Pack You Baggies: Here Comes Cannabis Tourism

One of my must-reads every December is the Hotel Guru’s Top 10 Hospitality Market. Robert Rauch of RAR Hospitality predicts what will be making news in the coming year and his top 10 is the rise of Cannabis Tourism, which is music to the ears of names like Chairmen, who run MJ Tours Corp. in January. Her company has already developed four segments: Grow Tour, Buds & Brews, Wake & Bake, and Weed & Wine. They’ve already partnered with the Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business program and The Rosie Network and are growing like you’d get the idea.

Los Angeles will be the unquestioned center of the California cannabis industry, but San Diego will be its clear winner in cannabis tourism. The company — a wholly owned subsidiary of an Israeli company of the same name — uses satellite data to find leaks in water pipes. It uses the same technology the U.S. Geological Survey uses to measure soil moisture, said Clifford Chan, operations manager for the East Bay Municipal Utility District in Oakland, a repeat customer of Utilis.

Another user is Central Arizona Water, which serves 450,000 people in the Little Rock area. Utilis’ parent company counts customers in more than 25 countries.

The City of San Diego recently signed on for a pilot study of its own. With Utilis’ help, it will search for water leaks in Mira Mesa, the state Route 56 corridor, Pacific Beach and Clairemont.

Water leaks are a big deal, said James Perry, Utilis’ vice president of business development and one of seven employees in the company’s Rancho Bernardo office. Water is often a scarce commodi
ty. In dry regions such as California, it takes considerable energy to pump water from its source to the areas that need it, resulting in greenhouse gas emissions. Local governments are facing more pressure to cut waste.

Satellite images

Utilis uses a Japanese satellite equipped with synthetic aperture radar to gather data, said Perry. It matches the satellite images with computer maps of the region’s water system and then processes the data with its patented software.

The result is a map showing areas with a probability of drinking water in the soil. The technology is good for finding the general area of a leak. Water utility crews can use the data with its patented software.

Water pipes are typically 4 feet below the surface. Syn	hetic aperture radar can sense water up to 10 feet below ground.

‘One Tool in the Toolbox’

“We look at this as one tool in the toolbox,” said Chan, whose utility provides drinking water to 1.4 million people over a 332-square-mile territory east of San Francisco. In 2016, the district approved a one-year, $96,000 contract with Utilis.

Chan said his agency is now pursuing a new survey that will take radar images from an aircraft. Perry said that will offer a higher resolution view and more exact picture of where there might be leaks.

Diversifying

Privately held Utilis hopes to diversify its business. Perry said customers might also use its technology to find wastewater in the soil, as well as saturated soil in wet climates. In the latter case, the technology could substitute for taking core samples of the earth.

Utilis set up the Rancho Bernardo office in 2016. Perry said as the business grows, Utilis might add production employees.

“Utilis Is a Resource for Finding Water Leaks

SERVICE: Satellite Imagery Helps Detect General Location

By BRAD GRAVES

The drinking water flows from a source in the mountains to the customer’s tap, but somewhere in the sprawling network of pipes, part of it disappears. Utilis of Rancho Bernardo has technology to find where it’s going.

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