

**For Immediate Release**  
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**Contact:** Brian Ferguson  
(916) 376-5038

## **State to Pursue Drought-Tolerant Landscaping, Irrigation in Capitol Park**

*-- Areas of the park will be modified to accommodate drought tolerant plants, watering to target historic trees, sections of lawn will be allowed to die-off to conserve water --*

**Sacramento, CA** – As record dry conditions persist across the state, the California Department of General Services (DGS) will roll-out a new drought-tolerant irrigation and landscaping program this week to preserve the oldest arboretum west of the Mississippi – home to hundreds of historic trees, many more than a decade old.

“During this time of historic drought it is incumbent upon our department to be good stewards of all the state’s resources. But while we must safeguard the historic trees and other unique plant assets of the park so that they can be enjoyed by future generations, we must also find forward-thinking ways to save water wherever possible,” said DGS Director Fred Klass.

DGS, which is responsible for maintaining state facilities including the State Capitol grounds, halted spray irrigation in Capitol Park last November – nearly 200 days ago – to help conserve water during the typically-wetter winter months. During that time, DGS has explored ways to further reduce water usage in the park.

Since Governor Edmund G. Brown Jr. declared the [Drought State of Emergency](#) in January, DGS has taken steps to maximize the efficiency of water used at the Capitol including:

- State-of-the-art irrigation technologies are being utilized, including advanced timers.
- Dozens of inefficient spray sprinkler heads have been replaced with more efficient watering methods such as bubblers, drip irrigation systems and soaker hoses.
- More than a cubic ton of mulch has been added to flower beds and tree wells throughout the park to help retain moisture by reducing evaporation, and mulch is regularly being replenished.
- Efforts are underway to replace seasonal flowers and annuals with drought-tolerant plants with an emphasis on native Californian varieties.
- Different irrigation techniques are being explored, including cycling between watering different areas for a shorter duration but with greater frequency. This will allow time for improved absorption, resulting in an overall reduction of water use.
- A moratorium on non-essential landscaping projects, including the planting of annuals and other decorative varieties, continues to be enforced.
- Fountains and decorative water features remain turned off.

In order to preserve historic trees, which are already showing signs of stress during the ongoing drought, targeted, seasonal watering will resume at Capitol Park this week on a limited basis following the six-month hiatus.

These actions are part of a larger effort by DGS to reduce overall water use in the park by 20% over 2013 totals in line with the conservation goals outlined in the Governor's January proclamation.

## **Background**

Capitol Park – established in 1860 – is the oldest arboretum west of the Mississippi and an important part of California's vitality and history. The 40-acre park is home to 968 trees – some more than 100 years old – and hundreds of other plantings with [historical and cultural significance](#).

The trees and plants in Capitol Park rely on a complex irrigation system that includes more than 1,000 spray heads and is operated by a smart irrigation controller that is monitored on a daily basis.

Approximately 85 percent of the lawn at Capitol Park overlays [tree roots](#) which, due to historic watering practices, have extensive but shallow root systems and derive their water almost exclusively from lawn irrigation. Therefore, sustaining the health of the park's trees, in many cases, necessitates the use of the spray irrigation that waters the lawn.

Those areas of lawn that do not overlay tree roots will not be watered and will be allowed to die.

While irrigation will only take place during nighttime hours, testing of sprinkler heads will occur during the day with DGS staff monitoring.

*Governor Brown has called on all Californians to reduce their water use by 20 percent – visit [SaveOurH2O.org](#) to find out how everyone can do their part, and visit [Drought.CA.Gov](#) to learn more about how California is dealing with the effects of the drought.*

*The Department of General Services acts as the business manager for the State of California. DGS helps state government better serve the public by providing services to state agencies including procurement and acquisition solutions, real estate management, leasing and design services, environmentally friendly transportation, and architectural oversight and funding for the construction of safe schools.*

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