

Notes from Governor's Water Team Meeting
Friday, March 14, 2008 – 3:00 p.m.
UNL Chase Hall Room 225

The Team discussed recent educational sessions, the qualifications/hiring process for the project coordinator, grant status, and schedule for future activities.

There was a discussion of how long introductory sessions should last in order to impart information but not discourage attendance. About 2 ½ hours was one suggestion for an ideal length and it was noted that the project application had indicated 3 to 4 hour introductory sessions. There was a report on two customer meetings in Kearney and York with about 25 people attending each. It was reported that about 220 people total had attended four extension programs sponsored by the Corn Board. Several sessions offered by a pivot manufacturer through dealers were well received.

It was reported that surveys were done that may provide some useful information for the process and it was suggested that a review be done after the surveys were returned. There was then discussion of the nature of the educational meetings needed for the process. Suggestions included: 1) after the first meeting we need to make sure there is something else to go on to, and 2) a set format and suggestions about what to document would be helpful. One team member indicated that sales people were overwhelmed and need more introductory material. Suggestions for introductory workshops included providing basic principles of water management and tailoring programs to local areas. Derrel Martin reported on material posted to the FTP site and noted that the webpage development was moving slowly, but should be up by May.

There was extensive discussion on the qualifications and hiring process needed for the project dedicated extension educator/coordinator. Suggestions included seeking: 1) candidates who can project themselves and have personality, 2) candidates who know irrigation equipment and soil and water, 3) candidates who can relate to producers, and 4) candidates who have a masters degree. It was suggested that, once hired, the project coordinator will need to work with all four manufacturers in a hands-on manner. The coordinator will also need to visit with growers and dealers. It was suggested that the coordinator have a detailed program developed by mid-September. One participant suggested the program could send free e-mail reminders to people who have attended courses on what to do on various dates.

There was discussion about how fill the coordinator position as soon as possible. Ron Yoder indicated that he would begin work on a job description, assemble a selection committee and distribute resumes of the top candidates. There was a discussion of the possibility of having an experienced Extension Educator fill the position; this idea met with general approval. There was discussion of salary and grant amounts. It was noted that the final Environmental Trust grant award decision announcement was set to occur April 3. The group decided its next meeting should be held after the coordinator position is hired.