

# **WATER RESEARCH**

## **Center will provide conservation expertise**

Texas' demand for water is expected to grow about 18 percent over the next 50 years as the state's population continues to explode.

The estimated cost of meeting future water needs, including building seven major reservoirs, is a pricey \$17 billion. Already, water officials in the Fort Worth-Dallas area are talking of spending more than \$1 billion to build a huge new reservoir in Northeast Texas and pipe the water to the Metroplex.

Although demand for water undoubtedly will grow, Texans can temper that demand substantially by wasting less water.

The Texas A&M University system should be commended for leading the way. It is planning to build a \$20 million Irrigation Technology Center in San Antonio for research and education in water conservation on agricultural and urban land.

Even though Texas has a predominantly urban population, agricultural irrigation still accounts for 65 percent of freshwater usage. And in many urban areas, landscape irrigation consumes 20 to 40 percent of municipal water supplies.

A&M plans to use a \$3.1 million federal grant to find new ways to reduce irrigation demand in San Antonio and the Rio Grande watershed -- two thirsty areas where rapidly growing populations and modest rainfall are pinching precious water supplies.

The federal funds also will help provide seed money for the new San Antonio center. A&M officials said they hope it will become the world's pre-eminent irrigation research center and a leader in educating both industry and individual consumers about improved conservation practices.

In a fast-growing state hit hard by drought in recent years, the new A&M center is a timely and splendid idea.

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