Soil Sensor

Installation Guide

Rev. V
For Firmware Version 6

Safety and Equipment Protection

WARNING!

ELECTRICAL POWER CAN RESULT IN DEATH, PERSONAL INJURY OR CAN CAUSE DAMAGE TO EQUIPMENT. If the instrument is driven by an external power source, disconnect the instrument from that power source before attempting any repairs.

WARNING!
BATTERIES ARE DANGEROUS. IF HANDLED IMPROPERLY, THEY CAN RESULT IN DEATH, PERSONAL INJURY OR CAN CAUSE DAMAGE TO EQUIPMENT. Batteries can be hazardous when misused, mishandled, or disposed of improperly. Batteries contain potential energy, even when partially discharged.

WARNING!
ELECTRICAL SHOCK CAN RESULT IN DEATH OR PERSONAL INJURY. Use extreme caution when handling cables, connectors, or terminals; they may yield hazardous currents if inadvertently brought into contact with conductive materials, including water and the human body.

CAUTION!
Be aware of protective measures against environmentally caused electric current surges and follow the previous warnings and cautions, the following safety activities should be carefully observed.

Children and Adolescents
NEVER give batteries to young people who may not be aware of the hazards associated with batteries and their improper use or disposal.

Jewelry, Watches, Metal Tags
To avoid severe burns, NEVER wear rings, necklaces, metal watch bands, bracelets, or metal identification tags near exposed battery terminals.

Heat, Fire
NEVER dispose of batteries in fire or locate them in excessively heated spaces. Observe the temperature limit listed in the instrument specifications.

Charging
NEVER charge "dry" cells or lithium batteries that are not designed to be charged.
NEVER charge rechargeable batteries at currents higher than recommended ratings.
NEVER recharge a frozen battery. Thaw it completely at room temperature before connecting charger.

Unvented Container
NEVER store or charge batteries in a gas-tight container. Doing so may lead to pressure buildup and explosive concentrations of hydrogen.

Short Circuits
NEVER short circuit batteries. High current flow may cause internal battery heating and/or explosion.

Damaged Batteries
Personal injury may result from contact with hazardous materials from a damaged or open battery. NEVER attempt to open a battery enclosure. Wear appropriate protective clothing, and handle damaged batteries carefully.

Disposal
ALWAYS dispose of batteries in a responsible manner. Observe all applicable federal, state, and local regulations for disposal of the specific type of battery involved.

NOTICE
Stevens makes no claims as to the immunity of its equipment against lightning strikes, either direct or nearby.

The following statement is required by the Federal Communications Commission:

WARNING
This equipment generates, uses, and can radiate radio frequency energy and, if not installed in accordance with the instructions manual, may cause interference to radio communications. It has been tested and found to comply with the limits for a Class A computing device pursuant to Subpart J of Part 15 of FCC Rules, which are designed to provide reasonable protection against such interference when operated in a commercial environment. Operation of this equipment in a residential area is likely to cause interference in which case the user at their own expense will be required to take whatever measures may be required to correct the interference.

USER INFORMATION
Stevens makes no warranty as to the information furnished in these instructions and the reader assumes all risk in the use thereof. No liability is assumed for damages resulting from the use of these instructions. We reserve the right to make changes to products and/or publications without prior notice.

Declaration of Conformity

The Manufacturer of the Products covered by this Declaration is

STEVENS
Water Monitoring Systems, Inc.

12067 NE Glenn Widing Dr. #106
Portland, Oregon 97220 USA
503-445-8000
The Directive covered by this Declaration2004/108/EC Electromagnetic Compatibility directive

The Product Covered by this Declaration

HydraProbe Soil Measurement Sensor

The basis on which Conformity is being Declared

The manufacturer hereby declares that the products identified above comply with the protection requirements of the EMC directive for and following standards to which conformity is declared: EN61326-1:2006

Electrical requirements for measurement, control, and laboratory use EMC requirements Class A equipment – Conducted Emissions and Radiated Emissions

1907/2006/EC REACH
Stevens Water Monitoring Systems, Inc. certifies that the Stevens HydraProbe, including all models and components, are compliant with the European Union Regulation (EC) 1907/2006 governing the Registration, Evaluation, Authorization, and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) and do not contain substances above 0.1% weight of a Substance of Very High Concern (SVHC) listed in Annex XIV as of June 15th, 2019.

The technical documentation required to demonstrate that the products meet the requirements of the EMC directive has been compiled and is available for inspection by the relevant enforcement authorities.

CE

RoHS √

Installation of The HydraProbe

See Appendix A for SDI-12 probes, Appendix B for RS485 probes, and Appendix C for Modbus probes for wiring and communication. Calibration is not necessary for most soils and the default settings will accommodate most users and applications.

Supporting Documents

Document Number	Document
HP003A	HydraProbe Quick Start, SDI-12
HP004A	Soil Data Guide
HP005A	HydraProbe Install and Troubleshooting Guide
HP006A	HydraProbe Quick Start, RS-485
HP007A	Regulatory Information
HP008A	HydraProbe Comprehensive Manual
HP009A	Soil Geomorphology Guide for Soil Sensors
HP010A	Lightning Protection for Meteorological Stations
HP011A	HydraProbe Quick Start, Modbus

Stevens HydraProbe Installation Guide

Table of Contents

1 Introduction

The Stevens HydraProbe Soil Sensor, or the HydraProbe, measures soil temperature, soil moisture, soil electrical conductivity (EC), and the complex dielectric permittivity. Designed for many years of service buried in soil, the HydraProbe uses quality material in its construction. Marine grade stainless steel, PVC housing, and a high-grade epoxy potting protects the internal electrical component from the corrosive and reactive properties of soil. Most of the HydraProbes installed more than a decade ago are still in service today.

The HydraProbe is not only a practical measurement device; it is also a scientific instrument. Trusted by farmers to maximize crop yields, using HydraProbes in an irrigation system can prevent runoff that may be harmful to aquatic habitats, conserve water where it is scarce, and save money on pumping costs. Researchers can rely on the HydraProbe to provide accurate and precise data for many years of service. The inter-sensor variability is low, allowing direct comparison of data from multiple probes in a soil column or in a watershed.

The HydraProbe bases its measurements on the physics and behavior of a reflected electromagnetic radio wave in soil to determine the dielectric permittivity. From the complex dielectric permittivity, the HydraProbe can simultaneously measure soil moisture and electrical conductivity. The complex dielectric permittivity is related to the electrical capacitance and electrical conductivity. The HydraProbe uses patented algorithms to convert the signal response of the standing radio wave into the dielectric permittivity and thus the soil moisture and bulk soil electrical conductivity.

HydraProbe installation at a typical USDA NRCS SNOTEL Site.
Picture compliments of USDA NRCS in Salt Lake City, Utah.

1.1 Applications

The US Department of Agriculture Soil Climate Analysis Network (SCAN) has depended on the HydraProbe in hundreds of stations around the United States and Antarctica since the early 1990s. The Bureau of Reclamation's Agrimet Network, NOAA, and other mesonets and research watersheds around the world trust the measurements the HydraProbe provides. Applications of the HydraProbe include:

Agriculture	Irrigation
Viticulture	Sports Turf
Research	Soil Phytoremediation
Water Shed Modeling	Evapotranspiration Studies
Land Reclamation	Land Slide Studies
Shrink/Swell Clays	Flood Forecasting
Satellite Ground Truthing	Wetland Delineation
Predicting Weather	Precision Agriculture

1.2 Calibrations

The HydraProbe has three factory calibrations that provide excellent performance in a variety of soils regardless of organic content or texture. The three calibrations are: GENERAL (G) good for most all soils composed of sand, silt, and clay; ORGANIC (O); and ROCKWOOL (R). The factory GENERAL soil calibration is the default calibration and is suitable for most all mineral soils. (See Chapter 5.4.3 and Appendix D for more information)

1.3 *Dielectric Permittivity*

The complex dielectric permittivities are provided for custom calibrations and other applications. (See Chapter 4.2.2 for more information)

1.4 *Structural Components*

There are three main structural components to the HydraProbe: the tine assembly, body, and cable. The marine grade stainless steel tine assembly is the four metal rods that extend out of the base plate ground plane and is the wave guide. Each tine is 58 mm long by 3 mm wide. The base plate is 25 mm in diameter. Electromagnetic waves at a radio frequency are transmitted and received by the center tine. The head, or body of the probe, contains the circuit boards, microprocessors, and other electrical components. The outer casing is PVC and the internal electronics are permanently potted with a rock-hard epoxy resin giving the probes a rugged construction. The cable has a direct burial casing and contains the power, ground, and data wires that are all soldered to the internal electronics.

1.5 *Accuracy and Precision*

The HydraProbe provides accurate and precise measurements. Table 1.1 below shows the accuracy.

Parameter	Precision
Real Dielectric Permittivity (isolated)	Range: 1 to 80 where 1 = air, 80 = distilled water Accuracy: < +/- 0.5% Or +/- 0.25 dielectric units
Imaginary Permittivity	Range: 0 to 80 where 1 = air, 80 = distilled water Accuracy: +/- 0.1 up 0.25 S/m and +/-7 at or above 0.5 S/m
Soil Moisture for inorganic mineral soils	Range: From complete dry to full saturation (0% to 100% of saturation) Accuracy[1]: +/-0.01 WFV for most soils (θ m^3,m^{-3}) +/- $\leq$0.03 for fine textured soil
Bulk Electrical Conductivity (EC)	Range: 0 to 1.5 S/m Accuracy[2]: +/- 2.0% or 0.02 S/m whichever is greater
Temperature	Range: -40 to 75^{o} C Accuracy: +/- 0.3^{o} C
Inter-Sensor Variability	+/- 0.012 WFV
Pore Water EC	Hilhorst Equation

Table 1.1 Accuracy and Precision of the HydraProbes' Parameters.

[1]Soil Moisture accuracy can vary with soil properties.
[2]Accuracy and range of Bulk EC depends on soil properties and distribution of ions present.

1.6 *Electromagnetic Compatibility* CE

The Stevens HydraProbe is a soil sensor that uses low power RF energy. The intended use of the HydraProbe is to be buried in soil underground to depths ranging from 5 cm to 2 meters deep.

