

SECTION 5: REQUIRE IRRIGATION SYSTEM EVALUATIONS AS PART OF HOME INSPECTIONS

RECOMMENDATION #2: Multifamily and Commercial/Industrial Properties

Background

One limitation of the current and newly updated Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELo) is the ability to substantially reduce water use for existing landscapes. It is common knowledge that existing landscapes account for the majority of potential for over watering and waste. Upwards of 45% of current urban water use is attributed to landscape irrigation usage (Department of Water Resources [DWR] California Water Plan 2104). Therefore any process included in MWELo to manage and reduce the amount of water used and/or wasted from existing landscapes will provide significant savings to the State's water resources. Currently, Section 493.1 of MWELo addresses "Irrigation Audit, Irrigation Survey, and Irrigation Water Use Analysis" and states:

493.1. Irrigation Audit, Irrigation Survey, and Irrigation Water Use Analysis.

(a) This section, 493.1, shall apply to all existing landscapes that were installed before December 1, 2015 and are over one acre in size.

(1) For all landscapes in 493.1 (a) that have a water meter, the local agency shall administer programs that may include, but not be limited to, irrigation water use analyses, irrigation surveys, and irrigation audits to evaluate water use and provide recommendations as necessary to reduce landscape water use to a level that does not exceed the Maximum Applied Water Allowance for existing landscapes. The Maximum Applied Water Allowance for existing landscapes shall be calculated as: $MAWA = (0.8) (ET_o) (LA) (0.62)$.

(2) For all landscapes in 493.1(a), that do not have a meter, the local agency shall administer programs that may include, but not be limited to, irrigation surveys and irrigation audits to evaluate water use and provide recommendations as necessary in order to prevent water waste.

It is currently difficult for many water providers to adequately account for and manage specific information about existing irrigation systems throughout their service area due to staff limitations and processes to gather and disseminate information. In the future, when Automated Metering Infrastructure becomes more widespread, water providers will have better access to real time water usage. Until then, a challenge remains in most of the State to identify and report on existing irrigation systems including how much water is actually being used especially at peak demand and how that usage compares to the water needs of the associated plant material.

Purpose Statement

In keeping with section 493.1 of MWELo regarding existing landscapes, water efficiency strategies shall be applied to landscapes over 1 acre. These strategies should include the following: pragmatic regulation, conservation based pricing, and education and outreach. As such, reporting on the state and status of existing irrigation systems is crucial to managing landscape water use appropriately. Similar to

California State-required smog checks for vehicles, inspections of existing landscape irrigation systems are necessary to determine those systems operating appropriately and those that are underperforming. Once identified, the local jurisdiction working with the property manager, owner and landscape company can determine the most appropriate approach to influence upgrades or compliance to local regulations. In the smog test example above, the onus is upon the owner/driver to present the vehicle to be inspected. The responsibility of the governing entity is to notify the owner of the need to perform the test. The third party, the mechanic is responsible to report the results and typically also performs necessary repairs.

The Independent Technical Panel Recommends That:

Pursuant to MWELo section 493.1, the State legislature will direct DWR, who in turn will work with the California Urban Water Conservation Council and the California Landscape Contractors Association to first create a template for an irrigation inspection report form and then require, beginning in January 1, 2017, all multifamily, commercial and industrial properties, and in January 1, 2020 all residences with irrigated landscapes of 1 acre or larger to submit a landscape irrigation report once every three years to a database created and managed by DWR, with access available to the local agencies, consisting of a minimum of the following items:

- a) Irrigation system overview: water meter number and type (if existing), assessor parcel number, irrigation zone map, zone description, plant factor by zone (MWELo defaults).
- b) Water budget as defined in MWELo: gallons per minute per zone, operating pressure by zone, expected peak month consumption.
- c) List of responsible parties: owner, landscape contractor, property manager.
- d) DWR to submit a summary of data and recommendations after initial three years of program for purposes of MWELo updates.