

Water Dispatch

Water information and commentary

Fall 2016

Dennis Kiemeny and Erwin Braun Retire from the WID



Dennis Kiemeny and Erwin Braun at Dennis' retirement party - WID photo

Two employees of the WID are retiring this year. Construction Supervisor, Dennis Kiemeny has already hung up his hat and hit the road, traveling with his wife. General Manager, Erwin Braun will start the new year with a new direction in life.

Dennis Kiemeny

When someone has spent 37 years with an organization, they become a living encyclopedic resource for everyone they work with. This is exactly the case with Dennis Kiemeny, who retired this fall from the WID.

Dennis held positions as a ditch rider and in construction, and knew the District well.

“If you wanted to know the story about why the district or a ditch was a certain way you just had to ask Dennis. He was a great resource,” WID’s General Manager, Erwin Braun said.

The people at the WID will miss Dennis, and the feeling is mutual. “It was the people that made my job what I wanted to go back to every morning. It wasn’t the job. Anyone could run equipment or make decisions, but it’s the people you do it with - That was a big part of what keeps you going,” Dennis said.

Dennis’ retirement plans include travel and enjoying more time with his wife and family. His grandchildren live on his farm where

they represent the fourth generation of irrigation farmers.

Dennis expressed gratitude for his years at the WID. “They always treated me 100%. At the end of the day, when push comes to shove, I was always taken care of, either by my WID family or WID the company. It was a good family.”

Thank you for all your years of service, Dennis.

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See also “116 Years of Service Celebrated at the WID” in the Fall 2014 issue of Water Dispatch for more on Dennis Kiemeny’s history with the WID

Dennis Kiemeny and Erwin Braun Retire from the WID - continued

Erwin Braun

Erwin will retire from the WID at the end of the December after twelve years with the District. He took some time to look back over his 35 years working in the irrigation industry and the changes he's seen over the years.

Erwin grew up on a farm in Gem and became a third-generation irrigator in the Eastern Irrigation District. His grandparents irrigated with ditches over rolling land, and worked hard to get a crop.

"It was very evident that irrigation district infrastructure was limiting what we could do on the farm in terms of production," Erwin explained. "I remember one year we had to wait ten days because we couldn't get water and it wasn't because we didn't have water, it was because the infrastructure was so poor."

Erwin was determined to help improve on that. He saw an article about Alberta's plan to implement a cost sharing initiative to update irrigation districts' infrastructure, and he knew immediately what he wanted to do with his civil engineering degree. Over the years, he worked for the Bow River Irrigation District, the Eastern Irrigation District, and finally the Western Irrigation District.

Through those early years, Erwin saw Alberta invest further in irrigation, including rebuilding the headworks for many districts. At the same time, the economy in Alberta grew, and technology and construction methods improved. As the province and Districts invested, so did farmers, with many converting to pivot systems.

Since then, there has been a complete transformation of irrigation in Alberta. Erwin reflected upon the increase in reservoirs for off-stream storage, hundreds upon hundreds of kilometers of pipeline installed and canals lined. There's no more seepage, evaporation is decreased, and efficiency is increased. These upgrades enabled farmers to increase production, use less water and it requires a lot less labour.

Improvements have made Districts' work easier as well, Erwin explained, "With electronic monitoring and controls we're able to look at a



Erwin Braun will retire after 12 years with the WID - Claudette Lacombe photo

computer now and find out where the water is. We control the water by pushing a button on a computer screen. You can see where the water level is and if the water level gets too high it warns you with an alarm. This is amazing progress."

Construction is more efficient, too. What took three people on a survey crew can now be done by one person, faster and with greater accuracy. "We have lasers and gps guidance on our equipment where we used to have to go out with survey instruments and walk along and take shots," Erwin said.

Erwin is optimistic about the future of support for irrigation infrastructure. The current Agriculture minister with the NDP government has background in irrigation, and the new government has seen the benefits of efficient irrigation.

"They've continued to support, and we think they will continue to support, funding of the irrigation districts for infrastructure," said Erwin.

Erwin has also served as the Chair of the Alberta Irrigation Projects Association, and the vice chair of the Bow River Basin Council. "It's quite gratifying to me that we were able to give leadership to water management from a relatively small irrigation district. We've got unique challenges and so we have to have unique skills to

be able to deal with the challenges that come our way."

As Erwin approaches his retirement, he has reflected on the people he has worked with as well.

"We've got a lot of long term staff that are dedicated to the WID. It's like being part of a family. When somebody leaves, like Dennis, who's been here for so long, it affects us all. We've had a few like that. It's been really great to work with the group of people that we've had," Erwin said.

