

# Water Dispatch

water information and commentary

Fall/Winter 2014

## 116 Years of Service Celebrated at the WID



WID Photo

When four people have a combined 116 years of service to an organization, it's time to celebrate! In September, the Western Irrigation District did just that. WID staff, former colleagues, family members and friends all gathered at the Travelodge to recognize this milestone.

Dennis Kiemeny, Don Brownlee, Cory Krahenbil and Wes Sproule were the focus of the event. WID's General Manager, Erwin Braun, spoke to the importance of long term employees. "There is a wealth of history with both irrigation in general and our district in particular. These men have seen the district transform over the years. They have witnessed the changes to how water is delivered, and how water is used on the farms. Their experience – their knowledge of the system and the landowners and the district – cannot be undervalued."

Dennis Kiemeny, Construction Supervisor, has been with the District for 36 years. In reality, though, his interest goes back even further. As a young boy, Dennis' fami-

ly farmed, and he related the story of the incident that he believes started his path toward the WID.

In an afternoon rainstorm, while doing his chores, he suddenly faced a deluge of water coming through the farmyard. Dennis called the WID office and got a hold of the Water Master, who came to the farm to help. It was dark, but with a home-made garden tractor, a shovel and some gunny sacks, they made their way to the source of the excess water. "He stood on the back with the shovel, flashlight and gunny sacks in one hand, he grabbed the scruff of my coat with the other, and away we went." When they got to the canal, they found a wooden structure had washed out in the storm. They filled sandbags to block the water temporarily and the next day, the WID sent a crew to replace the damaged structure.

Dennis recalled, "I thought after, when I started at the WID, that was probably why I worked here - because of my early experiences with the WID."

To this day, Dennis enjoys getting the most out of the equipment available, and making any process more efficient. He also likes the people. "You know what the best thing about the job is? The people I work with. That's what sums it up."

It turns out Dennis is responsible for hiring one of the other long time employees. Cory Krahenbil, Maintenance Superintendent and 20 year employee with the WID, remembers Dennis calling him up to offer him a two-week gig helping out with some labour putting in pipelines. "That two weeks turned into 20 years," Cory laughed. "On a good day, I have Dennis to thank, on a bad day, I have him to blame!"

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WID Photo

From left to right - Dennis Kiemeny, Don Brownlee, Cory Krahenbil, Wes Sproule

## 116 Years of Service - continued from page 1

Cory attributes the number of long-term employees to the quality of personnel, and the way the organization runs. "There are plenty of reasons to want to be here, and want to contribute to the prosperity of the region." He particularly appreciates the people he works with, and taking pride in each job he does. Cory also mentioned how important it is to be able to focus on his family, and that he was never denied time needed to be with them.

Don Brownlee has 35 years of service with the WID and is currently the Water District Supervisor for the Carseland area. He recalled the early days with the WID, "Back when it started, it was a family. It was a smaller operation, and different than it is now. You knew all the farmers and saw them at functions." Don appreciated the close relationships with farmers, "I had coffee daily at the Johansen's. Stella told me if she wasn't there when I arrived, to go in and put the coffee on, they'd be along."

"I love what I do here, and my goal is to make 40 years. It's more business now, but it's still fun – it needs to be fun to come to work," Don said. "When I started, my manager told me 50% of my job was PR – we want you to spend 50% of your time getting to know water users." Don has taken that to heart, focusing on knowing his water users and doing what he can to provide them with excellent service. Each of his colleagues spoke highly of him, and he of them, which shows that personal connection.

Wes Sproule, has been with the WID for 25 years, and is the Water District Supervisor for the Rockyford area. He commented on the change from open canals to pipeline in his region. "I'm glad I started in what I call the 'good old days'. There were more trees, more habitats and I liked that. I liked the animals I saw. I remember seeing the ducks, frogs and deer when driving the ditches. Now I drive across a barren field to a metal thing sticking out and turn it on. It's not the same."

