

The challenge soon involved state and national legislators, but eventually opposition subsided.

In 1954 an Outlying Testing Program was started in three central Washington counties—Grant, Adams, and Franklin—by Dr. Harston. He initiated the program with no equipment or additional help or funds. He borrowed equipment from the Irrigated Agriculture Research and Extension Center at Prosser. His responsibilities in outlying testing were in addition to his other soil specialist responsibilities. The Outlying Testing Program of combined testing and demonstration field experiments was a novel idea implemented by Dr. Harston and then expanded and amplified by those who followed.

The need for proof and demonstration projects was most acutely felt in the Columbia Basin which was rapidly changing from desert and dry farming to irrigation. The idea was warmly espoused by administrators. IAREC Superintendent H.P. Singleton had been deeply involved with the Bureau of Reclamation in the reclamation of the area to be irrigated with water from Grand Coulee Dam. Together they worked out the concept of Pilot Farms to work on pressing problems before settlers came to the project to begin farming. Exploratory research located several typical soil areas that would provide insight into what practices and processes might be deemed best.

The Outlying Testing program fit into this need. Problems were identified by county agents; the Outlying Testing Specialist held a meeting with the Superintendent of the Branch Experiment Station, the Chairman of the Department of Agronomy and Soils, researchers and appropriate Extension specialists. Problems were listed, discussed, assigned priorities, and action was planned to solve them. The Outlying Testing Specialist served as the quarterback; he also worked closely with county agents in selecting sites, putting out experiments, tending plots, holding meetings with farmers, collecting data, and compiling reports. The reports were evaluated by the Outlying Testing Committee as a basis for recommendations and planning future work.¹³

The system worked; all seemed happy with the results. The concept worked equally well in western Washington; other states adopted the idea. The program obtained