

PROPOSAL PAPER

Independent Technical Panel on Demand Management Measures Final Report on California Landscape Water Use 1-13-16 Draft

Section #: 4 (From the current draft outline)

Section Title: Voluntary Turf Replacement (From the current draft outline)

Authoring Team: Jeff Stephenson and William Granger

Background:

According to the *California Water Plan 2013 Update*, the residential landscape and large landscape sectors account for approximately four million acre-feet, or 44 percent, of statewide urban water use per year.¹ A large volume of the water used by these sectors is wasted due to leaks, overwatering, and poorly maintained irrigation systems. Contributing to the high water use is the prevalence of turf and other high-water-use plants.²

This recommendation would reduce the amount of water used to irrigate turf through a turf replacement incentive program. Turf replacement incentive programs are not intended to fund entire projects, but rather provide just enough of an incentive for people to take action. Turf replacement incentive programs are also not intended to be available indefinitely. Instead, they are implemented to provide an initial boost to the landscape transformation process and initiate change in the marketplace. There are far too many acres of turf in the state for a turf replacement incentive program to fund replacement of all turf. The transition from turf to sustainable landscapes will take years accomplish, but when complete, will dramatically reduce the amount of water used for landscape irrigation.

Recommended Action:

Authorize a three-year statewide turf replacement incentive program in the form of a non-refundable tax credit to encourage upgrades of existing landscapes to sustainable landscapes. The tax credit for residential customers would be \$1 per square foot.

Proposal:

A statewide turf replacement incentive program would provide multiple benefits through the installation of sustainable landscapes. Sustainable landscapes have multiple benefits, including that they use significantly less water, reduce stormwater runoff, reduce embedded energy use, and reduce green waste generation. To increase the visibility and public acceptance of sustainable landscapes, the program would target the replacement of turf for residential front yards. To qualify for a tax credit a minimum of 250 square feet of turf would need to be replaced. Annual tax credits for residential customers would be capped at \$1,5000.

Program requirements for converted areas would include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Minimum of 50 percent plant coverage;
- Use irrigation fixtures at least as efficient as high-efficiency nozzles and point source emitters;
- Utilize a minimum of three inches of mulch;
- Utilize on-site stormwater capture via rain gardens, bio-swales, dry streambeds, etc., where possible;

¹ Department of Water Resources. 2014. *California Water Plan Update 2013*. Volume 3 - Resource Management Strategies, Chapter 3 - Urban Water Use Efficiency, 3-10.

² *Ibid.*, 3-12.

- Hardscape must be permeable, pervious, or porous;
- New landscape materials must remain in place for at least five years; and
- Landscapes irrigated with recycled water are not eligible.