Efficient water usage will be the emphasis of a University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension conference scheduled Sept. 1 at a new university facility in Brule.

The fifth annual Great Plains Conference, “Improving Crop Water Productivity” will be held at the West Central Water Resources Field Laboratory. There is no cost to attend the conference and a complimentary meal will be served.

Using water as efficiently as possible on the farm will be the focus of the conference, which is geared for agricultural producers, said Alan Corr, extension water educator.

As water is one of the state’s most valuable natural resources, the conference will help farmers and policymakers learn and see irrigation practices and cropping systems on a farm scale that maintain or increase crop production while conserving water.

WRFL was purchased by UNL in 2007 to research, demonstrate and teach water conserving methods in cropping and livestock systems in western Nebraska. This year is the first growing season research has been conducted at the lab, which will be open for tours during the event.

The event opens at 8 a.m. (MDT) with registration at Purty Punkins, 350 Road West M South in Brule.

The morning agenda includes presentations by UNL hydrogeologist Jim Goeke, who will talk about the hydrogeologic framework in the area of the lab. He will be followed by Derrel Martin, irrigation and water resources engineer, who will discuss maximizing efficiency with center pivot irrigation.

Robert Klein, western Nebraska crops specialist, will talk about how to avoid water evaporation on corn, soybeans and wheat. Crop producer Jon Holzfaster of Paxton will discuss a producer’s perspective on Nebraska water issues.

Following lunch, University of Nebraska President James Milliken will help introduce guests to the WRFL, where field tours will begin at 1 p.m.

Interested participants are asked to register by Aug. 26. For more information contact Linda Lehmann at 308-696-6727 or at llehmann@unlnotes.unl.edu.