



Left: Sheridan's irrigation supervisor Steve Deschenes checks out the nerve centre of the irrigation system, which consists of two 60-horsepower pumps that can each move 1,100 gallons of water a minute, through a 14-inch main pipe in a computer-monitored pump house, which then irrigates more than 600 acres of Sheridan's farmland.

Below: Deschenes monitors the water usage and flow at the pumping station beside the eco-pond. The equipment is computerized allowing the water to be directed to where it is needed.



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Stensson said it's the first of its kind in North America for its size. As a matter of fact, it's easily identified on satellite images on Google Earth.

"What makes it so unique," continued Stensson, "is the fact it filters the runoff water through a reed bed, in which the runoff water filters through, and the reeds naturally clean the water, so in theory it's fairly pure once it reaches the other end."

"In essence we created a natural wetland area, which takes a lot of the nitrates out of the water," added Deschenes.

The total size of the area of the pond and catch basin is about eight acres, of which the catch basin/pond occupies two acres, which includes a wet cell and wetlands area. The water makes its way through to the opposite end of the wet cells by gravity, where it is then pumped into the main four-acre pond to maintain the 32-foot depth of the main pond.

The water is then drawn from the pond by means of two 60-horsepower pumps that can each move 1,100 gallons a minute, through a 14-inch main pipe in a computer-monitored pump house, which then irrigates more than 600 acres of Sheridan's farmland.

"We have the capability to expand to another 200 acres of coverage by increasing the pressure of the system," said Deschenes. "We calculate that the new system will be responsible for at least a 25 per cent saving of the water we draw from the Credit."

The eco-pond system didn't come cheap. Stensson says the entire three-year program and construction carried a price tag in excess of \$1 million, but all at Sheridan feel it was well worth the cost, to further their commitment to conservation of the water.

But their conservation programs didn't stop at reclaiming water. In addition, they began another irrigation program, called the 'Pot 'n Pot' system, in which the water is directed to the roots of the plants, rather than sprayed overhead.

The system is much more efficient, as water is placed where it does the most good, and also can be specifically applied to plants, rather than a 'blanket' spray approach.

Presently Sheridan has approximately 15 acres irrigated with the 'Pot 'n Pot' system, and more will be added in time. Their trial beds were started in

2003, and most of the present system was installed in 2007.

Bart Brusse, Sheridan's container farm manager, is quite pleased with the system.

"We're seeing a 70 per cent saving in water using the 'Pot 'n Pot' system versus using overhead systems," said Brusse. "We use both 25 and 45-gallon containers under each tree, with drain tiles underneath each one. The tiles capture the runoff and we reuse the water for irrigation."

In addition to the Pot 'n Pot system, Sheridan is using another simple yet effective measure to save water.

They have cocoa disks, which are in essence a cocoa mat cut in a circle. The mats are placed around the base of the trees, to hinder weed growth, and most importantly, to stop evaporation.

Another measure Sheridan has been utilizing is underground tape irrigation, and drip tape, which is an irrigation method that uses a product similar to soaker hoses, only much smaller.

"They are most effective," said Brusse. "They

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