

## Palisade finds ways to save water through irrigation audit

By FRANK WATT

Special to the Sentinel

Watering your lawn in a smart way benefits everyone, including water providers who deliver treated water to the public. One available resource to ensure the efficient and economical use of water is to get an irrigation audit from Colorado State University Cooperative Extension. This summer, the Town of Palisade had these audits performed at Riverbend Park, Memorial Park, Independent Park, Peach Bowl Park and the town Cemetery.

The town uses untreated irrigation water at all of these facilities except for Independent Park, which is watered by treated water from the town's water plant. Even though Palisade has a low-cost source of water available for irrigation, it doesn't mean the town shouldn't use that water efficiently. Town managers don't want brown areas with dying grass or swampy areas that turn into mud holes. Wise water management is essential for parks to look nice and to function well for sports and other public uses. Keeping irrigation systems in top shape also helps Palisade use its money wisely because it has a budget to meet just like homeowners.

The CSU audit provided Palisade with detailed information on how each of the watering zones was functioning. Watering times and the amount of time spent watering are important, but the report went far beyond these basic elements. It documented how many zones are in each area, how many sprinklers exist in each zone, what areas were covered, and water pressures and how well each sprinkler head performed. It also addressed other factors such as depth or tilt of watering devices and what adjustments could be made. The audit report also provided analysis of soil conditions and what problems town properties may have related to watering or to some other factor such as insects or disease. Technicians made recommendations on how the town can create a more efficient irrigation system with different types of sprinkler heads or changes in zoning based on the actual real-life functioning of the system, not just an analysis on paper. A map was also provided for each system with notes related to the detailed analysis provided in the written report. Overall, the audit provided valuable information which will help the town save water and better manage its public parks and cemetery. According to CSU Cooperative Extension, an average of 40 percent of water savings can be realized with changes suggested through an irrigation audit.

*We live in a semiarid climate where droughts will always be a part of our environment. Water for our future means conserving now. The Drought Response Information Project (DRIP) is a collaboration between the valley's domestic water utilities and CSU Cooperative Extension to provide information and educate the public about drought and the importance of water conservation.*