



CASE IN POINT

- LOCATION:** RC Farms
Hurlock, Md.
- SITUATION:** 2,700 acres total,
1,500 irrigated acres
- CHALLENGE:** Remotely control and
monitor center pivots to
reduce labor inputs
- DEPLOYMENT:** BaseStation3™
- EFFECT:**
 - Labor savings
 - Meeting crop needs
 - Convenient control
 - Ease of monitoring
and reporting

BaseStation3™ Replaces Retiree

In the heart of Maryland’s Eastern Shore lies family-owned RC Farms, 2,700 acres of primarily corn, wheat and soybeans. It’s a farm much like the others in the region, except for one thing: RC Farms takes advantage of irrigation technology to save on labor, time and expenses.

RC Farms was the first in the area to use Valley® telemetry technology to control its center pivots, and when the time was right, it was also the first to convert to BaseStation3™.

“Labor issues made us go that way,” says Dale Roe, technology expert and farm manager. “The man who worked the most with our irrigation machines was retiring, and the timing was right. Rather than hire someone to replace him, we put in BaseStation3. Now three of us can use our smartphones to control and monitor all 21 of the pivots that are on BaseStation3.”

Saving Time

By managing their pivots remotely, the operators at RC Farms don’t just save money on labor – they save hours. With BaseStation3, RC Farms can manage multiple fields and farms remotely. According to Roe, that capability cuts the time it takes to start and stop the pivots at least in half.

“Without it, we’d have to drive out to the field, get out of the vehicle, start the pivot, which took even longer with the old diesel motors,” Roe says. “Then we’d have to drive around and check on all of the pivots and stop each pivot at the end of the day. That’s a lot of labor to factor in.”

Now when there is a bump in the night, RC Farms team members can assess the situation in a couple of seconds on their phones to determine whether they need to make an urgent run to the field, if they can take care of it on their phones, or if it can wait until morning.

Rusty Stevens, owner and operator of RC Farms, says BaseStation3 also delivers peace of mind.



“I don’t like to have men out there during electrical storms, and now when we see that one is coming our way, we don’t have to go out to the field to shut our machines off,” he says. “We can just shut the pivots down from the app.”

BaseStation3 allows Stevens to quickly adapt to Mother Nature. By turning off the machines, he reduces the risk of lightening strikes and minimizes the need to replace equipment. That peace of mind is worth a lot to him.



Easy Information Access

RC Farms tracks the hours its pivots run and the amount of water used. This information makes it easy to provide the necessary water usage reports to the state of Maryland.

“It’s much simpler to keep all the data in order with our BaseStation3, because we can just get the report right from the computer,” says Stevens. “We no longer waste time figuring things out, because BaseStation3 makes all the data pulls and reporting effortless.”

A Justifiable Investment

Stevens performed some simple math to determine whether the investing in the BaseStation3 conversion was justifiable.

“Some of our farms were more expensive than others to convert, so I kept it simple. I divided the total cost of our conversion by the number of total irrigated acres controlled by BaseStation3,” explains Stevens. “It ended up costing us about \$15 per acre over five years.”

Because RC Farms had to replace five control panels with Valley digital panels and upgrade some old diesel motors to electric, the conversion to BaseStation3 was a sizable initial investment. Despite that, it became obvious after Stevens’ analysis that the expense over time was minimal, especially when factoring in the time savings.

While the decision to invest in BaseStation3 was already justified, Stevens’ calculation didn’t even include his retired worker’s salary. Stevens figured the employee spent a third to half of his time managing irrigation, so factoring in that portion of his salary made the investment unquestionable.

Looking To The Future

RC Farms is using BaseStation3 in a number of ways and knows its capabilities expand beyond its current usage. There’s room for expansion and the farm plans to do just that by adding its six remaining pivots to the BaseStation3 network when they’re ready to be replaced.

Roe says the operation has a few older, smaller machines, that just couldn’t justify upgrading the panels at the time of the BaseStation3 integration. Eventually, when he replaces those pivots or the panels, he’ll switch to Valley digital control panels and connect them to BaseStation3 as well. He also plans to expand his use of the features BaseStation3 provides.

“As much as we love it, we know we’re not using BaseStation3 to its fullest potential,” says Roe. “We are hoping to add soil moisture monitoring, so we can make better use of our Variable Rate Irrigation capabilities and make sure we’re providing exactly what our crops need and when.

“Even using BaseStation3 only as we are now, it was a great investment. I wouldn’t want to go back to working without it!”