## Thanks to Irrigation Corn Roast a Success



*Thanks to Irrigation hosted a corn roast at the Calgary Farmer's Market in August. Visitors munched over 2700 cobs of corn, and took away information packages about irrigation in Alberta. The most common comment was, "This is the sweetest corn I ever tasted – where does it come from?" It's all Thanks to Irrigation!*  
- Photo by Brian Stecyk

He still enjoys his job. "It's an enjoyable place to come to work. That's what I like about it. It's not big money like you might make on the pipelines up north, but you know you've got a bunch of good guys watching your back, and you're going to go home safe at the end of the day." Wes pointed out that it's not just the staff members that make it a good place to work; it's the farmers too. "I treat the landowners like they're my bosses, not the WID," Wes said, explaining that a good working relationship with the farmers makes a huge difference in his ability to do his job efficiently.

A common theme emerged among them all – good people. It seems no matter what your job is, it's going to be better with good people. Each of the four men spoke to how important that was in their decision to stay with the WID over the years. Congratulations on your Long Service Awards, gentlemen!

## The WID Welcomes Their Newest Staff Members!



**JR Dunbar**  
**Water District Supervisor**  
**Strathmore Region**



**Charlotte Horne**  
**Assessment and**  
**Accounts Receivable**  
**Clerk**



**Heather Higgins**  
**Administration Clerk**



**Derrick McGougan**  
**Water District Supervisor**  
**Chestermere Region**

## ***WID Leads the Way With Innovative New Weed Control Product***

Irrigation canals need to be clear of weeds and algae to ensure reliable delivery, good flow rates and prevent problems from spreading to other areas of the system. Weed control is challenging enough on land, but in water, it's an even more complicated process. Chemicals available are expensive, toxic and difficult to apply. The Western Irrigation District is experimenting with EcoSocks, a liquid live microorganism (LLMO) product that shows promise to change that.

Three years ago, the WID became the first Irrigation District to try using EcoSocks, a relatively new product in Advanced Water Technologies' (AWT's) product line. Brian Sander, Water Master at the WID explained, "Our interest in LLMO was brought about due to the then very real possibility that the traditional way the irrigation districts dealt with aquatics, Magnacide H, would no longer be available for use in Canada."

The liquid form of the product was used for treating storm water ponds in Lethbridge, Calgary and Edmonton, and Sander visited the Calgary location to get a feel for how the product works. "Testimony from Calgary workers was very positive about its effectiveness, however how to use LLMO in flowing water was a problem as it had only been used in static ponds with little to no flow of water," Sander said. They needed a different product for canal systems. When AWT brought in EcoSocks, it seemed they found the product that would work with irrigation

Problems arise when the natural balance of an aquatic system is disrupted. EcoSocks are designed to help restore that balance. The EcoSock is attached by a rope to structures along the canals, and distribute bacteria that occur naturally in the environment into the water. Phyllis Day Chief, CEO of AWT explains, "EcoSocks are filled with environmentally friendly, naturally occurring soil bacteria. What we're doing is equalizing the balance in the body of water. The EcoSock out competes the algae



***EcoSocks are proving to be beneficial for weed control in canals***

so it can't bloom." These beneficial bacteria in the EcoSocks are important to remove nitrogenous waste from the water.

EcoSocks require early application and weekly monitoring, but they are completely safe to handle. The MSDS Safety sheets for this product read "N/A" all the way down the list. They don't utilize chemicals or pesticides, so there is no need for special clothing or equipment.

EcoSocks were a very new product, and had little information on effective treatment distances, maximum treatable flow rates and application techniques. The WID first installed the socks in a main canal where the traditional chemical used for weed control, Magnacide H, was not possible. That trial showed that high and fluctuating flow rates made it impossible to detect effectiveness.