The HydraProbe meets and conforms to the conducted emissions criterion specified by EN 61326-1:2006 and FCC 15.107:2010 in accordance with method CISPR 11:2009 and ANSI C63.4:2009

The HydraProbe meets the non-intentional radiator emissions, (group A) specified by EN 61326-1:2006, FCC 15.109(g) and (CISPR 22:1997):2010 in accordance with method CISPR 11:2009 and ANSI C63.4:2009 when the probe is NOT buried as specified. Test results are available upon request. The HydraProbe is RoHS.

1.7 *Configurations and Physical Specification*

The HydraProbe is available in SDI-12, RS-485, and Modbus, with standard cable lengths of 7.5, 15, and 30 meters.

The three digital formats, SDI-12, RS-485, and Modbus incorporate a microprocessor to process the information from the probe into useful data. This data is then transmitted digitally to a receiving instrument. SDI-12, RS-485, and Modbus are three different methods of transmitting digital data. In all versions there are electrical and protocol specifications that must be observed to ensure reliable data collection.

All configurations provide the same measurement parameters with the same accuracy. The underlying physics behind how the HydraProbe works and the outer construction are also the same for each configuration. Table 1.2 provides a physical description of the HydraProbe.

Feature	Attribute
Probe Length	12.4 cm (4.9 inches)
Diameter	4.2 cm (1.6 inches)
Sensing Volume[1] (Cylindrical measurement region)	Length 5.7 cm (2.2 inches) Diameter 3.0 cm (1.2 inches)
Weight	200g (cable 80 g/m)
Power Requirements	7 to 16 VDC (12 VDC typical)
Storage Temperature Range	-40 to 75˚C

Table 1.2 HydraProbe Physical Description (All Versions)

[1]The cylindrical measurement region or sensing volume is the soil that resides between the stainless-steel tine assembly. The tine assembly is often referred to as the wave guide, and probe signal averages the soil in the sensing volume.

1.8 *Soil Data Accessories and other Products*

1.8.1 Portable soil sensors

Figure 1.1. The portable HydraGO-FLEX and HydraGO-S allow for wireless on the go measurements of soil moisture. Connect via Bluetooth with a smartphone and the HydraGO App.

There are two portable HydraProbe soil sensor systems, the HydraGO-FLEX and the HydraGO-S. Each model of the HydraGO has Bluetooth and can connect to a mobile device. The HydraGO App will work with either Android or Apple iOS devices. The HydraGO-S provides GPS data from the device's GPS which has a typical accuracy of 5 to 10 meters depending on the device. The HydraGO FLEX has an internal survey grade GPS, which has sub-meter accuracy depending on satellite conditions. The HydraGO-S has a HydraProbe mounted to a shaft for quick soil measurements. The HydraGO-FLEX includes a detachable HydraProbe that comes in two models. One model of the HydraGO Probe has a flexible cable good for spot measurements, down holes, or on-the-go surface measurements. The second model has a direct buriable grade cable so that the probe can remain buried underground.

1.8.2 Tempe Cell

The Stevens Tempe Cell System can employ various methods to eliminate the uncertainties from soil moisture measurements to achieve the highest level of accuracy. This system uses an enhanced gravimetric method to measure soil moisture to obtain the actual volumetric water content. The volumetric water content determined gravimetrically can help develop a custom soil moisture calibration equation or to validate the soil moisture value output from a sensor. In addition to the soil-specific calibration and validation, an algorithm can be developed to determine the soil's matric potential using the HydraProbe up to 2 bars of tension. The Stevens Tempe Cell is ideal for mesonets, climate reference networks, and soil monitoring stations. See Appendix D.

Figure 1.2A. The Tempe Cell for custom calibrations, soil water retention curve

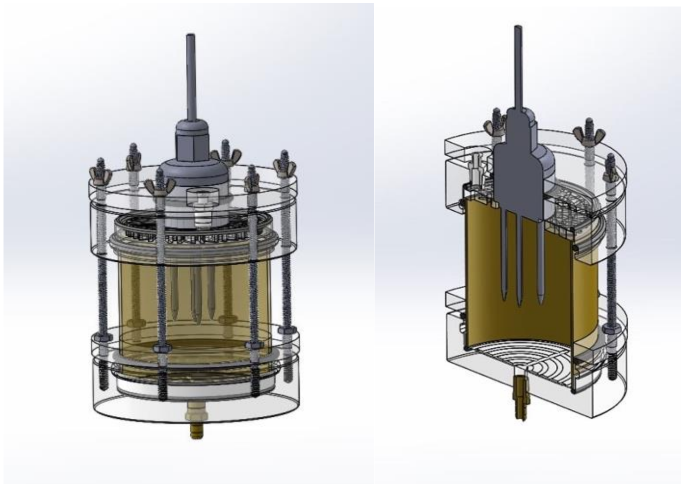

Figure 1.2B. Cross sectional diagram of Tempe Cell.

Water is infiltrated from the bottom which pushes the air out the top ensuring full saturation of the soil core.

1.9 *HydraProbe Versions*

- **Professional** – A scientific instrument designed for long-term climate references, research, and applications requiring high accuracy and quantitative data assessments.
- **Temperature Test Certificate** – Optional additional testing available to guarantee and show the HydraProbe operates down to -40º Celsius.

Parameter	Unit
Soil Moisture	Water fraction by volume
Bulk EC Temperature Corrected	S/m
Temperature	C
Temperature	F
Bulk EC	S/m
Real Dielectric Permittivity	-
Imaginary Dielectric Permittivity	-
Pore Water EC	S/m
Dielectric Loss Tangent	-

Table 1.3. HydraProbe Parameters

HydraProbe SDI-12	
56012-02	SDI-12, Professional, w/25 ft. cable
56012-04	SDI-12, Professional, w/50 ft. cable
56012-06	SDI-12, Professional, w/100 ft. cable

Table 1.4 Stevens part numbers for SDI-12 HydraProbes

HydraProbe RS485	
56485-02	RS485, Professional, w/25 ft. cable
56485-04	RS485, Professional, w/50 ft. cable
56485-06	RS485, Professional, w/100 ft. cable

Table 1.5 Stevens part numbers for RS485 HydraProbes

HydraProbe Modbus	
56585-02	Modbus, Professional, w/25 ft. cable
56585-04	Modbus, Professional, w/50 ft. cable
56585-06	Modbus, Professional, w/100 ft. cable

Table 1.6 Stevens part numbers for Modbus HydraProbes

HydraProbe Accessories	
56000-TST	Temperature Test Certificate
93633-007	HydraGO-S Portable Soil Sensor
93633-500	HydraGO FLEX Portable Soil Sensor with GPS
51169-100	Tempe Cell Basic Kit
93723	SDI-12 / RS-485 Multiplexer, 12 Position
93539	Cable, RS-485/Modbus Probe, 5 conductor (1000' spool)
93924	Cable, SDI-12 Probe, 3 conductor (2500' spool)

Table 1.7 Stevens part numbers for accessories

2 Installation

2.1 *Precautions*

To avoid damage to the HydraProbe. DO NOT:

- Subject the probe to extreme heat over 70 degrees Celsius (160 degrees Fahrenheit).
- Subject the probe to fluids with a pH less than 4.
- Subject the probe to strong oxidizers like bleach, or strong reducing agents.
- Subject the probe to polar solvents such as acetone.
- Subject the probe to chlorinated solvents such as dichloromethane.
- Subject the probe to strong magnetic fields.
- Use excessive force to drive the probe into the soil as the tines could bend. If the probe has difficulty going into the soil due to rocks, simply relocate the probe to an area slightly adjacent.
- Remove the HydraProbe from the soil by pulling on the cable.

While the direct burial cable is very durable, it is susceptible to abrasion and cuts by shovels. Use extra caution not to damage the cable or probe if the probe needs to be excavated for relocation.

Do not place the probes in a place where they could get run over by tractors or other farm equipment. The HydraProbe may be sturdy enough to survive getting run over by a tractor if it is buried; however, the compaction of the soil column from the weight of the vehicle will affect the hydrology and thus the soil moisture data.

DO NOT place more than one probe in a bucket of wet sand while logging data. More than one HydraProbe in the same bucket while powered may create an electrolysis effect that may damage the probe.

2.2 *Topographical Station Placement Considerations*

The land topography often dictates the soil hydrology. Depending on what you'd like to measure, the placement of the HydraProbe should be in the most useful area to measure.

Some factors to consider prior to HydraProbe placement are tree canopy, slope, surface water bodies, and geology. Tree canopy may affect the influx of precipitation/irrigation. Upper slopes may be better drained than depressions. There may be a shallow water table near a creek or lake. Hill sides may have seeps or springs.

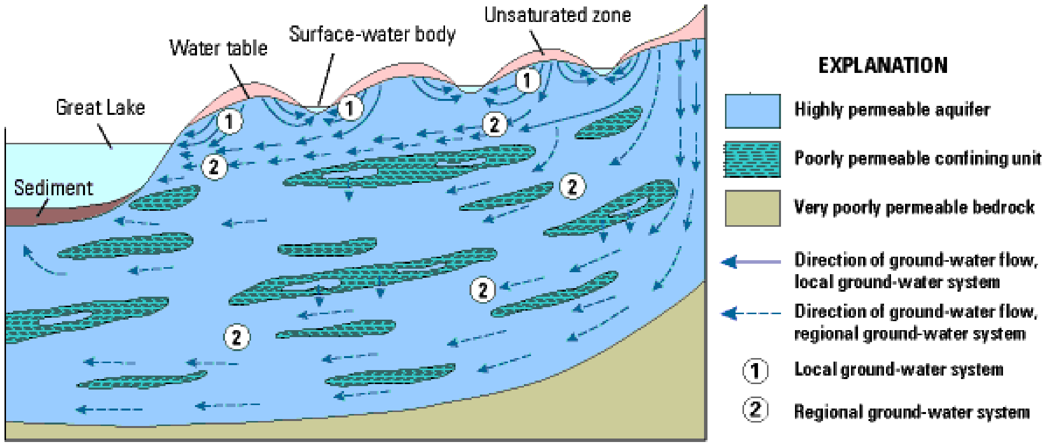

Figure 2.1 Ground water pathways and Surface water. Taken from USGS Report 00-4008.

