



# WATER DISPATCH

FALL 2020

## HIGH DEMAND FOR 2021 ACRE DISTRIBUTION

The WID has successfully approved 950 acres for distribution in the 2021 water season, the third time a distribution has occurred since 2018. This is good news for all WID irrigators, as it increases the overall efficiency within the district.

Irrigators who were awarded acres will invest in high efficiency systems that use low pressure pivots or drip irrigation. And, the distribution of acres also ensures that capacity which has been increased with WID infrastructure upgrades, will now be used.

But, there is more demand for the 95,000 irrigation acres than the WID can fulfill.

"This year we received applications for more than three times as many acres as we had to distribute," says David McAllister, WID's General Manager.

So the WID is looking at further expansion possibilities.

"For example, the North Cluny tailout was designed with a certain future expansion capacity," explains McAllister. "Now 80% of it has been taken up in three years – so we know there is a demand for more acres and there is great value in targeted infrastructure investment."

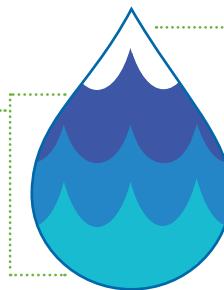
Based on this strong demand, the District has engaged the Province of Alberta to undertake expansion modeling for the WID serviced area. The modeling will reveal potential expansion scenarios which the WID's Board of Directors will review.

"If approved by the Board, expansion plans would then be submitted to WID irrigators for a plebiscite," says McAllister.

The WID appreciates the investments producers are making in irrigation and is working hard to meet demand for more acres!



**95,000**  
total irrigation  
acres available  
to WID



**950**  
**irrigation acres**  
made available by  
owners, distributed  
to irrigators  
committed to  
implementing or  
using a  
high-efficiency system

**This past irrigation season,  
more than 85% of the systems  
used in the WID were high-efficiency**

**NEW HOME  
COMING SOON**

**Construction underway  
for unique partnership,  
page 2**



# BREAKING GROUND FOR NEW JOINT FACILITY

Books and water together? It turns out they are a fantastic blend when two non-profits have a shared vision of supporting the community, providing their staff with efficient workspace, and saving money at the same time. In a unique collaboration, the Western Irrigation District and Marigold Library System are building a joint headquarters on six acres in Strathmore at the intersection of Pine and Orchard.

"It is unique for two organizations like these to come together, and we both benefit from the cost-effectiveness of sharing resources," says David McAllister, General Manager of the WID. "Plus, our community benefits, from construction jobs in the near term, and public use of meeting space, and our ongoing contributions to the local economy in the longer term."

Set to open in summer 2021, the building will have a total of 34,642 square feet and is designed to prioritize efficient workflow. Each organization will have its own wing, and there will be shared common spaces and a meeting room to host up to 100 people.

The WID originally owned the land, which is now co-owned with Marigold. The WID donated an adjoining parcel of land to the Town of



Michelle Toombs, CEO, Marigold Library System; Amber Link, Reeve, Wheatland County; Reuben (Buck) Breaker, Councillor, Siksika Nation; Lynda Lyster, Board Chair, Marigold Library System; Dan Shute, Board Chair, Western Irrigation District; Angela Pitt, MLA, Airdrie East; Denise Peterson, Councillor, Town of Strathmore; David McAllister, General Manager, Western Irrigation District; Martin Shields, MP, Bow River



Strathmore. The donated land includes a wetland and will be preserved as a natural space.

Project funding comes from both organizations along with a generous grant to Marigold from the Alberta Ministry of Municipal Affairs.

The WID is excited to forge a relationship with Marigold. In this case, water and books mix perfectly.

# IRRIGATION CRITICAL AT POPLAR BLUFF ORGANICS

Rosemary Wotske's organic vegetable farm is the living legacy of farmers before her who made the vital irrigation she needs possible.

"I like the history of the WID," says Wotske. "I appreciate that the original canals were dug by the men working for the Candian Pacific Railway. Not an easy feat, but they somehow managed to get the water up and over the ridge from the valley back into Strathmore and Cluny without GPS or the tools we have now."

