

Item 4 – Consideration of Grant Funding for Agricultural Soil Moisture Sensors

The Grant Committee met Wednesday, March 2, 2022 to review the current grant funded projects and discuss the possible addition of agricultural irrigation soil moisture systems to the grant budget. Members of the committee are:

Pete Brien – Chair
David Stratta
Mark Carrabba

The General Manager met with representatives of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) February 2, 2022 to discuss programs of mutual benefit offered by both entities. During the meeting, it was discovered that the NRCS has funding available for the purchase, installation, and use of soil moisture sensors related to agricultural irrigation. This precipitated the grant funding discussion with the Grant Committee.

Soil moisture sensors allow the producer to irrigate field crops more efficiently regardless of their method of irrigation (pivot, furrow, or drip irrigation systems). Committee members discussed the benefits of a cost-sharing grant funding and concluded:

- A cost-sharing program would be the agricultural equivalent of grant funding provided annually for the BVWaterSmart program established in 2015 for the efficient use of water for lawn irrigation;
- The District is in an excellent financial position to fund the program;
- The program funding should mirror the remote-control access grants using a 50/50 cost-share framework not to exceed \$1,000/device;
- The District should implement the soil moisture sensor grant program with the initial FY2022 funding level of \$10,000, and;
- If the program proves to be popular with district producers, the Board should consider continuing the program at a funding level of \$20,000 beginning FY2023.

It is the recommendation by the Grant Committee and General Manager to amend the FY2022 District Operating Budget adding a \$10,000.00 grant funding line item for the purchase, installation, and use of soil moisture sensors related to agricultural irrigation.