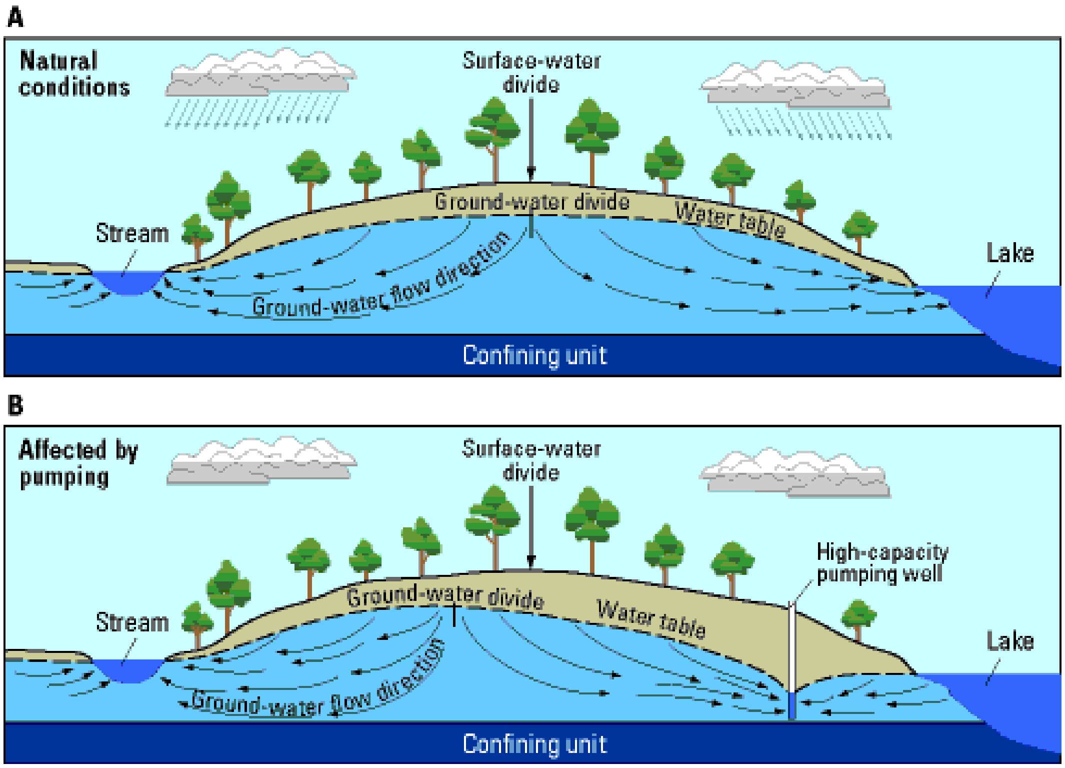

Figure 2.2 Ground water flow direction and surface water body. Taken from USGS report 00-4008.

Figures 2.1 and 2.2 illustrate subsurface water movement in the water table. The HydraProbe data is most meaningful in the unsaturated zone where soil moisture values will fluctuate. If the water table rises to the depth of the HydraProbe, the HydraProbe soil moisture measurements will be at saturation and will be indicative of the porosity. If you are interested in groundwater level measurements in wells, a water depth sensor might provide the necessary information.

2.3 *Soil Sensor Depth Selection*

Like selecting a topographical location, selecting the sensor depth depends on the interest of the user. Farmers may be interested in the root zone depth while soil scientists may be interested in the soil horizons.

For those in agriculture, two to three HydraProbes may be installed in the root zone and one HydraProbe may be installed beneath the root zone; this would also be dependent upon the crop and root zone depth. The amount of water that should be maintained in the root zone can be calculated by the method described in section 5. The probe beneath the root zone is important for measuring excessive irrigation and downward water movement.

Figure 2.3 Six HydraProbes installed into 6 distinct soil horizons.

The soil horizons often dictate the depths of the Stevens HydraProbe placement. Soil scientists and groundwater hydrologists are often interested in studying soil horizons. The HydraProbe is ideal for this application because of the accuracy and precision of the volumetric water fraction calibrations. Soil horizons are distinct layers of soil that form naturally in undisturbed soil over time. The formation of soil horizons is called soil geomorphology and the types of horizons are indicative of the soil order (see table 2.1). Like other natural processes, the age of the horizon increases with depth. The reason why it is so useful to have a HydraProbe in each horizon is because different horizons have different hydrological properties. Some horizons will have high hydraulic conductivities and thus have greater and more rapid fluctuations in soil moisture. Some horizons will have greater bulk densities with lower effective porosities and thus have lower saturation values. Some horizons will have clay films that will retain water at field capacity longer than other soil horizons. Knowledge of the soil horizons in combination with the HydraProbe's accuracy will allow the user to construct a more complete picture of the movement of water in the soil. The horizons that exist near the surface can be 6 to 40 cm in thickness. In general, with increasing depth, the clay content increases, the organic matter decreases, and the base saturation increases. Soil horizons can be identified by color, texture, structure, pH, and the visible appearance of clay films.

More information about soil horizons is provided by the USDA National Resource Conservation Service's website for a Soil's Profile under their Soil Education section.

More information about the soil horizons in your area can be found on the USDA's soil survey page.

Soil Horizon	Property
O	Decaying plants on or near surface
A	Top Soil, Organic Rich
B	Subsoil, Most Diverse Horizon and the Horizon with the most sub classifications
E	Leached Horizon (light in color)
C	Weathered/aged parent material

Table 2.1 Basic description of soil horizons.

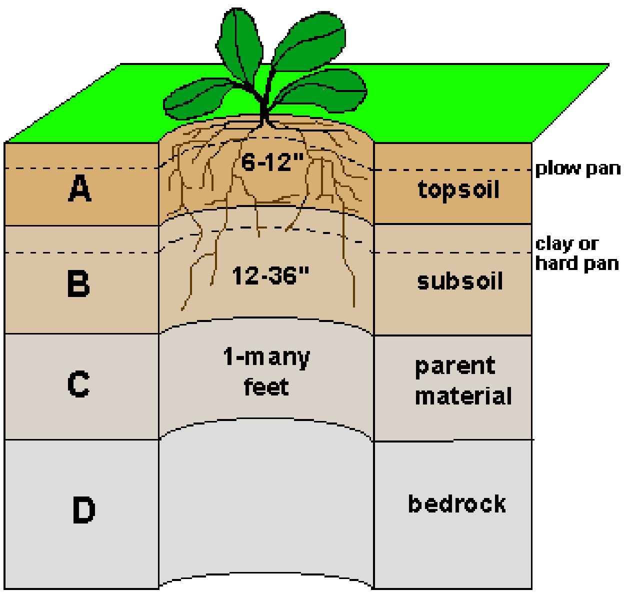

Figure 2.4 Soil Horizons.

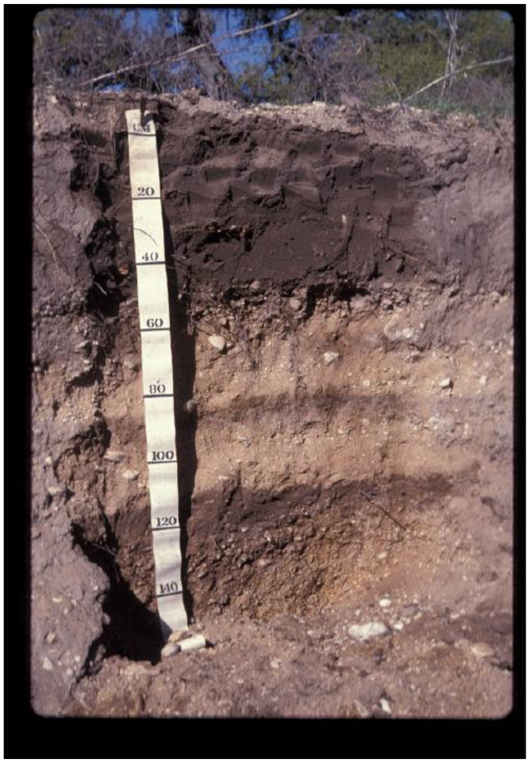

Figure 2.5 Illustration of soil horizons. In this frame, the soil horizons are very distinct and show the geological history of the soil.

2.4 *Installation of the HydraProbe in Soil*

2.4.1 Checklist before you go into the field

Here is a list of helpful and recommended items to take into the field:

Notepad and pen	Gloves	
Shovel	Water/food	
Knife	Muncell Color book	Water bottle (for cleaning)
Trowel	Wrench	Rags and towels
Tape measure	Toe tags for labeling probes	Handheld voltmeter
Zip ties	Wire cutter and wire strippers	Marker flags
Screw drivers	Needle nose plyers	

2.4.2 Test the probes and logger in the office before going into the field

We recommend setting up and running the system with the logger and the sensors before installing in the field. This allows users to become familiar with the system and identify any issues that may arise. The HydraProbes can be placed in water to test functionality. See Appendix A for SDI-12 communication, Appendix B for RS-485 communication, or Appendix C for Modbus communication or the quick start guides to take readings and test probes.

2.4.3 Labeling

We recommend labeling the sensor at the head prior to installation for quick identification before going in the hole. The cable at the logger end should also be labeled. The serial number and address should be documented. The serial number is printed on the label or use the SDI-12 "aI!" (aaaXR_SN for RS485 or register 1020 for Modbus) command to get the serial number.

2.4.4 Installing the HydraProbe in the Soil

The most important factor when installing the HydraProbe is that the soil should be undisturbed, and the base plate of the probe needs to be flush with the soil. Once the soil is disturbed from its pedology or equilibrated state, the porosity will increase which will in turn affect the way water is held and moves through the soil. To install the probe into the soil, first select the depth (see Chapter 2.3 for depth selection). We recommend the use of a post-hole digger or spade to dig the hole. If a pit has been prepared for a soil survey, the HydraProbes can be installed into the wall of the survey pit before it is filled in. Use a paint scraper to smooth the surface of the soil where it is to be installed. The soil must be flush with the base plate. If there is a gap, the HydraProbe signal will average the gap into the soil measurement and create errors.

If it is not possible to install the probe in undisturbed soil such as a bore hole application. The soil will settle over time and the soil around the probe will once again reach an equilibrium. If possible, the soil should be put back into the bore hole the way it came out so that the sensor is surrounded with the same material that exists at that specific depth.

Figure 2.6 HydraProbe Installed in undisturbed soil.

