



## President's letter

by Bobby Winter, IANY President

As I take on the helm of the IANY, I will do my best to navigate this association on the correct course.

Looking back over my 41 years in this industry when I was a young man, things were completely different. I could dig fast and install or replace a lot of heads. I was making a lot of money for my age. I remember walking the Atlantic/East coast show eager to learn more about the Irrigation industry. There were so many vendors there and a lot to take in. I walked up to the IANY table at one of those shows and asked them to tell me what they are all about. Their answer was "EDUCATION". I laughed because at this point I had been doing this type of work for 10 years and thought I knew everything about irrigation. But did I? So I signed up for a class.

I still remember my first instructor, Tom Armbruster. Tom was a guy working for Toro at the time. I am sure I was the

the ride. Some will just drift away on their own journeys. As a captain, I know it takes the whole crew to make a trip safe and successful. No one person can do it alone. Most of us do not own a large corporation with an H.R dept., an A.R. dept. /A.P dept., office staff, an estimating dept. or a PR/Social Media advertising staff. Never mind a reliable staff of service technician and helpers. Most of us owners wear most if not all of these hats.

As an association we come together to find answers on how to navigate our industry's forever changing codes, restrictions, GPS tracking, computer software, smart controls, more efficient irrigation methods along with many other new and old challenges. We have made many in roads with water purveyors in recent years. We are working with them to promote water conservation and are listing what their concerns are. Together we are doing our best to make fair and reasonable codes and restrictions. A lot of changes are

*A lot of changes are coming in the next few years. Will you know what's coming? Will you be part of the decision making? Will your voice be heard from the boat that's a drift?*

biggest P.I.A. in the class. To this day he would probably say I was the biggest he ever had in a class. LOL! I was amazed at just how much I didn't know about irrigation. I still wanted to learn more, so I take every chance I can to take a class. I still call Tom from time to time to ask him questions.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Tom and everyone else who has helped me over the years. I sincerely hope someone someday will thank me for helping them. As I sit here, writing this, I ponder what this season is going to bring. How am I going to navigate this season? Will we have another hotter and drier year? Will I have the staff to handle another season? Should I invest in new equipment, software, etc? Should I reduce the areas where we service? How much will I raise my rates?

We are all in the same boat asking the same questions. Some of us are working together to better our industry, our livelihoods, and our bottom lines, while others are just along for

coming in the next few years. Will you know what's coming? Will you be part of the decision making? Will your voice be heard from that boat that's a drift?

Remember those classes I took? At some point I realized that I got so much more out them than I thought. There is always something to learn or something to teach. Sometimes it had nothing to do with irrigation. The most important thing I think I learned was that these guys weren't just my competitors. They were in the same boat as me. They were willing to help me and I them. We shared stories about customers, equipment, employees, software, insurance and more. Someone always knew the answer to something. We have built trusting relationships and friendships. These guys are the crew I want in my life boat. I want to invite all of you to join us and help navigate the future of our industry.

*Bobby Winter is owner of B&A Lawn Sprinklers and president of the Irrigation Association of New York.*



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# Preaching to the choir

## Education is key to our industry's survival.

by Mike Dwyer, CIC

We had a great day on February 1st. The Town of Hempstead and Liberty Water co-sponsored a contractor learning event. Forty two contractors showed up on an icy road morning. I want to thank Hunter, Rain Bird, Toro, HydroRain, K-Rain, Central Irrigation, and SiteOne for answering my request to attend.

The message of the day was irrigation's impact on water supply. Liberty provided a map of suggested watering times for different areas within its territory. We, as an industry, create very high water draw between the hours of midnight to 5 a.m. All water districts experience the same draw time frame during the irrigation season. My customers get a 2 a.m. start time if they don't need or request a different time.

The main speaker was Supervisor of the Town of Hempstead Don Clavin. His talking points were use water, but use it wisely. Liberty asked for water conservation in the house and outdoors. I pointed out that water districts are just like us. They distribute the water from water towers into the water mains to our houses. We distribute water from the main to the manifold to each zone. We layout a zone based on how much water we have available. Consider that the entire water district is 1 zone for us. They are reaching their maximum gallonage. Like us the only option is to split the zone into 2 zones. Moving forward the idea is to make existing systems more efficient.

