

AgriLife irrigation course gets EPA WaterSense accreditation

<http://agrilife.org/today/2011/02/10/agrilife-irrigation-course-gets-epa-watersense-accreditation/>

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The Texas AgriLife Extension Service Landscape Irrigation Auditing and Management Short Course includes hands-on field instruction, as at this

site in Houston. (Texas AgriLife Extension Service photo by Charles Swanson)



COLLEGE STATION — The Texas AgriLife Extension Service and the Irrigation Technology Center-School of Irrigation has been conducting the Landscape Irrigation Auditing and Management Short Course since 1994.

But starting in 2011, attendees will get twice the recognition for the buck, said Charles

Swanson, AgriLife Extension landscape irrigation specialist and one of the course instructors.

This year's course attendees can also earn Environmental Protection Agency WaterSense certification for irrigation system auditing in addition to the 16 hours of continuing education units and certification as a Texas Water Auditor.

"Students must pass an optional exam to gain EPA WaterSense accreditation," Swanson noted. "Completing the course alone does not grant certification; that only gets you CEUs."

AgriLife Extension will hold the course in Dallas (Feb. 22-23), El Paso (March 16-17) and San Antonio (April 12-13). Course registration is \$255 and the optional exam cost is \$75, and may be paid online at <http://agrilifeevents.tamu.edu> or by telephone at 979-845-2604.

Registration will be accepted online for any course up to 24 hours before the course begins, but walk-in registrations also will be permitted, Swanson said.

The request for EPA WaterSense accreditation came from past students, Swanson said, because some contractors require it for various reasons, including winning federal contracts and "green" building projects.

The curriculum remains largely unchanged from that of previous years, he said, but the exam has increased from 50 questions to 100 to meet all EPA criteria. Through classroom presentations and hands-on field instructions, students learn how to analyze irrigation- system performance, correct problems such as broken sprinklers and low pressure, and calculate actual application rates using catch cans.

However, WaterSense accreditation required the instructors to create an oversight committee to review course materials for the requirements for certification renewal," said Dr. Guy Fipps, co-instructor and director of the Irrigation Technology Center.

WaterSense Certification is only good for two years with renewal requiring course work and completion of an audit. The auditing program is completely voluntary and not regulated in Texas. This is different from the Irrigators License program that is administered by Texas Commission on Environmental Quality. Licensing is required in Texas for those who design, install, maintain or repair irrigation systems in Texas connected to a potable water supply, Fipps said.

“The AgriLife Extension program becomes one of only nine organizations in the country, as well as the only one based in Texas, to offer the EPA WaterSense label to irrigation professionals,” Swanson said.

More information about the landscape irrigation and other courses can be found at the AgriLife Extension Irrigation Technology Center’s website at <http://irrigation.tamu.edu/> .

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