Push the tines of the HydraProbe into the soil until the base plate is flush with the soil. The tines should be parallel with the surface of the ground. Do not rock the probe back and forth because this will disturb the soil and create a void space around the tines.

It is imperative that the bulk density of the soil in the probe's measurement volume remain unchanged from the surrounding soil. If the bulk density changes, the volumetric soil moisture measurement and the soil electrical conductivity will change.

2.4.5 Soil Sensor Orientation

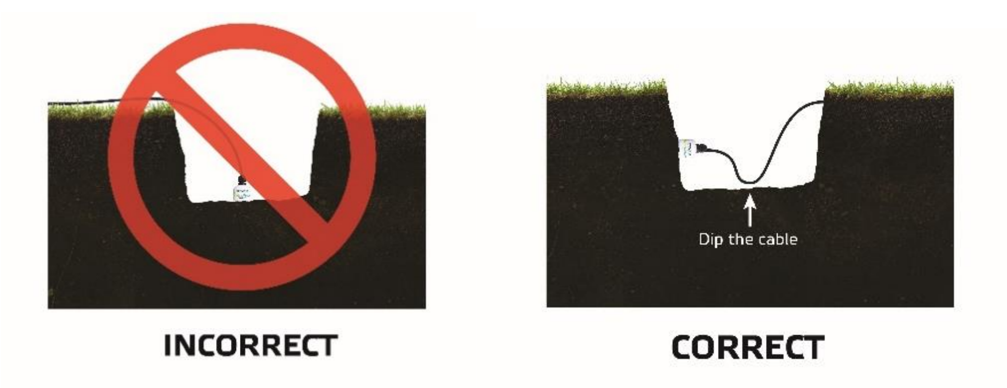

Figure 2.7 Horizontal placement sensor and dipping the cable is recommended

We recommend keeping the tine assembly horizontal with the ground particularly near the surface. A drain loop can be put in the cable to prevent water from running down the cable to the probe's sensing area.

2.5 *Wiring to a Logger Station*

Connect the red wire to a +12 volt DC power supply and connect the black wire to the ground for all HydraProbe models. The measurement duty cycle is 2 seconds.

Wiring and power for HydraProbes	
Power Requirements	**9 to 16 VDC (12VDC Ideal)**
Red Wire	+Volts Power Input
Black Wire	Ground
White Wire	Data Signal A inverting signal (-)
Green Wire	Data Signal B non-inverting signal (+)
Blue Wire	SDI-12
Power Consumption RS-485/Modbus	2.5 mA Idle 25 mA Active
Power Consumption SDI-12	1 mA Idle 25 mA Active

Table 2.2 Wiring connections and power considerations.

You may also want to run the HydraProbe cable through a metal conduit like the one shown in figure 2.3 to add extra protection to the cable.

Once the probes are wired to the logger, test the communication between the logger and all the probes. This can be achieved by current reading features in the logger or in SDI-12 transparent mode. See Appendix A for SDI-12 commands, Appendix B for RS-485 commands, and Appendix C for Modbus commands.

2.5.1 Sensor Setup

We recommend for most applications of the HydraProbe to use the default factory settings and the factory soil moisture calibration which accommodates most all soil types. The default soil moisture calibration is called GENERAL and most users will not need to change it. If you have unique soil that requires a one of the other factory calibrations or a site-specific calibration, see Appendix D.

2.6 *Backfilling the Hole*

2.6.1 Test Before you Backfill

When the probes are securely installed in the undisturbed soil, test the communication between the logger and the probes. You can do this by the current reading features in the logger or in SDI-12 transparent mode. See Appendix A for SDI-12 commands, Appendix B for RS-485 commands, and Appendix C for Modbus commands.

Backfilling Precautions. The horizons and soil become physically homogenized after soil is removed from the ground and piled up next to the hole. The bulk density decreases considerably because the soil structure has been disturbed. After the probes are installed into the wall of the pit, the pit needs to be backfilled with the soil that came out it. It is impossible to put the horizons back the way they have formed naturally, but the original bulk density can be approximated by compacting the soil. For every 24 cm (1 foot) of soil put back into the pit, the soil should be compacted. Compaction can be done by trampling the soil with feet and body weight. Mechanical compactors can also be used, though typically they are not required. Extra care must be taken not to disturb the probes that have exposed heads, cables and conduits when compacting the soil. If the probes were installed in a post hole, a piece of wood can be used to pack the soil.

If the soil is not trampled down while it is being backfilled, the compaction and bulk density of the backfill will be considerably less than the native undisturbed soil around it. After a few months, the backfilled soil will begin to compact on its own and return to a steady state bulk density. The HydraProbe will effectively be residing in two soil columns. The tines will be in the undisturbed soil column, and the head, cable and conduit will be in the backfill column that is undergoing movement. The compaction of the backfilled soil may dislodge the probe and thus affect the measurement volume of the probe. After the probes are installed, avoid foot traffic and vehicular traffic in the vicinity of the probes.

2.7 *Lightning*

Lightning strikes will cause damage or failure to the HydraProbe or any other electrical device, even though it is buried. We recommend surge protection or base station grounding in areas prone to lightning.

If lightning hits a logger station, the voltage surge propagating underground can cause serious damage to soil sensors. Underground voltage surges are called earth surge transients and the station needs to be protected both above and below ground.

Attach a dual lightning dissipator to the top of the lightning rod 3 to 6 meters above the ground surface for maximum protection from lightning. Using at least 1 cm thick copper cable, connect the dissipator to a series of buried copper rods 2 cm in diameter. The buried copper rods should be at least 2 meters long buried horizontally 1.5 to 2 meters deep. Figures 2.8 and 2.9 show grounding of the soil monitoring location and the logger station. More information can be found in the Soil Sensor Lightning Protection Guide located on the Stevens Water website.

Place a series of grounding rods 2 to 4 meters away from the soil probes 2 meters deep and clamp and connect them with a copper cable. Circle the soil sensors with the grounding rods in a way so that electrical surges propagating through the ground will go around the soil sensors.

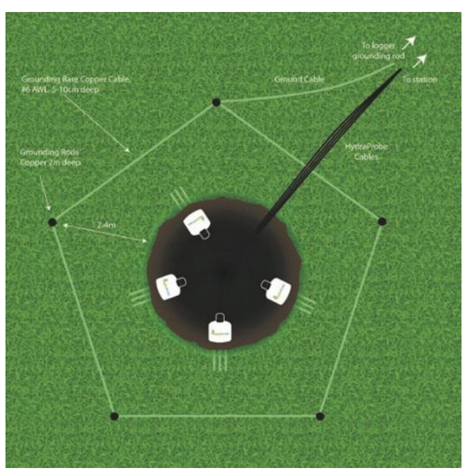

Figure 2.8 Place grounding rods around the perimeter of the soil monitoring area

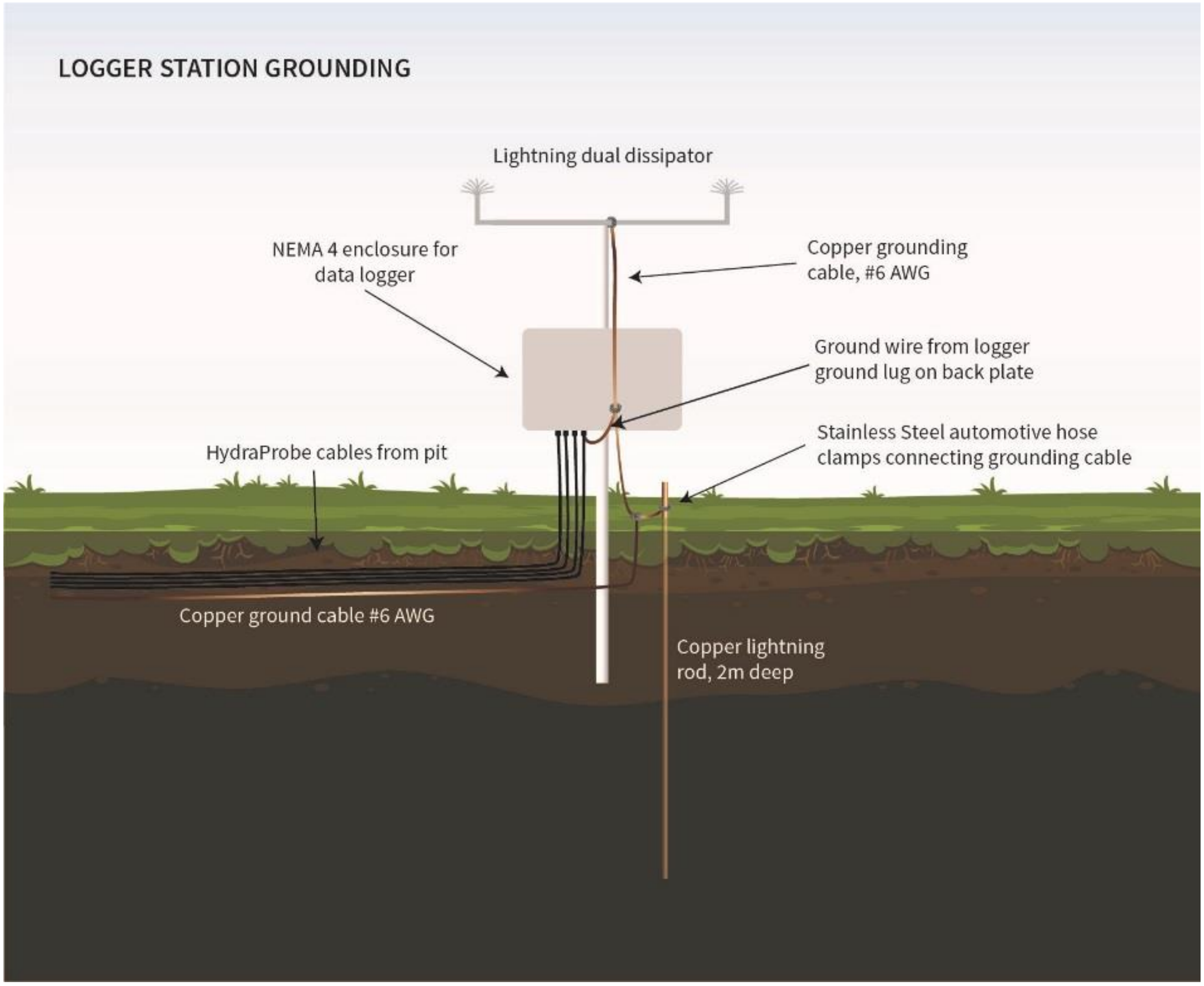

Figure 2.9 Ground the logger station with dual dissipators and ground rod

3 Troubleshooting and Soil Considerations

This section discusses troubleshooting and how the nature of soil can affect data. There are generally three main reasons why a probe may appear to be malfunctioning:

1) Improper logger setup or improper wiring
2) Soil hydrology may produce some unexpected results
3) Power failure

HydraProbes have a longevity in soil and a long warranty period; therefore, we recommend recording the serial numbers of the probes for support purposes before installation.

