

EFFICIENT IRRIGATION ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

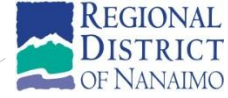
March 27, 2012



Nanaimo
Ladysmith



City of
Parksville



In attendance: Groundskeepers from City of Parksville, Town of Qualicum Beach, City of Nanaimo, School Districts 68 & 69, representative from IIABC, representative from RDN Team WaterSmart

BEST PRACTICE COMMITMENTS

IRRIGATION SPECS & STANDARDS

Each organization commits to following the IIABC (Irrigation Industry Association of BC) Specifications and Standards to uphold good water management practices and to have a means of providing clear communications when relaying requirements to contractors.

The City of Nanaimo is an example of an organization that has compiled their own Specs and Standards, consistent with the IIABC's, but specific to the City of Nanaimo's particularities. This goes above the minimum standards of the industry. Other organizations may want to work towards this as well.

CERTIFICATION & TRAINING

Many crews already have staff with certification from the IIABC, however each organization commits to strive for continuous training and further certification for their crews, as a means of keeping staff up to date with the most efficient and effective practices.

PRODUCTS/HARDWARE FOR CONSERVATION

Each organization commits to moving over to more efficient products such as:

MP Rotators (instead of Spray)

Check valves

Flow Sensors

Rain sensors/ ET sensors / Central Control / Weather Stations

Sub soil sensors

Drip irrigation

DESIGN FOR CONSERVATION

Each organization commits to design their irrigation systems with efficiency and future-use in mind. This includes considering soil type, slope and plant type when choosing the irrigation products and implementing a design. By ongoing monitoring including visual inspections, tabs can be kept on the efficiency of the current design and observations for improvement can be made. The organizations in attendance already practice certain techniques that aid in water efficiency:

Use of mulches and groundcover

Head to head coverage

Higher Mow height

Aeration

Top Dressing

SCHEDULING FOR CONSERVATION

Each organization is committed to scheduling their irrigation based on seasonal / current weather conditions. Products such as Evapotranspiration Sensors and Central Controls can aid in efficient scheduling. All generally abide by the rule of thumb: 1" of water per week.

PUBLIC AWARENESS

Each organization sees the value of raising public awareness about water conservation. The municipalities are part of the RDN Team WaterSmart program that provides water quality/ conservation information at community events, free workshops and online. One suggestion put forward is to provide rebates for residential rain sensors.

At the Roundtable Meeting, each organization received bumper stickers with the phrase "We Practice WaterSmart Irrigation" as a commitment and public awareness tool to indicate that they are working for water efficiency. Each organization is viewed as an example within their community and is held to high standards.

DEALING WITH VANDALISM

Each organization deals with some level of vandalism on their irrigation systems. The practices that work best to minimize the impact of vandalism are:

- Scheduling around peak periods, summer daylight hours, bar schedule
- Using Master Valves and Flow Control / Sensors to shut off water automatically when spray head is kicked off
- Refrain from installing pop-up spray heads , as they seem to be the biggest vandalism target

TROUBLESHOOTING MAINTENANCE ISSUES

Each organization has maintenance issues to contend with. Many of these issues are a result of outdated or poorly designed/installed system components. This directly ties in to the ongoing commitment to upgrade systems with water efficiency in mind. Troubleshooting also encompasses learning from past experiences so that the same errors don't recur as well as sharing successes/shortfalls with others in the field.

WORKING WITHIN WATERING RESTRICTIONS

Each organization admits difficulties in working within watering restrictions. One suggestion put forward is to exempt Evapotranspiration (ET) based systems, that water according to weather/soil based need rather than days of the week. Perhaps the watering restrictions could be based on actual water use instead of address, albeit that would be hard to patrol.

Overall, the discussions served as a great way for groundskeepers from all the jurisdictions to network and share successes, shortcomings and suggestions. The common goal to work towards efficiency will be further aided by the IIABC's Irrigation Efficiency Best Practices Web Tool – similar to LEED certification points program – that ranks the efficiency of a system based on its design and components. This will provide a quantifiable goal for organizations striving for efficiency and will give guidance on how to improve overall systems. This tool is planned to be available in the fall of 2012.

Thank you to everyone who attended & helped facilitate the event.

we practice
watersmart
because every drop counts 
irrigation

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