

## IRRIGATION CONCERNS

The recent Northern Utah Water Conference included a series of interesting presentations for irrigators and municipal leaders. I came away with renewed appreciation for early Utah pioneers who worked so cooperatively in designing and building the series of canals that water our lands and beautify our landscapes. Their methods and machines were somewhat crude, but their ambition and cooperative work ethic are without compare. I often wonder if it is easier, or more difficult, to complete needed irrigation projects today. There seems to be opposition to every effort made. It must be discouraging, and certainly time consuming, to be an officer in many irrigation companies.

I was fascinated with the presentation by Ivan Ray, General Manager of the Weber-Davis Canal. Ray spoke of the difficulties their company has experienced since their major canal break in July of 1999. It was impressive to see the series of improvements that have been made to their system during the past decade, but discouraging to consider the costs to shareholders. The Weber-Davis is obviously a well managed company, but their challenges continue as they deal with burgeoning urban growth.

There was also discussion on legislative matters affecting water delivery as discussed in the recent Utah legislative session. Two specific House Bills were sponsored by two of our local representatives. H.B. 60, titled Water Conveyance Facilities Safety Act was sponsored by Representative Fred Hunsaker. Representative Ben Ferry sponsored H.B. 298, titled Land Use Authority Notification of Canal Development.

H.B. 60 addresses management plans for water conveyance facilities, all in an effort to reduce potential risk to human life, critical transportation amenities, public buildings, utility services or any event that would have a high probability of extensive economic loss. Managers of canals, ditches, pipelines or other means of conveying water that present a potential risk due to location, elevation, soil conditions, structural instability, water volume or pressure are required to prepare a written management plan for submission to the Division of Utah Water Resources no later than May 1, 2013.

As a written document, the management plan must address six specific elements. First a detailed map that identifies the municipalities or counties through which water is conveyed, points of diversion, bridges, culverts, trash racks, storm water entry points, spill points or other unique components to the system. Second, a maintenance and improvement plan, including anticipated dates for implementing the plan along with potential sources of funding. Third, companies must provide proof of insurance against liability resulting from potential failure of water conveyance facility. The fourth requirement deals with an evaluation of any potential slope instability that may cause a potential risk. Storm water assessment is the fifth requirement, and an emergency response plan, updated annually, is the sixth requirement.

Cities or other entities that introduce storm water into a water conveyance facility are also required to provide an estimate of the maximum volume and flow of water that may occur at each structure. The plan is a protected document, but is required for any

company that may be requesting state funding for future water improvements. Representative Hunsaker's bill appears to be a reasonable approach to reducing risk to the general public, while protecting canal company shareholders.

H.B. 298 requires a municipal or county land use authority to notify a canal company or canal operator of any land use application to develop within 100 feet of a canal. Many believe the distance should be greater, but compromise is often necessary in order to pass legislation. Canal companies, however, must provide information to any municipality in which the canal company owns or operates a canal by July 1, 2010. Required information includes a description of the location of each canal, and contact name, mailing address and phone number of authorized canal company representative. The local Conservation Districts can provide an up-to-date map of the location of canals within the County. Canal representatives may call 753-6029 ext. 29 or 38 to request such maps.

Conference participants appreciated the USDA-NRCS Snow Survey report by Randy Julander. He reported that as of April 6, 30 percent of our stored moisture had come within the last five days. That is a big boost to the limited supply that has fallen thus far.