

Report to Council



Date: May 12, 2016
File: 1890-01
To: City Manager
From: Kevin Van Vliet, Utility Services Manager
Subject: Water Controller Rebate Program

Recommendation:

THAT Council receives for information the report from the Utility Services Manager dated May 12, 2016, pertaining to an irrigation controller rebate program for City of Kelowna Water Utility customers;

AND THAT Council approves a \$40 rebate program for the purchase of replacement irrigation controllers for properties serviced by the City of Kelowna water utility as outlined in the report.

Purpose:

To present a rebate program for City of Kelowna water utility customers to assist in water conservation and the transition to water use restrictions using the assigned day of week watering program.

Background:

Irrigation controllers have improved significantly in recent years. They are easier to program and have more control options which improves their ability to optimize irrigation performance and minimize water consumption.

On April 18, 2016, Council amended the Water Regulation Bylaw and implemented water use restrictions for City of Kelowna water utility customers. For basic residential and commercial properties during "normal" non-drought years, properties with odd numbered addresses can irrigate their landscaping on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays. Properties with even numbered addresses can irrigate on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. There should be no residential or commercial irrigation on Mondays. Using a watering can or spring loaded nozzle is allowed on any day.

The implementation of permanent water use restrictions using assigned days of the week is a significant change for City of Kelowna water utility customers. The City has not historically had irrigation restrictions. In response to the 2015 drought Council implemented stage 1 of the City's Drought Response Plan which implemented restrictions based on odd / even calendar days.

While staff do not have an estimate of the number of homes with existing irrigation controllers, the proposed program has funding for up to 500 units. Generally, new homes will already include irrigation controllers that will allow bylaw compliance and efficient operation, so they have not been included in this program. New controllers easily allow for rain delay and easily allow for seasonal reduction in performance to account for the fact that less water is needed in May than in August. Some older controllers are more complicated to program and do not allow programming based on days of the week. This makes it difficult to ensure optimal water use. Owners of these controllers will need to either reset their controller every week, or purchase, install and program a new controller in order to maximize their irrigation efficiency as well as to comply with the bylaw.

In order to help City of Kelowna water utility customers reduce water consumption by better optimizing their irrigation routine as well as adapt to the new water irrigation regulations, staff propose providing a \$40 rebate to all Kelowna water utility customers that purchase a controller that is compliant with the Water Regulation Bylaw. The proposed program specifics are as follows:

1. Only one \$40 rebate per property served by the Kelowna Water Utility. Applicants will need to provide a copy of their water utility bill.
2. Only existing water utility customers may apply. New home construction is exempt.
3. Proof of purchase will be required, including make and model of the unit. The compatibility with our bylaw will be verified.
4. Compliant controllers must be purchased between April 19 and July 31, 2016 to be eligible for the rebate.
5. Required information must be submitted to the City of Kelowna by August 31, 2016.

Waterkind, the City's water smart contractor can provide the expertise to verify that the controller complies with our bylaw. Residents are encouraged to call them in advance of purchase. In addition, they can help answer other technical questions that our customers may have and provide general water conservation information and strategies. With the appropriate documentation, Waterkind will issue a rebate cheque. Staff will create the option for users to submit the necessary documentation electronically (via the website or via email). In person application will be able to be arranged directly with Waterkind. Waterkind can be reached at waterkindinfo@gmail.com or by telephone at 778-478-9840.

Waterkind will invoice Utility Services monthly along with the appropriate documentation.

This program will be advertised in the City utility bills, along with some mention on radio and print ads that are intended to increase overall awareness of the new water irrigation rules.

Internal Circulation:

Jodie Foster - Communications Supervisor
Andrew Reeder - Utility Planning Manager
Lynn Walter - Revenue Manager

Existing Policy:

The City has an existing program allowing for rebates for water irrigation controllers. In order to qualify the applicant must complete the irrigation permit and reporting requirements. The program does not apply to simple controller replacement. Over the last few years very few rebates have been issued under this existing program.

Financial/Budgetary Considerations:

Funding for up to \$20,000 for this program is available within the existing Water Utility budget in the Public Relations / Water Conservation program. Should the program appear destined to exceed this amount (500 controllers) staff will return to Council for further direction.

Communications Comments:

Information about the rebate program will be included in ongoing communications to City of Kelowna water utility customers regarding the April 2016 update of residential water regulations. In addition, the consultant hired to deliver the Water Smart program in 2016 will continue to work directly with residents, as well as irrigation specialists to develop awareness of watering restrictions and the rebate program.

Considerations not applicable to this report:

Legal/Statutory Authority:

Legal/Statutory Procedural Requirements:

Personnel Implications:

External Agency/Public Comments:

Alternate Recommendation:

Submitted by:

K. Van Vliet, Utility Services Manager

Approved for inclusion:



Joe Creron, Divisional Director, Civic Operations

cc:

Jodie Foster - Communications Supervisor

Andrew Reeder - Utility Planning Manager

Lynn Walter - Revenue Manager