Agricultural Pumping Efficiency Program

Irrigation Planning

Helping California Agriculture...

Put More Power Through the Pump!
The Agricultural Pumping Efficiency Program ("Program") has two overall objectives: 1) get high-efficiency pumping equipment in the field and 2) manage that equipment so that its potential efficiency is realized. Planning an irrigation so that you know how much water needs to be pumped is an important part of that management.

What is the Program?

The Agricultural Pumping Efficiency Program is a statewide educational and incentive program designed to improve water pumping efficiency and promote energy conservation in agriculture. The Program includes these key components:

- Subsidized Pump Efficiency Tests
- Incentive Rebates for pump retrofit or repair
- Education

The educational message has four parts:

1. Know how to specify an efficient pump
2. Know how to maintain an efficient pump
3. Know how much water has to be pumped
4. Know how much water has been pumped

This brochure addresses the third part of the educational message, "know how much water has to be pumped."

Introduction

The focus of this brochure is on planning an individual irrigation. The intent is to estimate how much water is required for the irrigation, which then leads to an estimate of how long to run the pump.

Each irrigation should have a purpose - to put a specific amount of water in a specific amount of soil, as uniformly across the field as possible, with minimal losses. The obvious questions are:

- Do you know how much water you need to apply?
- Do you know how uniformly and efficiently you are applying it?
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This brochure introduces some concepts and terms that can help you to plan an individual irrigation so that you have a target volume of water to be pumped and a target number of hours to pump. Among these concepts will be:

**Application rate (AR)** - equivalent depth of water applied to a given area per hour by the system, usually measured in inches/hour.

**Daily crop water use (evapotranspiration)** - this is the net amount of water extracted from the soil daily by the crop.

**Distribution uniformity (DU)** - a measure of how evenly water is applied across the field.

**Effective root zone** - the depth of soil in which you are actively managing the crop.

**Field capacity** - the amount of water the soil will hold.

**Frequency** - refers to how often you irrigate: high frequency vs. low frequency.

**Irrigation efficiency (IE)** - a measure of how much water that is pumped and applied to the field is beneficially used.

**Net water needed versus gross water applied** - net water is what you need to replace in the field. Gross water is how much you have to pump in order to accomplish this goal.

**Soil moisture depletions (SMD)** - the net amount of water that you need to replace in the effective root zone.

**Soil probe** - this is nothing more than a long piece of 3/8” steel bar, usually tipped by a ball bearing, with a handle (below). The probe is pressed into wetted soil to judge how deep water has penetrated. It can be used during an irrigation to indicate when enough water has soaked into the ground. It can also be used to judge the uniformity of an irrigation. If (2-3 days after an irrigation) the probe can be pushed into the soil to a depth of 4 feet at the top of a furrow, and only to 2 feet at the bottom of the same furrow, this is an indication of poor distribution uniformity.
Irrigation is both an art and a science. Research has provided many concepts and methods for measurement of the various processes involved in irrigation. However, your knowledge of your field and crop, along with your experience in interpreting this science, will remain of utmost importance in achieving effective, efficient irrigations.

- **Effective irrigations produce the desired crop response.**
- **Efficient irrigations make the best use of available water.**

Irrigation efficiency does no good if it's not effective in producing a profitable crop. Effective, efficient irrigations are a result of knowing *when* to irrigate, *how much* to irrigate, and *how* to irrigate.

- **When** - to irrigate is an agronomic decision based on how you want to manipulate your crop.
- **How much** - to irrigate is the soil moisture depletion in the effective root zone. This is the amount of water needed to take the soil moisture reservoir back to field capacity or other desired level.
- **How** - to irrigate is not just knowing how to set a siphon, or connect a sprinkler pump. It is also knowing how to apply water evenly to a field while controlling the total amount applied.

Effective, efficient irrigations produce a profitable crop while making the best use of available water supplies and creating a minimal impact on water quality. In doing so they also minimize energy use and save you money.
There are two measures of irrigation performance - distribution uniformity (DU) and irrigation efficiency (IE).

**Distribution uniformity** is a measure of how evenly water soaks into the ground across a field during the irrigation. If eight inches of water soaks into the ground in one part of the field and only four inches into another part of the field, that is poor distribution uniformity. Distribution uniformity is expressed as a percentage between 0 and 100%. Although 100% DU (the same amount of water soaking in throughout the field) is theoretically possible, it is virtually impossible to attain in actual practice.