We are stressing the capacity of available water and water districts are asking for our help. They need us to change the watering times (another zone). I spoke about proper design of irrigation systems including the use of matched precipitation nozzles for rotors, drip irrigation, smart controllers, and pressure regulated spray bodies.

Education is the key to our industry's survival. Take a class in design or layout. My biggest eye-opener class, which I took a few years ago, was the Irrigation Association Irrigation Auditor class. This class has hands-on approach where you can see the impact that bad nozzle selection, poor spacing, clogged nozzle, bad layouts have on applying water to the landscape. Our ultimate goal is to use the least volume of water for a healthy landscape.

I want to thank the choir for coming to the event. I wish for the choir (attendees) to help share the word with the congregation (irrigators).

*Mike Dwyer, CIC, is with Hot Water Aplenty. He currently serves on the IANY Board of Directors and the leads the IANY Water Conference Committee.*



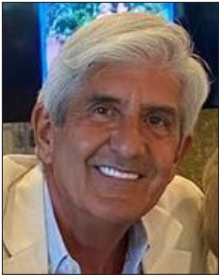
IANY board member Mike Dwyer and Supervisor of the Town of Hempstead Don Clavin connect with Rain Bird representatives on February 1, 2023.



Attendees network at learning event hosted by the Town of Hempstead and Liberty Water.



Supervisor of the Town of Hempstead Don Clavin poses with a young pup being socialized to serve as a service dog.



# A viable alternative to costly metered water for irrigation systems

## An introduction to well and pump systems.

*Gary Caparelli, NYSDEC Certified Well Driller*

The talk of the irrigation industry these days appears to be WATER CONSERVATION.

The talk of homeowners these days is most certainly WATER COST.

Besides the impact on Long Island's pristine deep aquifers which supplies our drinking water, the rising cost of metered water for irrigation purposes is causing concern among homeowners burdened with the monthly expense of maintaining a green lawn during the summer months.

Installing an Irrigation water well system as a water supply can mitigate both issues and deliver a reliable source of FREE water for many years to come.

There are basically two types of well systems used to pump groundwater on Long Island.

**(1) Shallow Wells**, typically driven to depths of 25' to 40' and tap the Upper Glacial aquifer. The pump is located at ground level, creating a suction to raise the water and sufficient pressure to operate a sprinkler system. This is the system we will discuss in today's article.

**(2) Submersible Pump Wells** are deep wells normally driven to depths of 50" to 300" and would be utilized in areas where depth to water exceeds the 25' requirement of a shallow well or must seek a different level of water due to quality issues, (e.g.) High concentration of dissolved iron. We shall touch on this type of well in a subsequent article.

### SHALLOW WELL AND PUMP SYSTEMS

This type of well is limited to water table depths of less than 25', which allows installation for most of the South Shore of Long Island and areas close to sea level. The extensive Hempstead Plain along the south shore typically allows for a well in the lower 1/3 of LI. There are many smaller residential properties which have sprinkler systems within its boundary.

As stated, a typical shallow well is 25-40' deep with a 1HP -2HP pump able to raise the water and send it out at pressures compatible with standard systems, about 30 PSI.

The components of this system include a stainless steel well screen, a 1-1/2" PVC well pipe, a properly sized self-priming well pump, a brass spring check valve, a 24v

pump relay and a connection pipe to the sprinkler system. NOTE: the current system MUST be totally disconnected from the former domestic water supply piping. Cross connections are Illegal!

**WELL SCREEN:** This is a critical component and impossible to replace, so it pays to use the best available. This has proven to be a wrapped SS wire screen with .01 slots, sufficient to allow a good flow of water through while keeping small sand particles out.

**WELL PIPE:** 1-1/2" Schedule 40 pipe is a standard riser which will not rust or corrode during the life of the well.

**SELF PRIMING PUMP:** On all systems that require raising water from depth, a self-priming pump is a must. While the check valve is tasked with maintaining the head of water at pump level, a self-priming pump will insure water delivery should it fail. And from time to time, it will fail for various reasons.

**BRASS CHECK VALVE:** As stated above, the check valve should maintain the water at ground level (like placing your finger on the end of a straw and raising it from a glass of water). A good quality brass check valve should have two threaded outlets- a 1/8" on suction side and 1/4" on downstream side. This will allow for a diagnostic vacuum gauge to be installed for trouble shooting any future problems.

