

Director's Message

2002 was a year of pluses and minuses. We lost two scientists: Herman Bouwer who retired in January 2002 and Ed Barnes who resigned in November, 2002 to join Cotton Incorporated. Herman still comes by most days and we hear from Ed occasionally. Ed we wish you well with your new job in North Carolina. We also added two staff members in December 2002. Clinton Williams joins the lab from the California Department of Water Resources, Sacramento CA. Clinton is a soil scientist and will be working on water quality aspects of irrigating with sewage effluent. Jeff White was hired into the Global Change research team and will be working on modeling plant responses to changing atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration. Jeff comes to us from CYMMT, an international research center in Mexico. Welcome Clinton and Jeff.

We were all saddened by the loss of Bud Lewis who passed away on May 6, 2002. He will be missed.

Six of the eight in-house research projects at the laboratory were approved through ARS's new peer review process by the Office of Scientific Quality and Review (OSQR) and started functioning in 2002 (some late 2001). The New-crop project was written and reviewed in 2002. Global change will start planning for a new project plan in 2003. Our 2002 annual report provides an update on these projects plans.

During 2002, laboratory staff spent many hours with the Smith Group, the Architectural and Engineering firm that is designing the new research facility for ARS at the Maricopa Agricultural Center. During 2002, they completed the 50% design drawings. The drawings and specifications are to be completed by June of 2003. Since congress has appropriated sufficient funds to build the facility, it should go straight from design into contracting and then to construction. We expect to move in some time in 2006.

The Western Rivers Initiative was developed to fund water management research for the Snake/Columbia, Sacramento/San Joaquin, and Lower Colorado River systems. It was put together by the U.S. Water Conservation Lab., the George E. Brown Salinity Lab., the San Joaquin Valley Agricultural Sciences Center, and the Northwest Irrigation & Soils Research Lab. The joint effort outlines problems faced in common by these river basins and offer research directions to help solve existing water management problems. Details on this initiative can be found later in this report.

The laboratory program looks strong and healthy in the near term. In the long term, we need to focus on developing technology that will help growers and water-resource managers to effectively utilize water for the good of the community. This will require increased cooperation with users and additional resources. Leveraging our current resources and strong research program will be needed to bring this about.

Bert Clemmens
Laboratory Director