

**COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA**  
**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS POLICY**

**Subject:**  
**WATER EFFICIENT LANDSCAPE POLICY FOR  
COUNTY OWNED OR MAINTAINED FACILITIES**

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**I. PURPOSE**

It is the intention of this Policy to establish provisions for designing, installing, and maintaining water efficient landscapes for County owned or maintained facilities (County Facilities). In so doing, the County will lead by example and:

- Reduce public facility water consumption from landscapes without a decline in landscape quality;
- Prevent water waste from overspray and/or runoff;
- Demonstrate that California Friendly landscaping is attractive;
- Accelerate the use of regionally appropriate landscape components;
- Ensure the proper maintenance, repair, and rehabilitation of existing landscapes; and
- Comply with The Water Conservation in Landscaping Act as revised by AB1881 and approved by the Governor on September 28, 2006. AB1881 compels local agencies to implement certain landscape water conservation obligations commencing on or before January 1, 2010.

As water becomes more limited and the demand for the resource increases, it is imperative that local agencies reduce public facility water consumption by addressing those areas in which wise planning and best management practices can have the most impact. Landscapes installed or rehabilitated at County Facilities should reflect the regional climatological limitations and employ state-of-the-art irrigation technologies to minimize their reliance on, or waste of, water.

The Board of Supervisors adopted County Ordinance No. 859 that prescribes water efficient landscape practices for new development in the private sector and ensures compliance with AB1881. Likewise, it is the intent of the Board of Supervisors to implement similar practices and compliance mechanisms for County Facilities.

**II. POLICY**

County Facilities shall serve as a model of responsible stewardship for natural and financial resources. Therefore, this Policy shall apply to all landscaping installed, rehabilitated, or maintained in conjunction with said facilities. County Facilities may be installed, rehabilitated or maintained by County departments including but not limited to Transportation, Waste Management, Economic Development Agency, Regional Park and Open-Space District, Flood Control and Water Conservation District, County Fire, County Sheriff, etc.

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This Policy shall incorporate by reference the latest version of the County of Riverside Guide to California Friendly Landscaping (County Landscaping Guide) which is recognized throughout the state for its best management and landscape design practices. The County Landscaping Guide, found at <http://www.rctlma.org/planning/content/devproc/landscape/landscape.html>, shall be used to assist with the design, installation, and maintenance of water efficient landscapes and irrigation systems.

Effective January 1, 2010, all new County facility projects, rehabilitated or repaired landscapes, or landscape maintenance activities shall meet the general landscape objectives outlined below and follow the applicable requirements enumerated in Ordinance No. 859:

**A.      New Facilities**

1. Landscapes shall not exceed a maximum water demand of seventy percent (70%) of its reference evapotranspiration (ET<sub>o</sub>) or any lower percentage as may be required by State legislation. Provisions are made for a higher ET<sub>o</sub> in the Water Budget Calculation for Special Landscape Areas such as parks, sports fields, golf courses, etc. This calculation is reflected in Ord. No. 859.2 and the County Landscape Guide.
2. Use California Friendly or drought tolerant trees, shrubs, and groundcover selected from the plant list found in the County Landscaping Guide and suitable to the microclimate of the area.
3. Use appropriate landscaping for fire safety in fire prone areas including fire resistive trees, shrubs, and groundcover. A list of plants not suitable for fire prone areas is available from the Riverside County Fire Department – Fire Protection and Planning Section.
4. Use state-of-the-art, water-efficient irrigation technologies such as weather based controllers, MP rotators, sub-surface irrigation components, master shut-off valves, rain gauges, etc.
5. Design irrigation systems to prevent water waste, employ best management practices, and use recycled or other non-potable water where available. If a recycled water connection is not readily available then irrigation plans shall make provisions for such a connection at a later date and in a manner that minimizes future retrofit costs.
6. Eliminate turf as a groundcover for medians and parkways. Eliminate turf used for strictly ornamental purposes. Instead, substitute turf with drought

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tolerant groundcover, mulch, decomposed granite, rock products, pavers, etc. Restrict the use of turf to those areas that serve a functional recreation element.

