



May 2011

AAFC Irrigation Project Transitions Newsletter



CONGRATULATIONS AND THANK YOU!

...to the Irrigation Project Groups for arranging and participating in the facilitated planning sessions this past winter. Their ultimate objective is to write divestiture proposals for their projects as requested by AESB's Assistant Deputy Minister, Jamshed Merchant. A few positive comments that were noted included:

- "This got the ball rolling."
- "We've had good communication with each other, and we needed it."
- "We got some more information. We're better informed now."
- "We've identified acceptable options for us."

Groups also identified outstanding issues, such as:

- "We don't have enough information about funding."
- "Is it feasible to consider other options, such as sprinkler irrigation?"
- "We need to know about water licensing in Saskatchewan."
- "We need more information about irrigation districts in Saskatchewan."

The Groups also provided positive feedback on the facilitators, Helen Wythe and Rod Harder.

BOARD PRESIDENTS WORKING TOGETHER

Irrigation Groups' Board presidents are working together on common issues, with continuing facilitation by H.J. Wythe & Associates. They met officials from the Saskatchewan Watershed Authority on February 14. Additional facilitated meetings of the Board Presidents with Provincial and AESB officials are anticipated before the end of August.

SUPPORT FOR GROUPS' NEXT STEP – DIVESTITURE PROPOSALS

AESB is procuring a divestiture proposal writer for the Groups. We are required to go through a competitive bidding process and plan to have the contract in place by July. This will enable Groups to finalize divestiture proposals and submit them to AESB by March 31, 2012. For more information, contact your Board President or Diane Ganshorn at 306-780-3390.

USE OF WORKS AGREEMENTS UNRESOLVED

The Use of Works Agreements were sent to all Irrigation Groups over a year ago, and have not yet been signed. The agreements outline the roles and responsibilities of AESB and the Groups during the transition period between now and divestiture in March 2017. They are not intended to establish conditions for divestiture. An issue that concerns most Groups is that the agreements define infrastructure components to be considered 'project works' and therefore the responsibility of the Groups for the duration of the agreement. AESB will be working with the Group boards over the coming weeks to resolve the concerns.

HOW DOES SIPA SUPPORT THE IRRIGATION GROUPS?

The Saskatchewan Irrigation Projects Association (SIPA) has taken an active interest in the AAFC-AESB southwest irrigation projects. At the November 2009 Annual Irrigation Conference,

Steven Gunter from West Flat Irrigation Corporation presented the irrigators' perspective on the divestiture. In June 2010, the SIPA Board conducted a two-day tour of the irrigation projects to gather information about the impacts of divestiture. At least one SIPA Board member has attended most of the facilitated planning sessions, by invitation and as a resource for the Groups. If you are interested in SIPA and considering whether your Group would benefit from SIPA membership, please contact SIPA President Roger Pederson at 306-867-8460 or Secretary-Treasurer Sandra Bathgate at 306-796-4420.

ICDC – THE IRRIGATION CROP DIVERSIFICATION 2011 FIELD PROGRAM

ICDC's program for Southwest Saskatchewan in 2011 focuses on two themes: 1) alternate approaches to soil fertility; and 2) demonstration of the stale seedbed technique for crop establishment. Both efforts result from a discussion paper prepared by the ICDC Board in 2008.

Six of the ten projects planned for 2011 target aspects of phosphorus, potassium, sulphur, zinc and boron nutrition of irrigated alfalfa or annual cereals. Several of the demonstrations test: banded versus broadcast phosphorus and potassium; timing for phosphorus application; and sufficiency of sulphur on flood irrigated soils. A demonstration planned for Eastend will compare fertilization guided by soil analysis with the conventional grower practice. Another demonstration at Ponteix seeks to improve weak production from "cut areas" on flood irrigated fields with balanced fertilization.

A crop establishment project will demonstrate the stale seedbed method. This approach has potential to reduce the risk of production failure when established forage stands are terminated for reseeding the forage. The approach replaces tillage with glyphosate to kill the forage. Low disturbance seeding maintains trash on the soil surface, conserves soil moisture for germination of the new seeding and improves seed to soil contact.

Any questions can be addressed to Gary Kruger, Ministry of Agriculture Irrigation Agrologist for Southwest Saskatchewan at 306-867-5524 or gary.kruger@gov.sk.ca

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **July 14, 2011 - CSIDC Field Day in Outlook, SK** – The Canada-Saskatchewan Irrigation Diversification Centre's annual field day. Increase your knowledge about crops and irrigation options. For more information, contact the Centre at 306-867-5400.
- **December 6-7, 2011 - Saskatchewan Irrigation Conference in Moose Jaw, SK** – Meet other irrigators, learn more about SIPA's and ICDC's activities and the benefits of irrigation. For more information, contact Sandra Bathgate at 306-796-4420.

CONTACT INFORMATION

AESB Irrigation Project Transition Team phone numbers are listed below.

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This newsletter is published at least twice yearly. Please forward feedback to Diane Ganshorn or John Walker as noted above.