**Irrigation efficiency** was defined by the American Society of Civil Engineer’s On-Farm Irrigation Committee in 1978. It is the ratio of the volume of irrigation water which is beneficially used to the volume of irrigation water applied. Beneficial uses may include crop evapotranspiration, deep percolation needed for leaching for salt control, crop cooling, and as an aid in certain cultural operations. Differences in specific mathematical definitions of IE are due primarily to the physical boundaries of the measurement (a farm, an irrigation district, an irrigation project, or a watershed) and whether it is for an individual irrigation or an entire season.

Irrigation efficiency is also expressed as a percentage between 0% and 100%. 100% IE is not theoretically attainable due to immediate evaporation losses during irrigations. However, it could easily be close to 95% IE if a crop is under-watered. In this case, assuming no deep percolation, all water applied and not immediately evaporated would be used by the crop.

The term irrigation efficiency should not be confused with the term water use efficiency (WUE). WUE is generally a measure of yield per unit water applied.

**Relationships Between DU and IE** - There are two important relationships between DU and IE, described with the help of Figures 1 - 4.

The figures are a profile view of two adjacent sprinklers in a field and the root zone under them. The horizontal, dashed line in the figures depicts the depth of the actual soil water depletion at irrigation. This is the amount of water that the grower would be trying to soak into the soil to satisfy crop water use requirements. The blue shading depicts the actual depth of water infiltrated during the irrigation.

Deep percolation is indicated whenever the actual depth of irrigation (blue water level) is below the soil water depletion line (the horizontal, dashed line). Conversely, under-irrigation is indicated whenever the actual depth of irrigation is above the soil water deficit line.
Figures 1 and 2 demonstrate the first relationship: **There must be good distribution uniformity before there can be good irrigation efficiency if the crop is to be sufficiently watered.**

In Figure 1, the farmer has irrigated to sufficiently water the entire field. The poor DU, indicated by the uneven blue water level, has resulted in excessive deep percolation. (Much more water infiltrated between the sprinklers than next to the sprinklers.)

**IMPORTANT!**

*Leaching must be uniform across the field over a number of years to prevent areas of excessive salt accumulation.*

In Figure 2, the farmer has acted to prevent excessive deep percolation by shortening set times. Now part of the field remains under-irrigated. Under-irrigation usually results in high irrigation efficiency because most water applied is stored in the root zone, available for plant use. However, under-irrigation is usually not an effective way of growing since the resulting water stress on the crop in some parts of the field will usually decrease yields. Also, there is a need for some deep percolation for leaching to maintain a salt balance.
Figures 3 and 4 demonstrate the second relationship:

**Good distribution uniformity is no guarantee of good irrigation efficiency.**

Figure 3 depicts a good irrigation. There was a high DU as indicated by the flatter blue water level. Approximately the right amount of water was applied. There is little deep percolation (enough for salt control) and the entire field is wetted sufficiently. It is assumed that surface runoff was minimal or collected for reuse.

![Figure 3 - Depiction of an irrigation sufficiently watering the entire field with good uniformity and irrigation efficiency.](image)

Figure 4 depicts an irrigation with the same high DU as Figure 3. However, twice as much water as needed was applied, resulting in low irrigation efficiency. A practical example of this situation is the farmer who is using a well-designed and maintained micro-irrigation system. The hardware provides good DU and the potential for high IE. However, if the farmer runs the system twice as long as necessary, that potential is not realized.

![Figure 4 - Depiction of irrigation with good uniformity but excessive deep percolation (a good irrigation system that was run twice as long as necessary).](image)
To summarize: Improved irrigation system hardware or management may result in higher distribution uniformity and improve the potential for higher irrigation efficiency. It then follows that distribution uniformity is the first concern when improving irrigation system performance. However, actually achieving high irrigation efficiency ultimately depends on two factors - knowing how much water is needed and controlling the amount of water applied to match that need.

Know (and Improve) the Distribution Uniformity of the Irrigation System

Remember that the first consideration for effective, efficient irrigations is distribution uniformity. DU can be improved by understanding the different aspects of DU for each system type, then working to improve these parts.

