

From: Tracy Morgan Hollingworth [mailto:aslasd@sbcglobal.net]

Sent: Monday, December 29, 2008 5:16 PM

To: Eching, Simon

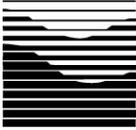
Subject: State Model Water Conservation Ordinance - Comment Ltr from SD Chapter ASLA

Dear Mr. Eching: Attached is the comment letter regarding the State Model Water Conservation Ordinance from the San Diego Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects.

Please confirm receipt of the letter and let me know when the state may take action to issue a final report.

All the best in 2009!

Tracy Morgan Hollingworth, CAE
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December 29, 2008

Department of Water Resources
Office of Water Use Efficiency and Transfers
Attention: Simon Eching (seching@water.ca.gov)
P.O. Box 942836
Sacramento, CA 94236

RE: Comments from the San Diego Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (SDASLA) regarding the November 26, 2008 Modified Text of Proposed Regulations Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance

Dear Mr. Eching:

Thank you for allowing SDASLA to submit the following comments regarding the Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance modified text November 26, 2008.

First, we would like to commend staff on the proposed refinements and modifications. We are encouraged that the current draft is a much improved document. It is obvious that you have listened to the previous comments that we and others have made. We offer the following additional refinements for consideration:

1. Section 491 (cc) Regarding the definition of "landscape area", we are glad to see non-irrigated planting areas such as succulent gardens are now credited as landscape area. We still have concerns regarding this definition, however, and the potential confusion it may create. Our hope is that the Model Ordinance will give us as much flexibility as possible to comply with water efficiency with beautiful landscapes (to meet many clients' tastes) that are appropriate for our region. From our perspective the regulation still could make it difficult for us to create innovative solutions. For example, the current definition of landscape area is the "planting area" subject to MAWA. Pervious "hardscapes" are not allowed in the calculation. We agree that decomposed walking paths or other rigid "paths of travel" should not be included in the calculation for MAWA but we fear that implementers will define a decomposed granite or gravel mulch as a hardscape. We wonder if decomposed granite mulch under a succulent garden, for example, would be considered hardscape and thus not part of the "planting area" if there were a distance between succulents (so as not to create a complete cover). To provide more clear definition we propose to include mulch within the definition as follows. **"means all of the planting areas, turf areas, mulch areas, and water features in a landscape design plan subject to the Maximum Applied Water Allowance (MAWA) calculation.** Mulch as defined in the definition section is loose material which is different than a pervious hardscape that is compacted material that will be used as a path of travel for vehicles or pedestrians.
2. 491(zz) We are also concerned regarding the definition "recreational area". The definition implies that sports fields with organized active play are the only areas that qualify as recreational area. Picnicking and informal leisure passive activities are just as important within public parks. We feel that throwing a Frisbee, picnicking, playing tag, or rolling down a turf covered gentle slope are important forms of play and should be allowed under the definition. Our public parks represent the highest and best use of our water resources because they benefit the most number of people. We do agree that a single family front yard is not a recreation area. Perhaps the definition can clarify by adding wording that includes passive recreation for non-programmed recreation but excludes "ornamental turf". Ornamental turf (which is not a recreational area) can added to be defined to include turf grass that primary purpose is visual and decorative.

Comment 036.1

Comment 036.3

3. 491(ooo) Definition indicates that “**stormwater best management practices are not water features and, therefore, are no subject to the water budget calculation**”. We think this definition should be clarified. It seems to imply that Low Impact Development such as bio-swales and basins will not be counted as landscape area and not included in MAWA. Is this the intent? In our region, stormwater basins can be very large and might be designed to include very high water use plant material. We believe they should not be exempted from the requirements.

