



Sustainable irrigation on the sports field

SMART WATERING CASE STUDY: FOSTER RECREATION PARK

Rolleston is one of New Zealand's fastest growing towns – and with rapid growth – comes pressure on its resources. The commuter town, just outside Christchurch, will soon boast what could be New Zealand's most sustainable sports fields.

Foster Recreation Park, located in the heart of the township, is home to not only the district's new aquatic centre, but will in the future offer up to 20 new sports fields designed to operate with a minimum of water. In an area known to be water-short, the sports fields' developer, the Selwyn District Council, recognises the importance of walking the talk when it comes to efficient irrigation.



John Reid at Foster Recreation Park

Selwyn District Council's Major Property Projects Manager John Reid says stage one of Foster Recreation Park will be complete within the next two years. Ten sports fields for football, athletics and cricket codes have been sown, with irrigation systems installed, surrounded by energy-efficient LED lighting. While sports fields in general are renowned for being water-hungry, John says measures are in place to keep water use to a minimum.

First of all, pop-up sprinkler systems will ensure high uniformity water application across the grounds. To maintain the health of in excess of 300 specimen trees, a 'weeping membrane system' controlled independently from the irrigation on the sports fields takes care of the trees' root zone. To retain moisture around the trees, mulching reduces evapo-transpiration.

"We're mulching a zone of up to two metres around the trees. It's quite an investment to ensure efficient water utilisation. Rolleston is quite a dry area, the ground is very stony and we have high water infiltration. So we are looking to be as responsible as possible with the water we are using."

Another key ingredient will be water storage. Plans are underway to collect water in storage tanks that will then be re-used to water the trees. The storage tanks will be buried under the car park and water will also be captured from this environment as part of a 'rain garden'.

"We'll collect it, filter it and re-use the water. In a sense the philosophy of the park is to try and be as green as possible. This is not just about the look and feel of the park, but how we use our resources. We understand how important the water resource is, but we also understand the importance of the recreational resource we are creating. So we are trying to balance these two things. Without water we wouldn't have this park."

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