Furrow and border strip systems - you need to be concerned with:

1. **Down-row uniformity** - how evenly water infiltrates at the top and at the bottom of a furrow.
2. **Cross-row uniformity** - how evenly water infiltrates from row to row. Be especially aware of the different infiltration rates in rows where tractor tires run.
3. **Soil variability** - although there is usually very little that can be done to alleviate the effects of soil variability, be aware of different soil types within a field. Modify your irrigation management whenever possible to compensate for the different infiltration rates.

Generally, with border systems you would only be concerned with the down-row uniformity and soil variability issues.

Sprinkler systems - there are three main factors in uniformity:

1. **Pressure uniformity** - Check the pressure throughout the irrigation system. It should not vary more than 10-15% at the nozzles throughout the field. Also make sure the system is operating at the correct base pressure.
2. **Device uniformity** - Device uniformity means that each sprinkler is flowing the same amount of water. Assuming that the pressure uniformity is okay, check for worn or plugged nozzles and systems with more than one size nozzle or sprinkler head.
3. **Overlap uniformity** - Overlap uniformity is important with field sprinkler systems and depends on the correct choice of sprinkler spacing, pressure, and head/nozzle size. In many areas, wind is the major factor affecting overlap uniformities. Using alternate sets is always a good idea with field sprinkler systems. Also make sure that the risers are high enough so that the crop doesn’t interfere with the stream. Overlap uniformity is not as important with undertree systems since the widespread rooting system of the orchards will compensate.

**Micro-irrigation systems:**
You need to be concerned with pressure uniformity and device uniformity with micro-irrigation systems. Also with trickle systems make sure the filters are kept clean. Use chemical amendments on a regular basis to prevent algae and slime buildup. Keep the system flushed clean.

There should not be excessive surface runoff with sprinkle/trickle/spitter systems. If there is, either the set times are too long or the system was not designed properly. The soil/water chemistry interactions may also have changed. Check for required amendments.

There may be a Mobile Irrigation Laboratory in your area. They can perform irrigation system evaluations. They will measure the distribution uniformity of your system and offer suggestions for improvement. A list of Labs in California and how to contact them is provided in the "Other Tools" section on page 22. Another important resource is your local University of California Cooperative Extension office.

**Control the Total Irrigation Water Application**

Remember, good hardware is only as good as its management. The most uniform drip irrigation system in the world is only 50% efficient if it is run twice as long as needed. Plan your irrigations and know how much water you are trying to apply. Measure water flows to know how much water has been applied and turn off the irrigation system when enough water has been applied.

Be aware of how much flexibility you have in the frequency, flow rate, and duration of your water supplies. Many irrigation districts deliver water in 24-hour increments. In some situations, investing in an on-farm reservoir may be profitable.
Frequency refers to *how often you irrigate*. High-frequency irrigation systems are utilized every 1 to 3 or 4 days and are typically micro-irrigation systems. The intent is to maintain an optimum soil moisture condition, usually with a high uniformity and efficiency.

On the other hand, low frequency irrigation systems are utilized every 8 to as much as 20-30 days depending on the climate, crop, and soil. These are typically furrow, border strip, or field sprinkler systems.

Another important aspect of high versus low frequency systems is the amount of soil that is wetted. Flood irrigation systems and field sprinkler systems will wet the entire field. High frequency, micro-irrigation systems only wet part of the field.

The frequency of irrigation is important since the method of estimating how much water to apply at each irrigation is different for low versus high frequency systems.

With low frequency irrigation systems usually some method is used to estimate the soil moisture depletion (SMD) in the effective root zone. This is because the SMD is substantial due to the long interval between irrigations. Also, since the entire field is being wetted there is no question as to the extent of the wetted root zone.

However, with a high frequency system, it can be hard to judge the SMD when crop water use is on the order of at most .3 to .35 inches/day. A further complication is that not all of the field is being wetted so there is a question as to the extent of the actual root zone. Thus, with high frequency irrigation systems it is advisable to use estimates of the daily crop water use to plan irrigation system run times.
The following is a suggested way of planning a furrow, border strip, or any type of low frequency irrigation. Four important steps are:

1. Estimate the SMD (and required leaching if any) - this is the amount of water you want to put into the soil.

2. Pre-plan the irrigation - a simple equation can indicate how long you need to apply water at a given flow rate. This includes considering irrigation efficiency (the combination of distribution uniformity and losses).

