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PIPELINE

JUNE 2013
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Tom Super

Dear Irrigation Professional,
Business seems to be brisk for most! I feel like the guy in the circus that is spinning plates in all directions. Thanks goodness we have active board members that have stepped up and are taking tasks head on. I would like to thank a few in particular. Jeff Snyder has been feverishly working on the upcoming Water Summit for 2013. This event is packed with high-level presenters, great classes, and even preparatory classes for our new state irrigation license. The dates for the event are July 31 – August 2 and it will be held at the Sheraton Sand Key Resort in Clearwater Beach. Secondly, I would like to recognize Adam Jones and Suzanne Ingraham from Massey Services. Adam and his staff have stepped up in a huge way on many fronts, including state licensing, education, and standards just to name a few. Scott King also deserves a huge pat on the back. He has embraced his role helping with the state licensing, even volunteering to be a question writer for the new exam. Scott also has taken on the role as Finance committee chair. There are countless others that are invaluable to me and the society members that go to bat for us daily. Please take the time to thank a board member or committee member the next time you see them, as they give time, money, and efforts for the benefit of all irrigation professionals. We always welcome new people to step forward if they are interested in joining a committee, so if you are interested, please contact the Florida Irrigation Society. We have had our first round of irrigation professionals take and pass the exam to be state licensed. The feedback I have received from those that have taken the test is positive. They felt the questions were both relevant and fair. Test takers have seen the benefit in having a license that allows them to work anywhere in the state, and adds another layer of professionalism to our industry. We have

won a major battle by having the ability to have this voluntary license. There is still much ground to cover, we are constantly being challenged by other interest groups and tradesmen. We need representation in Tallahassee and this costs money. Please join me and donate to our organization and earmark this donation for these efforts. If every member could donate, we can be better poised to protect our industry and our living. I look forward to seeing you at the Water Summit!

Regards,
Tom Super

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Legislative News Update

By Diana Ferguson, ESQ.
Rutledge Ecenia, P.A.



As many of you already know, the Florida Irrigation Society (FIS) worked with the Construction Industry Licensing Board (CILB) over the course of the last year to develop a voluntary statewide certification program for irrigation contractors. The CILB finalized the rulemaking to establish the program in February. We have also worked with the testing vendor, Professional Testing, Inc. (PTI) to finalize the test so that the program can be implemented. The first exam opportunity was this spring and several contractors took this first exam. We encourage all interested contractors to take the exam, as certification under this program will allow you to do business statewide without having to obtain

licenses in each individual county.

While FIS' ultimate goal is still mandatory statewide licensure, this voluntary program is an important first step in that direction and it is critical that the industry as a whole shows a significant level of support for the voluntary state certification program. The test will be offered in a paper and pencil format in June, August, October, and December of 2013. The electronic test will begin in March 2014. For more information, visit the Professional Testing Inc. website at www.proftesting.com and follow the "Examination Programs" link. The Department of Business and Professional Regulation has also posted Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) here: www.myfloridalicense.com/dbpr/pro/cilb/documents/cilb_irrigation_faqs.pdf.

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Miller Legg Completed Landscape Architecture for Miramar Pineland Park

FORT LAUDERDALE, FL – After many years of abuse from all-terrain vehicles and uncontrolled dumping activities, Miramar Pineland Park, a 157-acre active and passive park in South Broward County opened in March. Miller Legg was part of the design-build team with MBR Construction and Synalovski Romanik Saye Architecture for the park improvements. Miller Legg was responsible for the project's landscape architecture and irrigation design and permitting. This design effort required minimizing impacts to the existing threatened pineland habitats and utilized a unique seed and vegetation harvesting process to replant many of the project's open areas with the preserve's native plant species.

The Park was identified as a unique habitat in South Florida and pur-

chased by Broward County for preservation and development as both a passive nature-oriented and active recreational space. The project's program included the restoration of native pineland habitats, creation of open spaces for picnicing, design of a boardwalk through wetland areas and nature walks through the unique upland habitats.

Miller Legg works successfully to improve communities and create environments for a variety of clients from multiple locations, as shown on our website at www.millerlegg.com. Client sectors include transportation, municipal and county government, healthcare, education, federal and international.

