

Where Intelligence Meets Infrastructure

Mueller SYSTEMS

Anson County Water Department

The Anson County Water Department is a public utility located in the largely rural south central region of North Carolina, approximately one hour from Charlotte, and two hours from either Raleigh or Greensboro, NC.

Serving more than 5,200 customers in two states, four counties and eleven towns, the Anson County Water Department's service area includes the counties of Anson, Union, Richmond (in NC) and Chesterfield County, SC. The department utilizes more than 700 miles of water lines and has a production capacity of 16,000,000 gallons of water per day.

challenge

The Board of Commissioners set a goal of having water lines on every road in Anson County. With 531 square miles to cover and fewer than 50 people per square mile, the Anson County Water Department was already spending too much time getting regular, accurate, meter readings. Eight people and four trucks struggled to keep up. Therefore, the water department needed a solution that could significantly increase operational efficiencies.

solution

The Anson County Water Department selected Mueller Systems' Hot Rod™ Automatic Meter Reading (AMR) system as the solution to better, more cost effective meter reading. Mueller Systems' AMR system helped solve the water department's biggest issues: expensive labor, difficult access, inaccurate readings, and delayed billing. Anson County changed out more than 5,000 meters and updated the GPS mapping of their meters over a four-month period. Mueller Systems provided the department with everything they needed to receive the benefits of AMR including encoded meters, radio readers, software, installation and training. Mueller's staff also worked closely with Anson County to integrate the information into their in-house billing system.

results

As a result of implementing Mueller System's AMR solution, the Anson County Water Department has reduced meter reading labor by 85%. It has decreased the time spent reading and re-reading meters in addition to cutting the associated manpower and operational expenses.

The reporting capability of Mueller's AMR system has also greatly reduced the amount of time spent on dealing with customer complaints, especially in the area of leaks and high water bills. In the past a service representative was sent to every customer complaint to determine if there was a leak, or the meter had been misread. With the AMR system misreads are a thing of the past, any leaks will be flagged by the meter and will show up on a monthly report that can be shown to the customer. Trips out to investigate possible leaks have been reduced by 99%.

"Using Mueller Systems' Hot Rod AMR solution has minimized time spent reading and re-reading meters, hastened new water line construction, and reduced customer complaints, offering instant evidence of leaks."

Steve Natoli, Water and Sewer Collection Supervisor
Anson County Water Department

AMR Cuts Rural Utility Reading Labor By 85%

Like many utilities in largely rural areas of America, the Anson County Water Department, covering 531 square miles with 50 people per square mile, spent way too much time getting regular, accurate, meter readings. Eight people and four trucks struggled to keep up. Employee vacations, a steep route-learning curve, and meters that were difficult to locate, compounded the challenge. On top of that, approximately 50 misreads and suspected leaks every month meant sending a reader and a truck as far as 30 miles to resolve each one. Worse yet, the department would pull six workers off a water line construction crew to handle the monthly reads. After setting a goal of having water lines on every road in Anson County, the last thing the Board of Commissioners wanted to do was draft high-wage equipment operators to read meters.

