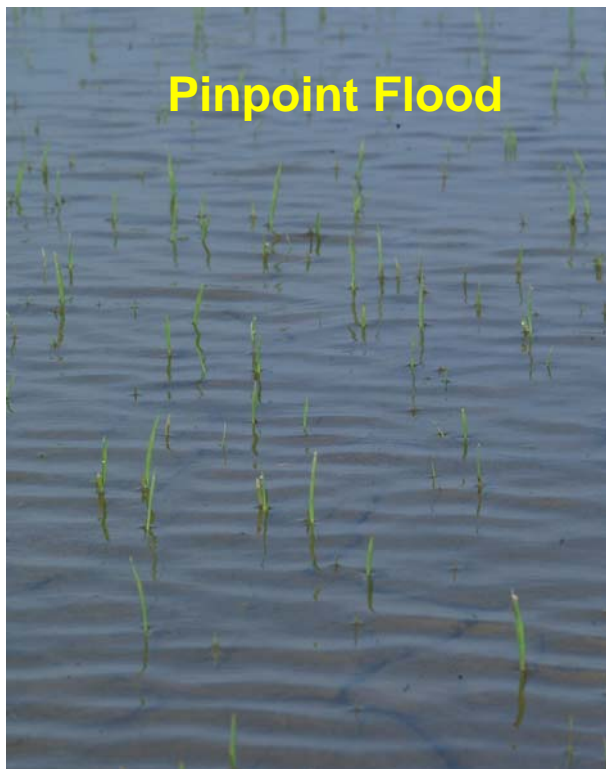


This is the first edition of Field Notes for 2006. It is without a doubt the most uncertain year for rice farmers in my career. I have nothing but admiration for those who have the courage and optimism to keep going against so much adversity.

Like everyone else we are trying to minimize input costs in our verification fields in an effort to show profitability at the end of the season. In our verification field in Vermilion parish the field was leveled dry, phosphorus and potassium were applied and the field was flooded. Seed were flown in, the water held until germination had begun then it was drained. We decided to use a pinpoint flood system of water management to control red rice. During the narrow window between draining and re-establishing a flood we applied 160 pounds of urea. We know we will give up some nitrogen use efficiency as a trade off for weed control. Because this farmer did a very good job leveling the field a true pinpoint flood has been established. (See the first photograph below). If all goes according to plan this field will not be drained until harvest.

In one of our verification fields we came across the grass seedling in the second photograph. This is one time when we can be relatively certain it is Jungle Rice rather than Barnyardgrass or one of several members of the genus *Echinochloa*. Usually the two cannot be separated until an inflorescence is formed and even then it is sometimes difficult because members of this genus will often hybridize. The purple band on the leaf blades are nearly always associated with Jungle Rice. The absence of the purple coloration **does not** necessarily mean it is another species because often the color does not appear indicating it is environmentally influenced.



We are continuing our water use study, now going into its fourth year in an effort to establish baseline data for water use on rice. As everyone is experiencing, especially this year, water is rapidly becoming a precious commodity. Years ago I read a prediction that the next world war would be fought over water. I suppose if we can fight over other less necessary commodities we can fight over an essential one. I hope I'm not around for that one.

On one verification field the young farmer decided to take it one step further by using plastic tubing and gates to send water throughout the field without having to build head on the upper paddies to flush the lower. This was his first experience with this well. As it turned out the well cannot provide the necessary flow to really utilize the side inlet or multiple inlet system to its full advantage.

The photograph of the gauge on the flow meter was taken while the system was in operation. At the exact moment of the photograph the flow was 1900 gallons per minute, but actually was fluctuating for an average of about 2000 gpm. The farmer said he had installed 27 of the blue gates on the pipe, but as soon as he opened number 27 the tubing began to collapse. That is because each gate is rated for a flow of 75 gpm. If 26 gates are wide open their total flow is 1950 gpm or the maximum of the well. What he intends to do is close these gates and install others in every other paddy using gravity to move water from one paddy to the next and the tubing to move it greater distances. It will be interesting to see if we conserve any water by doing so.





The field is 54.7 acres within the perimeter levees. Assuming 4 acre-inches of water will be needed to sufficiently flush the field and knowing there are 27,154 gallons per acre-inch, then it should take about 50 hours to flush the field. We'll find out when we visit again.