Miller Legg Awarded FDOT District 6 Landscape Architecture Services Contract

MIAMI, FL – Miller Legg was recently awarded the five-year Landscape Architecture Services Contract with the Florida Department of Transportation District 6 covering Miami-Dade and Monroe Counties. Services to be provided under this landscape architecture contract will include conceptual landscape, hardscape and irrigation design, plans production, cost estimating, tree removal/relocation, plan reviews, agency coordination, field reviews/inspections, maintenance agreements and public meeting coordination.

Miller Legg successfully improves communities and creates environments for a variety of clients from multiple locations, as shown on our website at www.millerlegg.com.

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“Miller Legg is proud of our participation in the creation of Miramar Pinelands Park. Through close collaboration with the Design-Build team on an innovative landscape architectural design, Miramar Pinelands celebrates threatened environments while providing unique passive and community-based recreational areas for the residents of Broward County” said Michael D. Kroll, RLA, ASLA, Vice President of Miller Legg.

Longtime colleague and friend of many of us in the irrigation industry David Washaliski passed away April 4th 2013 despite his courageous fight against cancer. Dave was born in Bethesda, Md on August 22nd 1954, he grew up in the Jacksonville area and started his career in our field with Florida Irrigation Supply in the mid 1980's and later went to work for Welty Inc. for over 17 years.

Dave was a generous person who had the rare quality of being able to relate to anyone regardless of professional position or social status, if he made you a promise it was rock solid and his kindness to anyone he met gave him the ability to make people feel comfortable around him. He enjoyed travel and eventually retired to Costa Rica in 2009, a place he loved and wanted to call home. His sense of adventure always kept him looking for the next highlight of his life as he believed that you only got one chance in this world and it's up to you to make the most of it. In fact no one says it better than Dave himself in this note he wrote a few days before his death:

Dave's journey is now complete, but the memories we shared with him will always be there as we go through our lives, his welcoming smile and kind words should always motivate us to live life to its fullest, respect and share with our fellow man and live our dreams.



You would be surprised how differently you look at life on the way out than you do on the way in. So many should've would've & could've. There are many things I wish I would have done differently, and often wish I had. But we do what we do, and find yourself regretting them. These are the things that change us, mold us into who we are today. The beauty of life is that God always finds a way for you to right your wrongs. So as you live your life, do not say "I wish I had done this, or that," but rather say "I can't believe I did that." Live your dreams.

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Irrigation Companies: MAKING SURE IT'S NOT YOU WHO GETS ALL WET!

By James Huston, President of J.R. Huston Consulting

Many irrigation companies, especially those in the Northeast, have had a rough go of it this season. The dry weather during spring turn-ons generated lots of repair work. However, the cool temperatures and rains that followed definitely put a dampener on irrigation service work. While commercial installation work wasn't as adversely affected, the residential installation sector wasn't helped by Mother-nature.

West of the Mississippi River, it's not uncommon for companies to provide irrigation as well as landscape services. However, east of the Big Muddy, companies *tend* to specialize more in either irrigation or landscape work. Even though the trend the last ten to fifteen years has been toward a full-service pallet, there still exist many companies that specialize primarily in the irrigation product line. This can be problematic. The irrigation-only

company that does not properly diversify by building its service business can experience both short and long-term consequences. The dilemma is that to properly understand the challenge of smart diversification you have to be part psychiatrist and part business guru.