"It's also been rewarding to work with the WID's board of directors," he added. "I've seen a number of water users step forward and serve on the WID board. People put their name forward to be on a board like this because they're passionate about the industry and they want to see the community prosper. It's been a real pleasure to work with the farming community through their representatives on the board."

While Erwin plans to keep busy after his retirement from the WID, it will be with some restrictions. "One thing I don't like - I don't like getting up when it's dark. That's just one little thing that I don't like."

We wish you all the best in your retirement, Erwin.

Wheatland Regional Corporation Breaks Ground



Ground Breaking Ceremony for the Wheatland Regional Corporation reservoir
Adnan Al Hussein - photo

Access to water is increasingly a challenge around the world, and this is no different in our own back yard. For years, communities within Wheatland County have struggled to maintain aging water treatment plants and support the water needs of their residents. The WID is proud to be part of the solution to this problem.

Earlier this year, the WID and the Wheatland Regional Corporation reached a long-term land lease agreement. WID land will be used for the reservoir that will serve the communities of Standard, Gleichen, Rockyford, Rosebud and Hussar, as well as landowners near the pipelines. The WID will deliver water from the Bow River to the 217,000 cubic meter reservoir. From there it will be piped to Standard for treatment, and then potable water will be piped out to each of the municipalities.

Wheatland Regional Corporation's General Manager, Baha Hasasneh explained, "We will utilize the (water) licenses from Gleichen, Rockyford and Standard to provide water to five communities plus farmers."

The project will move forward in phases, with Standard and Gleichen served first, followed by Rockyford and then Rosebud and Hussar.

"Regional water has been provided through a lot of the southern province. It's time that this area was included in a regional water system. This is a positive thing for the whole area," WID's General Manager Erwin Braun said.

Winter Construction to Complete Standard Area Upgrades

The WID worked together with the Wheatland Regional Corporation while putting together their annual construction plans. When the reservoir is excavated, they require a plan for all the material that is removed, so the WID is relining 8.5km of canal in the area, and utilizing that material to cover the liner. The combination of this cooperation and tenders coming in under estimates resulted in significant cost savings for the WID.

WID staff will install a pipeline in the Standard region as well. The Jensen lateral off the Standard ditch will be converted to 10km of pipeline, and the McCallum lateral to 2km of pipeline. This will wrap up the Standard area's rehabilitation projects.

"It's going to improve the area a fair bit. We have a lot of seepage issues and farmers are looking for that to be rectified." Jeremy Hemsing, Manager of Operations and Maintenance stated. "So far, with the favourable weather conditions we have right now, the construction program is doing very well. Much of the work may be completed earlier than expected."



Pipeline installation near Standard - WID photo

WID Water Master's Report

From drought to deluge to drainage challenges, 2016 was unusual in many ways for the WID.

In the early irrigation season, every sign pointed to drought, and for the second year in a row, the Langdon Reservoir proved very useful in ensuring that the District could meet the high demands. Then in mid summer the rain started and it didn't stop. Water requirements were minimal from then through to the end of the season.

"We had 110,000 acre/feet of diversion this year, compared to 137,000 last year," Water Master Brian Sander explained.

Finally, with the late harvest, shutting down for winter proved challenging. "Shutdown for this past water season was longer than normal, due to the difficulty the farmers had with harvest," Sander explained. "We had to delay the draining of some pipelines because we didn't want to cause water issues."

Some pipelines drain across crop land, and this could create potential for harvest equipment to get stuck. The WID didn't wish to add to what was already a difficult harvest.

"In the end, with good weather, crops were able to be gathered and our lines could be drained. We were able to complete dewatering without incident," Sander said.

Further, the delayed freezing meant canals didn't dry out and added challenges to winter construction.

"Extra pumping measures combined with coffer dams were needed to keep water out of canal rehabilitation areas," Sander explained. "The water wasn't from our diversions but rather springs and canal banks releasing flow. Now that we have had some cooler temperatures, the inflows have finally started to wane."



The Langdon Reservoir expansion ensures that during drought periods the WID can provide for its users' needs

Growing Forward 2 Enhanced

If you've been sitting on the fence when it comes to upgrading your irrigation system, recent changes to the Government of Alberta's Growing Forward 2 program might encourage you to take that leap.

As of November 2, two significant changes have been implemented:

1. You can now apply for grants for multiple projects each year.
2. The maximum project payment of \$15,000 is now available for a complete replacement of a high-pressure center pivot to a low-pressure center pivot.

Producers can be reimbursed 40% of eligible costs for equipment upgrades up to \$5000, or for the costs to upgrade from gravity, side-wheel or high-pressure centre pivot systems to a new low-pressure center pivot system, up to \$15,000.

Please contact the Ag-Info Centre at 310-3276, or the WID for further information on this program.

[Growing forward 2 Irrigation Efficiency Program](#)

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