Comment 036.4

4. Synthetic turf is a heavily promoted water conserving design solution, yet it doesn't appear to be addressed in the Ordinance. Although the use of synthetic turf reduces water consumption in the landscape, there are environmental costs of this material. For example, the synthetic turf is not a recycled or recyclable material, it contributes to the urban heat island effect, and may have negative effects on water quality. It also promotes an aesthetic that is not consistent with the goals of this ordinance. We suggest that synthetic turf be defined as a pervious hardscape, not be included in the MAWA calculation.

Comment 036.5

5. 492.3 Elements of the Landscape Documentation Package. We appreciate that this section has been significantly streamlined. The inclusion of a grading plan for larger projects is important to provide a reference for where slopes occur and where other topographic features are located. But for small projects in the 3,000 square foot size range, for example, grading plans are often not required. We suggest that the inclusion of a grading plan be contingent on the requirement of a grading permit from the approval agency.

Comment 036.6

6. Water Efficient Landscape Worksheet, 492.4 and Appendix B: We appreciate that this has been significantly streamlined. We question, however, why every irrigation valve has to be included in the “hydrozone table” spreadsheet. Listing each valve seems to be unnecessary information. If each hydrozone is listed then that provides the information that is required. That would simplify the document while still providing the square footage of each hydrozone, percent of area for each, and ability to calculate the MAWA.

Comment 037.7

7. 492.6 (D) - We believe the requirement to limit turf grass to slopes less than 4:1 is excessive. 3:1 maximum has been the standard in the industry for many years, allows for more interesting aesthetic solutions, and does not significantly limit the effectiveness of this ordinance. Please allow turf in areas up to a 3:1 slope.

Comment 037.8

8. 492.7 Irrigation Design Item (M) Requires low volume irrigation (which is generally defined as drip irrigation) on mulch areas. Since mulch is required for all shrub beds then this seems to be requiring drip irrigation for all projects. We believe that the selection of equipment and irrigation methods should be left up to the design professional based on soil type, plant type and a number of other factors. We request to omit this requirement.

Comment 037.9

9. 492.7 Irrigation Design Item (T) mandates that low flow drip irrigation be used for all slopes over 4:1. We again believe the choice of irrigation type should be left to the professional based on each project and the site constraints. There are a number of areas of concern in this section. The most important example is for slopes with highly erosion soils conditions. It may be necessary to utilize a fast growing seeded groundcover to provide erosion control. In our arid part of the state this groundcover may need to be irrigated with spray irrigation to germinate in the summer months so that plant cover will provide erosion control during the wet season. Please allow appropriate low volume spray irrigation.

Comment 037.10

10. 491 (jj) - Definition of Low Volume Irrigation: Currently defined, as noted above, low volume irrigation is narrowly defined as drip irrigation. This definition needs to be expanded to include low volume spray irrigation. Please add to the definition that irrigation with a flow rate equal to or less than 0.75 inches per hour. This would allow efficient low volume stream rotors and similar equipment.

Comment 037.11

11. 492.7 (S) – We believe the intent of the 24” setback from non-permeable surfaces is to reduce wasteful practices of overspray and runoff onto streets, parking lots, and other inappropriate surfaces. We agree with this goal but the setback will create an inappropriate hardship in certain situations. For example, public parks frequently include concrete pathways that meander through open turf areas. It would be impractical to require subsurface irrigation within 24” of these walkways. The important distinction is that spray irrigation landing on

these walkways will not leave the site. We recommend that the intent of this item be defined more clearly to allow flexibility. We suggest wording to allow the installation of spray irrigation adjacent to non-permeable surfaces if the water is contained on site and flows into a landscape area, basin, or swale.

Comment 037.12

12. Finally, we would appreciate some clear direction of how each public agency can determine whether their ordinance is "at least as effective" as the State Model Ordinance.

Thank you for this opportunity and please feel free to contact us if you require any additional information.

Sincerely,



Glen Schmidt

David McCullough, ASLA
SDASLA President

Glen Schmidt, FASLA, Trustee and SDASA
Water Conservation Committee Chairman