THE PSYCHOLOGY BEHIND BUILDING IT RIGHT

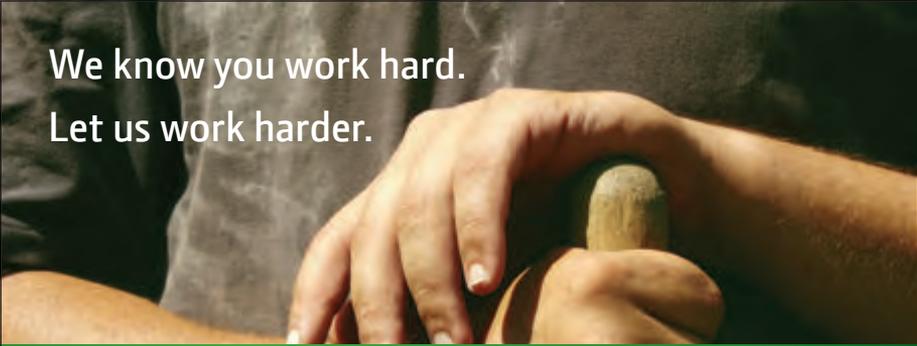
Two psychological issues face the irrigation entrepreneur who wants to grow his company. First, it is a mature contractor who realizes the importance of building a service division. Most young irrigation contractors start their company installing residential systems. They sell and install the system in just one to two days. They get their money and it's on to the next job. It's a big adrenaline rush combined with big bucks (\$3,000 to 5,000 for the average residential install system) and no long-term commitment. These guys just don't see the value of slow-paced, low-dollar and long-term commitment service



work. I call them “Cowboys.” They get the money and run (to the next job).

Second, approximately 75% of all landscape and irrigation contractors will never realize sales over \$500,000 per year. Psychologically, they’re stuck in the mindset of that of a technician. They need to learn to think like an entrepreneur—think outside of their self-imposed box. A person can only supervise 3-4 people in a business set-

ting. If you are supervising 3-4 laborers, each generating roughly \$100,000 of work revenue per year, your sales will be in the \$350,000 to \$450,000 range. If you are supervising 3-4 foremen, each supervising 3-4 laborers, your sales will quadruple and be in the range of \$900,000 to \$1,600,000. If you are supervising 3-4 managers who are supervising 3-4 foremen, you can see how the business revenue grows. However, you manage laborers, foremen and managers differently. It is a learned skill set. Most contractors (approximately 75%) never to learn to think beyond supervising la-



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borers. That's why they get stuck below \$500,000 in annual sales. They can't build a high-performance team! Those who learn to build a high-performance team (with appropriate systems) usually thrive and grow.

WEATHERING THE *ECONOMIC* STORM

So, you are a mature contractor/entrepreneur who understands how to build a high-performance team of foremen, managers and systems. You then realize that if you do not build your irrigation service base to supplement your installation work, your company is at risk in an economic downturn. What do you do?

First, I'd recommend that you see your business as a means to grow your service division. If you are installing one hundred systems per year, you should be adding one hundred service customers to your service base each year. Strive to have your service revenue eventually equal your install revenue.

Second, benchmark and set goals for your service technicians. Here are some benchmarks to consider. It takes approximately 350 residential customers to generate enough work to keep a service technician busy all season. A full-time service technician should generate at least \$100,000 of revenue (including parts) per year. In 90% of the locations in the U.S., a service technician will bill

out at \$60 per man-hour. If a service technician works an eight hour day, he/she should generate \$480 per day (not including parts). If you're charging less than \$60 per man-hour, you're probably too cheap. Many companies are charging \$75, \$85 or even \$95 per man-hour. Mark up your parts to a *minimum* of list price. Working an eight month season, eight hours per day at \$60 per man-hour, a service technician should generate \$84,480 per year (8 hours per day x \$60 per man-hour x 8 months x 22 days per month) = \$84,480. Add parts revenue to this and you're over \$100,000 per year per technician.

WEATHERING THE *PERFECT* STORM

Unfortunately, irrigation service work is adversely affected by the weather. If it is too wet and cool, customers will not use their systems and therefore won't need repairs. If it is too dry, water restrictions may be implemented. Either extreme is bad for sales. About one third of the time, you'll get the perfect season—one not too dry and not too wet. Batting .333 in baseball would make you an MVP. It doesn't work that way in business. What do you do?

Many of my irrigation-only clients have not only focused on increasing their service work but they have also expanded into other revenue streams. Some of the more popular are: Christmas decora-

tions, low voltage lighting, seasonal contracts for snow and ice removal, con-tracts for irrigation service work, invisible dog fencing, fertigation and lawn fertilization, to name a few.

HAVING YOUR CAKE (AND EATING IT TOO!)

