



Harlingen Irrigation District

ANNOUNCEMENT to NEWS MEDIA

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**Harlingen Irrigation District Touted as Global Leader
for “Good Practice Projects” in Agricultural Water Efficiencies**

A suite of water conservation initiatives developed and promoted by the Harlingen Irrigation District (HID) of Cameron County has been honored as one of nine global “good practice” projects included in a report presented to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, last month.

A Catalogue of Good Practices in Water Use Efficiency, prepared by the Stockholm International Water Institute for the 2030 Water Resources Group, highlights agricultural, municipal and industrial water efficiency and conservation projects that can be replicated elsewhere. The Catalogue defines a “good practice” project as one that “demonstrably improves the efficiency or productivity of water use (through water savings and/or yield increase). It will have been implemented in the field and will have demonstrated or have the potential for transferability to other appropriate settings.”

The District, which manages 52,000 acre-feet of water for irrigation use in agricultural operations in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas, was recognized for its innovation and technological advances in the area of irrigation flow control and water usage measurement.

“This project has proved that proper management, regardless of the method of irrigation, actually can produce increased yields with less water,” said HID General Manager Wayne Halbert. “Our results can be replicated across Texas and the entire world.”

In 2004, HID was awarded a 10-year grant under the Agricultural Water Conservation Demonstration Initiative Program of the Texas Water Development Board to promote water conservation while maintaining or increasing profitability on farms. The District focused on developing a state-of-the-art water distribution network control and management system and promoting on-farm irrigation techniques in a large-scale demonstration of cost-effective technologies. The District’s SCADA system (for “Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition”) allows it to monitor and control processes distributed among various remote sites, facilitating communications between those sites and the central facility, and providing the necessary data to control processes. The data provided by the flow measurement devices are helping the District move to volumetric pricing of irrigation water.

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Supporting the SCADA system are several other initiatives:

- A Flow Meter Calibration and Demonstration Facility – the first in Texas – that can simulate various options for irrigation systems, allowing for more informed decisions about irrigation techniques and, thus, water conservation. It also serves as a training center where operators can learn about pumps, automated controls, calibration of measuring tools, and water use data collection.
- Collection of on-farm flow measurement data through automatic meters installed throughout the District's 250-mile irrigation system. The meters are tied to a telemetry system that reports pumping and flows in real time.
- A demonstration of web-based information system that reports weather, real time flows, and a user accounting system.
- Design of low-cost automatic gates for irrigation canals and low-cost remote telemetry units to measure water levels and soil moisture.

HID has demonstrated it is possible to conserve water without losing money or affecting the quality of a crop. Surveys conducted in 2009 and 2010 showed that these innovative irrigation system controls and data streams achieved water savings of nearly 35 percent.

AW Blair Engineering, Texas AgriLife Extension Services, and Texas A&M University Kingsville provide consulting services for the various projects. Additional funding has been provided by U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, the North American Development Bank, and by the District along with its consulting partners, Delta Lake Irrigation District, Netafim and USDA-EQIP.

HID was honored with a Texas Environmental Excellence Award in 2011 for its water conservation initiatives.

The *Catalogue of Good Practices in Water Use Efficiency* is available on the District's website at <http://www.hidcc1.org/node/16>.

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