3.1 *Troubleshooting at the logger end and out of the ground*

This section summarizes the steps you should take if the HydraProbe is unresponsive or outputs suspect data. If the probes are in the ground, it is best to try to troubleshoot at the logger end before digging the probes up. Keep in mind that digging the probes out of the ground can be labor intensive and may disturb the other probes in the soil column. If a probe must be dug out of the ground, it can be tested in water to determine if it is functioning properly.

3.1.1 Check Wiring and Power

If you are unable to get a response from the HydraProbe, first physically check wire connections from the probe to the logger. Verify the cable has no cuts or abrasions. Use a handheld voltmeter to check the voltage on the battery and the SDI-12 bus. The voltmeter can also be connected in series with the ground wire to measure the current draw from the sensors. When idle, each HydraProbe draws 1 mA.

3.1.2 Communicate with the Sensor at the Logger End

If the logger has a current reading feature, run this feature from a device that interfaces with the logger. Try to reproduce what was observed in the logged data.

If the logger has an SDI-12 transparent mode, issue SDI-12 commands to the sensors on the bus. The “aI!” command can give the serial number. Use the “aM!” “aD0!” “aD1!” and “aD2!” commands to take a reading. Tables 3.1 and 3.2 are a summary of the commands. Isolating the suspect sensor and testing it by itself may also help.

Command Feature	**SDI-12 Command**
Change Address	aAb!
Get Probe’s Serial Number and ID	aI!
Take a Reading	aM! Follow by aD0!, aD1!,aD2!

Table 3.1 Common SDI-12 Commands

SDI-12 Measurements									
aM!	Value 1	Value 2	Value 3	Value 4	Value 5	Value 6	Value 7	Value 8	Value 9
Parameter	Soil Moisture	Bulk EC (Temp Corrected)	Temp	Temp	Bulk EC	Real Dielectric Permittivity	Imaginary Dielectric Permittivity	Pore Water EC	Dielectric Loss Tangent
Unit	Water Fraction by Volume	S/m	C	F	S/m	-	-	S/m	-

Table 3.2 Default M parameters for SDI-12 Probes.
For RS-485 or Modbus Probes, please see appendix B and C or quick start guides.

3.1.3 Check the Logger Configuration

If the connections are sound, check the logger's setup and configuration. The logger is often the power source for the probes. You may also want to cycle the power to the probe and the logger by disconnecting and reconnecting power. Refer to the manufacturer of the logger for tech support with the logger.

3.1.4 Remove the Suspect Probe from the Soil

If the problem cannot be resolved by checking the logger and the wiring, the probes must be dug out of the ground and cleaned off.

To verify that a HydraProbe is functioning properly, perform the following commands:
1. Place the HydraProbe in distilled water in a plastic container.
    - Make sure the entire probe is submerged.
2. In transparent mode type "**1M!**"
3. Followed by "**1D1!**" (for a probe address of 1 for this example).

The typical response of a HydraProbe that is functioning properly should be *1+16.1+0.01+78.826.*

In this example, the "1D1!" corresponds to parameters 4, 5, and 6, from table 3.2. The temperature is 16.1 degrees C, the bulk EC is 0.01 S/m and the real dielectric permittivity is 78.826. According to factory specifications, the dielectric constant should be from 75 to 85 and the EC should be less than 0.05 S/m in distilled water. If distilled water is not available, the user may use tap water for this procedure. Please note that tap water may contain trace levels of material that may affect the dielectric permittivity readings. Isopropyl alcohol with a dielectric constant of 18.6 at 20 degrees C can also be used. Please refer to the quick start guide or Appendix A for SDI-12 and Appendix B for RS-485.

3.2 *Soil Hydrology*

Sometimes the soil moisture data may look incorrect when in fact the HydraProbes are accurately measuring the soil moisture gradient. Soil hydrology is complex and can be modeled by Darcy's Law and Richard's Equation. These involved theories are beyond the scope of this manual.

Please note that the soil that resides between the tine assembly is where the measurements are taken. If there is a void space in the soil between the tines, this will affect the hydrology where the HydraProbe is taking measurements. If the void space is saturated with water, it will increase the soil moisture measurement. If the void space is not fully saturated, the soil will appear dryer. Figure 3.1 shows the measurement volume where the HydraProbe takes measurements and a void space between the tine assembly. These void spaces can occur from a poor installation such as rocking the probe side to side or not fully inserting the probe into the soil.

Figure 3.1 Measurement volume with a void space between the tine assembly.

Void spaces between the tine assembly can also occur from changing soil conditions. Factors such as shrink/swell clays, tree roots, or pebbles may introduce a void space. The following sections describe some of these and other factors.

3.2.1 Evapotranspiration

Water in the soil will be pulled downward by gravity. However, during dry periods or in arid regions, the net movement of water is up toward the surface. Water will move upward in the soil column by a phenomenon called Evapotranspiration (ET). ET is the direct evaporation out of the soil plus the amount of water being pulled out of the soil by plants. Factors such as wind, temperature, humidity, solar radiation, and soil type play a role in the rate of ET. If ET exceeds precipitation, there will likely be a net upward movement of water in the soil. With the net upward movement of soil water, ET forces dissolved salts out of solution and creates saline soil conditions.

3.2.2 Hydrology and Soil Texture

Sandy soils drain better than soils that are clay rich. In general, the smaller the soil particle size distribution, the slower it will drain. Sometimes silt may have the same particle size distribution as clay but clay will retain more water for longer periods of time than silt. This can be explained by the size and shape of the soil particles. Clay particles are planar whereas silt particles are spherical. Water gets stuck between the planar plate shaped clay particles and slows the flow of water.

3.2.3 Soil Bulk Density

In general, the greater the soil density the less water it will hold. The less water soil holds, the slower water will move through it in wet conditions. There will often be soil horizons that will be denser than others giving the soil different hydrological properties with depth. Occasionally, water will stop or slow down and rest on a dense, less permeable layer of soil. This phenomenon is called perched water. If two HydraProbes 20 cm apart have very different soil moisture readings, chances are that one of the probes is residing in perched water.

There is also a relationship between soil bulk density and the complex dielectric permittivity. The soil dry bulk density (ρ_b) can be described by equation [3.1].

$$\rho_b = m/V \quad [3.1]$$

Where m is the mass of the dry soil in grams and V is the volume in cubic centimeters. The bulk density is associated with the density of a soil ped or a soil core sample. The particle density (ρ_p) is the density of an individual soil particle such as a grain of sand can be approximated to be is 2.65 g/cm^3 for many types of soils in equation [3.2]. The two densities should not be confused with one another. Because the dielectric permittivity of dry soil is a function of both the bulk and particle densities (ρ_b, ρ_p), the soil density often creates the need for soil specific calibrations on some occasions. The relationship between porosity, bulk and particle density can be described by equation [3.2].

$$\varphi = 1 - \frac{\rho_b}{\rho_p} \quad [3.2]$$

3.2.4 Shrink/Swell Clays

Shrink/swell clays belong to the soil taxonomic order vertisol and are composed of smectite clays. These clays have a large ion exchange capacity and will shrink and swell seasonally with water content. The seasonal expansion and contraction homogenizes the top soil and the subsoil. As the clay shrinks during a drying period, the soil will crack open and form large crevasses or fissures. If a fissure forms in the measurement volume of the HydraProbe, the probe will signal average the air gap caused by the fissure into the reading and potentially generate biased results. If the fissure fills with water, the soil moisture measurement will be high, if the fissure is dry, the soil moisture measurement will be lower than expected. If the HydraProbe measurements are being affected by shrink/swell clays, it is recommended to relocate the probe to an adjacent location.

3.2.5 Rock and Pebbles

Often it will be obvious if a rock is encountered during an installation. Never use excessive force to insert the probe into the soil. Some soils will have a distribution of pebbles. If a pebble finds its way between the probe's tines, it will create an area in the measurement volume that will not contain water. The probe will signal average the pebble and thus lower the soil moisture measurement. If the pebble is an anomaly, relocating of the probe would provide more representative soil measurements. However, if it is revealed from the soil survey that there exists a random distribution of pebbles, a pebble between the tines may provide realistic measurements because of the way pebbles influence soil hydrology.

3.2.6 Bioturbation

Organisms such as plants and burrowing animals can homogenize soil and dislodge soil probes. A tree root can grow between the tines affecting the measurements and, in some cases, tree roots can bring a buried soil probe to the soil surface. Burrowing mammals and invertebrates may decide that the HydraProbe's tine assembly makes an excellent home. If the HydraProbe's tine assembly becomes home to some organism, the soil moisture measurements may be affected. After the animal vacates, the soil will equilibrate, and the soil measurements will return to representative values.

While the HydraProbe cable is direct burial grade and is resistant to animal bites, the cable leading to the probe may be a tasty treat for some animals. If communication between the logger and the probe fails, check the cable for damage. A metal conduit like the one shown in figure 2.3 is recommended.

