

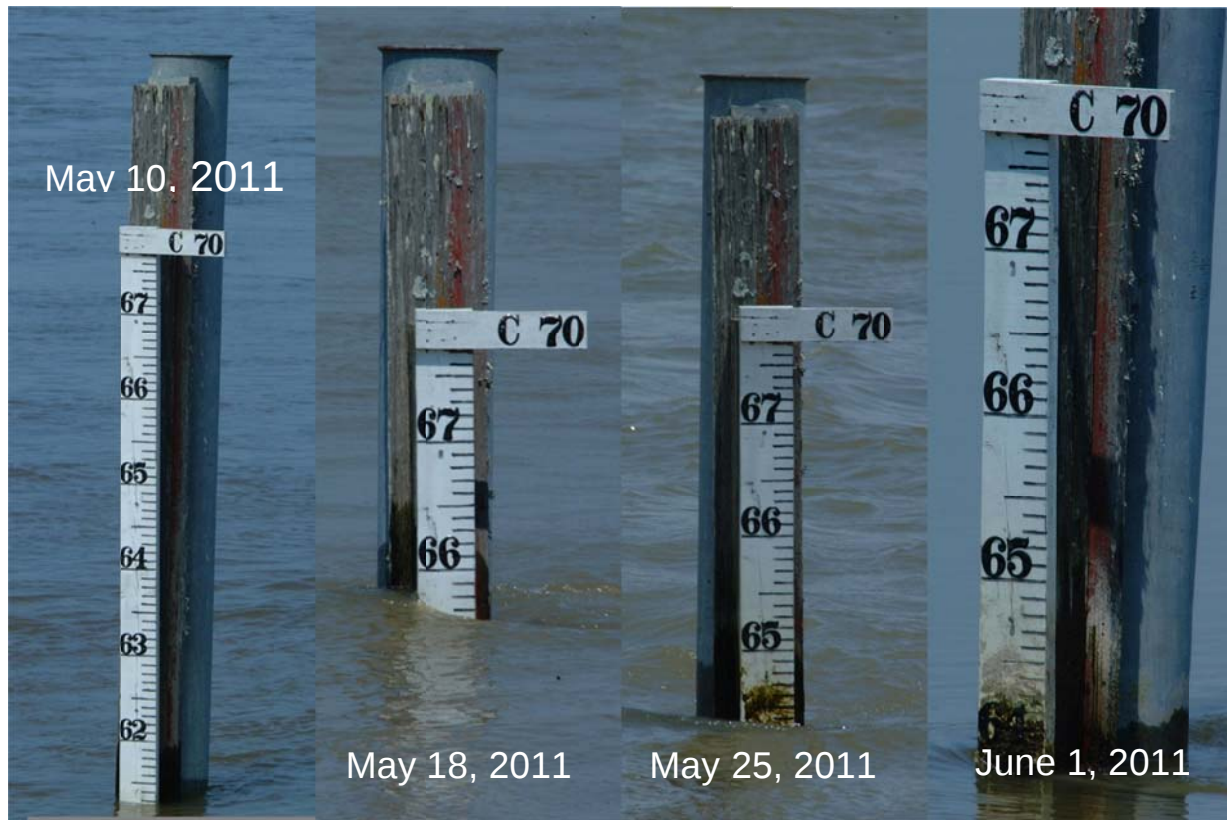
Field Notes
June 3, 2011
Johnny Saichuk



Earlier this week I looked at a field which exhibited unusual nutrient deficiency symptoms. They were very localized, but interesting just the same because I rarely find one that is of an immobile element. Notice in the second photograph that the yellow (chlorotic) leaves are the upper or

youngest leaves in contrast to the usual symptom we see in something like nitrogen deficiency in which the lower leaves become deficient. If an element moves within the plant – it is mobile – then when it is in short supply it moves from the lower portion of the plant to the upper portion. If the nutrient is immobile, calcium is a good example, the deficiency symptoms appear in the upper leaves. It would be very surprising if this is calcium. Visual symptoms alone will not tell us everything. Soil and tissue samples are to follow and should determine the problem.





This morning we held a meeting in Lake Arthur to discuss a serious problem, the critical shortage of fresh water. It is the greatest contrast of situations I have ever witnessed – excessive water on one side of the state as shown in the series of photographs of flood gauges at the Old River Control Structure, and extreme drought outside of the levee.

Representatives from the LSU AgCenter, the Teche-Vermilion Fresh Water District, the U S Army Corps of Engineers, and the U S Geological Survey addressed the group. Simply stated, there is no simple solution.

Many rice farmers in the lower areas of Calcasieu, Cameron, Jefferson Davis, and Vermilion parishes have reached critical levels of salt in normally fresh surface water supplies. The Palmer drought index maps shown by John Lovelace of the USGS explain the problem. We just have not had the rainfall to recharge the streams. The drought is affecting all crops, but rice is in the most critical state now. There was enough water earlier this year to plant and certainly no one expected it to remain dry as long as it has. Now the crop is well on its way and we are running out of water. Some are already in dire straits.

The research upon which our salt water use guidelines are based is old, but it is all we have. I am afraid some farmers are now participating in a grand experiment to determine the salt tolerance of rice. Applications of high salt content water can potentially cause long lasting effects in addition to the obvious short term consequences.

While walking through some of Dr. Linscombe's plots at one of his off station locations I noticed a number of fired or dried up leaves in some plots. I suspected and was able to confirm the pest shown below. It is a black bug in the stink bug family that we called Black Rice Bugs until we were told that common name is already taken and is correct for another insect.

One thing different this time is that I found them in an experimental plot setting instead of a large field. It showed the insects appear to have a preference for some varieties because some plots clearly had more damage than others.

While this is not an earth shattering problem it is one we have seen increase in recent years. Knowing there might be a preference could come in handy if they do become a serious pest.