7. Conduct an irrigation audit on new County Facilities prior to the Certificate of Completion, Certificate of Occupancy, or equivalent. Irrigation audits shall be performed by a Certified Landscape Irrigation Auditor. Subsequent irrigation surveys shall occur a minimum of once every five years.
8. County Stormwater Permits require the County to develop irrigation schedules and promote the use of native and/or drought tolerant landscaping in County Facilities. New facilities are also strongly encouraged to incorporate landscape designs that conserve natural areas and drainages and promote the use of landscaped areas for stormwater retention as an integral part of project design.
9. At such time that a new facility is installed, it shall be considered an existing County facility and employ the measures identified in Section II.C. below.

**B. Rehabilitated or Repaired Landscapes at County Facilities**

1. Comply with items A.1. through A.7. above
2. Conduct an initial irrigation audit prior to project completion. Irrigation audits shall be performed by a Certified Landscape Irrigation Auditor. Subsequent irrigation surveys shall occur a minimum of once every five years.
3. Develop routine landscape maintenance schedules and implement water-efficient management and irrigation practices. Employment selection criteria for landscape maintenance entities shall include the successful candidate demonstrating experience and/or training in the installation and maintenance of water-efficient landscape and irrigation systems.

**C. Existing County Facilities**

1. Conduct an initial irrigation audit on existing County Facilities one acre in size or greater. Irrigation audits shall be performed by a Certified Landscape Irrigation Auditor. Subsequent irrigation surveys shall occur a minimum of once every five years. Implement best maintenance and management practices to prevent water waste.
2. Develop routine landscape maintenance schedules and implement water-efficient management and irrigation practices. Employment selection criteria

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for landscape maintenance entities shall include the successful candidate demonstrating experience and/or training in the installation and maintenance of water-efficient landscape and irrigation systems.

**III. BEST MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES.**

The following best maintenance and management practices (BMP) are intended to avoid water waste, are effective at all times, and are permanent.

1. Limits on watering hours: Watering or irrigating of lawn, landscape or other vegetated area with potable water is prohibited between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. on any day, except by use of a hand-held bucket or similar container, a hand-held hose equipped with a positive self-closing water shut-off nozzle or device, or for very short periods of time for the express purpose of adjusting or repairing an irrigation system. Overhead irrigation shall be limited to the hours of 8 pm to 9 am. Exceptions to this schedule may apply to areas of new landscape where a more frequent watering cycle is necessary on a temporary basis to allow for plant establishment. Where existing systems are already operating at peak efficiency and cannot comply with the timeframes stated above, irrigation and/or conversion strategies identified through BMP No. 5 would apply.
2. No excessive water flow or runoff: Watering or irrigating of any lawn, landscape or other vegetated area in a manner that causes or allows excessive water flow or runoff onto an adjoining sidewalk, driveway, street, alley, gutter or ditch is prohibited.
3. No washing down hard or paved surfaces: Washing down hard or paved surfaces is prohibited except when necessary to alleviate safety or sanitary hazards, and then only by use of a hand-held bucket or similar container, a hand-held hose equipped with a positive self-closing water shut-off device, a low-volume, high-pressure cleaning machine equipped to recycle any water used, or a low-volume high-pressure water broom. Under no circumstances may wash water be discharged off-site or to a storm drain.
4. Obligation to fix leaks, breaks or malfunctions: Excessive use, loss or escape of water through breaks, leaks or other malfunctions in the water user's plumbing or distribution system for any period of time after such escape of water should have reasonably been discovered and corrected and in no event more than seven (7) days, is prohibited.
5. Retrofit Existing Landscapes: Within in one year from the adoption of this policy, County departments that maintain existing landscapes not currently

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utilizing water efficient irrigation components and technologies will prepare a strategy for conversion to weather based irrigation controllers and water efficient irrigation technologies or management practices. Such irrigation conversion strategies including alternate watering schedules shall be brought back to the Board of Supervisors for evaluation and prioritization.

**Reference:**

Minute Order 3.25 of 08/09/2005