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State Authorities Investigating Ongoing Vandalism at Capitol Park

-- Nighttime intruder has caused thousands of dollars in damage to park irrigation systems and triggered substantial water waste during historic drought--

Sacramento, CA – A string of incidents of vandalism at Capitol Park are now being investigated as criminal acts by officials from the California Department of General Services (DGS) and California Highway Patrol.

Since early this summer, various acts of damage and defacement have occurred during nighttime hours at the park that resulted in wasted water including: sprinkler heads turned 180 degrees toward the sidewalk, slashed irrigation/drip lines, and sprinkler heads destroyed in a myriad of fashions.

“These suspected acts of vandalism are very frustrating since they are not only costing the state time and materials to repair broken sprinklers, but also interfering with our water conservation efforts in this time of historic drought,” said Brian Ferguson, DGS Deputy Director for Public Affairs.

The incidents escalated overnight Thursday (August 13) when at least seven sprinklers near the intersection of 15th Street and Capitol Avenue were crushed with a blunt force object resulting in large amount of water spilling over into surrounding gutters and landscaping before the incident was discovered early this morning.

The CHP is now investigating the matter as a criminal incident and the state asks any members of the public who may have information on this matter to report it to the CHP Capitol Protection Section at (916) 322-3337.

In order to address the vandalism, daytime testing of sprinkler heads will occur during the coming days as DGS employees make repairs. Normally, what limited irrigation that does occur at the park only takes place during nighttime hours.

Incident photos from DGS:



Background

DGS, which is responsible for maintaining state facilities including the State Capitol grounds, has reduced the amount of water used at Capitol Park by nearly 40 percent since the Governor Brown issued his emergency drought declaration in January 2014.

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 have been allowed to die.

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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.