

Tips

Buying a Pump Station

Don't necessarily go with the lowest bidder

By Frank H. Andorka Jr., Managing Editor

Without a proper pump station, even the best irrigation system in the world won't fulfill your needs. With all the different pump station options facing superintendents, however, the choice can be confusing.

Superintendents must ask the right questions to determine which station will best fit their needs, says Willie Slingerland, new product sales manager for Dallas-based Flowtronex/PSI. Many superintendents often look solely at the bottom line — and that's a mistake, he says.

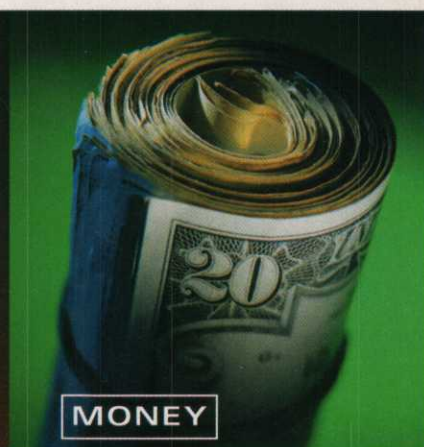
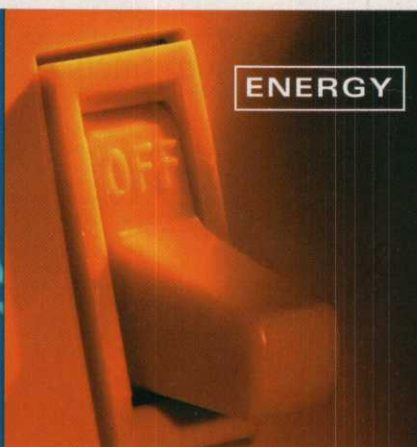
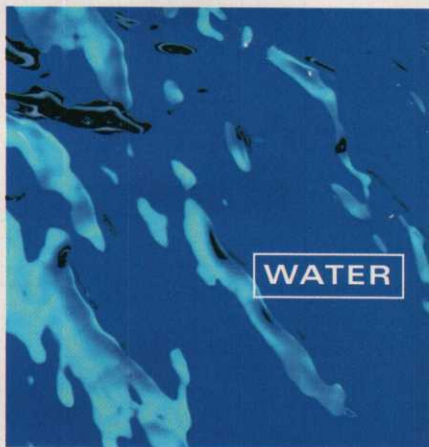
"Though important, the number on the bottom line can be deceiving and vary widely from manufacturer to manufacturer," Slingerland says. "Each company does things a little differently, and these differences can play a major role in the final price. It's up to the buyer to ask the right questions."

Don't necessarily purchase your pump station from the lowest bidder, Slingerland says.

"If the superintendent merely puts out a Request For Proposal (RFP) that talks about required gallons per minute

and pressure per square inch without specific system details, the resulting bids will vary dramatically," Slingerland says. "Selecting the lowest bidder under those circumstances almost guarantees the station purchased will not match the station the superintendent had in mind."

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Once you've determined your price range, you must decide on which type of pump will work the best for your course, says Jim Simonini, market development manager for Norcross, Ga.-based SynchroFlo. There are primarily two types of pumps on the market today — end suction or vertical turbine. Simonini says most superintendents today choose vertical turbines.

"Turbines are more efficient," he adds. "You'll save money on water and on energy."

Superintendents should also examine the pump station housing and internal parts, Slingerland says. They should be skeptical if they haven't heard of the brand names of the pumps, motors, drives and starters in a prospective pump station.

"To ensure a long-lived pump system, make sure the components are all from well-known companies," Slingerland says. "Have the manufacturer submit in writing what products will be

used on its station. If the manufacturer isn't willing to do that, be concerned."

Your pump station should have a sufficient cooling system to avoid overheating the pump and shorting it out, says Bryan Adams, SynchroFlo's project

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—Willie Slingerland, Flowtronex/PSI

manager. What some superintendents forget is that the cooling system must run even when the pump station is not.

"That's a crucial point that is poorly understood," Adams says. "On hot days, even if you're not running the system, you can fry out an electrical system from the heat of the sun. You want cool air blowing across the front of the electrical system and not the back."

Simonini says lightning protection packages are also important.

"We've all heard countless stories of

superintendents whose pump stations were destroyed by lightning during a thunderstorm," Simonini says. "The only way to protect yourself from suffering the same fate is to purchase a grounding package."

Such packages usually cost between \$200 and \$300, he added.

Superintendents should make sure that components are easy to access for service, Adams says. "You don't want everything packed in there so tightly that you can't reach all the parts," Adams says.

Slingerland says superintendents should pay attention to the warranty offered by pump station manufacturers because the last hassle you need is a broken pump station with no quick way to fix it, he adds.