3.2.7 Salt Affected Soil and the Loss Tangent

The HydraProbe is less affected by salts and temperature than TDR or other FDR soil sensors because of the delineation of the dielectric permittivity and operational frequency at 50 MHz. While the HydraProbe performs relatively well in salt affected soils, salts that are dissolved in the soil water will influence both dielectric permittivity and thus the measurements. The salt content will increase the imaginary dielectric permittivity and thus the soil electrical conductivity. See Chapter 5.5. The HydraProbe will not measure electrical conductivity or soil moisture beyond 1.5 S/m

In general, if the electrical conductivity reaches 1 S/m, the soil moisture measurements will be significantly affected. The imaginary dielectric constant will have an influence on the real dielectric constant because dissolve cations will inhibit the orientation polarization of water. When addressing the HydraProbe's performance in salt affected soil, it is useful to use the loss tangent equation [3.3].

$$Tan\ \delta = \frac{\varepsilon_i}{\varepsilon_r} \qquad [3.3]$$

The loss tangent (Tan δ) is the imaginary dielectric constant divided by the real dielectric constant. If Tan δ becomes greater than 1.5 than the HydraProbes calibration becomes unreliable. It is interesting to note that the HydraProbe will still provide accurate dielectric constant measurements up to 1.5 S/m. If the salt content reaches a point where it is affecting the calibrations, the user can use a custom calibration that will still provide realistic soil moisture measurements in the most salt affected soils. See Appendix C for custom calibrations.

3.2.8 Ped Wetting

A soil ped is a single unit of soil structure. Ped shapes include granular, platy, blocky, and prismatic. Ped sizes can range from 1mm granules to 10 cm prisms. The preferential pathway water travels through soil is between the peds. This is evident by clay film coatings that develops around a ped. The clay film precursors become dissolved in the pore water, as the pore water subsides, the clay film precursors fall out of solution and adhere to and surface of the peds creating the clay film. The clay film will often delay the infiltration of water into the ped thus as the wetting front move down into the soil, the regions between the peds will be the preferential water pathway. As the wetting front moves through the soil column, the soil moisture measurements may be temporarily biased by the peds. For example, if the soil probe's measurement volume is residing entirely in a single ped, the probe would not detect the wetting front until the water infiltrates the ped. Likewise, if the sensing volume is residing between several peds, the soil moisture measurements will reflect the movement of water between the peds. During installation, if a horizon has thick clay films around the peds, you may want to use daily averages of soil moisture reading to accommodate soil moisture variations in the peds.

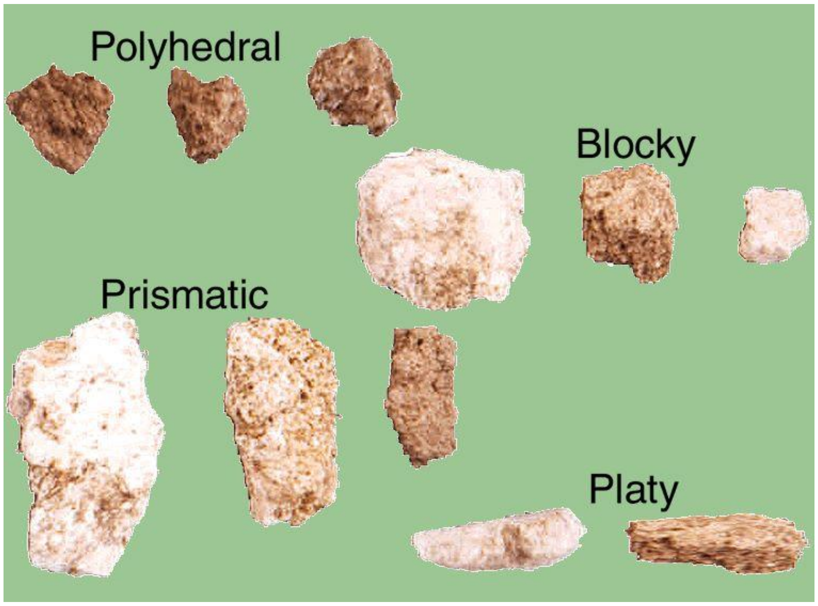

Figure 3.2 Soil Ped Types.

3.2.9 Frozen Soil

The HydraProbe can be used to determine if soil is frozen. Once ice reaches 0º Celsius, it will begin to thaw, and the real dielectric permittivity will increase from 2.5 to 5. The temperature alone may not indicate whether the soil is frozen. As the soil begins to thaw, the soil moisture and the real dielectric permittivity should return to values similar to what they were before the soil froze.

Appendix A– HydraProbe SDI-12 Communication (6 Firmware)

SDI-12 is a specialized communication protocol designed specifically for environmental sensors. It's an ideal choice for remote and low-power applications due to its minimal power consumption and reliable communication with minimal noise and interference.

Being a standardized protocol, SDI-12 allows for seamless integration of sensors and data loggers from different manufacturers into the same system, which simplifies setup and saves time and resources. However, if you require longer communication distances, higher data rates, or need to interact with a wider range of devices, Modbus may be a better choice. You can learn more about SDI-12 by visiting http://www.sdi-12.org.

Older versions of HydraProbe firmware may have different commands, contact Stevens Water for more information.

Technical Specifications:

Power	**Requirements**	9 to 16 VDC (12VDC Ideal)
	Consumption	1 mA Idle, 25 mA for 2s Active
Wiring	**Red**	+ Power Input
	Black	Ground
	Blue	SDI-12 Data Signal

How To Use:

Using SDI-12 involves setting up a master-slave communication system between devices. The master device sends requests to the slave devices to read or write data, and the slave devices respond with the requested data. The basic steps to use SDI-12 are below:

1. Set up the physical connection: Connect the SDI-12 device to your data logger or microcontroller using a compatible interface cable. The cable should have three wires: power (positive and negative) and data.

2. Set up the SDI-12 communication parameters: Configure your data logger or microcontroller to communicate with the SDI-12 device.

3. Assign SDI-12 addresses: Assign a unique SDI-12 address to each slave device on the network.

4. Send SDI-12 commands: The commands typically include a command code (e.g., "M" for measurement) and an address (e.g., "0" for the first device on the bus). The device will respond with the requested data. Many data loggers have a “transparent mode” to communicate directly with the sensor.

5. Interpret the data received from the SDI-12 device: The data may be in a specific format or units depending on the device type.

6. Test: Test the communication between the devices and make any necessary adjustments to the commands or settings.

Addressing
The first character of any command or response on SDI-12 is the sensor address. A lowercase ‘a’ is used to represent the address. Each SDI-12 sensor must have its own unique address. The default address is “0”.

SDI-12 Command	Response	Description
aAb!	b	Change Sensor Address a – Sensor Address b – New Sensor Address

Identification
A request for identification will return the sensor address, part number, firmware version, sensor version, calibration, and serial number.

SDI-12 Command	Response	Description
aI!	a12STEVENSWnnnnnv.vvvcSNxxxxxxxx	Send Identification a – Sensor address 12 – SDI-12 protocol version STEVENSW – Manufacturer nnnnn – Part number v.vvv – Firmware version c – Calibration xxxxxxxx – Serial number

Measurements

SDI-12 Command	Response	Description
aM!	atttn	Request Measurement a – Sensor address ttt – seconds (000 – 999) until the measurement is ready n – number of data fields (1-9) in the measurement
aD0!	a<F><I><G>	Send Measurement Readings F – Soil Moisture I – Bulk EC (Temp Corrected) G – Temperature (C)
aD1!	a<H><J><L>	Send Measurement Readings H – Temperature (F) J – Bulk EC L – Real Dielectric Permittivity
aD2!	a<M><K><O>	Send Measurement Readings M – Imaginary Dielectric Permittivity K – Pore Water EC O – Dielectric Loss Tangent
aM1!	atttn	Request Measurement

		ttt – seconds (000 – 999) until the measurement is ready n – number of data fields (1-9) in the measurement
aD0!	a<L><M><N>	Send Measurement Readings L – Real Dielectric Permittivity M – Imaginary Dielectric Permittivity N – Imaginary Dielectric Permittivity (Temperature Corrected)
aD1!	a<O><P>	Send Measurement Readings O – Dielectric Loss Tangent P – Diode Temperature

The following tables list the values and units:

Selector Order	Parameter	Unit
F	Soil Moisture	Water fraction by Volume (wfv)
G	Soil Temperature	Celsius (C)
H	Soil Temperature	Fahrenheit (F)
I	Bulk EC (Temperature Corrected)	Siemens/Meter (S/m)
J	Bulk EC	Siemens/Meter (S/m)
K	Pore Water EC	Siemens/Meter (S/m)
L	Real Dielectric Permittivity	-
M	Imaginary Dielectric Permittivity	-
N	Imaginary Dielectric Permittivity (Temperature corrected)	-
O	Dielectric Loss Tangent	-
P	Diode Temperature	Celsius (C)

SDI-12 Measurement Sets									
Command	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
aM! and aC!	F	I	G	H	J	L	M	K	O
aM1! and aC1!	L	M	N	O	P				

Pore Water Offset

SDI-12 Command	Response	Description
aXR_PWOS!	a<Current Offset>	Read Pore Water Offset
aXW_PWOS_<New Offset>!	a<New Offset>	Write Pore Water Offset
aXD_PWOS!	a+3.4	Reset Pore Water Offset to default 3.4

Appendix B- HydraProbe RS-485 Communication (6 Firmware)

RS-485 is a serial communication standard. It is commonly used in control systems to communicate between devices over long distances, up to 4,000 ft of cable. RS-485 is reliable and robust over longer distances but it does draw more power than comparable communication protocols such as SDI-12. RS-485 allows for multiple devices to be connected to a single bus. Each device on the bus has a unique address and can be addressed individually or as a group. Different RS-485 sensors may have specific requirements and commands unique to their functionality.

Older versions of HydraProbe firmware may have different commands, contact Stevens Water for more information.

Power	**Requirements**	9 to 16 VDC (12VDC Ideal)
	Consumption	2.5 mA Idle, 25 mA for 2s Active
Wiring	**Red**	+ Power Input
	Black	Ground
	White	Data inverting Signal Negative (-) A
	Green	Data non-inverting Signal Positive (+) B
Communication	**Baud Rate**	9600
	Data Bits	8
	Parity	None
	Stop Bits	1

How To Use:

Using RS-485 involves setting up a master-slave communication system between devices. The master device (logger) sends requests to the slave device (HydraProbe) to read or write data, and the slave devices respond with the requested data. The basic steps to use RS-485 are below:

1. Set up the physical connection: Connect the devices using the appropriate physical interface.

2. Set up the RS-485 communication parameters: Configure the baud rate, parity, data bits, and stop bits to match the settings of both the master and slave devices. All commands sent must end with a “Carriage Return” “Line Feed” pair.

3. Assign RS-485 addresses: Assign a unique address to each slave device on the network. Devices can be addressed as a group by using the broadcast address “///” or individually.

