



The Updated Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES

Landscapes are essential to the quality of life in California. They provide areas for recreation, enhance the environment, clean the air and water, prevent erosion, offer fire protection and replace ecosystems lost to development.

California's economic prosperity and environmental quality are dependant on an adequate supply of water for beneficial uses. In California, about half of the urban water used is for landscape irrigation. Ensuring **efficient landscapes** in new developments and reducing water waste in existing landscapes are the most cost-effective ways to stretch our limited water supplies and ensure that we continue to have sufficient water for California to prosper.

The Water Conservation in Landscaping Act of 2006 (Assembly Bill 1881, Laird) requires cities, counties, and charter cities and charter counties, to adopt landscape water conservation ordinances by January 1, 2010. Pursuant to this law, the Department of Water Resources (DWR) has prepared a Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (Model Ordinance) for use by local agencies. The Model Ordinance was approved by the Office of Administrative Law on September 10, 2009. The Model Ordinance became effective on September 10.

All local agencies must adopt a water efficient landscape ordinance by **January 1, 2010**. The local agencies may adopt the state Model Ordinance, or craft an ordinance to fit local conditions. In addition, several local agencies may collaborate and craft a region-wide ordinance. In any case, the adopted ordinance must be as effective as the Model Ordinance in regard to water conservation.

For more information, please visit our web site at <http://www.water.ca.gov/wateruseefficiency/landscapeordinance/>





Important points to consider...

Water purveyors have an important role.

The enabling statute was directed to local agencies that make land use decisions and approve land development. Active participation by water purveyors can make the implementation, enforcement and follow-up actions of an ordinance more effective.

Most new and rehabilitated landscapes are subject to a water efficient landscape ordinance. Public landscapes and private development projects including developer installed single family and multi-family residential landscapes with at least 2500 sq. ft. of landscape area are subject to the Model Ordinance .

Homeowner provided landscaping at single family and multi-family homes are subject to the Model Ordinance if the landscape area is at least 5000 sq. ft

Existing landscapes are also subject to the Model Ordinance.

Water waste is common in landscapes that are poorly designed or not well maintained. Water waste (from runoff, overspray, low head drainage, leaks and excessive amounts of applied irrigation water in landscapes is prohibited by Section 2, Article X of the California Constitution.

Any landscape installed prior to January 1, 2010, that is at least one acre in size may be subject to irrigation audits, irrigation surveys or water use analysis programs for evaluating irrigation system performance and adherence to the Maximum Applied Water Allowance as defined in the 1992 Model Ordinance with an Evapotranspiration Adjustment Factor (ETAF) of 0.8. Local agencies and water purveyors (designated by the local agency) may institute these or other programs to increase efficiency in existing landscapes.

All new landscapes will be assigned a water budget.

The water budget approach is a provision in the statute that ensures a landscape is allowed sufficient water. There are two water budgets in the Model Ordinance; the Maximum Applied Water Allowance (MAWA) and the Estimated Total Water Use (ETWU).

The MAWA, is the water budget used for compliance and is an annual water allowance based on landscape area, local evapotranspiration and ETAF of 0.7. The ETWU is an annual water use estimation for design purposes and is based on the water needs of the plants actually chosen for a given landscape. The ETWU may not exceed the MAWA.

Water efficient landscapes offer multiple benefits.

Water efficient landscapes will stretch our limited water supplies. Other benefits include reduced irrigation runoff, reduced pollution of waterways, less property damage, less green waste, increased drought resistance and a smaller carbon footprint.

The Department of Water Resources will offer technical assistance.

The Department plans to offer a series of workshops, publications and other assistance for successful adoption and implementation of the Model Ordinance or local water efficient landscape ordinances. Information regarding these resources may be found on the DWR website: <http://www.water.ca.gov/wateruseefficiency/landscapeordinance/> Questions on the Model Ordinance may be sent by e-mail to DWR staff at: mweo@water.ca.gov.