

California Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance 2015

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

Introduction

Governor Brown's Drought Executive Order of April 1, 2015 (EO B-29-15) directed the Department of Water Resources (DWR) to update the State's Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (WELO) through expedited regulation. The California Water Commission approved the revised WELO on July 15, 2015. The deadline for local agencies to adopt the MWELO or adopt their own WELO, which must be at least as effective in conserving water, is December 1, 2015. The deadline for local agencies creating a regional ordinance is February 1, 2016.

StopWaste created this information sheet to help explain the differences between the 2009 and 2015 WELO. It is not intended as a substitute for the model ordinance and it may not contain all the changes. For the full WELO text, go to water.ca.gov/wateruseefficiency/landscapeordinance.

Some of the new WELO changes exceed certain measures in the Bay-Friendly Basics checklist. The new WELO includes or exceeds five out of the nine Bay-Friendly Basics practices. The three practices not included are: divert 50% C&D waste, choose & locate plants to grow to natural size, and do not plant invasive species. For details, please see the *Bay-Friendly Basics & WELO Comparison* information sheet at stopwaste.org/welo.

Purpose

	NEW 2015 WELO	2009 WELO	WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
Watershed Approach	Watershed based approach to build landscapes that create conditions to enhance soil life, increase carbon storage and oxygen production, conserve energy, and protect air and water quality and habitat.	Water-use efficiency approach to landscapes	Broadens intent of the MWELO from water use efficiency to include a comprehensive approach to sustainable landscaping. The new WELO discourages practices that may save water but have negative environmental impacts. Watershed approach allows for new practices such as compost requirement.

Applicability

	NEW 2015 WELO	2009 WELO	WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
New Development Landscape Area	500–2,500 sf: Prescriptive compliance optional (Appendix D) ≥ 2500 sf: Full compliance	2,500 sf or 5,000 sf	Increased applicability. Prescriptive compliance is easier for small projects.
Existing Development Landscape Area	≥ 2500 sf	≥ 2,500 sf	No change
Graywater or Rainwater Satisfied ETWU	Prescriptive compliance optional. Appendix D (b) (5) irrigation system requirements only.	None	Requires only the irrigation section of Appendix D instead of the entire Appendix D. StopWaste recommends adding compost and mulch requirements for graywater/rainwater landscapes.

Water Budget Changes

	NEW 2015 WELO	2009 WELO	WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
Residential ET Adjustment Factor	0.55	0.70	DWR states that high water use plants are reduced from 33% to 25% of the landscaped area. Water budget is flexible. Possible water use combinations include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 75% low (0.3) and 25% high (0.8) • 51% very low (0.1) and 49% high (0.8) with all drip • 100% moderate (0.4)
Non-residential ET Adjustment Factor	0.45	0.70	DWR states high water use plants are reduced from 33% to infeasible. Water budget is flexible. Possible water use combinations include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90% low (0.3) and 10% high (0.8) • 63% very low (0.1) and 37% high (0.8) with all drip • 70% low (0.3) and 30% moderate (0.5) Unlimited special landscape areas including recreational lawns are still allowed.

Water Budget Changes Continued

	NEW 2015 WELO	2009 WELO	WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
Irrigation Efficiency	Projects can now use a different IE for each hydrozone: 0.81 for drip 0.75 for spray	0.71 average	Water budget calculations will now easily accommodate projects that install products with a mix of irrigation efficiencies.
Plant Factor Source	WUCOLS or other sources as approved by DWR	Derived from WUCOLS	More accurate representation of plant water use.
Plant Factor Range	0 to 0.1 very low 0.1 to 0.3 low	0 to 0.3 low	Separates very low and low water use designations.
Recreational Area	Excludes private single family areas	Vague for residential areas.	Residential lawn can no longer be considered a special landscape area and is therefore limited to 25% of landscape.

Landscape Design Plan

	NEW 2015 WELO	2009 WELO	WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
Medians	High water use plants, 0.7 to 1.0 are prohibited in medians.	None	No turf with a plant factor of 0.7 to 1.0 or other high water use plants in medians.
Compost	Incorporate a minimum of 4CY/1000 sf compost	None	4 CY/1000 sf compost or 1.3 inches compost required. Meets Bay-Friendly Basics requirements, although some jurisdictions have higher requirements.
Mulch Layer	3 in. mulch Recommends local recycled mulch Exemptions for 5% bee habitat	2 in. mulch	3" of mulch are required. Meets Bay-Friendly Basics requirements.
Mulch Layer Type	Organic mulch from recycled materials takes precedent over inorganic mulch	No statement on mulch type	Requires recycled content organic mulch unless there are no local feedstocks or prohibited by Local Fuel Modification Plan.

