



Community Development and Sustainability Department

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Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELO) Fact Sheet

Why is the City revising the Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance?

Governor Brown's Executive Order of April 1, 2015 (EO B-29-15) directed DWR to update the State's Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELO) through expedited regulation. The California Water Commission approved the revised Ordinance on July 15, 2015.

Which projects are subject to the Ordinance?

All new development projects are subject to the Ordinance. This applies to new and rehabilitated residential, commercial, industrial and institutional projects that require a permit, plan check or design review.

When does the Ordinance go into effect?

The State's Model Ordinance went into effect on December 1, 2015

Can I use the prescriptive checklist option for smaller landscape projects?

Developer installed or Homeowner provided landscaping in Single-Family or Two-Family residential projects with *landscape areas* under 2500 sq. ft. may comply with the newly developed prescriptive measures contained in the State's Ordinance.

"landscape area" means all the planting areas, turf areas, and water features in a landscape design plan subject to the Maximum Applied Water Allowance calculation. The landscape area does not include footprints of buildings or structures, sidewalks, driveways, parking lots, decks, patios, gravel or stone walks, other pervious or non-pervious hardscapes, and other non-irrigated areas designated for non-development (e.g., open spaces and existing native vegetation).

What are the other significant revisions?

More Efficient Irrigation Systems

- Dedicated landscape water meters or submeters are required for residential landscapes over 5000 sq. ft. and non-residential landscapes over 1000 sq. ft.
- Irrigation systems are required to have pressure regulators and master shut-off valves.
- All irrigation emission devices must meet the national standard stated in the Ordinance to ensure that only high efficiency sprinklers are installed.
- Flow sensors that detect and report high flow conditions due to broken pipes and/or popped sprinkler heads are required for landscape areas greater than 5000 sq. ft.

- The minimum width of areas that can be overhead irrigated was changed from 8 feet to 10 feet; areas less than 10 feet wide must be irrigated with subsurface drip or other technology that produces no over spray or runoff.

Incentives for Graywater

Landscapes under 2500 sq. ft. that are irrigated entirely with graywater or captured rainwater are subject only to the irrigation system requirements of the Prescriptive Compliance Option.

Improvements in Onsite Stormwater Capture

Friable soil is required in planted areas to maximize water retention and infiltration. Four yards of compost per 1000 sq. ft. of area must be incorporated. Other recommended measures for increasing onsite stormwater retention are listed in the Ordinance.

Limiting the Portion of Landscapes that can be planted with High Water Use Plants

The maximum amount of water that can be applied to a landscape is reduced from 70% of the reference evapotranspiration (ET_o) to 55% for residential landscape projects, and to 45% of ET_o for non-residential projects. This water allowance reduces the landscape area that can be planted with high water use plants such as turf. For residential projects, the coverage of high water use plants is reduced from 33% to 25% of the landscaped area. In non-residential landscapes, planting with high water use plants is not feasible. However, unchanged in the Ordinance is the extra water allowance made for non-residential areas when used for specific functional areas, such as recreation and edible gardens. The irrigation efficiency of devices used to irrigate landscapes is one of the factors that goes into determining the maximum amount of water allowed. Rather than having one default irrigation efficiency for the entire site, the revised Ordinance allows the irrigation efficiency to be entered for each area of the landscape. The site-wide irrigation efficiency of the previous ordinance was 0.71; the revised Ordinance defines the irrigation efficiency of drip as 0.81 and that of overhead spray as 0.75. Median strips cannot be landscaped with high water use plants, precluding the use of turf. Also because of the requirement to irrigate areas less than ten feet wide with subsurface irrigation or other means that produces no runoff or overspray, the use season turf in parkways is limited.

How do I comply with the ordinance?

Prior to construction, the project applicant shall:

Submit a Landscape Documentation Package to the City of Davis.

The Landscape Documentation Package shall include six (6) elements:

1. Project information
2. Water Efficient Landscape Worksheet
3. Soil management report
4. Landscape design plan
5. Irrigation design plan
6. Grading design plan

At completion of the project, the project applicant shall:

1. Submit the signed Certificate of Completion to the City of Davis for review
2. Ensure that copies of the approved Certificate of Completion are provided to the property owner or his or her designee.

Reporting Requirements

All local agencies will report to the Department of Water Resources on the implementation and enforcement of their ordinances by January 31st of each year.

Contact Information:

