

Apps let neighbors report water wasters

By Javaier Panzar, Los Angeles Times

With Californians being urged to cut water use as the state's historic drought drags on, a growing number of local water agencies are enlisting the public to play water cop with their smartphones.

From Long Beach to Placer County, officials are rolling out apps that allow users to snap and send photos of homes and businesses that are violating watering restrictions or operating broken and wasteful irrigation systems.

The apps put more boots on the ground to spot waste and leaks that might go unnoticed, officials say. They say the high-tech citizen reporting programs are intended to encourage water conservation, and not to be used as evidence to fine offenders.

In Placer County, the water agency released a multipurpose water-saving app in May. It lets users report water waste, but it also features a shower timer that estimates how many gallons a person uses. So far, the agency has received 30 complaints, mostly about water runoff, said Matt Young, the agency's director of customer services.

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