

# Water Dispatch

water information and commentary

November 2008

## Rehabilitation Hits the Fast Lane in WID

By the 2010 irrigation season, Western Irrigation District will have an additional \$25 million worth of newly rehabilitated infrastructure in place. This includes the South Cluny project and the Irrigation Rehabilitation Program funds; which are cost shared with the provincial government.

“It’s like we’re going to do 10 years worth of construction in two years at historic spending levels,” says Erwin Braun WID Operations Manager.

He adds this construction blitz will complete Secondary A canal all the way to Strathmore. Braun adds that the Board and staff will revisit the 10-year construction plan produced a couple of years ago. A new plan will look at complete systems and possible pipeline projects to create the next 10-year plan based on an \$8 million per year expenditure program. Historical spending was \$2.5 million per year.

“We’re taking priorities from the 10-year plan and using that to prioritize

entire systems,” says Braun. He explains that, for instance, they will look at the entire C canal system then prioritize that into yearly components. He clarifies that some projects can’t be done in chunks.

“On some systems, you can’t do part of a pipeline,” he points out. One of the advantages of long-

term planning is that the staff will have the opportunity to ensure all the components of a project come together smoothly. It also means that the water users and landowners will have time to plan any changes they may want to make when the construction project reaches their land or water source.

“It gives us time to do the land assembly for the right of ways and



Work underway on Secondary A canal. WID photo

discussions with the farms about what happens with the old canals and things like trees,” Braun explains. Some water users may change where they irrigate, incorporate land from a canal back into production after a pipeline installation or change their own irrigation system to take advantage of a pressurized pipeline.

## Thanks, Dwight

Over 50 water users, staff and Directors attended a retirement party for Dwight Gittel, Chestermere Water Supervisor. Dwight started in Cluny and moved to Chestermere for most of his 32.5 year career. Operations Manager Erwin Braun says, “He was a wealth of information. He knew a lot of the farmers and knew the history of our system and how it operates. We’ll miss his experience.”

## Opportunity to buy WID Used Trucks

One 2007 and Ten 2008 Dodge Ram 1500 SLT Quad Cabs for sale

Starting at \$22,000 plus GST.

For more information, please call Don @ 403-899-4641.



Dwight Gittel at the Chestermere dam station. WID photo

Western Irrigation District produces this newsletter to keep all users of water informed about water issues and WID efforts to protect and manage the resource in this region. Contact WID, 934-3542.

## *WID a Leader in Water Monitoring*

The Western Irrigation District has become a leading irrigation district in the province for real-time water monitoring by putting 38 monitoring sites in place over the past three years.

"I'm actually pretty happy about that," says Water Master Brian Sander. "We've got a really good picture on the A and C canals. We need a little more work on the B canal, but it's coming along. It not only gives us a look at what our water supervisors are doing in the field; it also helps them become more efficient by showing them where the water is when they order it."

Sander explains that the monitoring equipment allows water supervisors to log onto a computer system and take all the guess work out of where their water order is after diversion from Chestermere all the way to the return

flow station. In the past, this information wasn't available until data analysis at the end of the season allowed water supervisors to scrutinize the annual flow data.

"It improves the delivery efficiency to our irrigators, providing a more accurate timeline for when a water user can expect their water order to arrive and that improves conservation," Sander explains. Water supervisors can manage their time and water much better as they can see problems in the system right away. If a clogged weed screen blocks water flow in an area, they know immediately.

"That affects your delivery to your farmers." He adds that this is part of the diversification of tools irrigation districts can use to increase overall efficiency in water management.

For instance, as data becomes more accurate, the WID Board an Operations Department will be able to tell where the infrastructure may need work to keep the water flowing in a timely fashion. "It gives us hard data to work with that's hard to argue with and we can compare the past and present," Sander says.

The monitoring progress is a result of an Alberta Agriculture program that offered 100-percent funding to install the equipment.

"It was great revenue and it went a long way. It's hard for the district to budget, for example, \$205,000 this year. That's pretty tough to pull out of the normal irrigation district budget," Sander explains. He hopes the government will announce the program for 2009.

## *Irrigation Sector Plan one of the First in Alberta*

Under Alberta's Water for Life strategy, one of the goals is to increase the productivity and efficiency of the water Albertans use for all sectors.

