

Comments on the California 20 X 2020 Water Conservation Plan draft

At IRROMETER Company we support the state's efforts to improve water conservation by 20% in the next ten years. We are a California based company and since 1951 we have worked with landscape designers and installers, commercial growers, research scientist, and environmentalist to optimize irrigation and maximize conservation. We offer products that measure, monitor, and manage soil moisture. Some of these products work with existing landscape irrigation controllers to improve efficiency. Our philosophy is to manage irrigation based on plant demand which reduces excess water use and improves plant health.

In the section of the draft titled "Potential Conservation Savings from New Actions" (pg. 20), the document recognizes weather based irrigation controllers as one way to improve outdoor water conservation. While these types of devices can improve irrigation efficiency they are certainly not the only technology that will reduce landscape water waste. Weather based controllers are only one of the two types of technologies recognized as "SMART" by the Irrigation Association. The IA definition is as follows: "*SMART controllers estimate or measure depletion of available soil moisture in order to operate an irrigation system, replenishing water as needed while minimizing excess water use*".

Weather based systems estimate soil moisture depletion by a variety of climatic or historical methods and then adjusts the irrigation schedule in an effort to replenish needed soil moisture. Soil moisture based technologies (ours included) actually measure the soil moisture status and work in conjunction with an existing controller (conventional or weather based) to prevent irrigation when the soil moisture level is adequate. In effect our technology makes conventional time based and even weather based controllers smarter! Independent research reports and case studies validate savings from 20% to 70% over conventional or weather based irrigation systems.

While the soil moisture sensor component of our system has proven its durability in the agricultural market over 25 years, the electronic control modules are state of the art electronics. Our devices are simple to install and adjust for local soil and plant types. Another benefit is that the system requires no seasonal adjustment which is often an overlooked point of excess water application.

To exclude this effective technology from California's conservation strategy would be a terrible oversight. Soil moisture based irrigation management provides an easy to use, low cost method of improving irrigation efficiency. In this difficult economic environment, with spiraling water rates it is essential that we provide consumers with options that make sense.

Finally we should not forget that these devices will work with most of the millions of existing irrigation controllers currently in use today. This will have an immediate impact on water conservation, while new system installation must wait until new construction ramps back up to reasonable levels. Retrofitting existing controllers will give the state a measurable and long lasting impact on outdoor water use.

We appreciate your consideration on these matters and offer our fifty-eight years of experience in optimizing irrigation efficiency and maximizing water conservation to you. Let us know if we can help in any way.

Regards,

Brian Lennon
IRROMETER Co.
951 689 1701
brianl@irrometer.com