



June 26, 2015

Ms. Julie Saare-Edmonds
CA Department of Water Resources

VIA EMAIL: Julie.saare-edmonds@water.ca.gov

RE: City of Rocklin Comments - June 12, 2015 DRAFT Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELo)

Dear Ms. Saare-Edmonds:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the June 12, 2015 Public Draft of the Revised MWELo.

We all share in the concerns that ongoing drought in California presents; however, the proposed amendments to the existing ordinance present a number of challenges for local government as well as the public.

Similar to other local jurisdictions and agencies throughout the state, we have half the number of staff in our Community Development Department as was in place 10 years ago, and more and more unfunded mandates to implement, many of which we do not have the staff or expertise to administer.

The existing MWELo ordinance has already been a challenge for us to implement and added significant costs and effort for the development community to adhere to.

The new proposal is even more onerous in that the landscape area thresholds that the new ordinance would apply will significantly affect both a greater number of projects, as well as, individual homeowners.

In a climate where California is already viewed as overregulated and suffering real competitive disadvantages with other states, imposing additional far reaching and burdensome regulations seems counterproductive for all. Our overarching comment would be rather than address the issues of drought and conversion of landscapes with more regulations and expensive and time consuming processes such as audits, reporting, etc., that the efforts of the state might be better served by creating more education programs and incentives (rebates, grants, etc.) for both developers and private homeowners to upgrade equipment, as well as provide examples of water conscious landscape pallets and designs that can be emulated.

In addition to the above general comments, our specific comments are as follows:

- The ordinance overall is too complex. There are a number of very small projects (coffee kiosks) and other small “mom and pop” type developments that struggle just to put funding together for construction of a building, site improvements and installation of landscaping. The ordinance requirements result in the need for them to hire professional landscape architects for preparation of plans, and other professionals to conduct water auditing, etc. All of these items add additional costs to many developments that are already on extremely limited budgets.
- Section 490.1 - Changing the applicability of the ordinance from 2,500 square feet to 500 square feet for new construction projects and 2,500 square feet for all rehabilitated landscape projects will significantly increase public agency workload. This is very onerous to both the agencies and the public. We recommend that the thresholds not be changed.
- Section 491 (hh) – This section indicates a landscape designer would only be allowed to prepare “conceptual plans”. Only a landscape architect is able to prepare construction drawings. It is not reasonable for a private homeowner to have to hire a landscape architect to prepare plans for a relatively small project. This requirement will add delays in processing of permits and add significant costs rendering many projects infeasible.
- Section 492.6 (a) (2)(E) - The addition requiring recreational water features such as swimming pools to recirculate water again seems onerous in terms of costs, particularly for homeowners and should be eliminated.
- Section 492.6 (a) (3) (C) (D) - Compost and mulch volumes and depths should be recommendations not mandates.
- Section 492.7 (a)(1) (A) – The added requirement for dedicated landscape water meters for all non-residential irrigated landscapes between 1,000 and 5,000 square feet again seems onerous in terms of costs and raises issues in terms of local agency building inspection staff expertise and workload. It should either be a recommendation (as in the current ordinance or eliminated). These comment also apply to Sections 492.7 (a)(1)(C), (H) and (G) where items such as pressure regulators, high flow sensors and master valves are all proposed to change from recommended elements to required.
- Section 492.12 – We strongly recommend that the ordinance be modified to eliminate the need for irrigation audits. These are expensive for small businesses and developers. Approval of plans that comply with the codes should be adequate. If there is a problem with water waste it will be evident and reported to water agencies by residents, adjoining businesses and/or through observations by local water agencies.
- Section 492.16 subsection (d) and (e) are really just “Best practices” and are not required so we suggest they be left out of the ordinance and put into a separate “Best practices” or informational guide.
- Section 492.17 (b)(2) – adding a sentence about model homes needing to provide information about hiring trained and licensed landscape architects, contractors, designers, etc. and the

benefits of using such professionals should be eliminated. This results in additional costs to the home builders and would create very little true educational impact on the public. A better approach would be for the state to spend its time and money developing public education spots to be aired on local television for all of these types of educational topics and pieces.

- Section 495 – The new section requiring local agencies to conduct annual reporting is again too onerous (especially in terms of data collection and record keeping). These are not reasonable to request of already overburdened local agency staff.

As an alternative, we strongly suggest that the State DWR develop a program whereby “pre-approved” plant species, irrigation systems, soil amendments and other components of water efficient landscaping are available for projects (consistent with applicable climate zones). Projects that utilize the pre-approved components for 100% of their project would be relieved from other requirements of the MWEL0 including the requirement for plans prepared by a landscape architect and irrigation audits. Local governing agencies would only be required to review plans to ensure compliance with the “pre-approved” programs and would not have any additional reporting requirements.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment and for your agency’s consideration of these recommendations.

Sincerely,



Marc Mondell
Economic and Community Development Director
City of Rocklin

Cc: Laura Webster
Karen Garner
Rick Horst
Leslie Woodman