

Stripling Irrigation Research Park
April 2009 Event and Activity Update

Rainfall at SIRP:

Since March 26, the weather station at SIRP has recorded nearly 12 inches of rainfall. Needless to say, we have several waterlogged areas in our research fields. To view information from one of UGA's automated weather stations near you, go to www.georgiaweather.net.

Field Activities:

Field activities have begun in earnest at the Park. Scientists, researchers, and SIRP staff began planting crops in late March. **Josh Mayfield**, Horticulture - Tifton, has tomato and bell pepper transplants growing on plastic mulch in the Park's surface drip field. Josh is evaluating soil fertility on yield and quality. **David Langston** (Plant Pathology - Tifton) and **Stormy Sparks** (Entomology - Tifton) have tomato transplants growing on 4 different types of plastic mulches in the surface drip field. They are evaluating the effects of the mulches on the spread of tomato spotted wilt virus by thrips. They will also be establishing a tomato variety trial.

The subsurface drip irrigation field (SDI) was planted with field corn (Pioneer 31P42) on March 20. This is the second year of a multi-year demonstration and research project and involves **Rad Yager** (SIRP), **Scott Tubbs** (Crop and Soil Science - Tifton), **Calvin Perry** (SIRP), and **Joel Paz** (Bio & Ag Engineering - Griffin). The team is evaluating yield as affected by SDI, surface tillage (conventional vs. conservation), deep tillage vs. non-deep tillage, and crop. Calvin was able to bring down Ag Engineering's autosteer tractor to aid in this field work.

The north section of the Newton lateral field has also been planted with field corn. **Dinku Endale** (USDA-ARS - Watkinsville) and **Jim Hook** (Crop and Soil Science - Tifton) are continuing their project evaluating the potential of high residue conservation tillage to enhance water conservation and water use efficiency in corn production.

Corn has been planted in the south half of the 2-Tower Pivots field for **Calvin Perry** and **Jim Hook** to investigate the effects that taller growing crops like field corn have on soil water distribution as irrigation water is applied from spray nozzles on drops vs. spray nozzles on top of the pivot mainline. This field was hit hard by the recent deluge and several low lying areas may have to be replanted.

The wheat growing in the south quadrant of the variable-rate (VRI) center pivot is looking great with very little disease pressure. The wheat study includes 4 irrigation treatments (4 inch sensor trigger, 10 inch sensor trigger, Kansched software trigger, rain fed). However, just as the treatments were starting to show effects, the rains took care of any differences. **Calvin Perry** and **Dewey Lee** are working on this project.

This past winter, the pine forest at SIRP was thinned to remove dead trees as well as trees attacked by disease and/or insects. Early this spring, our forest consultant had herbicide applied and later did a nice controlled burn. We are hoping to get better control of the underbrush during this process.

Building Renovation/Addition:

Construction of the new "wing" of the main building is 99.9% completed as the contractor finished all but a couple minor items last week. We are in the process of installing the phone and network cabling (to save money) and then we'll have the new floors waxed and sealed. This renovation project is giving SIRP much needed office, lab and storage space. In total, we have now added 4 offices, one lab and a storage room. We are very proud of this expansion, especially as it finally gives Heather, administrative assistant, a space of her own rather than having to call the lobby her office.

Upcoming Events:

April 15 - Reporter Greg Horstmier with DTN and Progress. Farmer magazine to learn about VRI

April 16 - FFA District Forestry Competition

April 27-29 - Georgia Water Resources Conference (Athens)

June 2-4 - First annual 4-H₂O summer educational event

June 30 - SIRP Field Day and next meeting of the SIRP Advisory Committee

Be sure to check out SIRP's website - www.nespal.org/sirp. We are continuing to update the material on the site and have plans to make it more useful to our clientele.