3. React to the first irrigation set - it is often difficult to predict exactly what will happen during a furrow irrigation due to changes in climate, soil surface conditions, and soil moisture conditions.

4. React to the irrigation - check the field after the irrigation to see the actual depth and uniformity of water penetration. Compare the total amount of water pumped to your estimate of what was needed. Learn from any mistakes.

The following is a detailed discussion of these steps.

**STEP 1: Estimate the SMD in the Effective Root Zone** - Using a soil probe and the Merriam Feel chart (Table 1 on pages 14-15) is fast, flexible, and inexpensive. Using something like a neutron probe is expensive, less flexible (constrained to the sampling site), but more accurate (at the site - a question is whether the site is representative of the field). You may also want to compare your estimates to estimates of the total crop evapotranspiration (water use) since the last irrigation.

**STEP 2: Pre-plan the Irrigation** - Use the following equation to estimate how long the pump should run:
1

\[
\text{Hours} = \frac{\text{SMD} \times \text{Acres} \times 452.2}{\text{Pump Flow} \times \text{IrrEff}}
\]

**Where:**
- SMD = soil moisture depletion in inches
- Acres = area of field in acres
- 452.2 = constant
- Pump Flow = pump flow rate in gallons per minute
- IrrEff = irrigation efficiency as a decimal (0 to 1.0)

It's important to understand that 0 to 1.0 IrrEff is equal to 0% to 100%. For example, .50 is equal to 50% and .75 is equal to 75%.

**Example A:**
- Pump Flow = 1350 gpm
- SMD = 4.0 inches
- Acres = 147 acres
- IrrEff = 75% (.75 as a decimal)

\[
\text{Hours} = \frac{\text{SMD} \times \text{Acres} \times 452.2}{(\text{Pump Flow} \times \text{IrrEff})}
= \frac{4 \times 147 \times 452.2}{1350 \times .75}
= 263 \text{ hours} = 10.9 \text{ days}
\]

This says that if you are trying to apply 4 inches of water into the rootzone at 75% irrigation efficiency with a pump flow of 1350 gpm, you need to run the pump for about 11 days.

Use equation (2) to estimate the volume of water to pump:

2

\[
\text{Acre Feet} = \frac{\text{Hours} \times \text{Pump Flow}}{5432}
\]

**Where:**
- Acre Feet = acre feet needed for irrigation
- Hours = hours of pumping
- Pump Flow = pump flow rate in gpm
- 5432 = constant

**STEP 3: React to the First Irrigation Set** - Assuming you estimated the SMD correctly and you know your pump’s flow rate, the equation and the answer of 11 days from the above example is only good if the irrigation efficiency is actually 75%. Use a soil probe to judge how fast water is soaking into the ground. Keep track of how long it is taking for water to reach the end of the furrow. Change the operating parameters (set time, flow per furrow) as needed. Using night irrigators can cost more money but this should be compared to potential water and energy savings.
### TABLE 1 - Estimating soil moisture depletion from the look and feel of a soil sample

(from USDA, NRCS Booklet "Estimating Soil Moisture by Feel and Appearance").

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Available Soil Moisture Deficit in inches per foot when the feel and appearance of the soil is as described.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Field Capacity (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75% to 100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50% to 75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25% to 50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0% to 25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dominant Texture</th>
<th>Available Water Capacity (in/foot)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fine Sand and Loamy Fine Sand</td>
<td>0.6 - 1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandy Loam and Fine Loamy Sand</td>
<td>1.3 - 1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sandy Clay Loam and Clay</td>
<td>1.5 - 2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clay, Clay Loam or Silty Clay Loam</td>
<td>1.6 - 2.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dominant Texture</th>
<th>Available Water Capacity (in/foot)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Field Capacity (%)</td>
<td>Wet, forms a weak ball. Free water.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100%</td>
<td>Wet, forms soft soil pat. Thick soil coating on fingers. Glistens. Liquid water appears on fingers. Soil may glisten.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75% to 100%</td>
<td>Wet, forms a weak ball. Light to heavy soil/water coating on fingers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50% to 75%</td>
<td>Moist, forms a smooth ball with well defined finger marks. Darkened color.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25% to 50%</td>
<td>Dry, forms a very weak ball. Aggregated soil grains break from ball.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0% to 25%</td>
<td>Slightly moist, forms a weak ball with few aggregated soil grains break away. Darkened color, very light water staining.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available Soil Moisture Percentage</td>
<td>Available Water Capacity (in/foot)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0% to 25%</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25% to 50%</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50% to 75%</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75% to 100%</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TABLE 1 - Estimating soil moisture depletion from the look and feel of a soil sample (from USDA NRCS Booklet “Estimating Soil Moisture by Feel and Appearance”).
STEP 4: React to the Irrigation - Use the soil probe 2 or 3 days after the irrigation to judge how far water penetrated at the top and bottom of the furrow. Judge crop response and water penetration to see how close your initial estimate of SMD was to actual. Compare the total amount of water delivered to the field (use a flow meter!) to your estimates of SMD and the pre-planning calculations.

