

CICWCD strives for water conservation

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By Cathy Wentz, The Spectrum

CEDAR CITY – The Central Iron County Water Conservancy District has bought three smart water controllers that will assist Cedar City and the Iron County School District in getting a handle on water usage during very dry times in the area.

Paul Monroe, general manager for the CICWCD, said the snowpack in the mountains has been approximately 40 percent for three years in a row, which means the Cedar Valley area has been under a drought during that time period.

He also said the Utah Geological Survey has estimated that the amount of water being overdrawn from the Cedar Valley Aquifer is 9,000 acre-feet yearly, which is higher than the 5,000 acre-foot estimate from the United States Geological Survey.

“It’s kind of nerve-wracking to have the amount of water that we have ... and nobody is really super-conscientious of their usage,” Monroe said.

As Monroe talked, employees of the CICWCD were busy digging a hole and a trench in the lawn at Three Peaks Elementary School in preparation for installing a water controller, the Weathermatic SmartLine.

The other two water controllers the water district purchased have already been installed in two Cedar City parks.

He said the water controller works by using a flow meter that calculates the amount of water that usually flows through the water lines, and if it detects a fluctuation indicating a problem, the meter will shut that line off.

Monroe used the example of a broken sprinkler head shooting off a lot of water and causing a pressure loss.

He said when the flow meter senses the problem, it sends out an alert text or email after shutting off the sprinkler line.

The controller can be monitored remotely by computer so that whoever monitors a particular sprinkler system is able to see whether it is running and even shut it down for a couple of days in case of rain.

Hunter Shaheen, energy manager for the ICSD and a member of the CICWCD conservation committee, said conserving water with the controller also will help the school district to conserve power and save money.

He said the district has been very proactive in its efforts to reduce costs during the past few years.

“At this point we’re not exactly sure what the difference is going to be,” Shaheen said. “We’re going to give it a good year or two and collect as much data as possible to see what the added benefit of having the smart controller on top of what our energy program has already been doing.”

Monroe said the water controllers cost an approximate total of \$4,000 each.

The water district not only is taking new measures to conserve water in the face of drought conditions, but it is continuing its partnership with Iron County’s Utah State University Extension office.

Candace Schaible, water-wise landscape and horticulture educator for the CICWCD and USU Extension, is once again offering her and her interns’ services in conducting water checks — they assist county residents with watering their lawns in the most efficient way possible.

She said the water check involves placing cups over a lawn to learn how long it takes a homeowner’s irrigation system to apply a half-inch of water.

“That’s the ideal amount each time you water,” she said.

She also said many people call her to ask how long they should be running their sprinkler systems, but the amount of water going onto the lawn is the important aspect of lawn irrigation. There is a lot of variation because some homeowners may only need to run their sprinklers 10 minutes, while others must run their systems for a full hour.

Follow Cathy Wentz on Twitter, @CathleenWentz.

To schedule a water check:

Call Candace Schaible at 586-8132 to schedule a lawn water check. The water checks are available now and will remain available until mid-August.