4. Follow the instructions for the logger you want to use or develop your own RS-485 application: There are different libraries and software tools available to simplify the development of RS-485 applications, depending on the programming language or platform used.

5. Test: Test the communication between the devices and make any necessary adjustments to the application or settings.

Addressing

The first three characters of any command or response on RS-485 is the sensor address. Lowercase ‘aaa’ is used to represent the address. Each RS-485 sensor must have its own unique address. The default address is “000”.

RS-485 Command	Response	Description	Access Level
aaaXR_AD	<Current Address>	Read Address	Read Only
aaaXW_AD_<New Address>	<New Address>	Write Address	Write Only

Identification

RS-485 Command	Response	Description	Access Level
aaaXR_SN	aaa<Serial Number>	Read Serial Number	Read Only
aaaXR_FV	aaa<Firmware Version>	Read Firmware Version	Read Only
aaaXR_MN	aaa<Model Number>	Read Model Number	Read Only

Measurement

RS-485 Command	Response	Description	Access Level
aaaTR	-	Request Measurement	Read Only
aaaT<0-1>	aaa<values>	Read Measurement Set 0 or 1	Read Only
aaaXR_T<0-1>	aaa<values>	Read Parameters in Measurement Set 0 or 1	Read Only
aaaXR_QM	aaa<X/0>	Read Quick Mode Selection X – Quick Mode Disabled 0 – Quick Mode Enabled	Read Only
aaaXW_QM_X	aaaX	Disable Quick Mode	Write Only
aaaXW_QM_0	aaa0	Enable Quick Mode	Write Only

The following tables list the values and units:

Selector Order	Parameter	Unit
F	Soil Moisture	Water fraction by Volume (wfv)
G	Soil Temperature	Celsius (C)
H	Soil Temperature	Fahrenheit (F)
I	Bulk EC (Temperature Corrected)	Siemens/Meter (S/m)
J	Bulk EC	Siemens/Meter (S/m)
K	Pore Water EC	Siemens/Meter (S/m)
L	Real Dielectric Permittivity	-

Selector Order	Parameter	Unit
M	Imaginary Dielectric Permittivity	-
N	Imaginary Dielectric Permittivity (Temperature corrected)	-
O	Dielectric Loss Tangent	-
P	Diode Temperature	Celsius (C)

RS485 Measurement Sets									
Command	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8	P9
T0, Transmit Set 0	F	I	G	H	J	L	M	K	O
T1, Transmit Set 1	L	M	N	O	P				

Pore Water Offset

RS-485 Command	Response	Description	Access Level
aaaXR_PWOS	aaa<Current Offset>	Read Pore Water Offset	Read Only
aaaXW_PWOS_<New Offset>	aaa<New Offset>	Write Pore Water Offset	Write Only
aaaXD_PWOS	aaa+3.4	Reset Pore Water Offset to default 3.4	Write Only

Appendix C- HydraProbe Modbus Communication (6 Firmware)

Modbus is a widely used serial communication protocol across a variety of industries, including environmental sensing. Being an open standard protocol, it can be used by any manufacturer as it is not proprietary. If you require longer communication distances, higher data rates, or need to interface with a wider range of devices, Modbus is the preferred choice.

The HydraProbe utilizes Modbus RTU over RS485 protocol. The acronym RTU stands for "remote terminal unit," which means the HydraProbe can be connected to a supervisory computer or a data logger. The physical connection is established using the RS485 electrical interface, which ensures secure and accurate data transfer. Protocol specifics can be found at https://modbus.org.

Technical Specifications:

Power	**Requirements**	9 to 16 VDC (12VDC Ideal)
	Consumption	2.5 mA idle / 25 mA active for 2s Active
Wiring	**Red**	+ Power Input
	Black	Ground
	White	Modbus A
	Green	Modbus B
Communication	**Baud Rate**	1200-115200 (9600 default)
	Data Bits	8
	Parity	None
	Stop Bits	1

How To Use:

Using Modbus involves setting up a master-slave communication system between devices. The master device (logger) sends requests to the slave device (HydraProbe) to read or write data, and the slave devices respond with the requested data. The basic steps to use Modbus are below:

1. Set up the physical connection: Connect the devices using the appropriate physical interface. For HydraProbe this will be RS485.

2. Set up the Modbus communication parameters: Configure the baud rate, parity, data bits, and stop bits to match the settings of both the master and slave devices.

3. Assign Modbus addresses: Assign a unique Modbus address to each slave device on the network.

4. Follow the instructions for the logger you want to use or develop your own Modbus application: There are different libraries and software tools available to simplify the development of Modbus applications, depending on the programming language or platform used. If you plan to use Python, reach out to Stevens for an example script.

5. Test: Test the communication between the devices and make any necessary adjustments to the application or settings.

Readings:

Addressing
Each Modbus sensor must have its own unique address. The default address is “1”.

Request Readings
To read data from the HydraProbe use function code 03, “read holding registers”. Data is stored as 32-bit floating point with big endian word order. Parameters are stored over 2 Modbus registers so you must read a minimum of two registers at a time to get a full 32-bit value.

Take a Reading and Return Value
Takes a reading then returns the value. Can take up to 2 seconds.

Modbus Register Address	Description
110	Soil Moisture (wfv)
112	Soil Temperature (C)
114	Soil Temperature (F)
116	Bulk EC (Temperature Corrected) (S/m)
118	Bulk EC (S/m)
120	Pore Water EC (S/m)
122	Real Dielectric Permittivity
124	Imaginary Dielectric Permittivity
126	Imaginary Dielectric Permittivity (Temperature Corrected)
128	Dielectric Loss Tangent
130	Diode Temperature (C)

Return Stored Reading
Returns data from last measurement reading. Requires a reading request first. To write data to the HydraProbe use function code 16, “write holding registers”.

Modbus Register Address	Description
1002	Reading Request
10	Soil Moisture (wfv)
12	Soil Temperature (C)
14	Soil Temperature (F)
16	Bulk EC (Temperature Corrected) (S/m)
18	Bulk EC (S/m)
20	Pore Water EC (S/m)

Modbus Register Address	Description
22	Real Dielectric Permittivity
24	Imaginary Dielectric Permittivity
26	Imaginary Dielectric Permittivity (Temperature Corrected)
28	Dielectric Loss Tangent
30	Diode Temperature (C)

Return Last Reading and Take New Reading

Returns reading from last measurement then takes a new reading. The sensor will be unresponsive for up to 1 second while taking the measurement.

Modbus Register Address	Description
210	Soil Moisture (wfv)
212	Soil Temperature (C)
214	Soil Temperature (F)
216	Bulk EC (Temperature Corrected) (S/m)
218	Bulk EC (S/m)
220	Pore Water EC (S/m)
222	Real Dielectric Permittivity
224	Imaginary Dielectric Permittivity
226	Imaginary Dielectric Permittivity (Temperature Corrected)
228	Dielectric Loss Tangent
230	Diode Temperature (C)

Configuration:

Information

To read data from the HydraProbe use function code 03, “read holding registers.

Description	Modbus Register Address	Number of Registers	Type	Writeable
Serial number	1020	8	Ascii	N
Firmware version	1070	3	Ascii	N
Model number	1016	2	Ascii	N

Pore Water Offset

To read data from the HydraProbe use function code 03, “read holding registers.
To write data to the HydraProbe use function code 16, “write holding registers”.

Description	Modbus Register Address	Number of Registers	Type	Writeable
Read/Write Pore Water Offset	1112	2	32-bit float big endian	Y
Reset Pore Water Offset to default 3.4	1115	1	n/a	Y

Baud Rate

The default baud rate is 9600. To change the rate, write the corresponding value of the desired baud rate from the table below.

To read data from the HydraProbe use function code 03, “read holding registers.
To write data to the HydraProbe use function code 16, “write holding registers”.

Description	Modbus Register Address	Number of Registers	Type	Writeable
Read/Write Pore Water Offset	1001	1	byte	Y

Baud Rate	Value to read/write
1200	0
2400	1
4800	2
9600	3
14400	4
19200	5
28800	6
31250	7
38400	8
56000	9
57600	10
76800	11
115200	12

Appendix D– Custom Calibration Programming

The following extended commands will change the coefficients in one of two general formulas that translate the real dielectric permittivity to soil moisture. In many cases, the HydraProbe will not need to be recalibrated in most mineral soils. The default General calibration has been heavily reviewed and will provide reasonable accuracy for most applications.

If a custom calibration is required, we recommend developing the new calibration in spreadsheets using multiple replicates before reprograming the sensor. Validation of the factory calibration can be performed with a Tempe Cell or gravimetric analyses. Development of a custom calibration needs to balance the need for more accuracy and the labor it takes to develop, and curve fit a new calibration.

The HydraProbe has a total of three factory calibrations built into the firmware for various soil conditions. While these three calibrations will accommodate most soils, sometimes you will need to create your own calibration and have the HydraProbe output the results using the custom calibration.

The default soil moisture calibration is called GENERAL or GEN. The GENERAL soil calibration has been heavily tested, widely used in many soil types, and is suitable for most agricultural and mineral soils consisting of sand, silt, and clay. We recommend keeping the HydraProbe set to the GENERAL soil calibration. Other factory calibrations include O (organic soil), and R (rock wool). A custom calibration can be entered using either CUS 1 or KUS 2 modes. In CUS1 Mode, you can enter four coefficients for a 3rd order polynomial (equation [D1]) and in KUS 2 Mode, you may select two coefficients for a semi-linear square root formula (equation [D2]). The calibrations curves are polynomials that calculate the soil moisture from the real dielectric permittivity. Soil moisture calibrations will typically take one of two different general formulas. There are two general formulas that will mathematically have the appearance of equation [D1] or [D2]

$$\theta = A + B\varepsilon_r + C\varepsilon_r^2 + D\varepsilon_r^3 \qquad [D1]$$

$$\theta = E\sqrt{\varepsilon_r} + F \qquad [D2]$$

where θ is moisture, ε_r is the real dielectric permittivity, and A, B, C, and D are coefficients. This procedure will allow the user to select their A, B, C, and D values for equation [D1]. The coefficients E, and F are the user defined variables for KUS 2 in equation [D2].