Work Backwards as a Check on Performance - You can use equation (1A) to check on your actual irrigation efficiency, assuming that your estimate of SMD was correct. For example, assume the same situation as in Example A but without knowing the irrigation efficiency, and knowing that it took 15 days to complete the irrigation.

### 1A

\[
\text{IrrEff} = \frac{\text{SMD} \times \text{Acres} \times 452.2}{\text{Pump Flow} \times \text{Hours}}
\]

**Where:**
- SMD = soil moisture depletion in inches
- Acres = area of field in acres
- 452.2 = constant
- Pump Flow = pump flow rate in gallons per minute
- IrrEff = irrigation efficiency as a decimal (0 to 1.0)

**Example B:**
- Pump Flow = 1350 gpm
- SMD = 4.0 inches
- Acres = 147 acres
- Hours = 360 (24 hrs/day x 15 days)
- \(\text{IrrEff} = \frac{\text{SMD} \times \text{Acres} \times 452.2}{\text{Pump Flow} \times \text{Hours}}\) = \(\frac{4 \times 147 \times 452.2}{1350 \times 360}\) = \(\frac{4 \times 147 \times 452.2}{1350 \times 360}\) = .55 = 55%

The question with this example is whether or not 55% is an acceptable irrigation efficiency.
Planning a Sprinkler Irrigation

The same process as outlined in the previous section can be used for sprinkler systems. However, there is an alternative equation to use if you know the application rate of the system.

**Application Rate (AR)** - equivalent depth of water applied to a given area per hour by the system, usually measured in inches/hour. Thus, if an application rate is .2 inches/hour that means that every hour that the system is run is equivalent to a .2 inch rainfall.

Five basic steps (with a little different mathematics) are used to pre-plan a sprinkler or drip irrigation.

1. Estimate the soil moisture depletion in the effective root zone.
2. Know the application rate of the irrigation system.
3. Pre-plan the irrigation.
4. React to the first set.
5. React to the irrigation.

**STEP 1: Estimate the SMD in the Effective Root Zone** - Estimate the soil moisture depletion in the same manner as for furrows (refer to the discussion on page 12).

**STEP 2: Know the Application Rate of the Irrigation System** - Refer to Table 2, “Sprinkler Application Rates” on page 18. Each combination of nozzle size, sprinkler spacing, and system pressure produces a distinct application rate. For example, a 7/64” nozzle running at 55 PSI on a 30 x 40 spacing has an application rate of about .2 inches/hour. This means that every hour you run the system is just like a .2 inch rainfall on the field.

If your system combination is not in Table 2 or you wish to determine your system’s AR exactly, use the following equation.

\[
\text{AppRate} = \frac{\text{GPMn} \times 96.3}{\text{Area}}
\]

**Where:**
- **AppRate** = the application rate of the system in inches/hour
- **GPMn** = the flow through the sprinkler nozzle in gallons per minute
- **96.3** = constant
- **Area** = the system spacing, lateral move times length of each lateral
For example, if you had a 30-foot sprinkler lateral with a lateral move of 45 feet, and the flow through each nozzle was measured at 2.8 GPM, then:

**Example C:**

\[
\text{AppRate} = \frac{\text{GPMn} \times 96.3}{\text{Area}} \\
= \frac{2.8 \times 96.3}{(30 \times 45)} \\
= .20 \text{ inches/hour}
\]

**TABLE 2 - Approximate water application rates in inches/hour for varying nozzle diameters and sprinkler spacings.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sprinkler Spacing (ft)</th>
<th>3/32</th>
<th>7/64</th>
<th>1/8</th>
<th>9/64</th>
<th>5/32</th>
<th>11/64</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 x 30</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.34</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>.54</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 x 40</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.41</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 x 45</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.36</td>
<td>.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 x 40</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.28</td>
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<td>.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35 x 45</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.20</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 x 40</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.31</td>
<td>.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40 x 45</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Assumes standard smooth-bore nozzle in good condition.

