

GEORGIA DROUGHT UPDATE

LANIER AND HARTWELL BASINS IMPROVE TO MILD DROUGHT

May 5, 2009

Thanks to generous rains, Lake Lanier and Lake Hartwell basins have improved to mild drought. The basins were previously in moderate drought.

The mild drought classification is based on the still low levels of the lakes. The remainder of the state, however, is drought-free.

Soil moisture conditions are above normal for the entire state except the north-central and northeast mountain counties. Soil moisture in these regions is near normal for early May. These

counties include the drainage basins for Lanier and Hartwell.

Stream flows are near normal for early May except for northwest Georgia, where stream flows are well above normal.

May is typically one of the drier months in Georgia. Additionally, with high temperatures routinely in the 80s and plant water use very high, moisture loss is accelerated. We normally expect the soils to start to dry out this month.

As we progress through the summer into the middle of fall,

moisture loss from the soil - due to evaporation and plant use - is normally greater than rainfall. With normal weather over the next several months, Georgians can expect to see a drying of the soils. However, this is normal and does not mean that Georgia is heading back into a drought.

Additional weather and climate information can be found at www.georgiaweather.net and www.georgiadrought.org.

-By David Stooksbury
University of Georgia

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The Two Wire Advantage

As new technology enters our industry and changes traditional installation practices, it seems like the conventional irrigation system is becoming a thing of the past. One of the more popular commercial systems being specified in our industry is the two-wire system.

What is a two-wire system? In a conventional system there is an individual wire going from each valve to the controller plus a single common wire connecting all the valves. In a two-wire system you use only two wires. One wire connects all the valves together and only one valve has to be connected directly to the controller. A decoder installed at each valve receives a signal from the controller that tells it to open or close the valve. In addition to saving a lot of wire, this method makes it much easier to expand if more valves need to be added later on.

There are many two-wire systems on the market today with various features and levels of flexibility. Rain Bird has a reliable system that is simple to use and can be upgraded to a SiteControl for full central control capabilities. This system is labeled the MDC Two-Wire System and has been marketed in Europe for over 20 years.

Recently I had the pleasure of helping a contractor install his first two-wire system on a large commercial site that was designed

to be built in phases. Bob Walker landed the McGinnis Crossing job under the ownership of Wheeler/Kolb Management Company. Bob Walker, owner of Repairs R Us, has over twenty years experience in the irrigation industry, but was hesitant about putting in a two-wire system and first presented the owner with the option of the more traditional system. Bob then researched the MDC Two-Wire System and decided, with its advantages, it would be a better match for this particular project.

The McGinnis Crossing project itself is a large segmented development consisting of three phases, the first being a shopping mall, followed by two other attractions. The main advantage of the MDC system is simply the wire path itself. MDC allows the contractor to run a single run of Maxi Cable around the irrigation system using decoders with addresses for each valve. The cable length can be run 2.4 miles in a star pattern and 9.0 miles in a looped system. The specified irrigation system consisted of 60 zones for phase one alone. By being able to install a single run of Maxi cable, Bob was not only able to save on material costs, but achieved a large labor savings, as well.

Because there are two more phases to this particular project, many more zones will need to be added and the only additional cost will be the Maxi cable. The MDC controller allows up to 200 addresses or 200 zones. Some of the decoders allow more than one zone per address for even more expansion. Bob was able



to use this advantage to have one controller for the entire site. He also stubbed out the Maxi Cable in several areas so all he needs to do for future building is connect to the wire and add to the existing irrigation system. Like any project of this size, there are many opportunities for subcontractors to damage the existing system, so as an insurance policy Bob added an extra run of Maxi cable. By having the extra wire, Bob has been proactive in resolving possible future wiring issues.

Bob put his years of knowledge and installation practices to work on the project, but because this was his first MDC Two-Wire system we called on our territory Rain Bird sales rep, Mike Wendel, for a little training on programming the controller. Mike was happy to be of service and showed up on site to lend a hand. Mike was able to train us on the MDC controller in about an hour and even went so far as testing all of our connections in the field with the controller to verify that everything checked out successfully. This check is necessary because the wire splices in the field are very important on any two-wire system. Without good splice practices two-wire systems can become a huge headache.

Another big part of this system was the installation of a Rain Bird Pump station. After the expansion is completed, this commercial site may have close to 200 zones so the water window would be



THE TWO WIRE ADVANTAGE (CON'T)

tight. Bob installed a Rain Bird pump station that could produce 400gpm at 100psi. This particular pump station was actually a

booster pump connected to a 24" reclaimed water line that runs through Suwanee. With the installation of such a high flow pump station this huge commercial site can be watered in less than a 24 hour period with ease.

The use of a two wire system on a large commercial application proved to be less labor intensive and much more versatile for future expansion. With the

help of Mike Wendel of Rain Bird and the experienced veteran Bob Walker, the McGinnis Crossing irrigation installation went very smoothly.

If you're an irrigation contractor, chances are you will come across a two-wire job soon. If you are interested in installing a two-wire system or would like any additional information, please contact any of our sales professionals at Stovall and we will be glad to assist you.

*-Contributed by Scott Coleman,
Stovall Sales*



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