Seal Rock Conserves Water and Advances Customer Service with Sensus

OREGON WATER DISTRICT MOVES TO AMI FOR BETTER ACCURACY AND RESPONSE TIME

CHALLENGE

Reduce unaccounted for water and improve customer service

SOLUTION

Upgrade metering infrastructure to improve leak detection

REACH FARTHER

Empower customers to monitor usage with the Sensus Customer Portal

Stretching 12 miles alongside Oregon's scenic Pacific Coast Highway is the small seaside community of Seal Rock. While the tranquil coastal community serves as a retreat for seasonal residents, managing water services across the area is a year-round responsibility.

"We have about 8,000 people here during the summertime, which is nearly twice the number of our static population," said Seal Rock Water District's General Manager Adam Denlinger. "With many houses sitting empty for much of the year, it can be challenging to promptly respond to issues like water leaks that can occur when no one is home."

The Seal Rock Water District (SRWD) Board of Commissioners is committed to reducing non-revenue water loss to ensure quality customer service and exceed progressive water conservation standards set by the state of Oregon. Achieving these goals requires a proactive strategy that includes using the latest technology to stay ahead of the curve.

sensus
a xylem brand

"We want to get our unaccounted for water down to three percent to be competitive with some of the bigger cities in the state. We are confident that we have the right tools and they're helping us get smarter every day."

ADAM DENLINGER *General Manager, Seal Rock Water District*

In need of an upgrade

While SRWD had implemented supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) technology to monitor various system conditions, capabilities at the metering level were substantially lacking. In most cases water leaks could take up to 30 days to be detected since many residents lived away for much of the year. The district's meters were also ten years old and approaching their end of useful life.

"Our SCADA system exposed operations to real-time data, but we needed to make adjustments to our metering infrastructure to expand the benefits for our customers," said Denlinger. "We needed to better understand the flow of water through our system, so we could be more proactive about responding to issues."

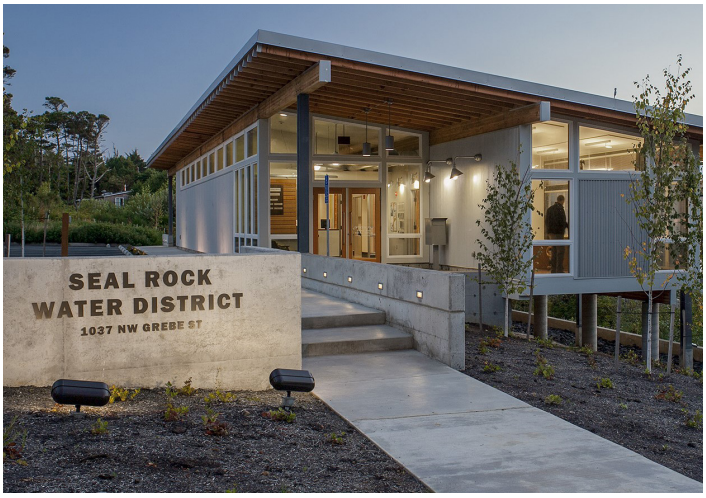


Photo credit: Pete Eckert

Sustainable technologies like AMI ensure water conservation efforts by SRWD.

To improve customer response time with daily and hourly consumption monitoring, the District decided to upgrade to an advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) system using funding provided by the United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development (USDA-RD) Waste Disposal Loan & Grant Program. The grant offers support for clean and reliable drinking water initiatives in rural areas.

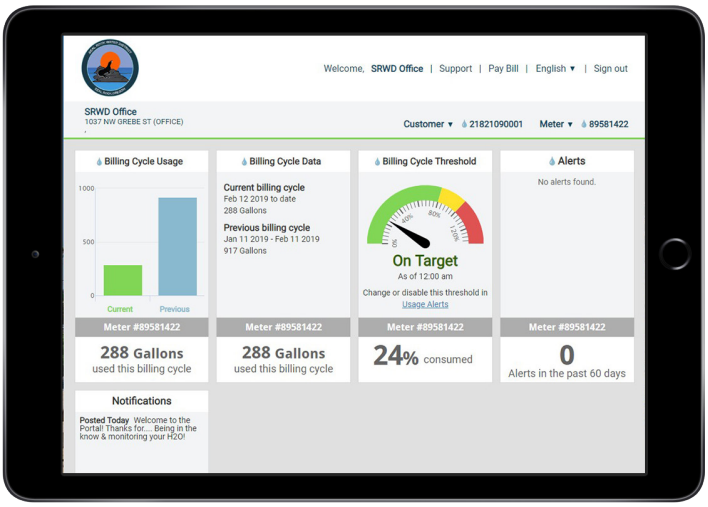
Working with Ferguson Waterworks, the district deployed an AMI system from Sensus, a Xylem brand, to enable real-time alerts for leaks and reduce unaccounted for water.

Getting smarter about water

SRWD deployed the Sensus AMI system across its 2,572 endpoints with SR II® residential and OMNI™ commercial water meters. Backed by the two-way FlexNet® communication network, the system gave district technicians the ability to remotely monitor water use and address leaks in near real-time.

"With the Sensus AMI system deployed, we can now detect a water leak and work with the customer to have it resolved within the hour," said SRWD Utility Billing Clerk Brendi Hargrove. "The program instantly improved our billing processes and helped us become more efficient."

The water district has also rolled out the Sensus Customer Portal to bolster water conservation efforts and bring customers in on the action. Empowering residents to set up alerts and monitor their own usage, the community has responded to the program with enthusiasm.



The Customer Portal encourages SRWD customers to be in the know and monitor their H20.

"Our initial goal was to get 10 percent of customers signed up and we're already at 12.5 percent in less than two months," said Hargrove. "With our AMI rollout, people see the benefits that data offers, and they've bought into our vision for water conservation."

Return on investment and future impact

SRWD leadership believes proper water management is necessary to gain control of the little water they do have. Innovative metering technology is one cost effective solution for municipal water suppliers.

Denlinger confirmed early trending data provided by the system indicates a net reduction in demand when factoring monthly reads are about 10 percent less as compared to the same time period in 2018.

Since completing their deployment, SRWD's unaccounted for water has fallen to around 12 percent—well below the state's 15 percent benchmark. In addition to the operational and customer benefits, the district sees how the savings extends to the environment.

"We treat water as a precious resource," said Denlinger. "By using sustainable technologies like AMI, we can ensure water is available for future generations."

While Seal Rock is pleased with the performance of its AMI system, their efforts to conserve water won't stop there.

"We want to get our unaccounted for water down to three percent to be competitive with some of the bigger cities in the state," said Denlinger. "We are confident that we have the right tools and they're helping us get smarter every day."

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