**24V PUMP RELAY:** The pump relay will turn the pump on from demand of the sprinkler controller and cut power when done watering. The low voltage wires are connected to the Master Valve or Pump connections on the controller.

### PROS AND CONS OF A SHALLOW WELL AND PUMP SYSTEM

Like most innovative ideas, there are pros and cons which should be considered before deciding to move forward. I will try to be very transparent as both are discussed here.

**PRO:** A irrigation well and pump system is the only source of FREE water for a sprinkler system. Although there is an initial cost to install, most systems have a payback of 2-3 years from metered water savings.

*Continued on page 5*



**PRO:** A system installed with quality components will have a life span of 15-18 years for the pump and unlimited life span for the well. Stainless steel and PVC are not subject to deterioration.

**PRO:** Since most wells tap the Upper Glacial aquifer, the water delivered does not come from the deeper Magothy or Lloyd aquifers which supply our drinking water. Basically, shallow wells use “last week’s” rain water which percolated down and rests atop a thick clay layer, separating the aquifers. Most irrigation water will eventually return to its source. **THIS IS CONSERVATION AT ITS BEST!**

**PRO:** Sprinkler systems on well water **DO NOT** lower the house water pressure during hours of operation. Also, wells generally supply more gallons per minute than standard water mains which reduce the number of zones needed.

**PRO:** This type of system does not require costly maintenance. Simply winterize as you would the sprinkler in the Fall.

**CON:** Certain areas along the South Shore of Long Island may have a high concentration of dissolve iron in the groundwater. This water is perfectly good for the grass, but can slowly build up an orange rust stain on siding, PVC fences and masonry. **NOTE:** There are ways and methods to mitigate this and an experienced well installer will know best.

**CON:** Well pumps can lose prime for a variety of reasons and fail to re-establish prime. There is always a cause for this and will require a service call with proper diagnostic device to find and correct.

**CON:** Well water, while technically free, does require electric to power a pump. Typically, a 1 HP pump uses 1 KW per hour to operate (about 30 cents per hour of operation)

**CON:** An IRRIGATION well system is just that-for irrigation only. It is not potable water and should not be used for any other purpose, such as filling pools, washing cars or power washing purposes. It should not be used to compensate for other water uses.

This pretty much sums up the debate of Well water vs Metered water. As shown, this is not a “one system fits all” solution, but for thousands of homeowners south of the Southern State Parkway, a shallow well system is currently saving users hundreds of dollars per month during the watering season.

In closing, I would ask all sprinkler contractors to ponder the following: Which makes more sense economically- Using chlorinated drinking water originating hundreds of feet underground in pristine aquifers, transported through miles of water mains and water meters only to be dumped on lawns with wasted runoff OR install a water source on location using renewable groundwater with no ongoing expense. **THIS IS THE THOUGHT FOR TODAY.**

To be continued ...

*Gary Caparelli is a NYSDEC Certified Well Driller and a former Irrigation Association CIC and CLIA.*

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# Budgeting for technology

## How can you add technology to your company without taking a big hit?

by Michael Mayberry

Technology is absolutely necessary for green industry companies, but it can be expensive to implement in your business. Deciding on a whim to add something new could be extremely disruptive to your bottom line. So how can you add technology to your company without taking a big hit?

### Process mapping

The first step to adding new technology is planning, and that should start with process mapping. Process mapping is when you graphically draw out the flow of work so that you can see all of the steps involved. By doing this, you can identify waste in your current system, look for repetitive tasks that can be automated and understand how the new tech you are trying to implement will reduce human labor and increase efficiency.

Process mapping will help you determine ROI by highlighting the current human tasks that will be replaced by your newly implemented technology. This process will also show your company's true needs. You may think you need a system to communicate with all your staff. But through process mapping, you may find the ROI isn't going to cover the cost of the new technology, which indicates that is not the best value for your investment. It may show that you have a real bottleneck in your invoicing department and instead should focus on technology that will help solve that issue.

### Budgeting

Once you have determined what technology you will implement, it is time to start budgeting. The idea behind adding any new technology should be that after a certain time period it will pay for itself. Often, the way technology will pay for itself is by freeing up time for your employees to focus on other tasks. If you had a person who was responding to all potential employee candidates and you added technology to automate those communications, that person should then be able to focus on another value-add tasks.