The initiative, called the Conservation, Efficiency and Productivity Plans (CEP), falls under the responsibility of the Alberta Water Council (AWC). The seven major water using sectors of the economy need to develop CEPs.

AWC developed a list of things each sector needs to review and a framework of how to go about developing one of these plans.

"The irrigation sector volunteered to be one of the first two groups to use this annotated table of contents in order to develop this plan," says Ron McMullin, executive director of Alberta Irrigation Projects Association (AIPA). "Wally Chin and Doug Clark, people involved in irrigation for a long time, were hired to then prepare this plan."

He adds that the irrigation industry has improved its efficiency over time and has a great record. "If you look at the numbers, over the last 40 years irrigation has increased efficiency at a rate of about 1% per year. Now that doesn't sound like much, but in 40 years that means an increased efficiency of 40%; which is tremendous strides. Those efficiencies come primarily from: putting leaking lateral

may increase efficiencies and water price and water market.

"I'm not saying pay per liter of water that the farmer uses, that's not it. What we're saying is when we conserve water, how can it be used by others to increase its productivity," says McMullin. He lists industries, communities, recreation and environment as ways of adding value to water use.

He adds there is also a need to consider what research the irrigation sector may need to add efficiencies.

The CEP group held a workshop of stakeholders where about 50 or 55 people came to examine, brainstorm and rank what opportunities

there are to achieve efficiency goals.

"Once we have these targets and opportunities set, then we can go forward over the next few years to achieve those goals," McMullin explained.

He says this plan will be a presentation topic at the up coming AIPA conference in February.



*Alberta Irrigation Projects Association  
Conference Feb. 8 - 10, 2009  
Lethbridge Lodge, Lethbridge  
Visit [www.aipa.org](http://www.aipa.org) for more  
information or call 1-403-3283063*

ditches into pipelines; reducing return flows, reducing seepage, reducing bypass water and converting some flood and wheel systems to pivots."

The irrigation CEP will explore possible technologies that can increase efficiency further; water storage that might be able to increase efficiency; how irrigation water use by others

# Money for water projects

Check out these programs to help secure funding for on-farm water projects.

## Western Irrigation District

The WID continues to offer support for on-farm efficiency projects through a cost sharing program offered by the Board. The program supports putting infrastructure in place that will save water. The projects range from flood to pivot irrigation conversions, operational size dugouts, yard and garden storage and a variety of stock watering systems.

"We'd like to see more applications for projects," says Brian Sander, WID Water Master. The goal of the program is to maximize the efficient use of water licensed to the WID. On-site storage allows the district to manage canal flows for maximum benefit of all water users on the system. "It's in the best interests for all users to have storage for all stock or yard water in the inevitable event that water levels in a lateral ditch or canal are low or turned off during the season due to little or no demand," he explains. Stock and yard agreements contain a clause that stipulates the water user provide a two-week storage facility. What size two weeks storage ends up being is very specific to the requirements of the facility. The important thing to realize is the impact a dugout has on water conservation, not only on an individual basis, but collectively through the entire District. "I encourage users to contact their area supervisor to initiate the process," says Sander. The district funded \$25,000 toward these projects and the owners contributed an aggregate of \$14,500 in 2007.

## Rosebud River Watershed Partners

The Rosebud River Watershed Partners (RRWP) solicits projects each year from watershed residents interested in protecting water quality or quantity within the watershed.

Types of projects for landowners include: riparian buffer strips; run-on/run-off water diversion or catchment projects; off-stream stock watering; abandoned well decommissioning; riparian assessments and riparian restoration projects.

RRWP applies for project funds through the Alberta Stewardship Network in January. Therefore, they would like people to contact them in December for inclusion in the funding request.

RRWP has about eight years and many successful projects in its history. Join them in preserving our watershed for the future.

You will find a Stewardship Project Application form on [www.umbel.ca/rrwp](http://www.umbel.ca/rrwp) in pdf format. If you would like it in Microsoft Word or to have a copy faxed to you, contact Claudette, 403-533-0008 or [umbel@myipplus.net](mailto:umbel@myipplus.net).

## Chinook Credit Union makes special offer to WID ratepayers

The WID Board negotiated a deal just for its ratepayers as a way of making last year's water license settlement directly benefit district water users. Chinook Credit Union Ltd. agreed to offer WID water users special financing to buy and install a new pivot.

