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Aug. 1, 2013

WESTERN WATER AGENCIES TEAM WITH BUREAU OF RECLAMATION ON GRANT PROGRAM SEEKING WATER-SAVING DEVICES OF TOMORROW

Next round of Innovative Conservation Program grants focuses on landscape irrigation as well as commercial, industrial sectors

The latest round of an expanded competitive grant program aimed at discovering the next generation of water-saving devices and technologies was launched today by three of the West’s largest municipal water agencies in partnership with the Bureau of Reclamation.

For the first time, the Central Arizona Project and Southern Nevada Water Authority are participating with the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and Reclamation in the Innovative Conservation Program, which looks to advance water-saving efforts by finding new and innovative methods for using supplies more efficiently.

This year’s $450,000 ICP cycle focuses on water savings devices, technologies and strategy proposals for landscape irrigation and the commercial, institutional and industrial sectors. Awards of up to $50,000 per selected project are available. Proposals that address other aspects of water-use efficiency also will be considered. All proposals are due Oct. 15.

"This program fosters fresh and innovative approaches and inspires creative ideas and strategies to reduce water use," said Metropolitan General Manager Jeffrey Kightlinger. "More than half the water used in Southern California is imported to our region, and with dry conditions and regulatory restrictions reducing those supplies, it is important that we continue to make water conservation a way of life."

Central Arizona Project General Manager David Modeer noted the backdrop for the next cycle of grants is occurring while the Colorado River is in the midst of a 12-year drought, reducing storage levels in both Lake Powell and Lake Mead to 47 percent of their capacity. In addition, the Colorado River Basin Water Supply & Demand Study released by Reclamation last December foresees a possible long-term resource imbalance that could seriously affect both the region’s economy and the more than 30 million people who rely upon the Colorado River.
"The Innovative Conservation research grant program represents an important step to cooperatively work together to make the Colorado River system resilient in the face of drought and increasing water demands,” Modeer said.

“We are proud to collaborate and expand the scope of this successful program so we can identify new, promising water efficiency technologies and programs. CAP is committed to developing water conservation and new water supplies as vital components of our future water supply,” he added.

Pat Mulroy, SNWA general manager, said her agency was grateful for an opportunity to participate in this important cutting-edge program.

“We are facing difficult times on the Colorado River, and urban users have a responsibility to do all we can to optimize our use of this resource. By spurring technological advancement and essentially serving as an ‘incubator’ for water-saving innovations, this program will accelerate the development and adoption of conservation-oriented devices,” Mulroy said.

Since Metropolitan and Reclamation unveiled the ICP in 2001, the program has awarded 44 grants totaling $1.4 million during the first four two-year funding cycles. Overall, the ICP has yielded 212 proposals totaling $25 million in funding requests from public agencies, community-based organizations, private companies, entrepreneurs, research institutes and equipment manufacturers.

Among the inventive approaches funded in previous cycles were the development of a pressurized water broom that replaces the need to use a hose to clean patios, driveways and other large surface areas, saving up to 250,000 gallons of water over its lifetime, and an X-ray film-processing unit that recycles more than 90 percent of the 1 million gallons a typical machine uses in a year in a hospital or medical center.

The last ICP round helped develop a mobile application for smart phones and tablets on water-saving plants that enables consumers to make informed decisions on climate-appropriate plants for home landscapes.

“Many of the innovative projects that are funded today will be the new water conservation technologies of tomorrow,” said Bill Steele, Reclamation’s Southern California Area Office manager. “Reclamation is excited about expanding the program to include the CAP and the SNWA, which will broaden the range and potential for future water conservation projects throughout the lower Basin states of the Colorado River and the entire arid West.”

Proposals will be evaluated through a competitive review process based on project innovations; a water/energy saving and research plan; market impact potential; cost effectiveness; ICP focus and project preparedness.
A non-mandatory pre-proposal ICP workshop will be held Aug. 21, from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m., at Metropolitan’s headquarters building at 700 North Alameda St., adjacent to historic Union Station in downtown Los Angeles.

More information on the Innovative Conservation Program, including proposal submission instructions and a list of past projects is available at www.bewaterwise.com.