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SAN ANTONIO IRRIGATION TECHNOLOGY CENTER ENTERS DEVELOPMENT PLAN PHASE

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SAN ANTONIO -- A development plan for site selection and construction is being put together on a proposed \$20 million Irrigation Technology Center (ITC) to be built in San Antonio.

The center is envisioned as a world leader in developing and testing irrigation technology and in training those working in the field.

This development phase, expected to take a year to complete, follows successful efforts to obtain start-up funds for a concept plan on the center.

The Texas Agricultural Extension Service recently committed \$94,000 to match the original \$125,000 start-up donation from the San Antonio Water System (SAWS). Another \$21,000 has been committed by the San Antonio River Authority, BexarMet Water District, and Medina County Groundwater Conservation District.

According to Dr. Guy Fipps, an agricultural engineer heading the project, once the development plan is completed, it will be presented to the Texas A&M Board of Regents in November. If approved, the project will develop a more detailed construction and budget plan, which will go back to the regents of approval, possibly in the spring of 2002.

Jarah Redwine, an Extension associate assisting in the planning efforts, said two San Antonio sites are being considered as a possible location, but the process is open to other sites.

Initial planning of the center has been guided by an advisory committee of San Antonio-area partners, including the San Antonio Water System, the San Antonio River Authority, the Medina County Groundwater Conservation District, and the City of San Antonio.

The goals of the Irrigation Technology Center include:

- helping the irrigation industry become more efficient by developing rigorous design standards and testing for equipment;
- researching the most effective irrigation techniques; and

- educating industry, consumers and students about best irrigation practices.

In San Antonio, an estimated 30 percent of the city's water supply winds up on lawns, golf courses and other urban green spaces. Urban programs at the center will focus on perfecting the technology involved in home lawn and commercial landscape irrigation systems and sharing those findings with others.

The center also will seek to lead in a relatively new area of water conservation -- the reuse of treated wastewater for irrigation of crops and landscapes and other potential uses.

For additional information about the Center contact Dr. Guy Fipps, (979) 845-3977, (g-fipps@tamu.edu) or the Texas Water Resources Institute at Texas A&M, (979) 845-1851 (twri@tamu.edu).