This presentation premiered at WaterSmart Innovations

watersmartinnovations.com
After the Initial Romance, do we still love our Smart Controllers?

Dennis Gegen – SNWA Conservation
Sean Ainsworth – SNWA Conservation
Las Vegas, a City of the Mojave Desert

- 54,000 square miles
- Low precipitation: 4 inches/year (2014 to date 1.52)
- Temperatures range: 15 - 115°F
- Low humidity: 7% - 20%
- High winds
- Bright sunshine, few clouds
- High ET Rate
Where our Water Goes

Total Residential Water Use

Most of our water is used outdoors

Effective landscape outdoor usage: 47%
Wasted landscape water: 23%
Indoor & Leaks: 30%
Outdoor: 70%

- Toilet 8%
- Laundry 6%
- Shower 5%
- Faucet 5%
- Leaks 5%
- Baths, dishwasher, miscellaneous 2%
Current Reservoir Conditions

September 1998
1215’

Lake Mead
Wash and Marina

March 2014
1106’
Reservoir Conditions

Current Elevation – 1081'
Discussion Points

- Intentions of study not to look at smart controller water savings
- Were smart controllers being used as intended?
- Surveys conducted 2010 and 2014
- Coupon program – going forward
Smart Irrigation Controllers

Customize irrigation schedules based on microclimate, temperature and evapotranspiration rate

Water according to a plant needs rather than a preset seasonal watering schedule

<http://www.foresteruniversity.net/webinar-getsmap-smart-irrigation.html>
Smart Controller Coupon Program

- Open to Single Family Residential customers only
- Customer prints coupon from SNWA.com
- One coupon per property address is allowed (must be a customer of SNWA member agency)
- Redeems coupon at approved participating retailer

Smart Irrigation Controller Instant Rebate Coupon
Smart Controller Coupon Program

- Purchase from list of qualifying products

- Receives rebate at time of purchase
  - Up to $200 or 50% of purchase price, whichever is lower
Smart Controller Coupon Program at a Glance

• Since 2006:
  • 162 coupons redeemed
  • Avg. rebate equals $127
  • Total amount to date equals over $21,000
2010 Smart Controller Coupon Survey

• 441 surveys *emailed* to coupon/voucher participants

• 47 returned

  • 22 participants signed up to save money on purchase of controller
  • 20 interested in smart controller technology
  • 5 had “other reasons for purchasing”

• 15 participants purchased an irrigation controller since printing coupon
  • 12 purchased a smart controller
  • 3 purchased rain sensors, soil moisture sensors
2010 Smart Controller Coupon Survey

Of the 47 Participants

- Turf/Xeric Combo: 19
- Xeric: 17
- Turf: 11
2010 Smart Controller Coupon Survey

Respondents

Maintained Own Landscape: 34
Contractor Maintained: 13
2010 Smart Controller Coupon Survey

Respondents

Programmed Controller: 38
Contractor Controlled: 9
Primary Goals

• Find how these controllers were being operated after a period of at least six months

• Are they operating as intended?
  • Smart Controller (auto mode)
  • Standard Controller

• Receive customer feedback regarding:
  • Controllers
  • Coupon Program
Scheduling Visits

- 162 customers who redeemed coupons were contacted
  - Visits conducted between Fall 2013/Summer 2014

- Email was sent offering free site consultation
  - Non respondents were called
  - Contact was made regardless of ownership change
Field Visits

• Visits lasted 15-20 minutes

• Confirmed controller settings were either in Auto or Standard Mode

• Pictures were taken onsite

• Visual survey of landscape quality

• Customers filled out brief satisfaction survey
• 49 participated in follow-up study

• 30% RESPONSE RATE!!

• 32 Field Visits completed
• 17 Telephone interviews were completed
2014 Smart Controller Coupon Survey

Controllers

Auto Mode: 30
Standard Mode: 19
2014 Smart Controller Coupon Survey

Auto Mode

Homeowner Installed: 18
Contractor Installed: 12
2014 Smart Controller Coupon Survey

Standard Mode

- Homeowner Installed: 14
- Contractor Installed: 5
• Majority of respondents were still positive about the benefits of their controller

• Respondents seemed comfortable with the latest gadgets to improve their quality of life
• Majority of respondents using clock in standard mode didn’t “trust” controller

• Clock was not initially installed or programmed properly

• Controller or weather station had malfunctioned or lost signal

• Some didn’t realize controller was not in Auto (Smart) mode
Customer Input

• All field visit participants expressed interest in a site visit by SNWA once the controller was installed by homeowner/contractor
  • At the time of this study, SNWA did not conduct program site visits

• Participants would like a chance to redeem another coupon if controller malfunctions or to upgrade as controllers with newer technology arrive on the market

• Majority of respondents purchased the controllers to save water/money (survey results)
Moving Forward

- Having a Conservation professional conduct a site visit would help homeowners feel confident and validate they are using the controller as intended to maximize water savings and money savings.

- A site visit would be beneficial to water purveyor to collect more data and allow for more correspondence between purveyor and customer for future studies/surveys.

- Increase collaboration with landscape contractors to utilize coupon program.
New Technologies
Smart Irrigation Controllers

- Smart Controllers are utilizing newer technologies

- App based irrigation products becoming more prevalent – user accessibility enhanced

- SNWA recognized this and expanded coupon program to allow purchase of these newer technologies
Questions?

dennis.gegen@snwa.com

sean.ainsworth@snwa.com