**STEP 3: Pre-Plan the Irrigation** - Use the following equation to estimate how long the pump should run:

\[
\text{Hours} = \frac{\text{Sets} \times \text{SMD}}{\text{AppRate} \times \text{IrrEff}}
\]

**Where:**

- Hours = required hours of pumping
- Sets = number of lateral moves
- SMD = soil moisture depletion
- AppRate = application rate of system in hours
- IrrEff = irrigation efficiency as a decimal (0 to 1.0)

**STEP 4: React to the First Set** - There should be no runoff with a sprinkler irrigation system if properly designed and operated. Also note excessive wind conditions or poor pressure uniformity that may decrease the estimated irrigation efficiency.
STEP 5: React to the Irrigation - Finally, react to the irrigation as a whole. Use the soil probe 2 or 3 days after the irrigation to judge how far water penetrated in different areas within the sprinkler patterns, and in different parts of the field. Judge crop response and water penetration to see how close your initial estimate of SMD was to actual. Compare the total amount of water delivered to the field (use a flow meter!) to your estimates of SMD and the pre-planning calculations.

As previously noted, micro-irrigation systems are generally a high frequency irrigation system. Further, they generally do not wet all of the soil. For high frequency irrigations such as with drip, spray, fogger, or mini-sprinkler systems, it is probably better to base irrigations on daily crop water use.

One method of planning micro-irrigations involves the following three steps:

1. Develop a seasonal (or possibly only monthly or weekly) first-cut irrigation schedule based on normal crop water use.
2. Maintain a reliable and regular system of monitoring soil and/or plant moisture conditions.
3. React to changes in the trend of these conditions.

STEP 1: Develop a First-Cut Schedule of Operating Hours - To develop the first-cut schedule of operating hours use this equation:

\[
\text{Hours} = \frac{\text{Sets} \times \text{ETc} \times \text{Area} \times \text{GPH} \times \text{IrrEff} \times 1.605}{19}
\]

Where:
- **Hours** = required hours of pumping
- **Sets** = number of irrigation sets (blocks) in the drip system
- **ETc** = crop water use between irrigation (inches)
- **Area** = planted area per tree or vine (sq. ft.)
- **GPH** = gallons per hour per tree or vine
- **IrrEff** = overall irrigation efficiency (0 to 1.0)
- **1.605** = constant
STEP 2: Maintain a Reliable, Regular System of Monitoring Soil and/or Plant Moisture Conditions - Micro-irrigation systems are sometimes referred to as subtle systems (meaning that by the time problems appear visually, much damage may have already been done). It is imperative that some type of soil and/or plant moisture monitoring be done. Commonly used methods include granular-matrix blocks, gypsum blocks, pressure chambers, TDR or FDR electronic sensors and tensiometers.

STEP 3: Graph the Measurements and Note Any Trends - For example, if you see that the trend in soil moisture is up or down, instead of relatively steady (and at the moisture content you want) then possibly your estimate of crop water use is wrong, or there is a problem with the irrigation system.

Row Crop Drip Systems - Because of the terminology used to describe drip tape systems you would use the following equation (6) instead of (5).

\[
\text{Hours} = \frac{\text{Sets} \times \text{ETc} \times \text{Spacing}}{\text{GPM100} \times \text{IrrEff} \times 11.55}
\]

Where:
- \(\text{Hours}\) = required hours of pumping
- \(\text{Sets}\) = number of irrigation sets
- \(\text{ETc}\) = net crop water use between irrigations (inches)
- \(\text{GPM100}\) = gallons per minute per 100’ of tape
- \(\text{IrrEff}\) = overall irrigation efficiency as a decimal (0 to 1.0)
- 11.55 = constant
The Pumping Energy Calculator

The Pumping Energy Calculator (Figure 5) is available from the Program. This simple-to-use device can calculate the gross depth of water required, dollars per hour or dollars per acre-foot pumping costs, and the number of required pumping hours per irrigation for the major types of irrigation systems. Contact one of the Program offices to obtain one. This calculator will help solve equations 1-6 presented in this brochure.