Wotske's farm is a feat of its own, a haven in the harsh Palliser Triangle, where the days are hot and nights are cold, surrounded by parched grass range.

For more than 35 years, Wotske has studied biodiversity of the land, harvesting season after season of soft fleshed ripe potatoes and sweet crisp carrots. When she bought her first 1.5 acres back in the 80's, she knew right away she would need irrigation. Throughout the years she has noticed a change in the rain levels, sometimes more and sometimes less but definitely unreliable and inconsistent.

While early months may offer an abundance of rain, the harsh beating August sun and wind take a toll on Alberta crops, drying them out before harvest.

"Without water for two months, a sweet carrot is going to taste more bitter than a tomato," says Wotske.

Irrigation makes it possible for her signature sweet vegetables to thrive in the microbiome soil ecosystem they grow in. Without irrigation the surrounding fungi would be dormant, which her crops lend their excess sugar to in exchange for valuable nutrients and minerals it can't reach on its own.



Rosemary, centre, applies biodiversity expertise to managing irrigation and crops

## LOOKING BACK

To see a video explaining the history of the WID, visit [www.wid.net](http://www.wid.net), under the About Us tab



The cold nights and water help the vegetables make sugar through an enzymatic process using light from the hot sun. They end up with more sugar than the plant can actually use up, leaving them extra sweet when they are harvested.

For Wotske, irrigation means stability for the crop season and the ability to yield tomatoes, parsnips, beets and sweet carrots from land where it may otherwise be infertile.

# LOOKING AT THE BIG PICTURE FOR DISTRICT CONSTRUCTION

This summer, the WID was busy with water – and construction! Yes, usually projects are tackled through the winter but this year, a number of projects could begin sooner, that didn't interfere with water delivery.

"During water season, there are some systems we can't work on," explains WID's Executive Manager of Operations Sean Mascaluk. "So we worked with landowners in this area to be able to advance construction over the summer, to further accelerate the rehabilitation of our system."

Most notably, in August, Phase 1 of the Field-Strangmuir Pipeline (shown at right), 6.5 kilometres north of Carseland got underway.



Phase 1 allows the potential area served by irrigation to increase from 400 to 1,400 acres. To justify this expansion, farmers proactively classified their land for irrigation.

This classification isn't the only way producers cooperated with the WID to make this project happen.

"It has taken a lot of collaboration with landowners because we're going through areas where surrounding fields are cultivated," adds General Manager David McAllister. "Landowners have worked with us, understanding there is a long-term benefit to this construction, and we really appreciate their contributions."

McAllister calculated that converting these acres from dryland to irrigation should add about 6 full-time equivalent jobs to the agriculture sector due to improved production on the land.

"There will be significant economic benefit from converting those acres," says McAllister. "We expect a GDP increase of slightly more than \$1 million per year."

This area has high demand for irrigation. The WID accounted for this by installing pipeline with a larger diameter. When all phases are complete, the full buildout will allow for a total of 8,400 irrigation acres.

## WID BOARD OF DIRECTORS

|                             |            |
|-----------------------------|------------|
| Doug Brown                  | Division 1 |
| Henry Colpoys               | Division 2 |
| Rick Page                   | Division 3 |
| Dan Shute – Chair           | Division 4 |
| Ray Kettenbach – Vice Chair | Division 5 |

## WATER SUPPLY CONTACTS

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| Joe Friedman     | Gleichen/Cluny    | 403-325-4642 |
| Wes Sproule      | Rockyford         | 403-325-4640 |
| JR Dunbar        | Crowfoot          | 403-325-4639 |
| Jaye Wegener     | Strathmore        | 403-325-4601 |

Tell us  
what you think

We're working on new ways to engage our irrigators and stakeholders in the future. If you'd like to answer a few short questions to provide confidential feedback on our newsletter, please call Jacquelynn at **403-808-2161** or email [jacquelynn@redstarcalgary.ca](mailto:jacquelynn@redstarcalgary.ca)

To contact our office, call **403-934-3542** or email [inquiry@wid.net](mailto:inquiry@wid.net)