

Stakeholders get familiar with drone technology

By EDWIN DELGADO, Staff Writer | Posted: Friday, May 27, 2016 1:00 am

HOLTVILLE — On Thursday members of the Desert Research and Extension Center along with other stakeholders were part of the second day of a three-day workshop in which they are getting the opportunity to get familiar with drone technology and the potential uses it can have in their field.

“The intent of this workshop is to start bringing the knowledge about unmanned aerial systems to the University of California Agricultural and Natural Resources division and the public at large,” said Sean Hogan, coordinator of Informatics Geographic Information Systems for UC ANR.

“There is so much curiosity about it right now, it’s a growing industry and there is a lot of concern and controversy about the misuses on it.”

Before going into the field, Hogan went over the model that he was using and getting everyone familiar with its features and capacities. He talked the sensors and cameras that can be used with it.

After going over the equipment, Hogan then gave everyone an overview of all the preparations, planning and regulations that they need to be familiar with before taking off.

“A big portion of the job is the planning of where you’re going to fly, compliance with regulations, safety measures and processing of the data is what is going to give you a good product that is useful for any kind of management,” Hogan said.

Now that the University of California system has the green light to begin using drones for projects in its division, Hogan is currently having these workshops in UC ANR facilities throughout the state to share his expertise with the faculty. He will have more than 25 workshops throughout the year.



Stakeholders get familiar with drone technology

Director of the Desert Research and Extension Center Jairo Diaz (right) along with members of the center monitor the flight of the drone through a tablet. EDWIN DELGADO PHOTO

“Now that we are authorized and we can start doing it, I’m building on enough expertise in the area, is a good practical thing to do and is good to bring awareness to the role of UC ANR, find application for agriculture, the booming coming up technology,” Hogan Said.

Desert Research and Extension Center Director Jairo Diaz said that Thursday was an important day in the workshop because they were able to see a demonstration of how the technology works and how it can be applied to the projects and research they are currently working on.

“These workshops that give growers and stakeholders can use in the area are very important because tech like this can help in the near future help find out different types of issues on the field like management of nutrients, water and find out to improve management of field,” Diaz said.

One of the things that Hogan said the drone technology can be helpful with is precision agriculture and can allow growers to map out the agricultural fields and find features that might be a concerns and understand what they can change and modify with treatments of their crops.

“You can fly a drone quick on demand to monitor some field in the correct air space and within the boundaries of what the permits are and get high-resolution and color images of it to look at the structure of your canopies and with that you can get a lot of good information of what is growing where and how well is growing,” Hogan said.

One of the points he made toward the end of the day and something that he plans to expand on today is ways in which the data gathered with the drones can be interpreted and implemented in a practical manner.

Diaz said that every new technology has its challenges at first but said he was looking forward for the drones to be good tool for the researchers in the center and sees potential that the new technology will want other researchers outside of the valley want to come and have their projects here in the Valley.

“In the Desert Research Renter the drone is a really viable technology that we can use,” Diaz said. “It can be a hook to attract researchers to do that kind of work related to drones and remote sensing in the center.”

Staff Writer Edwin Delgado can be reached at edelgado@ivpressonline.com