FIGURE 5 - The Energy Calculator.

Waterright for Seasonal Irrigation Scheduling

The Pumping Energy Calculator can be used to estimate the number of pumping hours required for individual irrigations. An important piece of required information is the gross depth of water to apply. It is always best to use one of many available methods for checking soil moisture depletions to directly measure this at the time of irrigation. However, seasonal irrigation scheduling can help you anticipate irrigations and provide a check on the estimates for net water required.

The WATERIGHT web site (www.wateright.org) will help you to develop a normal, seasonal irrigation schedule for either low frequency or high frequency systems. This site is dedicated to improved water management. There is a link to the WATERIGHT site from the Agricultural Pumping Efficiency Program’s web site, www.pumpefficiency.org.

WATERIGHT also contains information on how you might be able to improve your irrigation system’s performance.
Mobile Labs

Mobile Irrigation Laboratories evaluate irrigation system performance. They measure such things as water application rates and system distribution uniformity. If necessary, they give recommendations for system improvement. Mobile labs can be an important part of managing water resources.

Mobile Labs:
- Santa Barbara County - (805) 928-9269, ext.5
- Riverside County
  - East County/High Desert - (760) 347-7658
  - West County - (909) 683-7691 www.rcrcd.com
  - South East County - (909) 654-7733
- North San Diego County - (760) 728-1332
  www.tfb.com/~missnrcd/
- Fresno/Tulare County - (559) 237-5567 www.krcd.org
- Kern County - (661) 861-4129 www.pswrcd.ca.nacdnet.org
- Santa Clara Valley Water District - (408) 265-2607
- Tehema County RCD - (530) 527-3013, ext. 119
- Lava Beds-Butte Valley RCD - (530) 667-3473

Additional Mobile Lab information can be found at: www.owue.water.ca.gov/mobile/index.cfm

In Summary

The Program has two main objectives:
1. Get high-efficiency pumping equipment in the field.
2. Manage that equipment so that its potential efficiency is realized.

Planning irrigations is a key component in water and energy management. Every irrigation should have a purpose – put a specific amount of water in a specific volume of soil. Pre-planning an irrigation will tell you how much water has to be pumped.

Contact the Program at one of the toll free phone numbers below, or log on to www.pumpefficiency.org for more information on pre-planning an irrigation.
Log on to [www.pumpefficiency.org](http://www.pumpefficiency.org) or call the Program using the following toll-free numbers:

- Main Office - (800) 845-6038
- San Joaquin Valley - (800) 352-0434
- Northern California - (866) 333-8938
- Southern California - (866) 333-8939
- Central Coast - (866) 473-0847

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions.

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**Important!**

The Program may be terminated or modified without notice. The Program has a limited budget. Applications for retrofit/repair rebates or pump tests are accepted on a [first-come, first-served basis](#) until available funds are allocated or the ending date of the program, whichever comes first (visit [www.pumpefficiency.org](http://www.pumpefficiency.org) or call 800.845.6038 for more information).

California consumers are not obligated to purchase any full fee service or other service not funded by this program. This program is funded by California utility ratepayers under the auspices of the California Public Utilities Commission.

Los consumidores en California no estan obligados a comprar servicios completos o adicionales que no esten cubiertos bajo este programa. Este programa esta financiado por los usuarios de servicios públicos en California bajo la jurisdiccion de la Comisión de servicios Públicos de California.

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**The Center for Irrigation Technology**

The Center for Irrigation Technology developed and manages the statewide Agricultural Pumping Efficiency Program. CIT is dedicated to advancing water/energy management practices and efficient irrigation technology. Located on the campus of California State University, Fresno, CIT functions as an independent testing laboratory, applied research facility and educational resource to both the public and private sectors. For more information, check the CIT link at [www.pumpefficiency.org](http://www.pumpefficiency.org) or call (800) 845-6038.