The other way technology can pay for itself is to allow your people to manage more without affecting their work-life balance. For example, if you can add software that allows your account managers to go from managing \$1 million each to \$1.5 million each, with three account managers that means your business can handle an additional \$1.5 million in work without adding any extra people. In this example, let's say the cost of adding those employees with benefits could be up to \$150,000, but the software is only \$30,000

a year. In that setup, adding the software would save you \$120,000 each year.

It's important to understand how long technology will need to operate before reaching the break-even point when budgeting. Typically, it takes 1-3 years before a technology starts producing a real return on the investment.

### Technology spending

It is important to consciously increase your budget for technology each year so that the funds are available when you determine a technology is a right fit for your company. Even if you don't have a specific technology in mind for the coming year, you should still budget to increase your technology spending. Across all industries, the average budget for a small company's technology is about 7% of revenue. How does your spending compare?

*Michael Mayberry is the chief technology officer for Level Green Landscape LLC in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, blending a passion for the outdoors with technology to create a new way for the green industry to conduct business.*

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# Wave the magic training wand

Training is vital, but it requires developing a unique solution to be done properly.

by Christopher Pine, CLWM, CID, CIC, CLIA, CIT, MCLP

One of today's largest challenges for landscape irrigation industry contractors is attracting and retaining employees. More companies are recognizing that managing employees is a year-round business function and finding individuals with shared values is more important than finding people with "years of experience." Another realization is that providing training opportunities is critical for staff development, performance, employee retention and personal growth.

Training is complex and often not understood by management in our and other industries. As trainers, we joke about the probably unintentional expectation that some business owners have when they call us for services with an implied expectation that we will "wave the magic training wand" and all of their teams will be "trained." Once we try and start digging in to developing a training solution, many quickly recognize the scale of what is required. And many of those who do realize the challenge decide to continue living with the problem they are trying to solve.

You must have some goals and objectives to steer your training program to an outcome or result. You should have return on your investment to make it worth it and measure its effectiveness. Maybe it is as simple as achieving a specific level of competency on two-wire systems. Maybe it is more complex, like moving a new hire from zero experience to competency in scheduling irrigation systems efficiently. Either way, it is critical to define what you want to achieve. General "training" usually isn't that effective.

Another challenge is that most teams have different levels of experience and knowledge. Consider how many of us have experienced "education." Most have completed more than 12 years of grade school resulting in a diploma based on standardized requirements of learning. As we advanced to the next grade, there were standards for what was needed to advance. We have very little of that in the workplace and therefore the rules are different.

It is difficult for trainers to work with groups who have learners with skill sets that range from "unsure of how an irrigation system works" to learners who have spent 30 years in the field with experience managing pump stations. It is very challenging to keep everyone engaged and learning. One way to manage is to engage the advanced learners by having them share their experiences and mentor the less-skilled learners. We can't expect the advanced techs to be trainers, since good training skills are rarely a natural ability. However, most can share their experiences.

Perhaps the most important takeaway is that professional training and adult learning is a dynamic process. It starts with the presentation of the material, or what many consider to be the "training." This is followed by practice or implementation of the newly learned skills. Then, there needs to be some type of evaluation. This could be as formal as a written test, but it more commonly would be demonstration of those skills by the learner to their supervisor. After evaluation, if the learning objective is achieved, the learner moves onto the next objective. If not, the cycle continues with either presentation of the information again, practice or reinforcement.

Understanding that the training process is an investment to achieve a desired improvement in your business helps justify the effort to do it correctly. Everyone in the organization should be on board, especially management. It takes a lot of work. But until we find that magic training wand, follow the steps and reap the benefits of a professional and loyal team.

*Christopher Pine, CLWM, CID, CIC, CLIA, CIT, MCLP, is a principal of IrriTech Training and the president of BluGreen Solutions in Pocasset, Massachusetts.*

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# The long game

Contractors can be proud of what they've already done to help.

by Kyle Brown

If you've been following our original reporting on the *Irrigation & Lighting* website, you're up to date on the newest water use regulations coming down for dealing with drought. While there's still some ambiguity about how those rules will be applied and what effect they'll have, reduced water availability isn't anything new for irrigation contractors in places like California or Texas.

