



# The Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance

**Using Organics to help meet the  
Goals of the Model Ordinance**

# AB-325 1990

- Model Ordinance into effect 1993
- Many cities ignored it or exempted themselves
- Water Budget approach
- Targeted at mostly new construction

# Legislature tries again

- AB 2717 (2004)-Landscape Task Force convened by California Urban Water Conservation Council in 2005
- 30 members plus 84 work group members
- 43 Recommendations-Report to the Legislature
- Estimates of potential water savings of 600,000 to 1,000,000 AF per year

# Task Force Recommendations

- 43 Recommendations, 4 work groups
  1. Coordination, Processes and Institutions
  2. Irrigation
  3. Landscape Design, Plants, Turfgrasses, Soils
  4. Economics

# AB 1881 Statutes of 2006

- DWR Updates the (AB325) Model Ordinance adopted in 1993
  - Follow provisions in 1881
  - Follow recommendations of Landscape Task Force
- Dedicated Landscape Meters- 5000sq.ft.
- Equipment Standards set by CA Energy Commission

# Statewide Application

- Water Budget approach based on local climate
  - Eureka
  - Palm Desert
  - Monterey
  - Lake Tahoe
- Reduce ET Adjustment Factor to 0.7

Landscape Area x Local ETo x  
ET Adjustment Factor (0.7) x  
0.62=gallons of water

# MAWA

- Eureka  $2000\text{sq}' \times 0.7 \times 32.9'' \times 0.62 =$   
– 28,557 gallons
- Palm Desert  $2000\text{sq}' \times 0.7 \times 66.5'' \times 0.62 =$   
– 57,722 gallons
- Red Bluff  $2000\text{sq}' \times 0.7 \times 57.0'' \times 0.62 =$   
– 49,476 gallons

# Applicability

- Mostly **NEW** commercial and public landscapes over 2500 sq. ft.
- Recreational turf, food gardens and landscapes irrigated with recycled water allowed ETAF up 1.0.
- Some residential landscapes are applicable
- Some landscapes exempt by law

# Reduced Water Budget

- ETAF lowered to 0.7 from 0.8
- Plant mix remains at 0.5-meaning the **plant mix doesn't have to change**
- **Improved irrigation efficiency** is the key to reducing the water budget with a lower ETAF

# Existing Landscapes

- Does NOT force retrofits
- Water Budget stays with ETAF of 0.8
- Audits on properties over 1 acre
- On metered accounts—water budget checked
- Un-metered accounts—surveys and audits



UNTD





# Doesn't exclude any plants

- Any plants may be used
  - However we recommend:
- avoid invasive plants
- Consider size, and suitability of plants
- Encourage California natives and other climate appropriate plants
- Follow local tree ordinances



What  
were  
they  
thinking  
???



# No narrow turf

- No turf in areas less than 8' feet wide
- Previously limited to 10'





SPEED  
LIMIT  
45





# No Overspray and Runoff

- Wastes water, wastes energy
- Degrades watersheds
- Damages pavement, buildings, fences
- Liability issues
- Statute addresses stormwater













Great design, Great plant choices





Check  
Valves  
and/or a  
Swing Joint  
can solve  
these  
problems

But the irrigation leaks!

# Slopes

- No turf on 25% or steeper
  - Unless the toe is permeable
- Precip. rate of .75 inches per hour or less on 25% slopes





# 24" setback

- No spray within 24' of hardscape
  - Except where water will stay in the landscape
  - Parks, sports fields
  - Along interior walks





# Applies to some residential landscapes

- Developer installed
- Homeowner-provided landscaping with landscaped area of 5,000 sq. ft. or more (Landscape Area-not lot size)



5675

W



5756



# Local Agencies may adopt a local ordinance that is “at least as effective as the Model Ordinance”

- Regional Ordinances promote consistency
- Regional Ordinances can address regional issues-such as fire suppression and invasive plants
- Local ordinances can be more stringent if conditions warrant
- Can use plant lists
- Can limit turf or water features

# Provisions in AB 1881 specific to compost and mulch

- “use of mulches in shrub areas, garden beds and landscaped areas where appropriate”
- soil assessment (organic matter)
- “provisions for landscape maintenance practices that foster long-term water conservation”.

# Types of Mulch

- Organic
  - Leaves, straw, bark, **compost**, etc.
- Inorganic
  - Gravel, rock, decomposed granite
    - Deserts, high fire risk areas

# Mulch

- Moisture retention
- Weed control
- Thermal moderation
- Erosion Control
- Nutrients
- Esthetics
- Micro-flora and Fauna



Red Hill Country Club, Rancho Cucamonga



# Other Provisions that are influenced by organics

- No Runoff
- Erosion control
- Stormwater retention
- Soil Management
- Maintenance Schedules (replenishing mulch, fertilizing)

# Stakeholder Comments against the use of mulch

- Design, costs and functionality issue and not part of a water conservation ordinance.
  - Mulch saves water by reducing evaporation
  - Mulch is routine
  - Mulch reduces compaction, enriches the soil
- Should not be used in sloping situations
  - Mulch controls erosion

# DWR Reponses

- Mulch will improve soil conditions and reduce evaporation, etc.
- Mulch application is standard in most situations and will not increase costs
- Hydroseeding slurry or other stabilizing products shall be used on slopes-otherwise soil erosion will occur

# Compost in the Model Ordinance

- Amendment rates based on soils testing
- What is appropriate for the plants chosen and climate.

# Benefits of compost

- Retains soil moisture
- Air spaces
- Nutrients
- Harbors beneficial micro-flora and fauna

# What can locals do?

- Lobby local planning agency, and /or public works to keep mulch and compost provisions in locally adopted Landscape Ordinances.
- Lobby water purveyors to keep compost and mulching as part of their water conservation program.
- Continue education and outreach events like today's workshop

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