

Irrigation course teaches farmers effective water use

By Jim Wegman

The 17th annual meeting of the Irrigation Short Course sponsored by the UNL agricultural engineering department will be Jan. 24 and 25 at the Nebraska Center for Continuing Education, 33rd and Holdrege streets.

In past years, the short course has drawn farmers, soil conservation service employees, center pivot manufacturers and farm managers from across the country; William Splinter, professor and head of the agricultural engineering department said.

"It's one of the largest continuing short courses in the area of irrigation in the country," Splinter said.

Delynn Hay, extension specialist in water resources and irrigation, said the short course has gained a reputation for presenting material that is timely. Hay attended the course while he was a faculty member of Kansas State University.

The first session begins Monday at 8:30 a.m. in the auditorium of the center with an update given by Splinter on the energy farm being developed at the NU field laboratory near Mead. The farm uses alcohol and photovoltaic cells to power irrigation pumps. The solar-powered irrigation system is the first such system in the United States, Splinter said.

Other topics on the first day include nitrogen management, irrigation management, nitrates in ground water, insecticides and herbicides, electric load management, irrigation scheduling, efficient surface irrigation, lower-pressure-center pivot nozzles, reducing irrigation pumping costs and feasibility of pumping plant repair.

On Tuesday, Hay will begin the session with a discussion of water planning and legislation. This will be followed by various presentations on other irrigation topics.

The short course involves faculty members from the agronomy and entomology departments and the Center for Agricultural Meteorology and Climatology. It began 17 years ago at the university by Paul Fischbach, professor of agricultural engineering and irrigation extensionist. Other universities such as Utah State and the University of California at Davis also offer irrigation short courses,

but Nebraska may have the longest running course, Splinter said.

Irrigation concerns have changed over the years, but the goal of the short course has always been to help farmers use water resources in an economical and productive manner, Hay said.

Irrigation dates back to 1895 in Nebraska, Splinter said. Since then, commercial operators in Nebraska developed the first center pivot systems; NU helped with scheduling for the system.

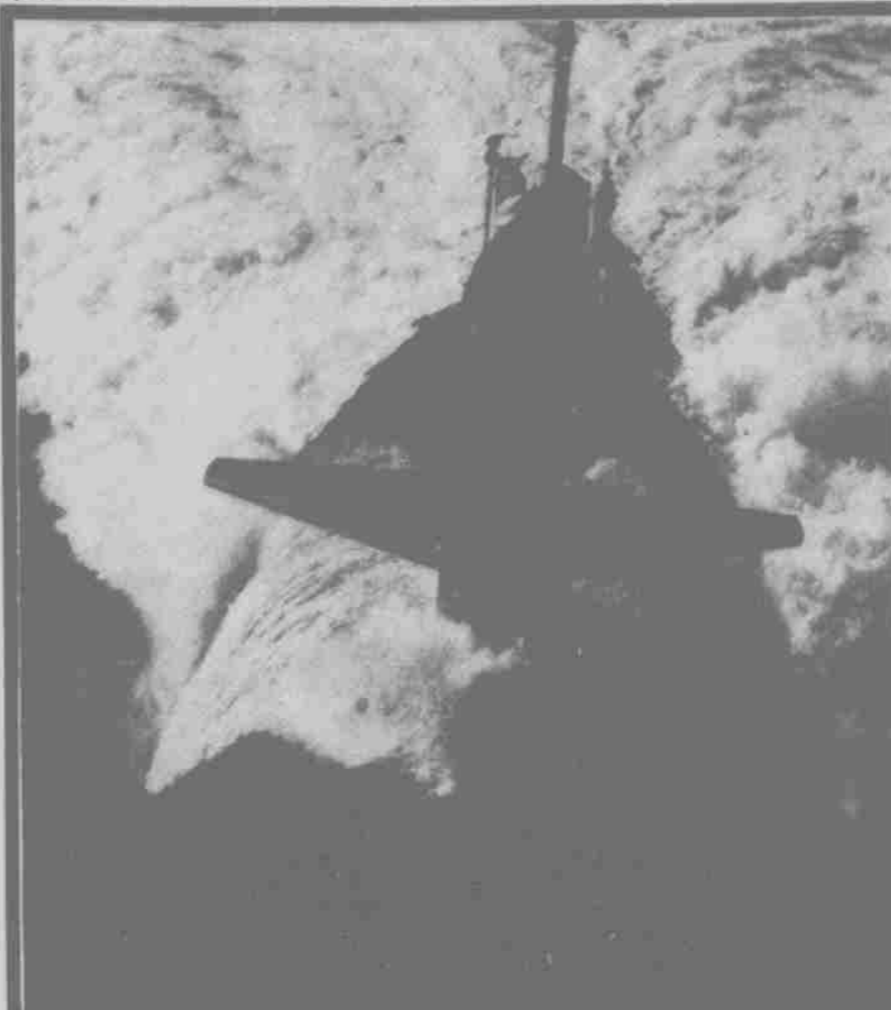
NU also developed automated graded-pipe irrigation systems and was the first to be involved in siphon tube

irrigation, Splinter said.

The two-day short course will kick off several smaller irrigation short courses throughout the state. The courses will be tailored to the specific irrigation needs and concerns of the particular areas involved, Splinter said.

Smaller meetings are scheduled for Hastings, Feb. 3; Ogallala, Feb. 8; and Ainsworth, March 2.

Students are welcome to sit in on the proceedings, but should sit in the auditorium balcony unless they have registered. The short course costs \$43 for both days and \$32 for one day. The cost includes the text, "Proceedings Irrigation Short Course, Jan. 24-25, 1983."



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