

CALIFORNIA STATE FAIR FARM UPGRADE PROJECT

FREP Contract # 01-0640

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INTRODUCTION

In 1984, "The Farm" was introduced at Cal Expo. The 3-½ acre demonstration farm received the Merrill Award, the highest honor awarded by the Western Fair Association, for clearly demonstrating leadership vision and excellence. During the last seven years, "The Farm" has been highly utilized, benefiting California residents and 5,000 school children annually. Unfortunately, there has been a lack of individual funding and limited staff. As a result, "The Farm" is in need of several specific improvements in the areas of educational school tours & workshops, a new irrigation system, compost exhibit, insect pavilion and increased staffing. In addition, current technology needs to be

implemented in order to educate both the public and private industry on the art and science of California farming.

OBJECTIVES

The specific objectives of “The Farm” Upgrade Project are to:

Irrigation System – Create a partner/sponsor with an irrigation company to install an irrigation and fertilizer injection system. The systems control panel will be incased behind glass so the public would be able to view the unit. Sections of pipe will also be exposed for the public’s viewing to provide a better understanding how the system functions. Interpretive signs will be incorporated into the demonstration sites. The system will be controlled with a computer that would allow the user to make accurate adjustments. With a new irrigation and fertilizer injection system, fertilizers will be monitored, which would reduce the amount of fertilizer leaching into watersheds. Workshops will be offered for homeowners, landscapers, fertilizer dealers and other interested parties demonstrating irrigation system installation and maintenance.

Educational School Tours/Workshops – Increase the number of educational hands-on interpretive tours/workshops being offered for children, teachers, homeowners, fertilizer dealers, landscapers, Master Composters, Master Gardeners and other gardening organizations.

Compost Exhibit - A new compost exhibit will be developed to demonstrate different methods and types of composting that will be useful to homeowners, schools, businesses, ranches and farmers. Interpretive signs will be incorporated so the exhibit can be used on a year round basis.

Insect Pavilion – The Insect Pavilion will display the direct positive and negative impacts insects have on California agriculture production geared towards homeowners, landscapers, fertilizer industry and other interested parties in a fun and educational manner. The 2002 renovation will bring added excitement to the exhibit along with improving insect viewing. With additional interpretive signs, viewers will have an increased understanding of insects in our world and the role they play in our lives. Interpretive information will focus on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and good culture practices.

Staffing - A temporary employee will be hired for an additional 2 months. This individual will dedicate 100% of his/her time to implement the fertilizer project. Duties would include planning, logistics and implementation of the project.

RESULTS

As the State Fair ended on September 2, 2002, thus ending the eighteen-day run of the 149th California State Fair, the consensus was the fair was a huge success. Fair officials report a total attendance of 1,003,022. This year’s Fair saw five days with record attendance figures and ten out of eighteen days reflecting higher attendance

numbers than those recorded in 2001. A total of 70% - 80% of fair goers visited the California State Fair Farm.

Partnerships were created with Ewing Irrigation Products, FertiGator and Griswold Controls to purchase discount irrigation supplies and provide consulting services free of charge. An IDC Irrigation Data Control and Fertilizer Injection System was purchased and installed in a newly renovated Irrigation Control Shed. The system has been incased behind glass that enables the public to view the operating system. New and updated irrigation supplies were purchased at a discounted rate and installed that allowed the new system to function at full capacity. Interpretive signs were incorporated with the controller and injection system demonstration site.

An increased number of educational hands-on interpretive tours/workshops were offered in the spring and fall for children, teachers, homeowners, fertilizer dealers, landscapers, Master Composters, Master Gardeners and other gardening organizations.

The City of Folsom, Recycle Division and Sun-Up Forest Products donated a total of 60 yards of compost that was incorporated into the existing soil to improve soil quality. A compost exhibit was developed to demonstrate different methods and types of composting and interpretive signs were incorporated into the compost demonstration site.

Partnerships were created with the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) Pest Prevention, and Sacramento-Yolo Mosquito & Vector Control District (Mosquito Vector) who contributed funding, consulting and materials to enhance the "Insect Pavilion". The "Insect Pavilion" successfully displayed the direct positive and negative impacts insects have on California agriculture production geared towards homeowners, landscapers, the fertilizer industry and other interested parties in a fun and educational manner. The 2002 renovation improved insect viewing and additional interpretive signs allowed viewers to increase the understanding of insects. Interpretive information focused on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and good culture practices.

CDFA funding through the Fertilizer Research and Education Program allowed the California State Fair "Farm" to showcase California agriculture. A temporary employee was hired for two months to perform tasks funded by CDFA grant and due to the many successful upgraded projects funded by this grant, just under 1 million, California Residents now have a better understanding of fertilizers and the role they have in California agriculture.