

The Nebraska State Irrigation Association, the state's oldest water use advocacy group, is accepting applications through Dec. 17 for the inaugural session of the Nebraska Future Leaders Academy.

The academy targets mid-career professionals interested in water and natural resources issues for a one-year program to learn about cooperative approaches to water resource issues.

Diamond Plastics, Corp., one of the largest suppliers of piping materials for the irrigation industry is the founding partner.

Nearly 20 other donor-partners are contributing to the project.

"We expect to interest men and women who want to learn more about water and natural resource issues," said Tom Knutson, past president of the association and its chief spokesperson. "We have planned a year-long program that offers a well-rounded curriculum presented by acknowledged experts in water and natural resource issues and leadership skills," he said.

"Fund-raising for the project began about a year ago and has surpassed goals. We are fortunate that businesses involved in agriculture are willing to give back to support this sort of undertaking," he said.

Set to begin in Spring 2011, the cost of the program is \$1500 per person. Each participant is required to personally pay \$500 toward program costs plus the cost of any additional travel, lodging or meals for six one-and-a-half day sessions to be held across the state.

Overnight lodging and meals during academy sessions are included in the tuition. Class size is limited to 20. Scholarship support is available.

Information about the academy as well as NSIA and its other programs is available on the association's newly-designed website www.nebraskastateirrigationassociation.org.

Individuals will find a downloadable application form on the site or can request a brochure by calling the NSIA office, 402-476-0162.

Other sponsors of the Water Futures Partnership-Nebraska include Nebraska Center Pivot Manufacturers Association, Central Nebraska Public Power and Irrigation District, Valmont Industries, Farmland Irrigation, Great Plains Meter Company, Nebraska Bostwick Irrigation District, North Loup River Public Power and Irrigation District, Pathfinder Irrigation District, Reinke Manufacturing Company, CJJ Communications, Farwell Irrigation District, Loup Basin Reclamation District, Michael Jess Water Resources Engineer, North Platte Valley Irrigation Association, Sargent Irrigation District and St. Paul Equipment Company.

Founded in 1893, the NSIA is focused on irrigation matters, mostly involving surface water, in Nebraska.

The group supports activities that provide educational conferences, workshop and meetings for members.

In addition, the Association works with groups whose interests support irrigation activities in Nebraska.