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South Dakota State Professor Schleicher Awarded \$75k Grant from IALC

July 8, 2005 - Brookings, SD - Professor Leo Schleicher, of South Dakota State University, was awarded a \$73,269 grant from the International Arid Lands Consortium to establish a demonstration project as a tool for educating homeowners and residential turf owners as to the numerous environmental benefits of using native, input-reduced turf grasses.

Associate Professor Leo Schleicher is a Turf Grass Specialist in the Department of Horticulture, Forestry, Landscape and Parks at South Dakota State University in Brookings. Professor Carter W. Johnson, who is also in the Department of Horticulture, Forestry, Landscape and Parks at South Dakota State University, is a co-investigator. The project is expected to take two and a half years.

Nearly \$400,000 was approved by the International Arid Lands Commission to fund the demonstration project and three research proposals that were proposed by collaborating arid land researchers from American universities, Israel and Jordan.

The proposals were recommended by scientists from the IALC Research and Demonstration Advisory Committee, which reviewed 46 proposals submitted from Arizona, Illinois, Israel, Jordan, Nevada, New Mexico, South Dakota and Texas. The vast majority of proposals were collaborations between two or more principal investigators. Funding of all IALC projects is contingent upon receipt of federal funding.

"The research that we were able to fund today offers the prospect of results that will have an important impact on arid land management and the world we live in," said Dr. Colin Kaltenbach, President of the IALC Board of Directors, "however, we would not have been able to support such work without the generous assistance of the USDA CSREES."

Professor Schleicher's study will be instrumental in educating consumers as a means to changing their preferences. In particular, the demonstration project will contrast typically used turf grasses with some native grasses so as to show consumers the differences in water inputs needed to sustain the grasses. The consumers will see that the native grasses are cheaper to maintain and that they also require much lower levels of water inputs to be maintained. Professor Schleicher's demonstration project will further the conservation of scarce resources such as water, which are critically important in arid land ecosystems.