

**MEMORANDUM
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS AND FACILITIES
COUNTY OF PLACER**

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors

Date: December 8, 2015

From: Ken Grehm, Director of Public Works and Facilities
By: John Ramirez, Parks Administrator

Subject: Parks / Update Report / Water Conservation

ACTION REQUESTED

Receive an update on results of the County Parks Division's water conservation practices and provide direction on future water conservation options.

BACKGROUND

As a result of the multi-year drought, County Parks staff implemented many water conservation measures in order to meet mandated water use reduction levels imposed by the various water districts in Placer County. While the water reduction measures have been highly successful, staff would like to discuss establishing a structure for designing, installing, maintaining and managing sustainable water efficient landscapes in new and rehabilitated parks and landscapes.

Staff will share a power point presentation that provides an update of the water conservation measures, and their success. Staff will also ask for your Board to provide policy direction for future water conservation practices and projects (attached). This will include both new and rehabilitated landscapes.

Water use reports indicate a savings during 2014 and much more drastic savings in 2015. This is because in 2014, most water districts required a mandatory 20% reduction in water use, but imposed no limit on the number of days public agencies were allowed to water. Consequently, the Parks Division watered the same number of days as 2013 (usually 6 days per week), but reduced usage by adjusting the watering times in irrigation controllers and taking other water reduction measures. In 2015 water districts established much tighter restrictions including a mandatory two days per week maximum watering restriction. Some districts limited the amount of time that water could be applied during a watering cycle, one to as little as 15 minutes per cycle. Also, in 2015, Parks staff identified several areas of low value turf where it was determined watering could be discontinued. Another measure saved substantial amounts of water by placing timers on faucets in areas where irrigation systems were not automated.

The Parks Division is now completing two pilot projects at the Placer County Government Center. They are significantly different types, and will give us the information we need to determine what it will take and how much it will cost to do similar sustainable water reduction projects. One area that is being rehabilitated is the strip of turf that parallels Richardson Drive along the west side of the Community Development Resource Center (CDRC) towards Bell Road. The turf is being removed, subsurface irrigation is being installed and decomposed granite will be spread over the entire area. The other pilot project consists of removing turf and some landscape plants from small planter areas throughout the parking lot at the CDRC. The turf is being replaced with bark and the overhead irrigation is being converted to drip irrigation. The CDRC projects total 3,000 square feet, and the estimated cost of the project is \$16,000 or \$5.42 per square foot. The projects are now nearing completion.

ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE

Projects to rehabilitate parks and landscapes to reduce watering requirements are categorically exempt from CEQA, pursuant to Title 14, California Code of Regulations, Section 15301, which allows for the operations, repair, maintenance or minor alterations of existing facilities.

FISCAL IMPACT

In the FY 2015/16 budget, there is \$125,000 available to begin undertaking identified high priority projects. The Water Conservation Plan will be a multi-year effort. Staff will continue to complete water conservation projects as funding is secured.

Attachment 1 – Policy Issues, New and Rehabilitated Landscapes

Policy Issues New Landscapes

- Limit the use of ornamental turf. No new non-sports turf shall be installed.
- Aggressively pursue reclaimed water at every opportunity.
- Parking lot planters shall be planted with minimal quantity of drought tolerant plants and watered with subsurface irrigation.
- Tie irrigation systems to computerized irrigation network, when feasible.

Policy Issues Rehabilitated Landscapes

- Preserve high value landscaping, especially trees. Invest in subsurface irrigation to trees.
- Remove non-sports and non-park turf and renovate areas to drought tolerant landscapes
- Identify areas that are overplanted, then thin or completely remove landscape plants.
- Greatly reduce or eliminate landscape plants in median landscapes and along streets and roads and replace with stamped concrete, hardscape, and trees
- Work towards automating all irrigation systems.