It's an enormous problem and situated to only escalate sooner rather than later. While no single irrigation professional can create a large, systemic change, it isn't always about a big gesture.

That's one of the driving forces behind the 2022 Smart Irrigation Month theme of "Proud of our past. Focused on our future." Irrigation professionals have been instrumental in responsibly managing water use in our communities for decades as we deal with the realities of our environment no matter where we live. Contractors can be proud of what they've already done to help. We're still facing issues of water shortages, but it's notable to think of how bad it could be without professionals putting in the work.

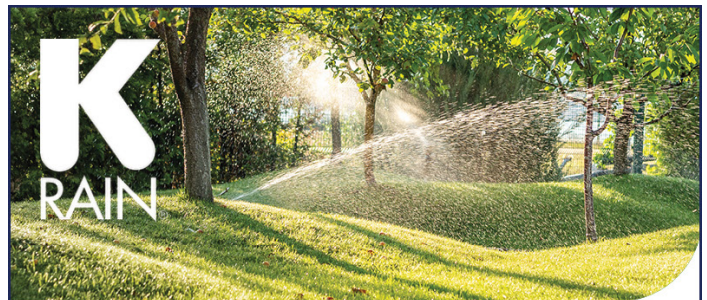
Looking to the future, clients in places that aren't just California need to really think about responsible water usage. Even where it feels like water is plentiful, it's important to help customers understand what small steps they can take today that will make a difference later on.

That's part of why I really enjoyed working with the winner of our Changing the Landscape Awards: Irrigation category. The project he worked on, using a rebate program and a grant to replace hundreds of conventional irrigation controllers with weather-connected ones, started out not because he was on a mission to make a change. Instead, he decided in his own irrigation practice to try to help his customers get the most out of their systems, which included letting them know about available rebates for system upgrades through their local water district.

One of the major reasons that the water district reached out to him to begin with was that they just kept seeing his invoices show up in the rebate programs, which led them to understand his drive as an irrigation professional. At the time, he couldn't have known how much water he would be saving in his region over the next few years. He was just doing the work of helping that day's appointment do what they could.

It's great to be able to show a customer just how much water they'll immediately save with a system upgrade. But irrigation professionals should also keep the long game in mind, taking one step at a time toward helping their communities manage water usage best.

*Kyle Brown is editor-in-chief of Irrigation & Lighting magazine, published by the Irrigation Association.*



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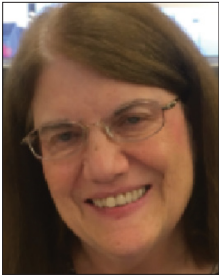


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# How often should you redesign your website? Education is key to our industry's survival.

by Lorraine Hart, President of Ideal Consulting Services

As a general rule of thumb, your website should be completely redesigned every two to three years. A three-year-old website can be considered a lifetime in the digital technology world and that is bad for business. You can compare your website with a smartphone, and how often we replace them, which is on average, every two or three years.

Reasons for redesigning a website vary, depending on the marketing goals of your business which may change from year to year. The most common reasons to redesign your website are to rebrand your site, increase your traffic, generate more leads, and improve functionality and user experience.

When people visit your website, that is the first impression they get of your company. What does your website say about your company? What does your website not say about your company? Is the design of your website outdated, are your photos old? Or is the first impression that you're modern and engaged and capable of delivering your services and support?

What was attractive and aesthetically pleasing three years ago likely isn't today.

Older websites have problems that can cause the site to not perform well. The site may be difficult to maintain. Unfortunately, software can become outdated and may prevent the site from running properly. The website may be slow to load which can cause visitors to go elsewhere immediately. Worst case, there may be no more technical support for outdated software.

Google frequently updates their algorithms and SEO best practices. Your website needs to reflect that to make sure you are relevant and maintain visibility.

Investing in a redesign of your website is like renovating your home before sale. If the bathroom or kitchen hasn't seen fresh paint or new fixtures in a few decades, it is likely to steer buyers away in the same way that a website that looks like it's from the early days of the internet.

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## Renew your 2023 dues

The 2023 membership year is well underway and if you haven't already, it's time to renew your dues. You should have received both an email and mailed copy of your invoice. Please contact Noreen Rich (703.795.4933, noreenrich@irrigation.org) if you need assistance with your membership renewal.