There are four primary benefits for an irrigation company to expand and grow its service division. First are the excellent margins normally enjoyed by service work. The benchmark for service work gross profit margins ranges from 45 to 55%. Second is the repetitive streams

of cash flow from year to year. Third is the influx of revenue from seasonal service contracts in ei-ther late fall or winter when additional funds are always appreciated. And finally is the contri-bu-tion to an owner’s exit strategy made by service work upon the sale of the company. The “blue-sky” or “good will” benchmark value of a service division (apart from any assets such as equip-ment, inventory or real estate) is 50% of one year of annual revenue--\$0.50 on the sales dollar. Compare this to the benchmark for installation work, which



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is almost zero, and you see why service work revenue is so critical to building a viable exit strategy.

HOW IT WORKS!

Ten years ago a partner from a large irrigation company in New England approached me during a break at an irrigation seminar that I was conducting. As in this article, I was emphasizing the need for irrigation companies to build their service division. The partner mentioned that their CPA had them almost convinced to get rid of their service work and focus on installation jobs. My counsel was to get rid of the CPA. Today this company has service revenue exceeding \$5M annually.

John Newlin, president of Quality Sprinkling Systems, Inc. near Cleveland, Ohio, has reaped the benefits of building a company focused on repetitive revenue streams. His irrigation service, lawn care and invisible dog fencing divisions have paid big dividends during the current economic slump. He's actually gained market share in these areas as other companies have gone out of business. John says it's a "last man standing" strategy. He and Jean Kelley, his only office assistant, have significantly streamlined the company by implementing HindSite Software for scheduling, tracking and billing. They've maximized repetitive revenue streams

while reducing costs at Quality Sprinkling Systems, Inc.

SUMMARY

Irrigation contractors who are not building the service side of their business and diversifying are making a big mistake. To be fair, these contractors need to learn how to "reinvent" themselves and that's not easy. Working hard is one thing. Working smart is quite another. Being a cowboy might be fun but often it's the cowboys who get the arrows while the settlers get the land. In today's economy, the *lifestyle* of a settler might be less exciting than that of a cowboy, but the *life expectancy* of a settler is an awful lot longer.

Huston is a member of the American Society of Professional Estimators and he is one of only two Certified Professional Landscape Estimators in the world. To order Huston's books or to obtain a free audio book version (plus S&H) of *A Critical Analysis of the MORS Estimating System*, go to www.jrhuston.biz or call (800) 451-5588.

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The Hottest New Industry App Just Got Better:

The recently launched Irritrol App has just been updated to include some great additions you won't want to miss! Available through both Google Play and Apple's App Store, be sure to download it on your Droid or iPhone if you haven't done so already! And if you already have, make sure you have the latest update as there have been some BIG changes!! If you have a Droid phone, the updates will automatically push through, but for iPhone users, you will need to delete the app and reinstall it to get the upgrades. Here are some screen shots of the new look:

Some of the biggest updates are as follows:

- "Video Library" is now easier to use taking the user directly to the Irritrol Channel on YouTube. To exit out, the "Back" button will now take you back to the landing page.
- Better Product scrolling using beauty shots for product images.
- "Support" tab now allows users to download our Product Catalog and Price List. A quick tap on the phone number, website or customer service email address will quickly give the user the option to call, hyperlink to our website, and auto-



matically start an email addressed to Contractor Support.

- At any point, if you want to get directly back to the landing page without hitting the “Back” button several times, just tap on the Irritrol logo and it will take you directly there!

We are still working on getting the latest contractor promotions on the landing page, but that’s coming soon! If you run across any issues, or if you have some suggestions for enhancements to the app, please be sure to let us know by emailing us at irritrolmarketing@irritrol.com.



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It's More Than a Niche

Kevin Colesworthy, TWC Distributors, Inc.

As construction picks up in Florida, I strongly believe that our Residential Irrigation Contractors have an outstanding growth opportunity that is largely ignored. This is especially true for those that work in the Tract Home market. Give some thought to the following ideas and let us help you grow your business profitably without having to knock on hundreds of doors.