"The actual value of a warranty is determined by what is included and by how the manufacturer handles claims," Slingerland says. "A product is often only as good as the service that backs it up." ■

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION
(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

1. **Publication Title:** Goldfom
2. **Publication Number:** 1526-4270
3. **Filing Date:** 09/14/01
4. **Issue Frequency:** Monthly
5. **Number of Issues Published Annually:** 12
6. **Annual Subscription Price:** \$30
7. **Complete Mailing Address of Known Office of Publication:** 131 West First St., Duluth, Minnesota 55802-2065
Contact Person: Darryl Arquette
Telephone: 218-723-9422
8. **Complete Mailing Address of Headquarters or General Business Office of Publisher:** 7500 Old Oak Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44130-3369
9. **Full Names and Complete Mailing Addresses of Publisher:** Pat Jones, 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, Ohio 44130-3369
Editor: Larry Aylward, 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, Ohio 44130-3369
Managing Editor: Frank H. Andorka Jr., 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, Ohio 44130-3369
10. **This publication is owned by:** Advanstar Communications Inc., 7500 Old Oak Blvd., Cleveland, Ohio 44130. The sole shareholder of Advanstar Communications Inc., is: Advanstar Inc., 545 Boylston St., Boston, MA 02116.
11. **Advanstar Communications is the mortgagor under a Credit Agreement dated Oct. 11, 2000, as amended, with various lenders as named therein from time to time. The agent for the lenders is Fleet National Bank, Mail Stop MADE-100090, 100 Federal St., Boston, MA 02110. Holders of 1.0% or more of Advanstar Communications Inc. mortgages or other securities as of July 2001, are as follows:** Bank of Montreal, 430 Park Ave., New York, NY 10022; Barclays, 101 California St., Ste. 1800, San Francisco, CA 94111; BHF Capital, 590 Madison Ave., 30th Fl., New York, NY 10022; Credit Suisse First Boston, 11 Madison Ave., 5th Fl., New York, NY 10010; Prometheus Investment Fund, 622 Third Ave., New York, NY 10017; Mountain Capital CLO II, 2 World Trade Ctr., 79th Fl., New York, NY 10048; Apex CDO I, 401 South Tryon St., Three First Union Ctr., 15th Fl., Charlotte, NC 28288; Dresdner Bank, 75 Wall St., 5th Fl., New York, NY 10005; Fleet National Bank, 100 Federal St., Boston, MA 02110; Toronto Dominion, 909 Fannin St., Ste. 1700, Houston, TX 77010; Wells Fargo, 6th & Marquette, N9305-072, Minneapolis, MN 55479; First Dominion Funding II, 466 Lexington Ave., 14th Fl., New York, NY 10017; Bavaria TRR Corp., 150 East 42nd St., New York, NY 10017; Prime Income Trust, Two World Trade Center, New York, NY 10048; Centurion CDO II, 400 Continental Blvd., 6th Fl., El Segundo, CA 90245; AMMC CDO II, One East Fourth St., 3rd Fl., Cincinnati, OH 45202; Magnetite Asset Investors, 345 Park Ave., 29th Fl., New York, NY 10154; Caravelle Investment Fund, 425 Lexington Ave., New York, NY 10017; Flagship CLO 2000 I, 100 Federal St., Boston, MA 02109; Heller Financial, 500 West Monroe St., Chicago, IL 60661; Indosuez Capital Funding VI, 666 Third Ave., 9th Fl., New York, NY 10017; Seaboard CLO, 32 W Pennsylvania Ave., 3rd Fl., Towson, MD 21204; Katonah I Ltd., Ka-

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12. Does Not Apply

13. **Publication Title:** Goldfom
14. **Issue Date for Circulation Data Below:** August 2001

15. Extent and Nature of Circulation

	Average No. Copies Each Issue During Preceding 12 Months	No. Copies of Single Issue Published Nearest to Filing Date
A. Total Number of Copies	31,911	30,303
B. Paid and/or Requested Circulation		
1. Paid/Requested Outside-County Mail Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541	24,219	25,284
2. Paid In-County Subscriptions Stated on Form 3541	0	0
3. Sales Through Dealers and Carriers, Street Vendors, Counter Sales, and Other Non-USPS Paid Distribution	98	125
4. Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS	0	0
C. Total Paid and/or Requested Circulation	24,317	25,409
D. Free Distribution by Mail		
1. Outside-County as Stated on Form 3541	6,813	4,413
2. In-County as Stated on Form 3541	0	0
3. Other Classes Mailed Through the USPS	0	0
E. Free Distribution Outside the Mail	725	423
F. Total Free Distribution	7,538	4,836
G. Total Distribution	31,855	30,245
H. Copies Not Distributed	56	58
I. Total	31,911	30,303
J. Percent Paid and/or Requested Circulation	76.3%	84.0%

17. Name and Title of Editor, Publisher, Business Manager, or Owner: Robert A Dahl, Group Circulation Director
Date: 09/14/01

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