

# *Incentive rebates available for agricultural pump testing*

**By Kathy Coatney**  
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The Agricultural Pumping Efficiency Program, an incentive rebate program that is funded through the California Public Utilities Commission, has been extended to March 31, and it will provide incentive rebates for pump testing and repair/retrofit of agricultural pumps.

Any user who is billed under the agricultural rate schedule and pays the Public Goods Charge is eligible to apply for a pump test. This would usually be customers for Pacific Gas and Electric Co., Southern California Edison Co., or San Diego Gas and Electric Co., according to the Center for Irrigation Technology at California State University, Fresno, which developed and implemented the program.

“The pump efficiency program is geared strictly to water pumps,” Pete Canessa, program manager, said.

To have a pump tested, all a grower has to do is contact one of the participating pump companies. A list is available online at [www.pumpefficiency.org](http://www.pumpefficiency.org) or by calling (800) 845-6038.

The approval process is straightforward and generally very automatic, Canessa said. “As long as they’re in the service territory, and it’s an ag rate schedule, there’s no reason not to approve somebody.”

After the test is completed, the grower will receive the results of the pump test that will include a calculation of kilowatt hours needed to pump an acre foot of water, overall pumping-plant efficiency, motor loading, power input to the pumping plant, and the



estimated energy and money saving from a pump retrofit/repair. The Web site explains the test results, or growers can call any regional office toll free at: Northern California, (866) 333-8938; San Joaquin Valley, (800) 845-6038; Central Coast, (866) 473-0847; and Southern California, (866) 333-8939.

Durham Pump, located in Durham, is one of many companies doing the pump tests. Tom Martin, president of Durham Pump, said the company is doing several tests currently. “A lot of the irrigation districts are calling now because this is when they’re shut down.”

Steve Greenwood, pump manager for the company, said, “Usually, for the farmer, a good time to pull his pump for a test or pull his pump if it’s indicated for repairs, would be after harvest when he’s not using it for awhile.”

It is easy to ignore an inefficient pump since it’s still working, whereas when a grower tries to start his tractor and the battery is dead, he has no choice but to do something about that, Martin said.

An older pump should be looked at on a regular basis, Martin advised. “As a pump runs, there’s wear involved and also things can change in the water well, too. Water tables can drop, there can be plugging in a well. These kinds

of things can result in a loss of efficiency,” he said.

If a retrofit/repair is indicated, the next step is to fill out an application which is available online or by contacting one of the regional offices.

Grower Eric Oberti of Madera raises about 1,200 acres of olives and grapes. Oberti had three of his pumps tested through the rebate program.

“We were looking at 44 percent pumping efficiency, and we brought it up to about 64 to 68 percent,” Oberti said, and added, the bowls had to be changed and the lining of the casing fixed.

The application wasn’t a problem for Oberti. “It wasn’t a headache at all. The process, I thought, was straightforward and easy,” he said.

Oberti received a rebate for the testing and part of his pump repairs. “Out of three wells, I’m probably going to be receiving about 40 percent of the cost of all repair work,” he said, and added that he was pleased with the reduction in pump usage after the repairs and the increased water output.

Gene Grumbles, owner of Lucky Farms in San Bernardino, raises oriental produce. He also participated in the pump testing program. Grumbles had two pumps tested. “One of them was at an old well and we just replaced it completely because it wasn’t putting out enough water,” he said.

New bowls were installed and the motor rewound on the other pump. “We just did a complete rebuild on it,” Grumbles said.

One site was increased by about 70 percent, and the other by about 30 to 40 percent more efficiency, Grumbles said. “As soon as we turned the pumps

on, there was just no comparison to the amount of water and efficiency.”

To date, there have been 8,000 to 9,000 pumps tested through the rebate program. Canessa encourages growers to get their application in before March 15. “If it’s a good package, we can approve it in a day, in five minutes if it’s a really good package,” he said. “This program has been very worthwhile for anybody who has taken advantage and had a pump repaired. I mean, we’ll get pump tests where a pump is operating at 25 percent efficiency.”

A repair could move that same pump into the range of 60 percent efficiency and cut the power bill by more than half. “The thing a grower has to look at is, for the guy with that big pump, going from 25 percent to 60 percent efficiency, the economics are almost a no-brainer,” Canessa said, which makes it worthwhile to repair a large pump.

On the other hand, for the grower with a small pump, it may not be cost effective to repair the pump. “Sure he’s going to cut his power bill in half, but I don’t know if it’s going to pay for a \$5,000 or \$6,000 bill to do it,” Canessa said.

Canessa recommended that growers with small pumps also have them tested. “You like to see them get done once just to establish a benchmark,” he said.

Oberti said he would definitely retest his pumps in the future with this program. “I’m doing another one, on another ranch, right now,” he said.

Grumbles concurred. “The testing of the pumps was well worth it.”