

BAWSCA Template Water Conservation in Landscaping Ordinance Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

- The Ordinance requires dedicated irrigation meters at all accounts with landscaping that exceeds 5,000 square feet. The DWR Model Ordinance only requires dedicated irrigation meters at non-residential accounts with landscaping greater than 5,000 square feet.
- The Ordinance includes water budget parameters and values that are consistent with the DWR Model Ordinance (e.g., plant factors, irrigation efficiency).
- The Ordinance includes landscape parameters that are consistent with the DWR Model Ordinance (e.g., slope restrictions, minimum mulch requirements).
- The Ordinance has been simplified relative to the DWR Model Ordinance, which will make it easier to implement, and therefore, increase the water savings.

What will happen if an agency has not adopted its own ordinance by January 1, 2010, when the DWR Model Ordinance has been deemed effective?

By law, the DWR Model Ordinance becomes effective by statute on January 1, 2010 unless an agency has adopted its own ordinance. However, at this time it is not clear how this law will be enforced by the state. BAWSCA has developed a form letter that each agency can send to DWR in January 2010 that explains that they are in the process of developing their own ordinance in lieu of adopting the DWR Model Ordinance and that they will be providing copies of the DWR Model Ordinance and other materials to project applicants until such time that their local ordinance comes into effect.

How much water will the Ordinance save?

The Ordinance has been designed to achieve a 25% savings on outdoor water use at applicable projects. Actual water savings will likely vary based on among others things, final landscape design and the long-term maintenance of the landscaping and irrigation systems.

Does the Ordinance apply to landscape rehabilitations?

The Ordinance applies to rehabilitated landscapes if that landscape is greater than 1,000 square feet, and if a landscape permit, plan check or design review or expanded water service is required.

How do is a water budget calculated?

There are two components of the water budget calculation: (1) The Maximum Applied Water Allowance (MAWA), and (2) the Estimated Total Water Use. The Water Budget Worksheets provided by BAWSCA are based on the DWR worksheets and present the process, data needs, and equations for estimating both the MAWA and the ETWU for a given landscape. Additional information on how to calculate the water budgets and where to get evapotranspiration values, plant factors and other inputs is available on the DWR website and from the local agency.

Can a landscape project have more than 25% turf?

If a project applicant chooses to prepare a water budget in lieu of complying with the turf restriction, and can demonstrate that the ETWU of the proposed landscape is less than the MAWA, then that turf area would be allowable pursuant to the Ordinance. However, the turf area may still be restricted if a local agency has established a maximum turf area as part of the Ordinance. If the turf area is irrigated with recycled water, then it will be considered a Special Landscape Area and different standards may apply.

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How does the Ordinance impact edible plants, golf courses, recreational fields, parks, areas irrigated with recycled water or gray water, or water features using recycled water?

Pursuant to the Ordinance, and consistent with the DWR Model Ordinance, all of the above are considered “Special Landscape Areas” or SLA’s. For purposes of water budget calculations they are treated differently in that the Evaporation Adjustment Factor (ETAF) for SLAs is 100% of the reference evapotranspiration (ETo). For non-SLA portions of the landscape, the ETAF is 70% of the ETo. The ETAF, when applied to the ETo, adjusts for plant factors and irrigation efficiency. Therefore, the SLAs are allowed 30% more water than other, non-SLA plantings.

Some plants require water to get established, but then do not require much water on a long-term basis. How is this accounted for in the Ordinance?

The checklists and water budgets that summarize the areas of low and high water use plants are based on the long-term average water needs of the plants. The water used for the establishment period (assumed to be one to two years) is not included in the water budget or the calculation of the irrigated landscape area.

How will the water savings associated with the Ordinance be measured and tracked?

Because there are many factors that impact water use on a year-to-year basis (e.g., the weather) specific water savings associated with adoption of the Ordinance will be difficult to track on a near-term basis. What will be possible to track in the near-term, however, is the number of permits and approved water service applications that are issued by a given agency that were deemed by that agency to comply with the Ordinance requirements. On a longer-term basis, and depending on the sophistication of the metering and billing system and the level of coordination between the agency and the water purveyor, it may be possible for BAWSCA to work with the local agency to quantitatively measure the water savings associated with the implementation and enforcement of the Ordinance. BAWSCA will continue to work with the member agencies on this issue.

Is an agency allowed to modify the BAWSCA Template Ordinance?

Each agency has full latitude to modify the BAWSCA Template Ordinance to suit the particulars of its local jurisdiction. However, the Ordinance that an agency adopts must, by state law, be at least as effective as the DWR Model Ordinance in terms of conserving water.

How will the Ordinance that my agency adopts be enforced?

Each agency will decide what level of resources will be assigned to enforcement its Ordinance. The first, and most critical, enforcement step will be when an agency either grants or denies a permit or an application for new or expanded water service based on whether or not the applicant has complied with the terms of the Ordinance.