

Center Pivot Remote Monitoring And Control

Surface Irrigation Sensors Research Underway

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Earl Vories, Agricultural Engineer with the USDA Agricultural Research Service, explained the concept of remote monitoring and control of center pivot irrigation. "Center pivots have gotten to the point where you can operate them from anywhere, either with an internet connection or a cellular phone," he said.

For example, Vories explained producers may need to shut down their center pivots during a rainstorm. "Or if you are on load management and the power company turns your pivot off, you want to know that it came back on when it was supposed to. If you know that you set it to come on at 4:00 in the morning, you'd like to be able to just look at your phone or look on the internet and be sure. You can have warnings set up, a lot of different options to notify you if there is a problem."

"The producers in the Portageville area are spread all over the county or even more than one county; having to drive to 20 pivots over several hundred miles gets very expensive. One of the neat things about the system is that if you have several pivots, when you go to the website, it will have them listed there so you can pick which one you want to look at."

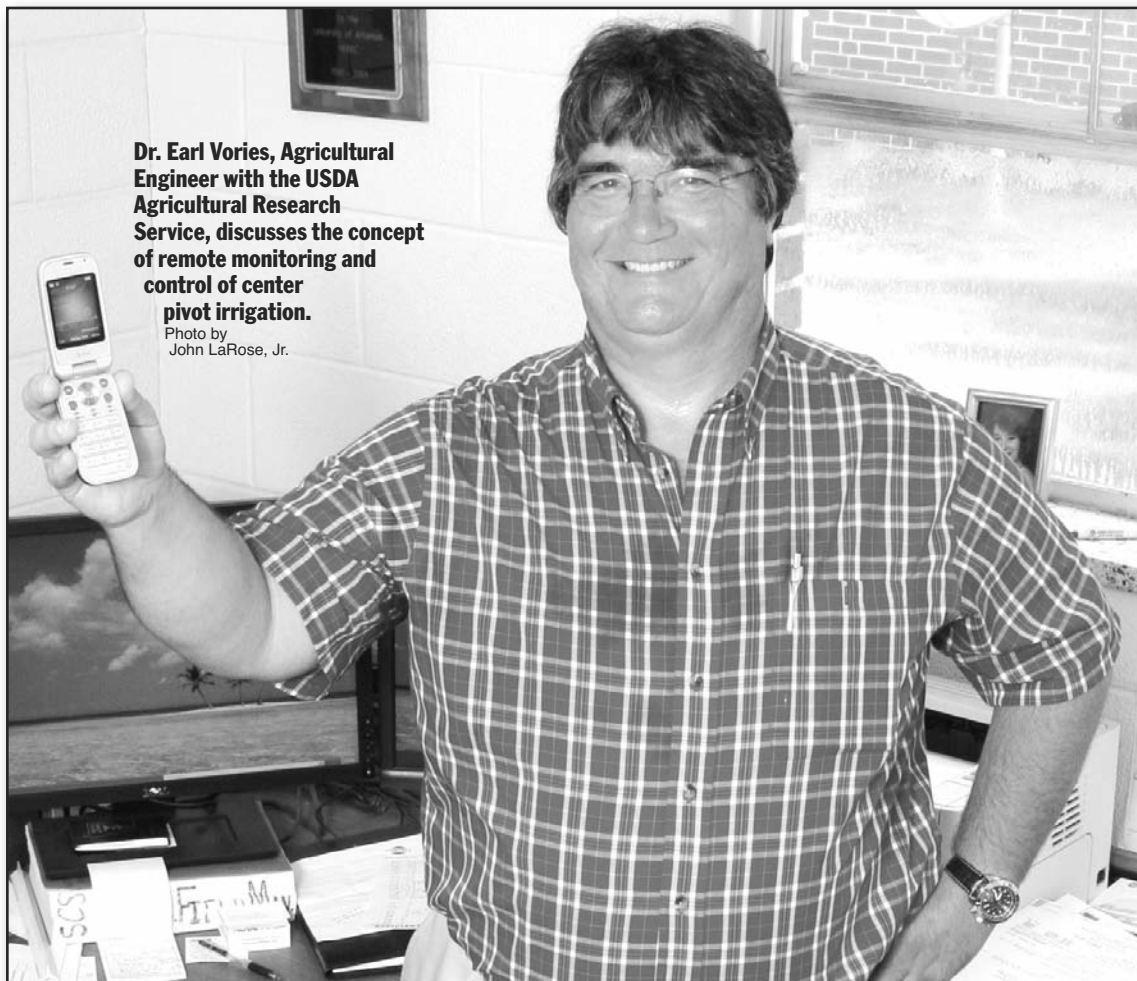
Peace of mind is a benefit with remote moni-

toring of center pivot irrigation. "We are trying to work on a system that is similar to this for surface irrigation; something that will detect the flood depth in flooded rice or where the water is when you are furrow irrigating, a system that you can either have shut down your well or notify you that you need to go check your well."

Vories suggests producers should consider this technology. "The peace of mind aspect of it; the fact that you can remotely shut down the system. I mentioned load management, and most people with electric systems have gone to load management because it saves them a lot of money but it's being able to verify that it came back on when it was supposed to. Even some things like finding out if there is a problem with the system. For instance, there is a pressure reading and if you have the equipment installed there will also be a flow rate reading on it. You can check and if you get a big difference in pressure, say it is normally 25 pounds and it's down to 10 pounds, you may have had a pipe break somewhere and you need to get out there and check it."

Of course, producers need to weigh the benefits with the cost. I think it is certainly something that they should look at." Δ

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Dr. Earl Vories, Agricultural Engineer with the USDA Agricultural Research Service, discusses the concept of remote monitoring and control of center pivot irrigation.

Photo by
John LaRose, Jr.



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