

### Keeping Sacred Ground Green

The markers stand at attention in perfect formation like the fallen soldiers they represent. Dandelions don't dot the landscape. Not a blade of grass is out of place. Military standards are the order of the acre in the new Washington State Veterans Cemetery at Medical Lake and for good reason. "We are expected to maintain this national cemetery as a shrine-like facility," says Rich Cesler, Washington State Veterans Cemetery at Medical Lake director. "It's to the point that I can't have one dandelion visible for an acre. We work very hard to have none. Everything has to be military precision. We are a veterans cemetery and we represent the veteran community. That's what they expect and that's what we do."

Thirty acres of seed-grown grass wrap around headstones adorning land that was once a pasture and two prominent mounds rise in the northern end swooping down to the lake providing a dramatic view. "Having large expanses of green gave the layout of the cemetery a natural shape," Cesler says. "What you see is a well-kept manicured property with an incredible view of the lake. It's pretty awesome."

Maintaining such a pristine sight takes up to three million gallons of water a month. The cemetery taps the city's treated wastewater in nearby West Medical Lake for watering its property rather than going after irrigation flows or disturbing the water table. Cesler relies on the staff at Baseline to make sure the delicate



balance continues through 67 irrigation zones in the cemetery. "With sensors in the ground, Baseline lets us stop drawing water if it's raining," Cesler says. "And if it's too windy, and not going to effectively lay the water down, it will turn off."

With the proper upgrades, the same efficiency methods work at older cemeteries too. Just changing out the sprinkler heads at the Idaho State Veterans Cemetery in Boise, Idaho reduced repairs and increased flow on a system already in use. "It's not only water conservation, it's budget friendly," says Jon Peters, Baseline director of sales. "The cost of water is going up and budgets are being

impacted. Flow management helps our clients move water more efficiently. We can't make more water, but we can use it more efficiently."

Off-site management adds to efficiency. Warnings reach home computers even on weekends and maintenance crews can troubleshoot while they're cutting grass. "They can be on a mower when they see a dry spot and all they have to do is grab their cell phone, push a couple of buttons and check the zone," Peters says. "They can fix the problem then jump back on their mower and go."

Cesler likes the ease and efficiency of a Baseline system. Both ensure he can meet the measure of excellence the military demands right down to the green surrounding the graves. "One of the largest issues is knowing whether you have watered properly," Cesler says. "Without the Baseline computer system telling us what's going on in the ground, we don't know. There are so many things that come into play that make it such a valuable system for us. It takes away all of the guesswork."