Irrigation Design Plan

	NEW 2015 WELO	2009 WELO	WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
Water Meters or Submeter	Non-residential ≥ 1,000 sf Residential ≥ 5,000 sf	All projects ≥ 5,000 sf	Lower threshold to require a meter or submeter for non-residential.
Pressure Regulators	Pressure regulating device required if pressure is under or over recommended pressure for irrigation device used.	None	Pressure regulators required if appropriate.
Flow Sensors	Required for all non-residential ≥ 5,000 sf	Recommended	Required flow sensors for non-residential.
Master Valves	Required	None	Master valves required.
Efficiency Requirements	Emission devices must meet the national standard.	None	Sprinklers must have a DU (distribution uniformity) of 0.65 or higher and meet additional national standards.
Low Volume/ Subsurface Irrigation	Subsurface irrigation required in areas less than 10 ft.	Low volume irrigation required in areas less than 8 ft.	Increased requirement from 8 ft. to 10 ft. and changed to subsurface irrigation.

Certification of Completion

	NEW 2015 WELO	2009 WELO	WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
Hydrozone Diagram	Hydrozone diagram in controller required.	None	Diagram with hydrozones shall be kept with irrigation controller.
Maintenance Schedule	Added topdressing compost.	Regular maintenance schedule.	Maintenance schedule has new requirement for topdressing compost.

Irrigation Audits

	NEW 2015 WELO	2009 WELO	WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
Irrigation Audits	Audit must be a third party. Irrigation Auditor Certification Program or Watersense program. Audit of 15% of production homes required.	Audits are required.	Increased auditor qualifications and made production home audits more reasonable.

Prescriptive Compliance Option Appendix D

This chart outlines the new prescriptive compliance option for new development landscape projects that are 500 to 2,500 sf.

REQUIREMENTS	MORE STRINGENT, LESS STRINGENT OR THE SAME AS STANDARD COMPLIANCE OPTION
4CY/1000 sf compost (1.3 in.)	Same
3 in. of mulch	Same
No turf on slopes exceeding 1:4	Same
Automatic irrigation controller with evapotranspiration or soil moisture sensor data and rain sensor.	Same
Pressure regulators (when needed)	Same
Manual shutoff valves	Same
Emission devices must meet the national standard.	Same
Areas less than 10 ft. width irrigated with subsurface.	Same
Turf prohibited in parkways less than 10 ft. wide unless adjacent to exiting vehicles. Any turf in parkways must be irrigated with subsurface irrigation.	More stringent
Residential areas use plants with occasional, little or no summer water (average 0.3) for 75% of the plant area excluding edibles and recycled water areas.	More stringent Water budget allows 51%
Residential areas 25% maximum turf.	More stringent Water budget allows 49% high water using turf
Non-residential areas install climate adapted plants that require occasional, little or no summer water (average 0.3) for 100% of the plant area excluding edibles and areas using recycled water.	More stringent Water budget allows 63%

Prescriptive Compliance Option Appendix D Continued

REQUIREMENTS	MORE STRINGENT, LESS STRINGENT OR THE SAME AS STANDARD COMPLIANCE OPTION
Non-residential no turf allowed.	<p>More stringent</p> <p>Water budget allows 37% high water using turf. Also unlimited amount of recreational turf is allowed.</p> <p>Note: Non-residential projects that are 500–2500 sf that wish to install turf as a recreational area will not meet the prescriptive requirements and will need to follow the standard WELO compliance option, (though this is not likely to affect many projects).</p>
Landscapes greater than 1,000 sf require a private submeter.	More stringent. Standard compliance requires 1000 sf for non-residential and 5,000 sf for residential.
<p>Note: The prescriptive option does not require the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soil analysis • Recirculating water features • Hydrozoning • Low volume irrigation in mulched planting beds • Low volume irrigation within 24 in. of non-permeable surface • Irrigation audit 	Less stringent

Reporting Requirements

	NEW 2015 WELO	2009 WELO	WHAT DOES IT MEAN?
Reporting Requirements	Reports due March 1, 2016 and January 31 of each year thereafter.	None	<p>Yearly reporting requirements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st year is confirming adoption and compliance. • 2nd year and after is on implementation and includes total square feet, number and types of new and retrofit landscapes, descriptions of enforcement, barriers, and more.