



Water control devices bring flood of savings

The amount of water we use is an important issue with people concerned about our environment. In that vein, Tonko Realty Advisors is taking a significant step in cutting down its consumption by contracting Calgary-based ExactET to manage its water needs.

Senior vice-president Scott Sharples is working with ExactET chief operating officer Darren Kovacs to employ technology using accurate real-time weather data to maintain the optimum soil moisture balance and avoid over-watering. Tonko has a local industrial portfolio of 26 buildings totalling 3.5 million square feet.

The technology has already proven to be a huge success in saving water, money and time for many Calgary clients.

Our city has a number of micro-climates from which Kovacs gathers data -- a network of six local weather stations that collect rainfall, temperature, wind, solar radiation and humidity information. The information is collected automatically by ExactET's server, analyzed and broadcast wirelessly every hour to a Rain Bird ET Manager, which calculates site-specific information to determine how much moisture has left the land and how much needs to be replaced.

Each client's site has an irrigation controller that turns on water only when the moisture balance reaches user-set levels.

Much of the landscaping around the city is watered on a set timer basis. If it has been fixed on a schedule of Monday, Wednesday, Friday, then that's when sprinklers turn on -- even if it's raining hard.

ExactET was launched in 2006 and Southcentre was one of its first clients. Documented water savings for the shopping centre show in two years, it reduced its water consumption by nearly nine million litres at a cost savings of more than \$12,000 based on city irrigation water meter rates.

Shaw Cable Systems cut its consumption by more than six million litres in its first two years using the technology and smaller buildings also are enjoying huge savings. In 2006-07, Beattie Homes' head office reduced its water costs by \$2,418 and, in one year, St. Mary's Cathedral has cut the amount of water for its landscaping by 43 per cent.

Kovacs says his units are now in 25 cities across Canada and businesses are eagerly awaiting to make use of his next station, which will be online next week in Kelowna, B.C. It's a smart way to irrigate and, as water rates increase, the savings on summer bills can be significant, as well as money saved by reducing maintenance and labour costs.