

NORTH READING DEPLOYS WATERSMART SOFTWARE TO ASSESS AND CHANGE RESIDENTIAL WATER USE

MARK CLARK
WATERSMART

In early 2018, the Town of North Reading embarked on a water meter replacement program. Superintendent Mark Clark saw the opportunity to take advantage of technology embedded in the new meters to share water usage data with community members and encourage changes in water consumption behavior.

As part of the project scope of work, Mark and his team asked their meter vendor to include a customer portal whereby residents could see and track their water usage and associated costs. The vendor, in turn, reached out to *WaterSmart*, an industry leader in creating portal-type websites for municipal water systems.

Upon completion of the meter replacement project in June of 2019, Mark and his team created marketing materials that announced North Reading's new *WaterSmart* website/portal and encouraged residents to register in order to access to their own water usage and cost data.

WaterSmart used data visualization functionality to display consumption in easy to understand charts and graphics. The meters automatically generate hourly readings so that residents can see in near real-time if they have water spikes or if they're on track to lower their consumption. They can also look back at historical usage patterns starting with the day before, week before, or as far back as the year before. In addition, an automated alert system can be activated to notify users via the portal's email function if they have surpassed a usage or cost threshold. *WaterSmart*

will also automatically generate and send an alert to a water customer if the systems suspects, based on meter readings, a slow leak or burst pipe.

Clark also keeps his eyes on the data, most notably a color bar graphic that indicates outdoor water use. "That's an analytic I use a lot," he says. "During the dry season, I'll receive a report of everyone in the last week that watered three days or more. Through the portal, I'll send them a notice via email reminding them they can only water two days per week." He also lets them know exactly how many gallons of water they used per day and compares it to their winter usage. He can even add a notation saying "you're on track to spend \$1,500 on water this month!"

The deployment of the entire program was seamless. As the new meters were being installed, *WaterSmart* joined status calls with engineers and performed behind the scenes testing to be sure the portal functionality matched up with the data.

"We are really happy with *WaterSmart*," says Clark. "I've had a few conversations with them about adding some analytics that will make it easier for me to get more out of the data."

The *WaterSmart* portal was funded through the Town of North Reading's water rates as is the annual licensing fee.

