



March 27, 2008

Attention: Judy Colvin  
Department of Water Resources, Office of Water Use Efficiency and Transfers  
901 P Street, Room 313A  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Comments on Draft Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance Update

Dear Judy:

The Association of Compost Producers (ACP), is a non-profit association of public and private organizations ***dedicated to increasing the quality, value and amount of compost being used in California.*** We do this by promoting activities and regulations that *build healthy soil*, benefiting people and the environment. ACP is pleased to submit the attached comments on the Department's proposed regulations to update the Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance.

A basic tenet of ACP includes promoting the use of compost solutions for multi-media environmental management, providing actual "net environmental benefits" for California. We are organized around the fact that the use of compost has beneficial impacts to soil, air, and water. The use of compost as a soil amendment in landscaping creates an integrated environmental sustainability unlike any other singular recommendation in this ordinance.

ACP supports the need to update the Model Ordinance and to optimize water efficiency in urban and suburban landscaping, and in particular, supports the changes to the soil management plan in section 492.7.

We believe the soil management plan is a very effective tool within Model Ordinance to improve water infiltration, soil penetration and water retention, and ensure adequate water status in the soil profile, thus maximizing water efficiency. Our association has identified and provided comments herein on the benefit of increasing organic matter in the soil profile and the use of mulch as a tool to aid in water conservation in the landscape.

It is our belief that the state of California can substantially impact water use by implementing these recommendations and in addition aid in the re-use and recycling of precious organic resources as compost and mulch.

We look forward to working alongside of the DWR to promote water efficient landscapes and the role that healthy soil plays in water conservation.

Sincerely,

Dan Noble,  
Executive Director

*Association of Compost Producers, March 18, 2008  
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Draft Model Landscape Ordinance*



**Comments on the State of California's  
Draft Model Landscape Ordinance  
By the Association of Compost Producers  
March 18, 2008**

The use of compost promotes water use efficiency in landscapes.

Proper soil preparation has been shown to reduce the water use by improving soil conditions. It is common in California to find compacted soils with poor drainage, often exacerbated by the aftermath of construction. Proper soil amending with compost is among the best management practices for improving these degraded conditions and thereby the water efficiency of the soils. The utilization of compost in landscaping reduces the water necessary to maintain the landscape.

Section 65596 (1) of the statute states that the Ordinance must include provisions for landscape maintenance practices that foster long-term, landscape water conservation.

ACP clearly connects the use of compost in the maintenance of landscapes, to increasing the capacity of the soils to conserve water. In fact, research has shown that in soil profiles of up to 15% soil organic matter, the water holding capacity of soil increases 200-400% in direct proportion to the organic matter in the soil.

In keeping with the language of the Ordinance, ACP agrees that  
*"Landscapes are essential to the quality of life in California by providing areas for active and passive recreation and an enhancement to the environment by cleaning air and water, preventing erosion, offering fire protection, and replacing ecosystems lost to development; and that (e) Landscape design, installation, maintenance and management can and should be water efficient;*

ACP not only agrees, but is available to help with developing the soil portion of the "Water Use Efficiency Education Program" defined in the Ordinance.

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ACP offers the following constructive comments on the current Draft Model Ordinance:

**§ 491. Definitions.**

- "**compost, or organic compost**" is thermophilically decomposed organic matter from one or more biological residual feedstocks, (food residuals, plant material, manure, biosolids) made to defined specifications (such as the "Seal of Testing Assurance" by the US Composting Council).
- "**healthy soil**" is composed of minerals and organic matter, as well as living organisms in proper proportions. The minerals are derived from the weathering of "parent material" - bedrock and overlying sub-soil. When organic material decays to the point it is no longer recognizable, it is called soil organic matter. Compost builds healthy soil from non-living dirt thus greatly increasing water infiltration and water holding capacity of the parent material.
- "**mulch**" means any organic material such as *compost*, wood chips, tree trimmings, leaves, bark, and straw or other *inorganic mineral mulches materials such as rocks, gravel, and decomposed granite* left loose and applied to the soil surface for the beneficial purposes of reducing evaporation and suppressing weeds.
- "**humus**" means any organic matter in soil which has reached a point of stability, where it will break down no further. It is used to improve and amend soil.
- "**organic matter**" is organic material that has broken down into a stable humic substances that are a dark brown or black color that resist further decomposition.
- "**soil organic matter**" is generally measured as a % dry weight of combustible (burnable) material in a given soil sample. Thus soil organic matter comprises all of the organic matter in the soil exclusive of the undecayed material.

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**§492.6. Water Efficient Landscape Worksheet.**  
SECTION B. WATER USE EFFICIENCY STATEMENT

**Suggested added question on the worksheet:**

What mulches or soil amendments were used to improve water retention and infiltration?

**§492.7. Soil Management Plan.**

Note that the Soil test, 1 (a), includes "percentage of organic matter", yet organic matter is not included in the definitions, which is why we recommend adding it.

Also, notice in 3 b) "provide a statement of recommendations to correct or improve soil conditions (i.e., applying organic compost as a soil amendment in planting and turf areas);" yet "organic compost" needs to be defined as recommended herein.

**§492.7. Soil Management Plan.**

*A soil management plan that addresses the soil attributes of the project site shall include a laboratory soil analysis and an on-site assessment with a statement of recommendations by a qualified soil specialist. A soil management plan meeting the following criteria shall be submitted as part of the Landscape Documentation Package.*

*1. A laboratory soil analysis of soil sample(s) from the project site, prior to installation, that evaluates physical and chemical properties shall be required. At a minimum, the soil analysis report shall include:*

- (a) soil texture (percent clay, silt, sand), indicating the percentage of organic matter;*
- (b) approximate soil infiltration rate (either measured or derived from soil texture infiltration rate tables). A range of infiltration rates shall be noted where appropriate;*
- (c) pH;*
- (d) total soluble salts; and*



(e) other soil physical or chemical properties relevant to improving water use efficiency and maintaining plant health (e.g., conductivity, % organic matter, nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, magnesium, sodium, sulfur, etc.).

2. A laboratory soil analysis may be excluded if a certified statement addressing reasons for not completing such a soil analysis is provided by a qualified soil specialist or scientist.

3. Prior to installation, an on-site soil assessment by a qualified soil specialist that identifies soil attributes or conditions that may minimize water use efficiency or limit plant growth shall be required. The on-site soil assessment shall:

- a) identify planting or turf areas that may need amendment;
- b) provide a statement of recommendations to correct or improve soil conditions (i.e., applying organic compost as a soil amendment in planting and turf areas);
- c) conduct a further analysis of soil conditions (i.e., soil profile, hardpan, bulk density, soil toxicity, salinity, etc.), where applicable;

4. A project applicant shall implement the recommendations from the on-site soil assessment and apply any relevant information from the on-site soil assessment to the design plans.

**Note:** Authority Cited: Sections 65595, Gov. Code Reference Section 65595 Gov. Code through Section 492.10, and Section 494