A custom calibration or a statistical data validation for an existing soil moisture calibration is labor intensive. You will need to experimentally solve equation [D1] or [D2] from data obtained from the soil. Gravimetric soil moisture values will need to be obtained for a range of soil moisture conditions. The volumetric soil moisture value will need to be calculated from the gravimetric soil moisture values. Gravimetric soil moistures need to be converted to volumetric values with either the dry bulk density of the soil or the know the volume of the soil sample. The user will then need to mathematically curve-fit one of the two polynomials using the real dielectric permittivity and the volumetric soil moisture values for the range. The relationship between volumetric soil moisture and gravimetric soil moisture is described by equation [D3].

$$\theta_v = \theta_g \frac{\rho_b}{\rho_w} \qquad [D3]$$

The coefficients for equations [D1] and [D2] can be programmed into the firmware of the HydraProbe.

Development of a new calibration involves collecting soil samples and drying them down in a gravimetric analysis. Take great care to obtain data points that are representative of the field conditions. We recommend to first post process the new calibration and compare it to the General factory calibration for a period before programming it onto the sensor. We also recommend logging the real dielectric permittivity so that new calibrations can be applied to the data set.

Calibration	Application	Formula
G	Most all soils (probe default)	D2
O	Highly organic soils, peat, fine compost	D1, C = 0 and D = 0
R	Rock wool	D1, C = 0 and D = 0
C	Custom 1	D1
K	Kustom 2	D2

Table D1. Factory calibration modes.

Calibration	Formula	A	B	C	D	E	F
G	C2	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.109	-0.179
O	C1	-0.02134	0.013148	0	0	NA	NA
R	C1	-0.02134	0.013148	0	0	NA	NA
C (CUS1)	C1	0	0.0224	-0.00047	0.00000514	NA	NA
K (KUS2)	C2	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.109	-0.179

Table D2. Coefficients for factory calibrations.

Note that the General (G) calibration was published in the Vadose Zone Journal (Seyfried 2005),
The default coefficients for Custom 1 are a general soil moisture calibration published in the Soil Science Society of America Journal (Logsdon 2010) and were curve fit for a potassium rich smectite. The O and R calibration coefficients are based on gravimetric analysis of common samples.

Custom Calibration Procedure for the SDI-12 HydraProbe

Note: We recommend to first post process a new calibration for a period of time before programming the coefficients into sensors. We also recommend logging the real dielectric permittivity so that a data set can be recalibrated if needed.

SDI-12 Command	Response	Description
aXR_SOIL!	a<G/O/R/C/K>	Get Current soil type G – General O – Organic R – Rockwool C – Custom 1 K – Custom 2
aXW_SOIL_<New Soil Type>!	a<G/O/R/C/K>	Write New Soil Type G – General O –Organic R – Rock Wool C – Custom 1 K – Custom 2
aXR_COEFA!	a<A>	Read coefficient A
aXR_COEFB!	a<B>	Read coefficient B
aXR_COEFC!	a<C>	Read coefficient C
aXR_COEFD!	a<D>	Read coefficient D
aXR_COEFE!	a<E>	Read coefficient E
aXR_COEFF!	a<F>	Read coefficient F
aXR_COEF!	a<A><B><C><D><E><F>	Read all coefficients
aXW_COEFA_<A>!	a<A>	Write coefficient A
aXW_COEFB_<B>!	a<B>	Write coefficient B
aXW_COEFC_<C>!	a<C>	Write coefficient C
aXW_COEFD_<D>!	a<D>	Write coefficient D
aXW_COEFE_<E>!	a<E>	Write coefficient E
aXW_COEFF_<F>!	a<F>	Write coefficient F
aXD_COEF!	a<A><B><C><D><E><F>	Reset all coefficient to default

Table D3. SDI-12 commands for setting calibration and custom calibration.

Example 1. SDI-12 Procedure for custom calibration

To program a probe with an address of 0 using the CUSTOM 1 formula, you would enter this command. The probe responses are shown in **bold.**

0XW_SOIL_C!
0C

The CUSTOM 1 formula uses four coefficients, so we will need to assign the values to them. To assign a value of -10.0 to the first coefficient, a value of 5.0 to the second, 0.3 to the third and 0.0005 to the fourth we would enter these commands. The probe responses are shown in **bold.**

0XW_COEFA_-10.0!
0-10.00000000
0XW_COEFB_5.0!
0+05.00000000
0XW_COEFC_0.3!
0+00.30000001
0XW_COEFD_0.0005!
0+00.00050000

To verify that your settings have been programmed into the probe, enter the following query commands. The probe should respond as shown in **bold.**:

0XR_SOIL!
0C
0XR_COEF!
0-10.00000000+05.00000000+0.30000001+0.00050000+00.10900000-00.17900000

The values that the probe returns may be slightly different than the values you entered. This is an artifact of the conversion from decimal to binary and then back again. The difference, for our purposes, is negligible. The last two numbers returned are coefficients E and F which are not used in the CUSTOM1 formula.

Custom Calibration Procedure for the RS-485 HydraProbe

Note: We recommend to first post process a new calibration for a period of time before programming the coefficients into sensors. We also recommend logging the real dielectric permittivity so that a data set can be recalibrated if needed.

RS-485 Command	Response	Description	Access Level
aaaXR_SOIL	aaa<G/O/R/C/K>	Get current calibration soil type G – General O – Organic R – Rockwool C – Custom 1 K – Custom 2	Read Only
aaaXW_SOIL_<New Soil Type>	aaa<G/O/R/C/K>	Write calibration soil type G – General O – Organic R – Rockwool C – Custom 1 K – Custom 2	Write Only
aaaXR_COEFA	aaa<A>	Read coefficient A	Read Only
aaaXR_COEFB	aaa<B>	Read coefficient B	Read Only
aaaXR_COEFC	aaa<C>	Read coefficient C	Read Only
aaaXR_COEFD	aaa<D>	Read coefficient D	Read Only
aaaXR_COEFE	aaa<E>	Read coefficient E	Read Only
aaaXR_COEFF	aaa<F>	Read coefficient F	Read Only
aaaXR_COEF	aaa<A><B><C><D><E><F>	Read all coefficients	Read Only
aaaXW_COEFA_<A>	aaa<A>	Write coefficient A	Write Only
aaaXW_COEFB_<B>	aaa<B>	Write coefficient B	Write Only
aaaXW_COEFC_<C>	aaa<C>	Write coefficient C	Write Only
aaaXW_COEFD_<D>	aaa<D>	Write coefficient D	Write Only
aaaXW_COEFE_<E>	aaa<E>	Write coefficient E	Write Only
aaaXW_COEFF_<F>	aaa<F>	Write coefficient F	Write Only
aaaXD_COEF	aaa<A><B><C><D><E><F>	Reset all coefficient to default	Write Only

Example 2. RS-485 Procedure for custom calibration

To program a probe with an address of 000 to use the KUSTOM 2 formula, you would enter this command:

000XW_SOIL_K<CR><LF>

The KUSTOM 2 formula uses two coefficients, E and F, so we will need to assign values to them. To assign a value of 0.3 the first coefficient and a value of -0.6 to the second, we would enter these two commands:

000XW_COEF_E_0.3<CR><LF>
000XW_COEF_F_-0.6<CR><LF>

To verify that your settings have been programmed into the probe, enter the following query commands. The probe should respond as shown in **bold**:

000XR_COEF<CR><LF>
000+00.00000000+00.02240000-00.00047000+00.00000514+00.30000001-00.60000002

The values that the probe returns may be slightly different than the values you entered. This is an artifact of the conversion from decimal to binary and then back again. The difference, for our purposes, is negligible. The first four numbers returned are coefficients A-D which are not used in the KUSTOM2 formula.

A Note About Scientific Notation

The probe can accept values for coefficients in a form of scientific notation. The decimal number is followed by the letter "E" and then the power of ten that is to be applied. For example:

-0.0007345 can also be entered as -7.345E-4 and
12345.678 can also be entered as 1.2345678E+4

Custom Calibration Procedure for the Modbus HydraProbe

Note: We recommend to first post process a new calibration for a period of time before programming the coefficients into sensors. We also recommend logging the real dielectric permittivity so that a data set can be recalibrated if needed.

To read data from the HydraProbe use function code 03, "read holding registers.
To write data to the HydraProbe use function code 16, "write holding registers".

Description	Modbus Register Address	Number of Registers	Type	Writeable
Calibration soil type G – General O – Organic R – Rockwool C – Custom 1 K – Custom 2	1009	2	Ascii	Y
Coefficient A	1100	2	32bit float big endian	Y
Coefficient B	1102	2	32bit float big endian	Y
Coefficient C	1104	2	32bit float big endian	Y
Coefficient D	1106	2	32bit float big endian	Y
Coefficient E	1108	2	32bit float big endian	Y
Coefficient F	1110	2	32bit float big endian	Y
Reset all coefficients to default	1114	1	n/a	Y

Example 3. Modbus procedure for custom calibration

To program a probe with an address of 1 to use the KUSTOM 2 formula, we would write "K" to register 1009 using function code 16.

The KUSTOM 2 formula uses two coefficients, E and F, so we will need to assign values to them. To assign a value of 0.3 the first coefficient and a value of -0.6 to the second, we would send 0.3 to register 1108 and -0.6 to register 1114 using function code 16.

To verify that your settings have been programmed into the probe, read registers 1108 and 1114 using function code 03.

The values that the probe returns may be slightly different than the values you entered. This is an artifact of the conversion from decimal to binary and then back again. The difference, for our purposes, is negligible. The first four numbers returned are coefficients A-D which are not used in the KUSTOM2 formula.

A Note About Scientific Notation

The probe can accept values for coefficients in a form of scientific notation. The decimal number is followed by the letter "E" and then the power of ten that is to be applied. For example:

-0.0007345 can also be entered as -7.345E-4 and
12345.678 can also be entered as 1.2345678E+4

Appendix E - Useful links

Stevens Water Monitoring Systems, Inc.
www.stevenswater.com

The Soil Science Society of America
http://www.soils.org/

The US Department of Agriculture NRCS Soil Climate Analyses Network (SCAN)
http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/scan/

The US Department of Agriculture NRCS Snotel Network
http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/snow/

The US Bureau of Reclamation Agricultural Weather Network (AgriMet)
http://www.usbr.gov/pn/agrimet/

Free Nationwide Soil Survey Information!
https://websoilsurvey.sc.egov.usda.gov/App/HomePage.htm