



WATERTRAX

The Digital Era: WaterTrax Mobile at Western Municipal Water District

Mobile Capabilities Enhancing Water Quality Trend Analysis and Tracking

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Brenda Meyer

Principle Engineer
Western Municipal Water District



About Western Municipal Water District

Long term planning and trending had always been a highly desirable and yet unattainable task at Western Municipal Water District (WMWD). Working on monthly and quarterly reporting would take the majority of the month, leaving little time for future planning. Though Brenda Meyer, Principal Engineer at WMWD, did not collect the samples herself, she struggled to keep on top of the data entry of sample results for their four potable water systems. WMWD operates wholesale and retail systems that include treatment and distribution for four systems ranging in size from small to large, which run the gamut of reporting requirements.

The Challenge

Prior to 2008, WMWD was using excel spreadsheet to track their sample results and generate reports. At that point, they transitioned to WaterTrax which was a great time savings for their reporting. It was the first time that all of the data was housed in one location making it possible to generate reports but still struggled getting data into the database.

The operations group was still recording all of their field data results on paper logs. These paper logs would be sent to the water quality reporting group who would then enter the data manually into WaterTrax using logsheets. Not only did this mean extra time to double record the data, but it also meant a significant delay in getting access to the results. The group could spend 8-16 hours entering data, depending on the month, making it difficult to catch small problems when they were entering such volumes of results. Even then the entered

field data was only the portion that needed to be reported, leaving significant amounts of field data only in hard copy. They would then have to spend time triple checking the results. As the person responsible for regulatory reporting, Brenda always wanted to get a better handle on trending and long term planning using all the field data, which was not possible with such a heavy burden of data entry and review.

“We are no longer storing lab data in hardcopy form. With the labs providing all info into WaterTrax, we don't touch data...Digital records have allowed us to keep a handle on the storage of physical data and also allows us to find the info a lot easier.”

The Solution: WaterTrax

When WaterTrax released the WaterTrax Mobile app for remote field data collection, WMWD jumped at the chance to reduce data entry efforts and get results into the database in real time. They were eager to modernize their program and maintain data in a much more efficient way. Before the mobile app was released, the team would often enter data as they could, but often it would stockpile it until the end of the month. Now, with the data coming in on a routine basis, they are able to review the result on a regular basis not waiting for it to get worse.

The Benefits

WaterTrax Mobile is allowing them to make data driven decisions in real-time, with data being more readily available. “We are now able to track a lot more on a much more frequent basis,” explains Brenda. “Now that we have implemented WaterTrax Mobile, we are doing weekly reports of field data such as nitrification, rather than relying on someone's memory and we now have a much better handle on water quality trends.”

Proactive Instead of Reactive Processes

To track nitrification, WMWD looks at several parameters results which are collected on a weekly basis including chlorine, nitrate and nitrite. If they start to see an uptick in nitrite, they are able to catch it before they have to do supplemental treatment. “By catching it early, it allows us options,” states Brenda. “We can choose to cycle the tanks, to push water through or we can prepare if we have to do some chlorination to bring that under control.”

Previously, it would get to the point that they would be in dire straits and would have to implement extra measures which would be reactionary and result in adding extra chemicals into the system, which is not their preferred action. “With WaterTrax, we are able to take the operational mediation route rather than treatment,” she explains.

Time Savings & Automated Lab Results

Where the team was previously spending a great deal of time entering and reviewing data, they now have more time to spend on other regulatory activities such as tracking new regulations, looking at stormwater and air quality issues.

With both their lab results and field results automatically uploaded into WaterTrax, data entry has been eliminated, saving them approximately \$4400 per year in data entry costs (based on previous data entry efforts and their subscription costs). They are able to rely on WaterTrax to check for compliance and alerts to notify them if a parameter is out of normal range, and at that point they can go back and check. “This allows us to have the extra check automatically,” states Brenda “and this has really helped us with accurateness and completeness of the data, to make sure we have everything.”

Eliminate Physical Storage With Digital Records

WMWD has also eliminated physical storage, after receiving approval to keep lab data in electronic format from the Division of Drinking Water in California. “We are no longer storing lab data in hardcopy form. With the labs providing all info into WaterTrax, we don't touch data.” With the amount of data that WMWD was generating, the storage and handling of paper was becoming unwieldy. “Digital records have allowed us to keep a handle on that and also allows us to find the info a lot easier.”

The Results

- Proactive instead of reactive processes
- Data driven decisions in real-time
- Time savings & efficiencies
- Automated lab results
- Eliminate physical storage with digital records

WANT TO LEARN MORE?

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