



Turf Replacement Initiative

Program Goals

The Governor's Executive Order B-29-15 directs the California Department of Water Resources (Department) to "lead a statewide initiative, in partnership with local agencies, to collectively replace 50 million square feet of lawns and ornamental turf with drought tolerant landscapes. The Department shall provide funding to allow for lawn replacement programs in underserved communities, which will complement local programs already underway across the State."

In response to the Executive Order, the Department will establish a program with two primary goals:

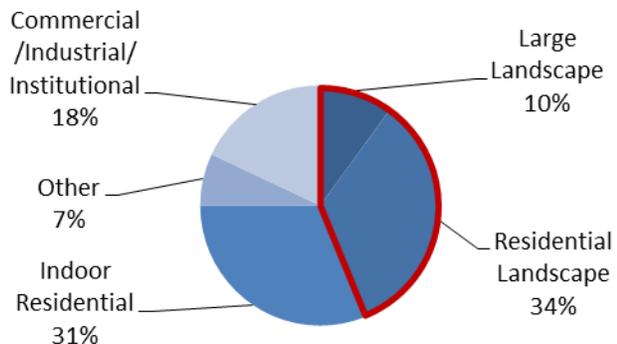
- *Water savings:* Both short term, as homeowners cut back or stop lawn irrigation this summer, and long term, as turf is replaced with low water use landscapes.
- *Environmental benefits:* Low water use landscapes provide multiple environmental benefits including reduced run off, improved water quality, beneficial habitat, reduction in energy requirements, and greenhouse gas emissions associated with landscape maintenance and water production and treatment.

Background

Because outdoor irrigation represents the largest component of urban water use, as shown in the portion of the pie chart outlined in red, it is a primary focus of statewide water use reduction efforts. Reducing unnecessary water use is a key component of supporting California long-term sustainability and managing our water resources.

Potential water savings attributable to turf replacement vary depending on climate differences, variability in landscape and irrigation replacement options, and human behavior. The report "Turf Removal & Replacement - Lessons Learned" (CUWCC 2015) indicates that across California turf-replacement reduces water use from 18% to 83%, resulting in an average water savings of approximately 13 to 70 gallons per square foot per year. The Department anticipates that implementation of these programs will result in both water savings and environmental benefits. Parameters to quantify both will be tracked as each program is implemented.

Statewide Urban Water-Use: Twelve-Year Average, 1998-2010



Water Plan Update, 2013.

Program Design

The Department has budgeted \$25 million in Prop 1 funds to help finance the Turf Replacement Initiative in the Governor's Executive Order. The program will include three components:

- *Rebates and Direct Install.* The Department will support turf removal and lawn conversion efforts implemented through customer rebates or direct installs with a focus on specified underserved, severely impacted, and drought stricken communities in the San Joaquin Valley, and disadvantaged communities in other areas.
- *Commercial, Industrial and Institutional (CII) turf conversion in partnership with the California Conservation Corps.* This program component will target government and commercial buildings in the San Joaquin Valley.
- *Statewide Campaign to Promote Low Water Use Landscapes.* The Department will lead a statewide campaign, in partnership with regional and local water agencies, to promote the conversion of lawns and other turf to low water use landscapes.

Lawn Conversion Rebates and Direct-Install Program

With a focus on underserved communities that have been hit hard by drought, The Department proposes to implement the Turf Replacement Initiative through a targeted and monitored rebate program, and in some locations, a direct-install program. Both options would have minimum planting and retrofit requirements. Approximately \$25 million will support the conversion of over 10 million square feet of turf at roughly 10,000 homes and a number of businesses, achieving 20 percent of the statewide goal of 50 million square feet.

The Department continues to partner with the California Urban Water Conservation Council (CUWCC) and other non-profit organizations to provide technical assistance and workshops to homeowners and landscapers on lawn-conversion efficient irrigation management.

Statewide Campaign to Promote Low-Water-Use Landscapes

The Department will lead a statewide campaign, in partnership with *Save Our Water*, other State, regional, and local agencies, as well as non-profit and other entities to promote low water use landscapes and the conversion of turf landscapes across the State. The campaign will raise awareness and provide information to residential, commercial, industrial and institutional customers on the multiple benefits of low water use landscapes. Specific activities will include; outreach, community engagement, and technical and financial support for public participation in landscape conversion events. It will also track the total square feet of turf removal across the State and encourage local agencies to join the effort. The campaign will seek pledges by local agencies and municipalities to meet the statewide goal.

Timeline

The Department expects to have the Turf Replacement Initiative implemented this summer.

For more information, or to be informed of updates, please see www.water.ca.gov.