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Kevin Colesworthy is Sales Manager at TWC Distributors, Inc.

Appendix F Update

By Suzanne T. Graham, Director of Government Affairs, Massey Services, Inc.

We had found out that Appendix F was going to be removed from the plumbing code because, according to the Florida Building Code Commission, Attorney Appendixes were not to remain as a supplement to the code. Rather, they should be adopted into the code. Since it was not, and it is a rather important part of the code for the Irrigation Industry, I went to Jack Glenn the building code expert from the Florida Home Builders Association and asked for his assistance. Jack communicated with Mo Madani at the Commission to ask for direction. Jack was able to resubmit Appendix F as currently written, as well submit an additional addendum for the pipe installation as was discussed by the committee per the Broward language.

Appendix F had to be submitted first then the Broward change. Worst case

scenario: We will at least be able to get Appendix F back in the Code. Best case scenario: We get the Broward language change.

Jack will keep me posted on upcoming meeting dates. We will need representatives to either participate on conference calls and or in person at the Commission meeting which has now been moved to August.

RAIN AND SOIL MOISTURE SENSORS, It's That Time of Year Again

By Michael D. Dukes, Ph.D., P.E., C.I.D., University of Florida IFAS
mddukes@ufl.edu

This time of year as the weather gets warm and we enter the rainy season, I normally get questions on rain sensors (RSs) and soil moisture sensors (SMSs). We have tested both types of sensors extensively since 2003 when we started research on smart controllers. Generally the types of questions center around which technology is best, how often maintenance is required and how much water can be saved. In Florida, RSs have been mandatory on new irrigation systems since the 1990's. Currently Florida Statute 373.62 states, "Any person who purchases and installs an automatic landscape irrigation system must properly install, maintain, and operate technology that inhibits or interrupts operation of the system during periods of sufficient moisture." which essentially mandates either an RS or an SMS for new systems. However, the statute goes on to state, "A licensed contractor who installs or performs work on an automatic landscape irrigation system must test

for the correct operation of each inhibiting or interrupting device or switch on that system. If such devices or switches are not installed in the system or are not in proper operating condition, the contractor must install new ones or repair the existing ones and confirm that each device or switch is in proper operating condition before completing other work on the system.", which is an effort to mandate these technologies on all systems, at least those that receive maintenance from professionals in the business.

The most common RS devices used in the industry are expanding disk type. Many have adjustable thresholds that allow a user to set different depths of rainfall before the RS switches to "interrupt" mode where the signal from a timer is interrupted before it engages a valve, "interrupting" an irrigation cycle. A hygroscopic material in the sensor expands when wet, hence the name of these sensors. When we began our research, the SMSs available were,

for the most part, single sensor add-on technologies. With these devices, an SMS control interface is wired to the timer and a sensor is buried in the active root zone of the irrigated area (2-4" for turf areas) and either wired back to the control interface or to the nearest valve which allows communication back to the control interface. These devices could be an interrupt or bypass configuration. The bypass configuration makes a decision at the initiation of a timer irrigation cycle on whether or not to allow the pre-programmed time schedule to occur. This decision is based on a soil moisture measurement from the irrigated root zone compared to a user adjustable threshold on the SMS control interface. If soil moisture content exceeds the threshold at the day and time of irrigation, that entire cycle would be bypassed.

We began evaluating expanding disk rain sensors almost as an extra side project to the SMS evaluation because we all know that RSs don't work. Right? At least that is what we heard a lot from practitioners and end users. We wanted to put that to the test by objectively evaluating both technologies. When we evaluate these technologies on research plots, we compare irrigation applied to a schedule based on IFAS recommen-

dations (<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ae220>). We have seen savings with RS devices of as much as 34% during above normal rainy periods. In early testing we found that RS devices accuracy exceeded 77% (where 100% is perfect accuracy). In contrast, in the same study, SMS devices averaged 72% savings across four brands at three different day of the week settings (12 devices total). More frequent day of the week schedules (7 days/week) resulted in SMS savings as high as 92% for one brand and, in general, more frequent day of the week tended to result in more savings. During dry weather periods, RS savings approaches 0% since they only respond to rainfall; if there is no rainfall, there can be no savings. In contrast, in addition to responding to rainfall, SMS devices can bypass irrigation cycles if previous irrigation cycles wetted the soil adequately. Savings during dry periods averaged in the 40 to 50% range. When we test these technologies on homes where there is much higher variation, we have seen SMS savings of 65%; however, RS devices did not result in a statistically significant irrigation reduction.

