



## **USDA-CSREES 2007 National Water Quality Conference**

### **Efficient Irrigation for Water Conservation in the Rio Grande Basin**

The Rio Grande is 1,900 miles long with municipal water sources from Rocky Mountain snowmelt, the Rio Conchos in Mexico and the Pecos River in Texas. It serves as a major source of water for two U.S. and five Mexican states, supporting 5 million people. The Lower Rio Grande Valley in Texas is one of the most productive agricultural areas in the U.S., generating roughly \$500 million of annual crop sales, and accounting for approximately 85 percent of the region's water use. However, the Basin's population is expected to double in the next 50 years causing doubled municipal water demands and serious agricultural impacts. Therefore, the future of irrigated agriculture in the Rio Grande Basin is facing many challenges since rainfall in the basin is not projected to double. The Rio Grande Basin Initiative (RGBI) focuses on helping solve these rising issues by implementing nine task groups devoted to the various water issues and concerns in the region. By investing in improvements in irrigation conveyance systems and efficient on-farm water-use, both urban and agricultural interests can benefit from increased water availability and resulting economic enhancements. The main objective of the RGBI project is to meet present and future water demands through conservation measures and efficient irrigation. Efforts are under way to expand efficient use of available water and thus create new water supplies. These efforts are being undertaken by experiment station researchers, Extension specialists and county agents from the Texas A&M University System and New Mexico State University. Since 2001, working collaboratively with local irrigation districts, agricultural producers, homeowners, municipalities and other agencies, more than 900,000 acre-feet of annual water savings have been realized. RGBI is funded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, administered through Texas Water Resources Institute at Texas A&M University.

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