



75% Completion Report
CWCB
Green Legacies Grant
PO # OE PDA14000000106
Landscape/Irrigation Evaluation and Reporting
June 20, 2015

Work on the Landscape and Irrigation Evaluation and Reporting Project is 75% complete.

Task 1 has been accomplished. Although two CSU Master Gardeners were recruited and prepared to assist in evaluating the landscapes, scheduling and weather constraints were such that evaluations were handled by Moorhead and Firth in all cases. In order to improve availability and response time, we included Service Partners in several of the more recent consultations.

Task 2 has been now been accomplished for the Spring 2014, Fall 2014 and Spring 2015 training classes. Attendance at all classes for Spring, Fall and Spring was good. Our landscape training reached nearly 265 customers of Security Water District, Donala Water District and the Town of Fountain. Tasks 3 and 4 are complete. All attendees who completed surveys and evaluations were screened for further assistance. Task 5 has been accomplished for the Spring and Fall 2014 training classes, and is 80% complete for Spring 2015 classes. Task 6 is complete. Task 7 has begun for some of the 2014 participants, consisting of a few landscape plans for homeowners in each of the participating communities, as well as completing a comprehensive landscape and irrigation renovation, with financial assistance provided by the Town of Fountain. Task 8, the 75% report will be complete upon submission of this report.

As stated in our 50% report, our beginning hypothesis had been that we would be able to generate sufficient qualified candidates for substantial landscape improvements to warrant extensive Further Assistance, by virtue of irrigation system improvements, landscape design and improvements, or both, which would qualify for long term monitoring. This monitoring would then provide on the ground, real time comparisons between pre- and post-improvement water use. Both types of improvements would conform to Water Returns' specifications (which are based on CWW's Best Management Practices).

We have found the following during our 2014 and 2015 work:

1. Although the classes have been well-attended (ranging from 15 to 45 or more), qualification for assistance with actual landscape or irrigation changes was disappointing. Interest in landscape or irrigation system *evaluations* was high, survey completion was high. But interest in actual implementation was low, even with the probability of water provider assistance for cost. This disinterest was the same across demographics. We had expected it might be lower in less affluent neighborhoods, but this was not the case. In fact, the on the ground assistance projects that are moving forward are located in less affluent areas. In Donala Water District, having generally higher income neighborhoods, we have received a financial commitment from a patio

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home community to assist them with assessment and planning services [completed detailed landscape and irrigation assessment and master concept plan; will be submitting comprehensive report shortly, outlining our findings and opportunities for multi-year water-saving modification]. We conducted another residential irrigation assessment this spring.

2. Interest in having an evaluation performed to check soil type, irrigation system efficacy, watering schedules, plantings appropriate for existing microclimates, etc. remains high. Unfortunately, these advice-giving evaluations do not yield a framework for robust monitoring of behavior *changes*. They appear to be best suited to the categories of outreach and public education monitored by HB 1051 reporting.
3. We believe there is need for training and/or assistance in greater detail and on a more basic level that offers help sheets, consultations and assistance with restoring, supplementing or replacing existing soils and the grass above it to healthier, more drought tolerant condition; we're just beginning this process with one homeowner that works for USAA, and expect to make this an additional class in the future.
4. Our partner water providers and their customers are enthusiastic about the training we are able to provide, which centers on landscape and irrigation system design, maintenance, winterization and assessment, planning and implementation steps for improvement projects. We believe this is a valuable service to water providers that are too small to sustain full time water conservation personnel.
5. During the spring and summer of 2015, we have discovered an interest on the part of water providers to assist *homeowners' associations* on a cost sharing basis in advancing conservation. We see opportunities to expand this interest to commercial landscapes. We are also seeing growing interest in having Water Returns serve as owners' representative for various landscape modification projects; facilitating the design, contract negotiation and project management process on behalf of the property owner.
6. As a result of the Spring 2015 training, we hope to secure another 3 or 4 projects where irrigation system and landscape improvements can be made with assistance from the water provider. Combined with the Further Assistance services/projects already completed, underway or scheduled, we conservatively expect to deliver 6 to 10 projects that have either been completed or are positioned for implementation, in the Colorado Springs area that meet Water Returns' standards (and CWW's Best Management Practice standards), and that are willing to be monitored for water use on an ongoing basis.

Lessons learned:

The current economy may have an effect on customers' ability to move forward with projects that would save them money long term; such projects may have a lower priority when compared with more pressing living expenses. This appears to be the case, as large numbers of participants are interested in the free advice-giving consultations, but few are able or willing to implement costly changes, even with the offer of assistance. If this observation is proven true across a range of participating communities, the resulting conclusion will likely be that programs providing training and on-site advice offer the greatest benefit for the least cost, especially to smaller water providers. However, this conclusion should not exclude the offer of Further Assistance to those customers who are qualified to implement significant improvements to their landscape.

Customers are encouraged and interested when they learn about the cost effective use of mulches and affordable plants they can install themselves to cover areas that have become dirt and weeds, as well as simple repairs and adjustments to their irrigation system that enable the, to have an affordable and attractive yard. Although some of these homes will provide little/no usable data for our current case study, the on-site consultations are helpful to customers, thereby creating informed advocates for both sustainable landscape practices and for the water provider. .

Respectfully submitted,

Linda J. Firth, Principal
Water Matters