

Proposal Paper

Independent Technical Panel on Demand Management Measures Final Report on California Landscape Water Use *10-28-15 Draft*

Section #: 7 *(From the current draft outline)*

Section Title: Complementary Policies and Regulations *(From the current draft outline)*

Recommendation #7: Upgrades to the California Irrigation Management Information System (CIMIS)

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Background:

The California Irrigation Management Information System (CIMIS) is a program unit in the Water Use and Efficiency Branch, Division of Statewide Integrated Water Management (DSIWM), California Department of Water Resources (DWR) that manages a network of over 150 automated weather stations in California. Archived data is also available for additional 92 inactive stations that have been disconnected from the network for various reasons. CIMIS was developed in 1982 by DWR and the University of California, Davis (UC Davis). It was designed initially for agriculture to assist irrigators in managing their water resources more efficiently but has since grown to include Landscaping, water providers and even fire fighters. Efficient use of water resources benefits Californians by saving water, energy, and money.

Recommended Action:

Although the program has shown a steady growth over the years to accommodate the needs of over 50,000 primary registered users and thousands more secondary and non-registered users, the current system still has spatial data gaps due to lack of CIMIS stations in certain regions of the State. While satellite information is being used in conjunction with active CIMIS stations and spatial data is available down to a 2 Kilometer area, the accuracy of the spatial CIMIS data depends on the density of ground stations and accuracy of station data. Adding more stations with quality data can significantly improve CIMIS's usefulness as a water conservation tool. Finding an appropriate site for new CIMIS stations is one of the limiting factors in the expansion of the CIMIS network. An ideal CIMIS site would require a well-watered cool-season grass with adequate fetch of about 600-ft in all directions. Providing an incentive in the form of a tax break or exemptions from certain ordinances can motivate landowners to provide the required field.

Despite significant increases in user base and CIMIS data uses, the operational budget for the program has remained about the same for more than three decades. Currently, CIMIS has less than five full-time employees statewide that deal with installation and maintenance of the stations, data quality analyses

and monitoring, research and development, and user assistance. This makes it very difficult for the program to provide quality services to its users and to respond to station problems in a timely manner.

The CIMIS user interface can also be improved by upgrading the system using current technologies. CIMIS provides an invaluable weather information for landscape water budgeting and irrigation scheduling as prescribed by the Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELO). A simpler method should be determined and implemented to create and link CIMIS information to irrigation professionals as well as the general public to provide guidelines for crop and landscape water scheduling among other uses. This should include an appropriate number of reporting stations, an upgrade in technology and adequate funding for a reliable program.

With the importance of reducing water waste in California, and recognizing the large amount used for irrigation of crops and landscapes, tools such as the CIMIS network are important to water managers in meeting State mandated water budgets for agriculture and landscapes meeting state guidelines and MWELO requirements.

Proposal:

The Water Use and Efficiency Branch of DWR within ~~working with~~ DSWIM and other stakeholders to be identified shall work in conjunction with the UC Davis (Center for Horticulture) and UC ANR to create a user friendly, public domain process to identify, collect and distribute weather information (such as ETo data, precipitation, and soil temperature), soil type maps, the Water Use Classification of Landscape Species (WUCOLS IV) list, etc. and create a user friendly and simple weekly landscape irrigation schedule guide for homeowners and professionals. The guide should then be linked to ~~the~~ SaveOurWater.org and to media outlets for inclusion on weather pages, radio weather reports, television weather segments and other outlets. To accomplish this, the CIMIS network shall be updated to current technologies and more reporting stations installed. The State Legislature will fund these improvements within the next 3 years as part of the overall importance of potable water use reduction for landscapes in California.