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Contact: Stuart Styles

805-756-2429; sstyles@calpoly.edu

Cal Poly Wins Contract to Help Bring Water to Disadvantaged Communities

SAN LUIS OBISPO — The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) has awarded a \$200,000 contract to Cal Poly's Irrigation Training & Research Center (ITRC) to bring technical assistance to irrigation districts that have the potential to provide high-quality water to nearby disadvantaged communities.

The contract will help address such issues as inadequate access to clean tap water; high levels of arsenic, nitrates and other contaminants in the groundwater that supplies tap water; and over-pumping of groundwater that caused water wells to dry up, cutting off water supplies in some communities.

Residents in areas classified as disadvantaged communities, where median household income is less than 80 percent of the state median, often lack the financial resources to combat these problems.

Many disadvantaged communities (DACs) are located in irrigation districts that receive all or part of their water supply from surface water sources such as reservoirs or rivers. Irrigation districts may be able to improve delivery and efficiency of water used by farms for irrigation and, in turn, provide the conserved water to neighboring communities for potable water use.

Cal Poly's ITRC will work with up to three irrigation districts to evaluate their water conveyance systems and provide recommendations and guidance through water efficiency and conservation efforts.

The feasibility of providing the conserved water to the disadvantaged communities in the districts will also be evaluated, including evaluating necessary operational and infrastructure modifications.

About Cal Poly's Irrigation Training and Research Center

The ITRC is housed within Cal Poly's College of Agriculture, Food & Environmental Sciences BioResource and Agricultural Engineering (BRAE) Department. The ITRC was formed in 1989 and continues to be self-supporting through contracts. Its work is comprised of approximately 65 percent direct technical assistance, 15 percent training, and 20 percent research (via both government and industry contracts). The ITRC is led by Chairman and Founder Dr. Charles Burt and Director Dr. Stuart Styles, both of whom are recognized internationally as irrigation experts.

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