

News Release



For Immediate Release

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**Volunteers sought for engine restoration:
Call for Western Engine Restoration Team
By the Non Profit Management Corporation of California Citrus State Historic Park**

The California Citrus State Historic Park in Riverside has a treasure: one of two remaining gas-powered Western Engines in existence. It was used to pump water to the growers in upper Highgrove, Grand Terrace, and the northern part of Riverside from the 1930s to 1960, and it needs a team of engine enthusiasts to make it run again.

In 1995, the late journalist Tom Patterson advocated heavily that the 17-ton engine, out-of-service since 1960, be transplanted to the park in Arlington Heights area of Riverside where it would contribute significantly to the citrus irrigation story of the entire region. By 2000, the engine had made its way from the Riverside Highland Water Company headquarters in the Grand Terrace area. Since then, it has resided in a metal shed, located in what will become the park's main interpretation area.

Twelve years later, the park's Non Profit Management Corporation (NPMC) wonders if the old engine, with its seven-foot flywheel, could be restored and re-started to run at its former performance level of 360 revolutions per minute. The organization wants to assemble a team of folks who are fascinated by old engines who would take on the restoration project.

Regional citrus growers originally relied on gravity flow water fed through a series of major irrigation channels until so much ground water was being taken that the Riverside Highland Water Company began to pump water from the San Bernardino Basin. Seven Western Engines were brought in to do the job in 1931.

The engines operated until 1960 when they were replaced by more efficient gas engines. Five of the seven engines were sold for scrap, and one was sent to Salem, Oregon where it is featured in a museum. The seventh one remained on site until early 2000.

"The 17-ton Western [Engine] would be an authentic exhibit for a phase of irrigation history," Patterson wrote for The Press-Enterprise in April of 1995.

But, not if it doesn't run.

The NPMC has set an ambitious time line that would see a restoration team established by February of 2013, fundraising efforts launched by March, and the engine restored and operating by December of 2013.

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"This engine can be fired up to pump water and show people how one of the water-delivery systems in the region once operated," said NPMC board member Bob Johnson. "It will likely be loud and definitely will be exciting to see it running again."

Anyone who knows more information about the Western Engine or who would like to be part of the restoration team should contact Kelly Elliott, Park Superintendent, at (951) 789-1278.

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