

From Vision to Reality

San Diego's Sustainable Landscapes Program

I. Introduction

The *Sustainable Landscapes Program* (SLP) is designed to reduce the amount of potable water applied to urban landscapes and to reduce pollutant infiltration into local waterways. The program aims to provide a practical, integrated approach to help the public comply with the spirit of two separate regulations that impact urban landscapes: California's Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance and the San Diego Regional Water Quality Control Board's Municipal Stormwater Permit. The SLP is a collaborative effort among three public agencies, a private water utility, and two non-profit organizations within San Diego County. SLP offerings include an attractive publication conveying design guidelines; diverse options for homeowner education; professional training; personalized technical assistance; generous financial incentives; and convenient access to landscape materials.

II. Background

The SLP is principally targeted at the residential-scale urban landscapes, although the program's guidelines are fully transferable to all types of urban landscapes. The SLP's comprehensive scope is a departure from conventional landscape water conservation programs in that it goes well beyond merely providing a financial incentive for a specific device, to actually providing a full spectrum of program resources to support participants at every stage of their projects – from planning through implementation. Projected SLP benefits include: 1) water use reduction; 2) green waste reduction; 3) labor reduction; 4) CO₂ emissions reduction; and 5) water quality improvements.

III. Approach

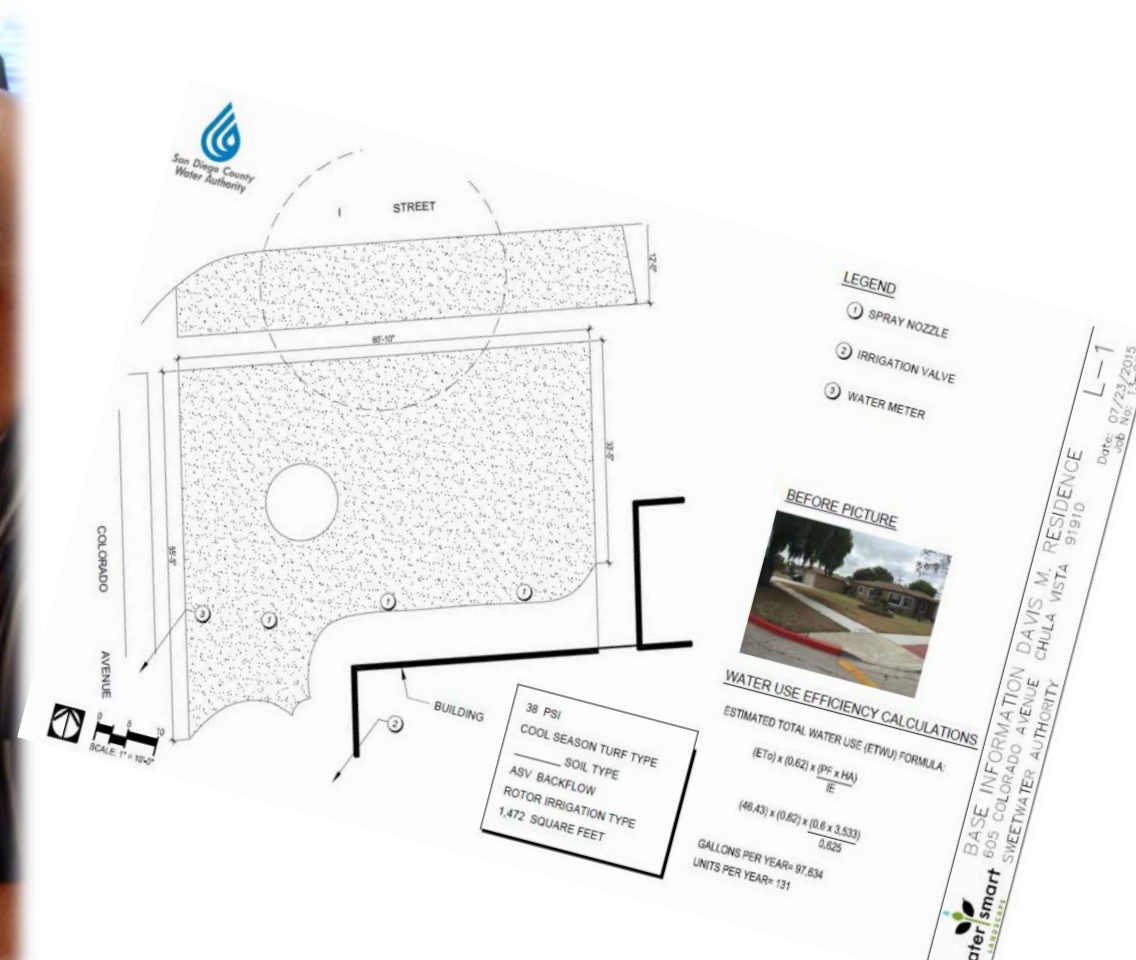
- **HOLISTIC:** Includes comprehensive and integrated sustainability concepts at a watershed level, designed to generate multiple resource benefits.
- **GRANT FUNDED:** Made possible by a San Diego Integrated Regional Water Management Program, Proposition 84, Round 1, grant from the California Department of Water Resources.



IV. Methods and Results



1 – Development of Landscape Guidelines. An attractive 71-page illustrated guide book, based on extensive research, was developed in consultation with a Technical Advisory Committee. It combines water efficiency and watershed protection best practices and is available in print and online.



3 – Technical Assistance. Diverse offerings included, professional site evaluations, creation of initial site plans to scale; personalized in-class landscape design coaching (emphasis on plants, irrigation, and stormwater detention), and on-site design coaching by qualified pros.



5 – Financial Incentives. Program started to accept applications in fall of 2016. Selected participants are required to implement projects per SLP specifications. An incentive of \$1.75 / sq. ft. is available for residential projects from 500 to 3,000 square feet. The total targeted turf conversion area is 6.25 acres, or an estimated 181 sites (1,500 sq. ft. avg. per site). Other grant funding available for additional projects.



2 – Education & Training. Residential education and professional training courses to learn and practice the concepts contained in the guide book. 100s of participants attended classes offered county-wide by the Surfrider Foundation and the San Diego County Water Authority.



4 – Marketing & Outreach. Developed publications and collateral materials, leveraged earned media; conducted regional outreach to raise program awareness and interest; disseminated program information at conferences; currently 402 active projects of which 100 approved for payment.



6 – Landscape Materials Provision. In collaboration with industry suppliers, the program is improving public access to sources of compost and mulch for use in landscaping projects. Mulching turf areas in-place reduces the use of pesticides and green waste, enhances infiltration, and improves the soil's moisture retention capacity.

V. Conclusions

- ✓ Designed to align with the San Diego Integrated Regional Water Management Program's vision for collaborative, watershed-based resource management solutions.
- ✓ Comprehensive and innovative approach to implementing required best practices will yield resource benefits beyond water conservation and stormwater management (e.g., energy, air, soil, etc.).
- ✓ This model enjoys broad support from state agencies and the California Urban Water Conservation Council.



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VI. Sustainable Landscapes Program Partners



