservation in Texas, Carole Baker. Baker is a member of the state's Water Conservation Advisory Council, and chairman of a national organization called the Alliance for Water Efficiency. She told the audience, "The State Water Plan clearly recognizes the need to manage our precious and limited water resources, and encourages us to use every tool at our disposal to ensure that maximum beneficial use is achieved. One of the most cost-effective tools we have in meeting the growing demand for water is conservation, which will account for nearly 23% of the projected additional water supply needed in 2060 - a total of two million acre-feet per year - which is enough to supply half of the current annual municipal use in Texas. The key to success is education!"

State Senator Eddie Lucio, Jr., also attended the Texas Irrigation Expo and presented Hoffman and Pawlik with certificates congratulating them for their contributions to agricultural water conservation.

The ADI Program is a 10-year study on conservation methods for agriculture. The study is funded by a grant from the Texas Water Development Board (TWDB) to the Harlingen Irrigation District-Cameron County #1 (HID-CC1). A key part of the program is recruiting local growers who are willing to try new irrigation techniques.

Hoffman and Pawlik were some of the first agricultural producers to join the ADI program when it began in 2006. Because of their leadership, other farmers joined the program too. Currently, more than 20 farmers are part of the ADI program. As population grows in the Valley, the need to conserve water – for cities, businesses, and agriculture – will grow.

Last week's Texas Irrigation Expo put a spotlight on what the Rio Grande Valley has learned in recent years about how to grow crops with more efficient irrigation techniques. More than 200 people attended the 2 ½ day event that featured nearly 60 exhibitors, presentations on agricultural water conservation, and tours of local sites that have installed water-saving irrigation measures.

Plans are underway for another Texas Irrigation Expo in 2011.

For more information about the Water Conservation Advisory Council, see www.savetexaswater.org.

To view presentations from the Texas Irrigation Expo, go to www.texasirrigationexpo.org.

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