They will finance up to 80% of the cost of the pivot alone or alternatively 100% may be available with the additional support of an equitable land mortgage. Financing will be over a term of five years with a maximum 10 year amortization.

The program can be accessed by contacting Chinook Credit Union Ltd. Strathmore Branch

"We've got a fair sized pot of money that we're going to use, but it goes fast because those pivots are kind of expensive," says Chinook Senior Account Manager Bob Watson.

## Alberta Farm Water Source Program

If you constructed a long-term on-farm water source(s) in 2008, you may be eligible for one-third funding from the 2008 Alberta Farm Water Source Program (AFWSP).

The government will process AFWSP applications on a first-come, first-served basis. Eligible projects could include: wells, dugouts, dams, and spring developments for active producers with at least \$10,000 annual value of farm commodity production. The program offers 1/3 of eligible project costs to a maximum of \$5,000 per eligible producer for constructing a long-term on-farm water supply that reduces drought risk.

The application deadline for this program is January 15, 2009. Visit <http://www1.agric.gov.ab.ca/general/progserv.nsf/all/pgmsrv356> for information and forms or call (310-000) 780-422-9167.



## Ducks Unlimited Provides Additional Benefits to WID

Ducks Unlimited Canada (DUC) and the Western Irrigation District (WID) enjoy a successful partnership that dates back to the early 1940's. Since that time, 75 wetland habitat projects have been developed within the WID operating area. These DUC projects amount to approximately 11,000 acres of wetlands.

In 2002, DUC initiated the water license application process with Alberta Environment to provide long-term water security for these important wetland habitats within the WID. By ensuring a water supply for these critical habitats, DUC protects its investment in the irrigation districts and guarantees that these special places will survive for future generations to enjoy.

In spring 2008, Alberta Environment approved DUC's license for 7,300 acre-feet of water for projects in the WID. The WID will convey this water

through its infrastructure. Flow rates in the WID irrigation canals that feed DUC wetlands will remain the same as it's been for DUC projects for over 60 years. The vast inventory of DUC wetland projects that were developed in partnership with the WID are critical not only for waterfowl, but are also very important sources of stock water. They ensure a diversity of native plants and animals, provide water quality benefits, offer recreational opportunities and, in some cases, provide sources of irrigation and domestic water for people.



*Ducks Unlimited project on Hwy 21 in Wheatland County  
Photo: C. Lacombe*

The water granted to DUC through Alberta Environment is entirely independent of the WID water allotment and does not take water from existing water users in the WID, but may allow the WID more flexibility with its licensed allotment. This will benefit the WID, DUC, irrigators, cattle producers and waterfowl alike.

## South Cluny Project Racing Along

The entire WID operations and maintenance staff are hard at work in the Cluny area and will be all winter. Operations manager Erwin Braun says most of the small pipe is in place and the 42-inch pipe will be next. The stilling pond and inlet structure are done and 800-meters of 48-inch pipe are in the ground.

"We anticipate the project to be complete by the 2010 water season," says Braun. "It's by far the biggest project we've ever undertaken in the district."



*Pipe going in for the South Cluny project. WID photo*

## Websites to Visit

**Alberta Invasive Plant Council**  
[www.invasiveplants.ab.ca](http://www.invasiveplants.ab.ca)

**Water Matters**  
[www.water-matters.org](http://www.water-matters.org)

**Alberta Sustainable Resources Development**  
Land Use Framework  
[www.srd.alberta.ca](http://www.srd.alberta.ca)

**Alberta Water Portal**  
[www.albertawater.com](http://www.albertawater.com)

**Alberta Water Council**  
Wetland Policy,  
Shared Governance Framework,  
Water Allocation Transfer  
[www.awchome.ca](http://www.awchome.ca)

**Red Deer River Watershed Alliance**  
[www.rdrwa.ca](http://www.rdrwa.ca)

**One Simple Act**  
Alberta conservation initiative  
[www.onesimpleact.alberta.ca](http://www.onesimpleact.alberta.ca)

## WID Water Supervisors

### Ditchrider Contacts

Brian Sander	Water Master	325-0493
Jeff Maude	Chestermere	899-4638
Don Brownlee	Carseland	899-4641
Pat Smith	Gleichen/Cluny	325-4642
Wes Sproule	Rockyford	325-4640
Vacant	Crowfoot	325-4639
Eric Beingessner	Strathmore	325-4601