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Sent: Thursday, March 13, 2008 1:56 PM
To: GSchmidt@schmidt-design.com; mweo@water.ca.gov
Cc: David Preciado
Subject: [MWEO] Model Efficient Landscape Ordinance Comments

To the Ordinance writers and reviewers:

I reviewed the Model Efficient Landscape Ordinance current 3/10/08 and had the following comments:

Definition 27: Landscape area only allows 10% of the pervious, non-irrigated planting areas to be counted toward water allowance. I think there should be a higher allowance so that there is encouragement to use pervious surfaces instead of solid planting. This might help allow for a small, useable lawn area surrounded by a large decomposed granite perimeter with drip irrigated plants. If this stays at 10% I would be encouraged to plant as much area as possible to increase my water allowance. This is counter to the goal.

Definition 33 - Low volume irrigation is defined as having a flow rate of 0.75" per hour. Flow rate is not defined. Is it the amount coming out of nozzle, or the precipitation rate of the triangular spaced system? If it is the precipitation rate, this will allow most rotor type sprinklers, so slopes can be irrigated with rotors. If flow rate defines the volume coming out of the nozzle, then inches per hour is not the right unit to use to measure this.

492.10 Grading Plan: Why not call this a "Landscape Grading Plan"? Typically a "Grading Plan" must be prepared by a licensed Civil Engineer. This plan does not really perform the same function as a site grading plan, so should not be called the same thing.

492.8.1.b (2): 4:1 turf areas would seem to be too steep to prevent run-off in spray irrigated turf. Drip would be impractical on a 4:1 sloped lawn. 5:1 may be more appropriate.

492.8.1.c (4) Pool and spa covers should be required.

492.8.2: The title "Specifications" is confusing and is in conflict with the common meaning in the industry. The word "Requirements" would be a better title for this section to avoid confusing these requirements with the Project Specifications (which is a booklet, or other documentation detailing the precise materials and techniques to be used in the construction). Specifications are not defined in the definitions, and yet in the certification forms, we are required to certify them.

492.8.2.(a)5 : Benchmark: Why is inclusion of "Benchmark" on the forms so important or even needed? The effort to research the benchmark will be too burdensome for small home projects, and landscape upgrades, and does not add to the appropriate information. Many small projects can be designed to the finish floor of the building, instead of the expense of hiring a surveyor.

492.8.2 (b) 10 Slopes greater than 4:1 require low volume irrigation or drip. Typically we are trying to establish hydroseed on large slopes over 4:1, so rotor sprays are necessary. Please make sure the ordinance does not prevent watering hydroseed with rotor type irrigation.

493.1.4.b.2: Agency audit costs are to be paid by the owner. What limit is put on these costs? The cost to single family residences may be excessive! Also, There needs to be a reimbursement to the owner if the agency requires an extra audit, and does not find a violation.

Water Budget Calculation Section C3 (Page 40) The Epsilon symbol in the formula is not defined in the ETWU formula. This formula is not clear it looks like the "1 to n" says "ton". What does this formula calculate? Greek Characters may not be available or understandable to everyone or print out correctly on printers.

ETo Tables: Please provide the source where this information can be accessed on line

Rainfall: Please provide an acceptable source for historic rainfall data to be used in the calculations.

Forms: Certification of Completion Section G signatures: Certifications covering everything are not insurable. There needs to be space on the form for disclosure of minor deviations, plan changes, construction changes, and substitutions of equipment that was not available, etc.

2,500 SF rule: For Home remodels, can we do 2,400 square foot projects incrementally to avoid the requirements?

Using Soil amendments to increase moisture holding is not addressed. In many cases, amendments may improve the water holding capacity of the soil, resulting in the need for less irrigation and more water conservation.

The Ordinance does not address the following significant landscape water uses:

Filling pools, spas,
Ponds and fountains
Games: Slip-and-slides, etc.
Wading pools
Power washing
Hosing paving
Washing of vehicles, boats, wave runners
Movable Sprinklers
Soaker hoses
Hand watering/hose use
Construction water use
Home interior water use

Monitoring the water use of a meter would not indicate the water used in landscaping. The water used might be the result of filling pools, household construction, hand watering, interior uses or any of the above listed items. How does the ordinance make allowances for these uses or restrict the uses? How can the water use in landscape be monitored if these other uses are combined on the same meter?

Meter reading: In San Diego, the meter reading has been so haphazard and inaccurate, with many months just estimated. The whole enforcement and auditing program relies on accuracy. The Water Districts must first build confidence that they can accurately read meters and report the results! Why would a citizen agree to pay fines or for audits that are based on meter reading when they know from long experience that the readings are not done monthly, or accurately. This will be the source of many law suits.

Reduce Grading and disturbance: Why doesn't the ordinance encourage doing less grading and displacement of natural vegetation. The less area disturbed, the less irrigation is required!

Leakage: For water conservation, leakage from municipal water pipes must be considered. Even if all users were shut off, a large amount of water would be wasted through the water mains. If the individuals are audited, then the municipal water districts must also be monitored, or the whole program is just a cynical waste of time.

The Big Picture

This ordinance will do much to create jobs for irrigation professionals and water agency employees. It will increase bureaucracy, slow projects, and provide a great deal of public antagonism against the government, especially the Water Agencies and enforcers. This is a cumbersome and costly way to address the issue of water waste.

A better solution would be to have accurate water metering, combined with a single water allowance per dwelling unit per month, to provide the minimum needs of the household. This would be the same for every dwelling unit in the water District. Everything over this basic amount would be billed at double the rate.

For water emergencies:

Stage 2: Double the rate over the allowance.

Stage 3: Triple the rate over the allowance.

Stage 4: Quadruple the rate and impose fines for exterior water use.

This eliminates the cumbersome, burdensome and hard to enforce Model Ordinance, and provides an easily understandable rate based system. The individual can determine the modifications to their property as needed.

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