SECTION 5: IMPROVEMENTS IN EXISTING LANDSCAPES

RECOMMENDATION #2: Landscapes Over One Acre

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[1]. 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) (ETo) (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.

[1] Department of Water Resources *California Water Plan* 2104.

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, i~~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. This can be done ~~as simply as a~~ through a direct mailing or possibly through a bill~~ing~~ insert to all commercial property owners indicating that if their landscaped area is an acre or larger the report will be required. This then puts the onus on the owner to communicate with their landscape care provider to validate the size of the landscape. ~~The third party, the mechanic is responsible to report the results and typically also performs necessary repairs.~~ For an irrigation system report it will be the responsibility of the Local Agency or its representative (MWELO section 493.0) to notify the property owner that a report is required. The onus will then be upon the property owner to verify the size of their landscape and see that a report is submitted to a DWR website created for this program. A third party such as the landscape service provider who are typically well versed in the criteria that will be asked for in the report or property manager can manage the creation of the report (and should already be aware of the size of the landscape) on behalf of the owner.

The Independent Technical Panel Recommends That:

The Water Conservation in Landscaping Act (Government Code, Article 10.8, sections 65591 – 65599), be amended at the appropriate place to add the following:

Sec._____. (a) Upon notice from the local agency or its representative, each owner or owner's agent of an irrigated landscape of more than one acre shall submit a landscape irrigation report once every three years to the Department of Water Resources.

(b) The first landscape irrigation report shall be submitted to the Department by:

(1) January 1, ~~2017~~ 2018 for multi-family residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional landscapes.

(2) January 1, 2020 for single-family residential landscapes.

(c) Each local agency, as such term is defined in section 491(oo) of Chapter 2.7, Title 23, California Code of Regulations, shall notify each owner of an irrigated landscape subject to the requirements of this section at least 60 days in advance of any date by which a landscape irrigation report shall be submitted.

(d) The Department, in consultation with the California Urban Water Conservation Council and the California Landscape Contractors Association and other industry stakeholders, shall create a template for an irrigation inspection report form, an internet portal for electronic submission of such report forms, ~~and~~ a database accessible to local agencies and water suppliers~~.~~ and a method to notify the local agency that a report has been submitted

(e) Each landscape irrigation report shall include the following:

(1) Irrigation system overview: water meter number and type (if existing), assessor parcel number, irrigation zone map, zone description, plant factor by zone (MWELO defaults) and water source (potable or non-potable)~~.~~

(2) Water budget as defined in MWELO: gallons per minute per zone, operating pressure by zone, expected peak month consumption.

(3) List of responsible parties: owner, landscape ~~contractor~~ professional, property manager or other agent as assigned by the owner.

(f) Properties using non-potable sources of irrigation water are exempt

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(g) Local agencies utilizing water conservation based rate structures are exempt

(h) Properties found to be 25% or higher over their approved water budgets as defined by MWELO or local ordinance shall be notified as such via a correction notice. Failure of property owners to respond or comply will be subject to possible fines as outlined ~~by local mandates~~ in section 492.2 of the Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELO).

(f) Not later than three years after the initiation of the on-line landscape reporting system authorized herein, the department shall submit to the Governor and the Legislature a summary of the data compiled together with any recommendations for revising reporting requirements or the provisions relating to existing landscapes in the MWELO.