Center for Irrigation Technology

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Pump Efficiency Program can help farmers and municipalities during dry season

Costs of pumping water can be reduced by improving efficiency

Dry spring weather and uncertainty over surface water deliveries mean that many farmers, ranchers and municipal water agencies may be relying more on pumping groundwater to meet demand this summer. Many of these pumps may have been sitting idle for several years and could quickly burden pump users with high energy bills because these pumps are not operating at their most efficient.

The Agricultural Pumping Efficiency Program (APEP) offers funds to help improve energy efficiency in well and booster pumps for electric and natural gas customers of Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E). Farmers, ranchers, golf courses and other large-scale turf irrigators, and municipal pumpers could be eligible (additional criteria may apply – check with the program). APEP offers subsidies for pump efficiency tests performed by APEP-approved pump test companies and incentives for repairs and retrofits of working pumps to improve efficiency. The program will pay 100 percent of the cost for a pump test up to $150, and up to 50 percent of the cost of the retrofit/repair of a water pump.

"Through APEP, many customers have received significant incentives to increase their pump efficiency and at the same time have received the benefit of significantly reducing the cost of their energy inputs," comments Program Manager Pete Canessa. "For example, through improvements to their pumps, California Water Services Company has saved enough electricity to power 76 homes for a year, remove 39 cars from the road, and avoid 281.87 tons of carbon dioxide emissions, and received more than $29,000 in incentives," says Canessa. "We really encourage operators to have their pumps tested for efficiency. This will give them a benchmark of performance as well as providing an estimate of potential savings from a retrofit," he added.

The program also conducts educational seminars throughout PG&E's service area on pumping plant specifications and maintenance, crop water requirements, and water measurement. During these seminars utility customers learn how to purchase and maintain an efficient pumping system. The importance of knowing how much water is needed as well as how much has been pumped is also demonstrated. Two mobile education centers, featuring real-time displays of pump performance and information to measure water flow, crop water requirements and irrigation scheduling are part of the program.

Applications to participate in the program and additional details, including a schedule of educational seminars, are available on the web site at www.pumpefficiency.org, or by calling (800) 845-6038. Program staff are also available to help in locating pump efficiency testers, completing a pump repair/retrofit incentive application form, or to answer general questions on pumping system design and use.

The APEP is administered by the Center for Irrigation Technology (CIT) at California State University, Fresno on behalf of PG&E. Funding is provided through PG&E by the Public Goods Charge under the auspices of the California Public Utilities Commission.

CIT is also working as a partner with The International Center for Water Technology (ICWT). These organizations provide education and technical support to agricultural, urban and environmental water users. For more information about ICWT, visit www.ICWT.net.

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