

Aston Irrigation Association
PO BOX 3233, Omak, WA 98841

Irrigation System Information

Aston Irrigation Association water allocations and annual usage is determined by water right issued by the Washington Department of Ecology. Each property in the association is allocated a portion of the total water right. Annual usage must be reported to the Department of Ecology. The DOE issues substantial fines to water right holders for overuse of a water right.

The Board of Directors bears the responsibility of ensuring that the association usage does not exceed the water right. In addition, the board is responsible to the membership for maintaining the irrigation system (pumps, mainlines, and laterals) which delivers the water from the Okanogan River to each owner's property.

The Board of Directors is elected from the association membership for 3-year terms on a rotating basis at the annual membership meeting, held in February each year. The association is funded from dues and fees assessed on each property. The Board of Directors holds 3-4 meetings per year which are open to members. Homeowners are encouraged to obtain a copy of the association bylaws, available from the secretary, and to be active participants in the association.

Property owners are responsible for all maintenance of their irrigation system (anything after the association turnout/shutoff at the delivery point except the meter), including start up, shut down, winterization, and managing their water usage according to the D.O.E. allocation associated with the property. A board-approved meter is purchased and maintained by the homeowner. The meter must be installed after the filter and as close to the property line as possible to provide easy access by the association meter reader.

Sensus iPerl meters are vulnerable to freezing and breakage, particularly in the fall when night-time temperatures can drop near or below freezing. To prevent freezing:

- 1) Install the meter in a below-grade vault.
- 2) Install any above-ground meters in a vertical position and include a drain after the meter so the water can be shut off and meter drained when night temperatures drop and freezing might occur.
- 3) Program the system to run intermittently during the night to keep water moving through the meter and reduce the risk of freezing.

If your meter freezes and breaks, you are responsible for the cost of replacing it.

It is NOT the association's responsibility to start up the owner's system, turn on valves, locate valves, look for leaks, or trouble-shoot problems not associated with the association's delivery system. There are several businesses in the area which provide this service. Owners who call the system manager for such tasks will be billed by the system manager for a service call at \$50 per hour.

If a property has been "locked off" for nonpayment or other reason, when the lock is removed, the valve will NOT be turned back on—the homeowner is responsible to restart their system.

The association reads each owner's meter monthly around the 15th of the month. These meter readings are used to determine monthly and annual gallons used. Owners are encouraged to monitor their meters as well and report any known or suspected meter malfunction to the association.

The association does not dictate how an owner must utilize their water allocation but does suggest a bell curve of use, i.e. reducing water use in the spring and fall to allow for increased use during the hotter parts of the summer. It is NOT best practice to set the timer in the spring and use the same setting for the entire season.

Irrigation systems are not trouble-free and require monitoring. The following are some suggestions to assist the owner with management of their water allocation:

Most systems have two shut off valves, one near the filter and another near the association line turn-out. Be sure both valves are in the 'on' position in the spring.

The irrigation season begins April 15 and runs through September 30 for members with interruptible water rights and through October 15th for members with non-interruptible water rights. If leased water is available, it is used to extend interruptible water service to October 15th as well.

There are approximately 183 days in the 6-month irrigation season. Divide the total allocation by 183 to obtain the average number of gallons per day. Set the irrigation timer to run through each cycle for a 10-minute period. Read the meter before and after running one complete cycle to determine the approximate number of gallons used per 10-minute cycle. Use this figure to determine a bell curve of use to obtain maximum benefit of the water allocation. This figure can also be helpful in determining if your system has a leak, e.g. a sudden increase in gallons used without corresponding change in timer settings. Keep in mind that full-circle heads need more time than ½-circle or ¼-circle heads to deliver the same gallons per sq ft of water.

Most irrigation timers have a "rain" button. Pressing this button when there is a good rainfall shuts off the system temporarily, conserving water for when extra water may be needed.

Read your meter regularly and maintain a record of your use. This will help you detect leaks and other malfunctions.

Clean the filter regularly. During periods of high water, it may be necessary to clean the filter more than once per day depending on filter size (coarse, medium, or fine) and nozzle sizes. Clean the filter thoroughly; merely spraying off the exterior of the rings is not sufficient for optimal operation. The rings should be loosened, separated, and debris cleaned from between the rings. Drip lines usually have an additional filter which should be opened and cleaned periodically.

If you prefer to run your system at night, it is a good practice to occasionally run the system during the day when you are on site to observe its function. It is difficult to determine nozzle malfunction, leaks, or timer malfunction when you cannot observe the system's performance.

Overuse penalties have been set by vote of the membership as follows:

- First 100,000 gallons, \$100
- Second 100,000 gallons, \$200 (\$300 total)
- Third 100,000 gallons, \$300 (\$600 total)

Owner's system may be locked lock out after overage of 300,000 gallons at the discretion of the board. Owners will be sent use notices monthly.

Owners are given approximately 2 weeks after the system is shut down for the season to have their system winterized. Winterization should be done all the way to the mainline turn-out valve to prevent winter freeze damage. Valves left open will allow water to re-enter the owner's system when the mainlines are winterized which may cause freeze damage to pipes. Additionally, valves left open are considered a service call and the owner will be billed accordingly.

If you have questions, please talk to any member of the board.