

Grower saves water by trusting Valley Scheduling technology



LOCATION: Schmeeckle Farms, Inc.
North of Gothenburg, Nebraska

SITUATION:

- Fifth-generation family farm
- 2,000 acres (1,700 irrigated)
- Grows corn and soybeans
- Uses smart irrigation solutions from Valley® for remote monitoring and management of pivots
- Mostly flat land with some slopes and varying soil types, mostly loam

CHALLENGE:

- Using various platforms to gain information on weather, soil, aerial imagery, etc.
- History of over-watering
- Trusting new technology to determine irrigation recommendations
- Adding soil moisture probes to six fields, including a dryland field
- Incorporating probes with Valley Scheduling™ software
- Using Valley Scheduling recommendations to plan and implement irrigation

EFFECT:

- Avoids over-watering by trusting Valley Scheduling recommendations
- Saves time by using Valley Scheduling in place of other technologies
- Takes advantage of simple convenience by using Valley Scheduling online, and on the mobile app



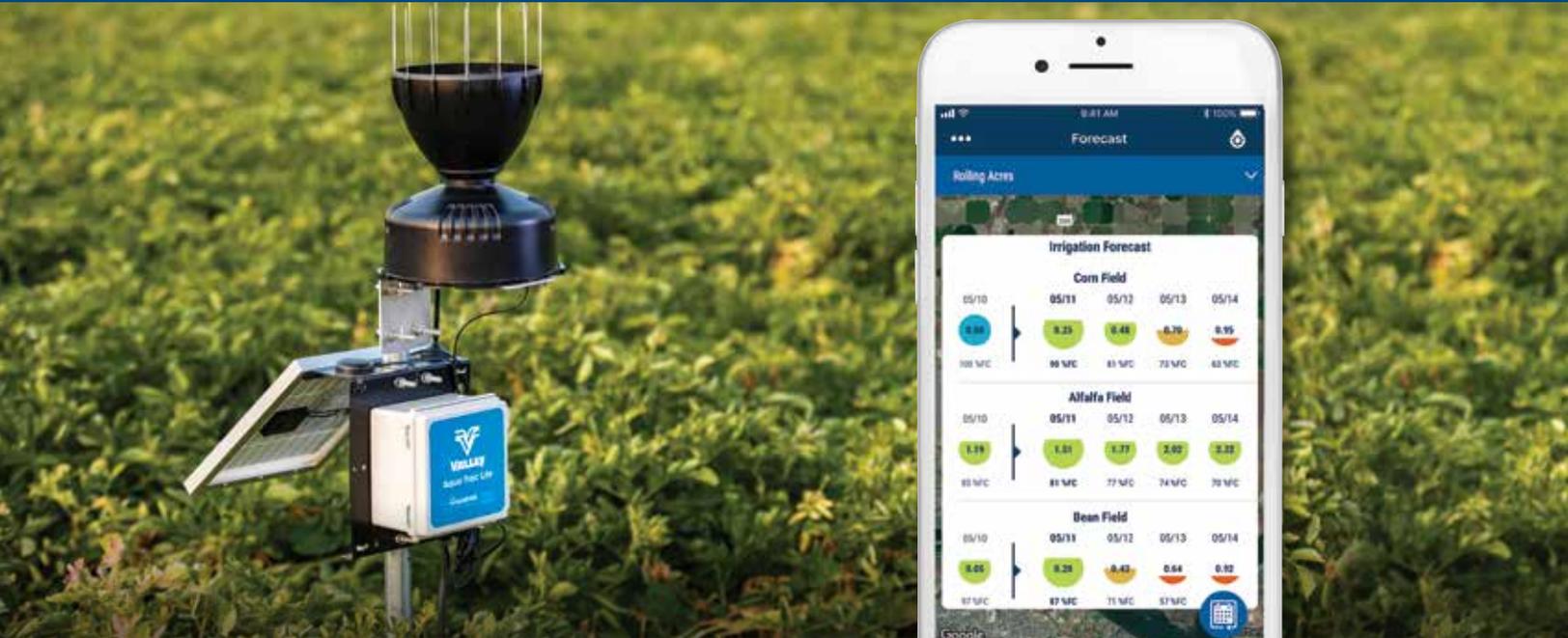
Tim Schmeeckle has been irrigating in one form or another his entire life. He is an early adopter of technology, and he's been using smart irrigation solutions from Valley to control his 10 Valley pivots for many years. In fact, he has been a beta tester of various technologies for Valley Irrigation.

So when Schmeeckle was asked to put Valley Scheduling advanced management software to the test, he was willing to give it a try. But he didn't blindly believe that it would work well for him. Actually, he was quite skeptical about the irrigation recommendations it provided. At first.

He worked with Valley Irrigation Director of Research and Development Jake LaRue to set up and install his moisture probes and software. Then, Dan Burgard, Principal Soil Scientist at Cascade Earth Sciences (CES), a Valmont® company, detailed how the technology worked. Soon, Schmeeckle was using it on his own.

Schmeeckle had been using soil probes, aerial imagery, a weather station and forecasting already, but they were all separate components for him to seek out. "I was familiar with a lot of the components of the technology," he says, but Valley Scheduling brought all of these components together in one place.

Valley Scheduling collects and analyzes data, including the soil type, crop type, stage of development, and automatically updated weather conditions to provide easy-to-understand data and irrigation recommendations within a single dashboard.



Using less water

Because he followed Valley Scheduling recommendations, Schmeeckle says he used considerably less water.

One risk of applying too much water is nitrogen deficiency. “I can see water in the root zones now, so I’m not pushing nitrogen out of that zone,” he explains. “Through the years, we’ve over-watered pretty consistently. It was just so easy to do. Now, we irrigate only when we know we need to.”

Schmeeckle also wanted to see what was happening in his dryland field, so he placed a couple of probes there, as well.

“It’s no surprise I learned that we were short of water there,” he laughs. “It was a pretty good year with all the rain we had, but the crop was still stressed.”

Intuitive, convenient technology

All of the data and recommendations for Valley Scheduling are available online, through the mobile app and on the BaseStation3™ interface. Schmeeckle began the season using the website to view data, but soon switched to the convenience of the mobile app.

“I ended up looking at the mobile app the most,” says Schmeeckle. “It was very easy. I could get a quick overview and enter the schedule ... whatever I was doing at that moment, I was able to get the information I needed.”

“The biggest learning curve for me was trusting it. I’m used to just pushing the button to irrigate whenever I think I need to water,” Schmeeckle explains. “People like me who have been irrigating our entire lives just irrigate whenever we think we think it’s necessary, without using any real principles. I always thought the crops needed more water than they actually do.”

“But as the growing season went on, I started depending on Valley Scheduling,” he continues. “It’s overwhelming that this technology works so well. It’s completely trustworthy, and it’s very handy and convenient technology,” Schmeeckle says.

“I know where all the information comes from, so I stopped second guessing the recommendations and followed them very closely.”