

Memorandum

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Be energy efficient!*

To: DISTRICT LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS
DESIGN MANAGEMENT BOARD

Date: August 19, 2010

From: KEITH ROBINSON, Principal
Landscape Architecture Program



Subject: Water Conservation

This memo is to update you on the current conditions of California's water supplies, compliance with water rationing procedures, and provide clarification on implementation of the State's recently revised Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELO).

The 09/10 rain and snow totals have helped to ease water shortage conditions around the state. Water year forecasts for statewide runoff are now about 90 percent of historical average. Reservoir storage on May 1 was 95 percent of the statewide average, an improvement from the 80 percent storage of a year ago. Nonetheless, the Department is committed to being a good steward of California's resources by implementing proactive and sustainable ongoing water conservation practices. This includes a continuous practice of implementing water efficient practices on Department and partner designed projects that allows roadside planting to withstand periods of water shortages, and coordinating with District Maintenance to manage and use water wisely.

While the current water supply has improved, water rationing programs at the local level may continue. Your attention is directed to Chapter 29 of the Department's Project Development Procedures Manual, "Plans, Specifications and Estimate," that requires documentation of water availability from the local water agency prior to advertisement of highway planting work when mandatory rationing exists.

On January 1, 2010, an updated MWELO was adopted by the Department of Water Resources. Although there has been some confusion about whether this model ordinance is a new requirement for the Department, a similar state model ordinance has been in place since 1990. The MWELO requires local agencies to implement and enforce the provisions of the model ordinance or its local landscape ordinance. The MWELO applies to local agency and private development projects that require a building or landscape permit, plan check or design review for new or rehabilitated landscape projects. These requirements typically don't apply to highway planting projects within the state right-of-way. However, if a local agency or water purveyor requires the Department to comply with all or parts of the model or local ordinance to obtain water service, it is our policy to conform to local water conservation goals and requirements in order to coordinate with local efforts, respond to the state's water shortages, and conserve

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California's water supply. This includes projects that require an encroachment permit for work on the state right-of-way.

At a minimum, appropriate district staff should be familiar with the Maximum Applied Water Allowance (MAWA) and Estimated Total Water Use (ETWU) calculations in the MWELD or local ordinance which establish water rates based on these calculations. To find information about MAWA and ETWU and other specific information about the local water efficient landscape ordinances adopted by the cities or counties in your District go to:

<http://www.water.ca.gov/wateruseefficiency/landscapeordinance/>.

Current policies and standards for planting and irrigation to achieve water conservation are still applicable and provide the necessary discretion for the Districts to implement appropriate water conservation strategies to comply with local goals and ordinances. Well designed roadside planting which meets the Departmental policy and standards, and local ordinances will result in the minimal use of water necessary to maintain slope integrity and stormwater quality, and just as importantly reduce long term maintenance costs.

Please ensure that district staff understand the policies and principles of water conservation and any local ordinances that require our cooperation. The Landscape Architecture Program is committed to demonstrating to local agencies, the public, and the landscape industry that water conservation is integral part of our roadside design and management strategies.

Thank you in advance for your cooperation. If you have any questions, please contact Dennis Cadd at (916) 654-5370 or myself at (916) 654-6200.

c: Parviz Lashai – HQ Maintenance
Dennis Cadd