



# WATER DISPATCH

SPRING 2021

## IRRIGATION TRIPLES HAY YIELD FOR FAMILY OPERATION



Tavis with his wife Megan and children

Irrigation efficiency grants and the opportunity to purchase additional irrigation acres have given the Rusnack family a leg up to increase the quantity, quality and predictability of their hay crops.

The family first grew hay on dry land just downstream from Chestermere Lake – but after a couple of years of inconsistent weather, decided to convert to irrigation. They started with one pivot system, and added a second when they purchased additional irrigation acres from the WID. Now, 145 of their 200 acres are under irrigation.

### GRANTS AVAILABLE

Go to [wid.net](http://wid.net) for details about ongoing grant programs to help finance upgrades to high-efficiency systems.

Tavis Rusnack says that irrigation triples their hay yield, partly due to a second cut every season. The quality has increased as well.



"We have an alfalfa-timothy-brome mix from Northstar Seeds that works well under irrigation," explains Rusnack. "It grows and matures quickly so we can get it off and get the next cycle rolling."

They selected a high-efficiency and time-saving automated irrigation system.

"We can be at work, wherever that is, get on our phone and start the pivot," says Rusnack. "We can also set the system so when it hits a certain point in the rotation it just shuts off. It's really nice not having to get up in the middle of the night to check it – it just does it."

The Rusnacks enjoy offering a reliable supply of hay to their buyers, thanks to irrigation.

"Even in drought years we have clients that know they'll get their orders filled because we have the means to do it."

### WHAT IS A WATER MASTER?

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# INFRASTRUCTURE MODERNIZATION DRIVES WATER EFFICIENCY

The WID makes significant strides each season with infrastructure construction and improvements, to increase water efficiency and allow for expansion of irrigated area.

Glenrose Canal rehabilitation phases 2 and 3 took place over the winter, south of Highway 564 near Rockyford. Crews upgraded the canal to include a buried liner, decreasing water loss to seepage. This project went even better than expected! Cost efficiencies allowed for the completion of an additional kilometre, for a total of 5.8 kms.

For the second year, construction will continue through the favourable summer season. Phase 2 of the Field Strangmuir Pipeline project, located north of Carseland, will progress and include 4.9 kms of pipeline. The WID is grateful for the cooperation of all who made this possible. The installation enables 3,400 acres of expansion upon completion of all phases, a boon for local landowners, with far-reaching effects.

"We anticipate economic benefits will include the creation of 18 full time equivalent positions and \$4.32 million construction spin off benefits," says WID's General Manager, David McAllister. "Over the long term, the expansion will add \$4.6 of annual gross revenue to the economy from farm land sales and value-added processing."

The WID is now looking forward to rehabilitation of the C Canal system, east of Highway 21. An initial meeting was held with adjacent landowners in February.



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## NEW FACILITY TAKES SHAPE

The WID and Marigold Library Service are more than halfway through construction of a new facility to open mid 2021 in Strathmore. From piles of dirt last fall, to framing this winter, to windows now in place, we look forward to having all WID staff in one building.





# YOUR WATER MASTER AT WORK

From the gate off the river to the pivot on the farm, the WID's Water Master Brian Sander is a jack of all trades who ensures quality water is where it needs to be, when it needs to be there, across the entire WID system.



For this unique job, Sander brings a blend of technical know-how, people skills, a creative eye for problem solving and a willingness to be hands-on.

Back in 2005, he started as a Water District Supervisor, often affectionately called a ditchrider. Soon promoted to Water Master, he hasn't had a boring day since!

"We have much in common with our water users, we're all working in the same direction," says Sander. "They are investing in and updating their equipment, seeing the value of irrigation. We are doing the same thing, constantly improving our systems and growing our infrastructure to serve them well."

Sander implemented a Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) system for the canals, so operations staff can manage water through a centralized computer system. And he supervises use of the Recording and Monitoring (RAM) system, that allows the team to see where water is being used in real time, to be efficient in directing flow into each canal.

"Water quality is always top of mind," he continues. The WID stewards water in many ways, dealing with weeds of all types, and now with a new spill response unit, can also clean up spills both in and out of the water.

Day-to-day, Sander works with to build relationships the municipalities and counties, and of course with producers.

"I appreciate what our farmers do," he says. "I really enjoy working for them, to help them be good water stewards, to be more efficient and ultimately more productive."

Read more about the water operations team at [wid.net](http://wid.net).

## WHEN IT RAINS...

Some might think that rainy days mean lazy days for Sander and his team – but the opposite is true. They are up in the wee hours, managing the system and the flow. Reservoir levels must be monitored, canals cannot get plugged or overflow, and pipeline screens need to be cleared.

## RAY GAUTHIER REMEMBERED

Our team has a long history of being passionate about what they do. Ray was a dedicated and much-appreciated WID ditchrider for 30 years, with many stories to tell. Enjoy reading about his life and career at [wid.net](http://wid.net).



# FUNCTION MEETS BEAUTY IN STRATHMORE



A portion of the Western Irrigation District's A Canal flows directly through the Town of Strathmore. During the pandemic, the WID collaborated with the Town of Strathmore to make it even easier to enjoy pathways along the canal. When used safely and respectfully, this is a beautiful feature for residents to enjoy, as so many experienced for the first time last summer.

Homeowners who back onto the 6.5 km stretch of canal appreciate water views, plants and birds that frequent the area. To keep the space peaceful for everyone, pathway users may use non-motorized

modes of transportation – and indeed, on any given day, it's now common to see locals walking, riding, or pushing strollers along the waterway.

"It's a beautiful amenity area and of course has an important function for the broader area," says WID's Executive Manager of Operations, Sean Mascaluk. "The canal is a critical part of our infrastructure that delivers water to our users downstream."

Water in the canal comes from the Bow River and provides a reliable and safe source of water to farmers, rural municipalities, and businesses within the WID.

While it might be tempting for people or pets to take a dip on a warm day, it's important to stay out of the canal. Water levels and flow rates can vary dramatically and concrete drop structures present a significant drowning risk.

"It can be very dangerous, and we just want people to be safe," says Mascaluk. "The canal should be enjoyed from the banks, never in the water."

It's a lovely feature for local residents, and one that will continue to serve irrigators throughout the district.

## WID BOARD OF DIRECTORS UPDATE

Congratulations to Rick Page who was acclaimed to his role on the Board, representing Division 3.



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

## WID BOARD OF DIRECTORS WATER SUPPLY CONTACTS

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