"We were still encouraged by what we had observed in the city ponds. We also have a desire to find a more environmentally friendly alternative to Magnacide H, so we decided try again in a smaller lateral canal. We chose an asphalt liner ditch in 2013, a small lateral with historically bad, and at times debilitating weed issues, because it could not have Magnacide H used under its conditions of use," Sander said. Visual results were immediate and decreased weed growth was noticeable, according to the Don Brownlee, Water District Supervisor for the area.

Encouraged further, in 2014 the WID installed EcoSocks in the same canal at the same treatment locations and the results were promising. They had never seen so few weeds in this canal.

AWT performed a scientific study this summer using test sites in the WID's canals. The WID is excited to see how the science supports their observations.



***Algae growth test plates were situated upstream and downstream of the EcoSocks***

# Reservoir Expansion, Pipelines and Canal Rehab Under Way this Winter

The Western Irrigation District is into one of its busiest construction seasons yet. The projects include the Langdon reservoir expansion, three lengths of pipeline installation and a section of C Canal rehabilitation.

The Langdon reservoir water level was lowered in July, allowing construction to speed up before the winter weather hit. By next spring the reservoir will double its capacity, and provide added insurance for WID's water users.

C Canal is the focus of gravel on poly liner rehabilitation this winter. Contractors will complete 6 km, and the WID 3 km starting at the Rohl spillway, east of Keoma. "Over the next 7-8 winters we will rehabilitate 63 km of C canal, all the way to Rockyford, where it joins the Redland pipeline," explained Jeremy Hensing, WID's Manager of Operations and Maintenance. "This section of C canal is extremely sandy, and lining the canal will create huge water savings."

Between the reservoir and C canal projects, over 110,000 tonnes of gravel is required. All of this material is coming from the WID's Cluny gravel pit. "The cost savings of having our own gravel source is significant," Hensing said.

This winter will also see 10 km of closed PVC pipeline installed by the WID in three locations. One section will tie C canal to existing pipeline north of Rockyford on the Cemetery Hill sublaterals. Another replaces the A canal sublaterals from A canal north of Namaka Lake down along the east side of the Lake. Finally, a section will be installed off the North Cluny lateral about eight kilometers east of highway 1.



WID Photo

**Construction on Secondary C Canal was well under way in the early fall. Lining the canals or converting them to pipeline creates huge water savings.**

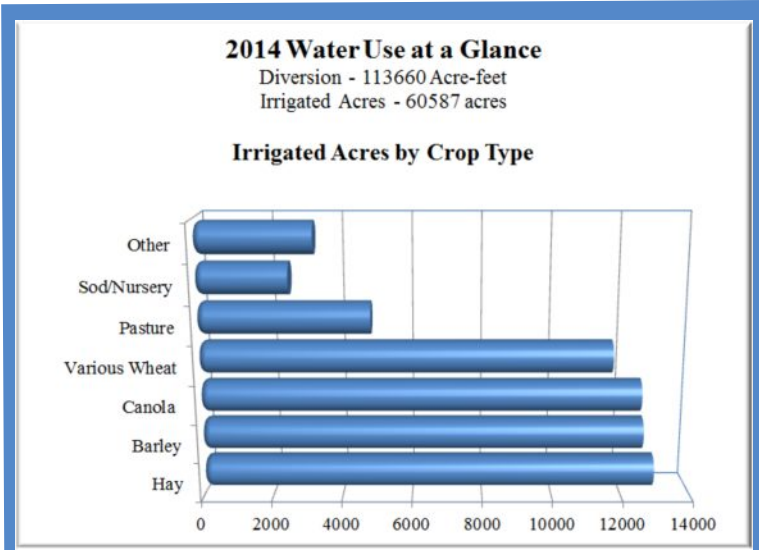


WID Photo

**Langdon Reservoir will double capacity after expansion**

## WID Board of Directors

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Now that the WID has completed the rehabilitation of A canal, high demands for water throughout the 2014 season proved to be a good test of the improvements. "The delivery times were shorter overall, which was a sign of increased efficiency over previous high demand years," Brian Sander, Water Master reported.

## Water Supervisor Contacts

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