So what's the bottom line? The SMS models that we have tested, and are still available commercially, have been robust (functional as long as 5 years) and

MOISTURE SENSORS *continued*

result in very effective irrigation control. We've tested nearly every popular expanding disk RS device and while they may be effective at saving water sometimes, they are much less so than SMSs. Irrigation reduction with SMSs exceeds RSs by a factor of 2 or 3 without any reduction in turf or landscape quality. In addition, in long term (> 3 years in the field) testing of RS devices, we found that the expanding disk material became less responsive after the first year and erratic responses increased. In all cases, expanding disk devices dry out 80% of the time within 24 hrs, which allows irrigation too soon after rainfall.

You can find publications on this testing at my publications website, <http://abe.ufl.edu/mdukes/publications/index.shtml>.



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Techline® CV emitters provide reliable, worry-free operation. Here's why:

- Continuous self-flushing design and anti-siphon feature prevent clogging
- Physical root barrier eliminates chemical additives; can be buried
- Flow rates for every soil type
- Built-in check valve for high or low pressures
- Use one dripline for all installations

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Netafim Multi-Function Hydrometers Monitor Water Usage and Flow Rates on Commercial Sites

Netafim USA now features multi-function hydrometers, water-saving devices that monitor irrigation flow rates and usage on commercial and institutional sites. The hydrometers provide visible, real-time data to help landscape managers evaluate water consumption on a daily basis.

The versatile device features four functions: built-in master valve, water meter, flow sensor and pressure regulating valve. Hydrometers can be utilized in either dripline or overhead irrigation systems and are compatible with controllers from most major manufacturers.

As more municipalities focus on water conservation, hydrometers have become practical tools in monitoring day-to-day water use.

The product's globe-shaped master valve has a double chamber that provides positive openings and closings. It can function as a remote master valve for automated operation.

A visible water meter, placed on top of the valve, communicates directly with the irrigation controller and records water flow in real time.

This sub-meter, dedicated to landscape irrigation, looks and operates like a mini-household meter and has encapsulated registers to prevent fogging.

An integrated flow sensor monitors water movement and is useful in gauging low or high flows that may be caused by broken lines or heads. It can shut down the system if necessary. A built-in pressure-regulating valve

protects the system from excess pressure.

The Netafim hydrometer also features an exclusive "straightening vane" that minimizes concern about water turbulence. The vane straightens water flow and results in uniform movement, which can be read more accurately by the flow sensor. The vane also allows a direct connection anywhere in the system, even at a 90° elbow in a small space. It eliminates the need for extra space before and after the hydrometer, often necessary with other flow sensors.

Netafim hydrometers are constructed from cast iron and have a corrosion-resistant polyester coating. Models are available in six sizes: 1 ½", 2", 3", 4", 6" and 8" and operate from 1.8 GPM to 1,500 GPM. They can be installed in both new sites and retrofits.

For more information, see the Netafim website: www.netafimusa.com.

Netafim offers a full-line of water-efficient irrigation products, including Techline® dripline, low volume control zone kits, filters, valves, water meters, point source emitters and more.

The company is based in Fresno, CA, and is a global leader in the research and manufacture of low volume irrigation solutions for landscape and agriculture. Millions of miles of Netafim dripline have been installed worldwide.

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Nancy@adwicks.com





Send to:
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Please make check payable to: Florida Irrigation Society
 Questions? Call the Society at 813-839-4601 or visit our Web site at www.fisstate.org



The Florida Irrigation Society is pleased to announce the arrival of FIS's new website!

The new design makes it easier for members, vendors, sponsors and partners to find information on upcoming meetings, events, partnership opportunities, chapter-specific news and more.

Check out some of our new features!

- Upload pictures of your projects to share.
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