



Dr. Michael Aide, Chairperson, Department of Ag, Southeast Missouri State University, discusses the long term effects of the recent drought.



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Aide Shares Thoughts On Drought

First Use Or Best Use

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Dr. Michael Aide, Chairperson, Department of Ag, Southeast Missouri State University, gave his thoughts on the long term effects of the recent drought.

Regarding the Missouri Bootheel, Aide said, “we have this vast amount of water supply here that’s very high quality water. We have three aquifers, it recharges every year when the Mississippi River comes back up and with the rain-fall we get in our winter.”

Most growers tap into the surface aquifer. “It is an unconfined aquifer, the one most farmers tap. Put a well down 100 feet, the water is there and then depending on where you are in the Missouri Bootheel; it’s deeper the farther south you go, but there are two other aquifers underground. Some cities will drill down to those because the water is deeper,” explained Aide.

The surface aquifer is supplied from the surface. “At East Prairie, when I dig holes the water table can be four feet or ten feet, depending on how high the river is. The other aquifers are recharged from Crowley’s Ridge,” said Aide.

Aide was asked about a water use regulation. “There are always issues. Each state has a different water law. With the drought everybody is looking at their water laws. In Missouri, we have first use, this means, whoever uses it first can continue to use it but, if they move to best use then the water can be reallocated. I think it’s

wise for the Missouri farmers to guard their water rights. We don’t want somebody moving our water to another state simply because they are wasteful.”

An extended drought is cause for concern. “If the drought lasts for two or three years, like some major droughts will, people are going to start thinking this way. We have to be on guard to preposition ourselves; that we are great stewards of our water and it is the economic base and livelihood of our entire economy. Therefore, we are resistant about having outside interests tap into our water.”

While visiting northern and central Missouri, Aide saw cattle ponds which are drying up. “There are people looking for water right now and they are farmers. I understand their needs. They have got cattle to water but, down here we will have the best yields in the state of Missouri; maybe the country. It’s because of our irrigation capacity. We want to garnish that water. We want to make sure it is used to the betterment of our particular region.”

Aide was asked if the good water situation can be kept separated from the potentially bad water situation. “That is a political question. Therefore, it is completely dependent upon the politics of the state, the nation our region. We just have to be forthright with our publicly elected officials in saying that we value our resource.” Δ

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