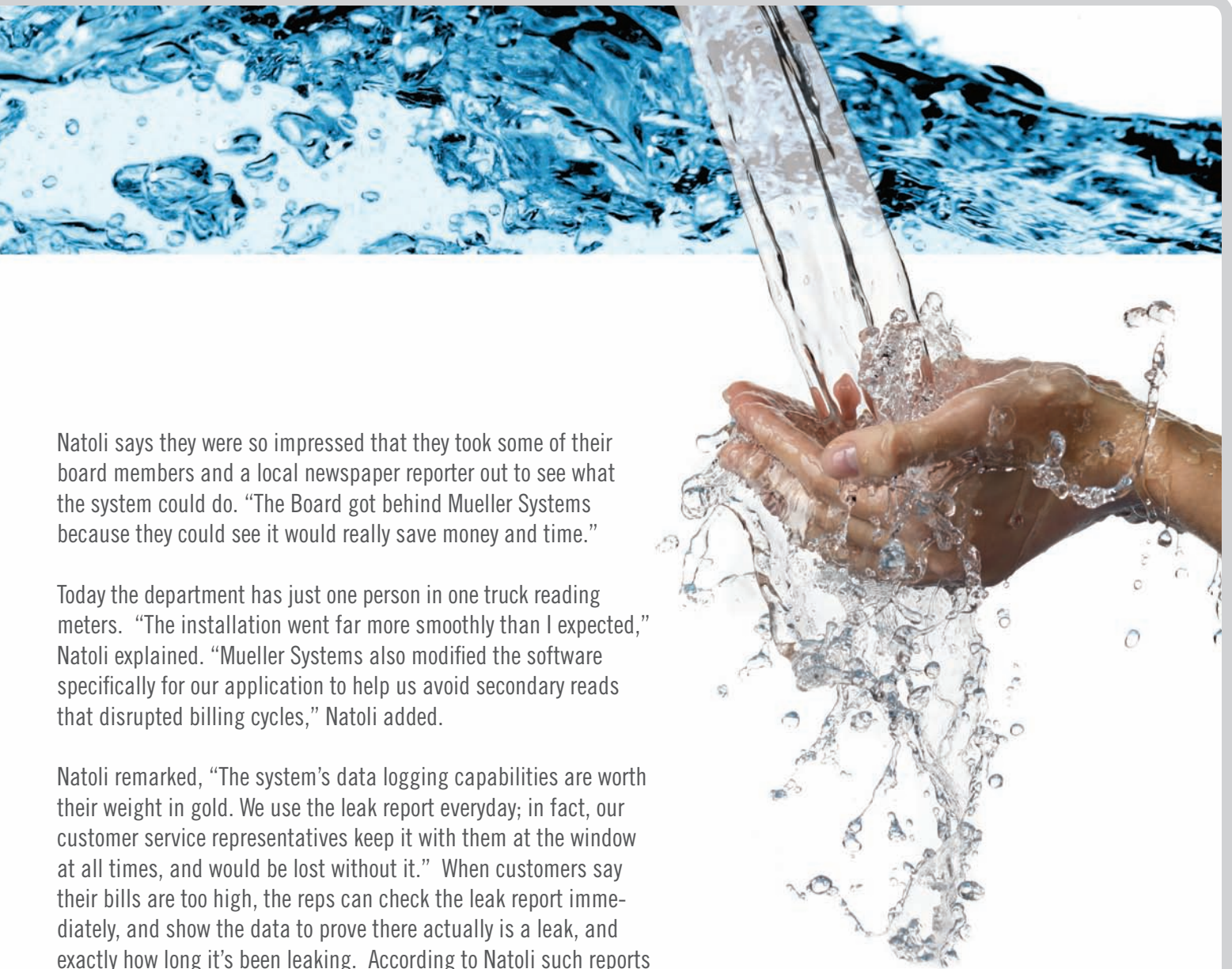
Anson County Water and Sewer Supervisor Steve Natoli searched for the right solution. He found it at Mueller Systems. As Natoli quickly discovered, the Mueller Systems Hot Rod AMR (Automated Meter Reading) system could provide real savings in manpower and operational expenses. For Anson County, using the Mueller Hot Rod system has minimized time spent reading and re-reading meters, hastened new water line construction, and reduced customer complaints, offering instant evidence of leaks.



During the research process Natoli looked for a reader that would work well with the department's billing software. He purchased a trial package from Mueller Systems that consisted of a radio reader, 15 meters and software for less than the cost of other companies' reader alone. "We installed those meters in a small housing development. My boss and I hooked up the equipment temporarily in a truck to test the system," Natoli said. "Before we even got to the development entrance, the Mueller system was done reading 14 of the 15 meters. The 15th was almost completely underwater, so we had to get a little closer for it to read. The speed with which we could read the meters was amazing."

"Mueller System's Hot Rod solution has absolutely lived up to our expectations. It's definitely the best move we ever made."

Steve Natoli, Water and Sewer Collection Supervisor
Anson County Water Department



Natoli says they were so impressed that they took some of their board members and a local newspaper reporter out to see what the system could do. “The Board got behind Mueller Systems because they could see it would really save money and time.”

Today the department has just one person in one truck reading meters. “The installation went far more smoothly than I expected,” Natoli explained. “Mueller Systems also modified the software specifically for our application to help us avoid secondary reads that disrupted billing cycles,” Natoli added.

Natoli remarked, “The system’s data logging capabilities are worth their weight in gold. We use the leak report everyday; in fact, our customer service representatives keep it with them at the window at all times, and would be lost without it.” When customers say their bills are too high, the reps can check the leak report immediately, and show the data to prove there actually is a leak, and exactly how long it’s been leaking. According to Natoli such reports have reduced trips out to investigate possible leaks by 99%. “Mueller’s Hot Rod system has absolutely lived up to our expectations. It’s definitely the best move we ever made.”

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Mueller SYSTEMS

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With Mueller Water Products' long history, broad product portfolio and reputation for quality and service, we aim to play a key role in delivering and protecting our precious natural resources. Our goal is to deliver superior, cost-effective products and services.

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