



Science  
Societies

# The Kirkham Conference: From Zoom to Africa!

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In the last days of August 2021, soil scientists of various disciplines from across the world gathered around a virtual South African bushveld (savannah) campfire to present and engage in their work, as part of the 2021 Virtual Kirkham Conference. The conference was aimed at bridging the gap between what would have been an on-site 2020 Kirkham Conference, postponed due to the COVID pandemic, and the subsequently planned on-site 2022 Kirkham Conference. The 2021 Virtual Kirkham Conference was opened by the chair of the Kirkham Conference Committee, Dr. Brent Clothier from New Zealand, who detailed the history and purpose of the Kirkham Conference, emphasizing the threefold objectives, to:

- provide an opportunity for timely impetus for new and critical research,
- bring together active researchers in soil physics and related disciplines to promote debate and interaction, and
- allow for interactive exchange of ideas and the application of soil physics principals to global environmental issues.

### **Wide-Ranging Specialists, Topics**

True to these objectives, the 2021 Virtual Kirkham Conference attracted a range of specialists, including soil physicists, soil chemistry and soil health scientists, agronomists, irrigation scientists, hydrologists, hydrogeologists, and civil engineers. The conference was highlighted by four eminent keynote speakers, who presented topics ranging from attributes of sub-Saharan soils (Pedro Sanchez, University of Florida) to assisting small-scale irrigation water management (Richard Stirzaker, CSIRO) to integrated assessment of soil health (Cheryl Palm, University of Florida) to gas transport in high-permeability porous media (Noam Weisbrod, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev). Each of these were followed by equally varied, three-minute research

presentations, which addressed agricultural, water resources, and mining industries.

The conference was wrapped up with a presentation on the experimental catchments in the Kruger National Park, South Africa; a summary of the many varied applications of soil physics in Africa; and the needs for multidisciplinary input to these.

The 2021 Virtual Kirkham Conference can be viewed at:

<https://vimeo.com/manage/videos/595965299>.

## **2022 Kirkham Conference**

The on-site 2022 Kirkham Conference is due to be held in the Kruger National Park (Skukuza Rest Camp) from 28 Aug. to 2 Sept. 2022. There is an open call for registration and paper submissions at:

<https://cwrr.ukzn.ac.za/conferences/kirkham-conference-2020/>.

We look forward to welcoming you to South Africa and the Kruger National Park.

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