This presentation premiered at WaterSmart Innovations

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Course Correcting Your Incentive Program

October 2, 2019
Metropolitan Water District

Regional Water Wholesaler
26 Member Agencies
5,200 Square Miles, 6 Counties
~19 Million People
~4.0 MAF Regional Annual Demand (MWD supplies about one-half)
Drought Conditions Leading to 2015

OCT 2011: None
OCT 2012: Abnormal
OCT 2013: Moderate
OCT 2014: Extreme

Extreme and Exceptional Intensity Percentage
Governor Declares Drought Emergency
Gov. Brown Issues Call For Mandatory 25% Water Reduction With No End In Sight For Drought

April 1, 2015

First time in 75 years with no snow
History of Turf Removal Program

- Member Agency Administered program in 2008
- Initially $0.30/Sq. Ft.
- Increased to $1/Sq. Ft. with grant funds in 2011
- Board approved maintaining rebate at $1 when grants ended in 2013
Southland water district OKs $350 million more for lawn-replacement rebates

Denise Hurst of Long Beach shows the drought-tolerant garden she planted with the help of a city program that offers rebates of $3.50 per square foot for residents who tear up their water-guzzling lawns and plant drought-resistant plants. Board members of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California voted Tuesday to add $350 million to the district's lawn-removal rebate program. (Nick Ut / Associated Press)

Southland water district ends popular lawn-removal rebate program

Ruben Hernandez removes turf to make room for a 12-foot decomposed granite pathway at the Miller Coors brewery in Irwindale. (Gary Friedman / Los Angeles Times)
Regional Turf Removal Program

- January 2014 - Launched
- May 2014 - Board increased rebate to $2/Sq. Ft as important drought response
- July 2014 – Staff implement additional policies for “Large Turf” reservations over $100,000
  - Detailed site maps
  - MWD site inspections before and after
  - Rebates limited to project costs
  - Allowance for reservations over 120 days
Turf Removal Program Objectives

- Accelerate the region’s ability to comply with 20% water use reduction by 2020
- Increase public awareness of water efficient landscaping
- Transform the market toward more efficient outdoor water use practices
- Act as an option for increased water savings during critical drought periods
Date indicates when application was submitted. All projects indicated have been completed.
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Turf Removal Distribution

Turf Rebate by Zip Code

# of Turf Rebates
- 0 - 50
- 51 - 133
- 134 - 244
- 245 - 465
- 466 - 970

Miles
Average Water Savings (Gallons per square feet of turf removed per year)

- Commercial: 90 gal/ sq. ft./ year
- IndInsti: 32 gal/ sq. ft./ year
- Mobile: 84 gal/ sq. ft./ year
- MultiFamily: 42 gal/ sq. ft./ year
- Multiplex: 25 gal/ sq. ft./ year
- SingleFamily: 33 gal/ sq. ft./ year
Program Size

Hard to implement:

- Percent of plant coverage
- Design plans
- Native only
- Inches of mulch
- Pre-post inspection
- Sheet mulching
What to do next?

- Program ended completely in 2016
- MWD Board returns to Water Supply Watch Condition
- Alliance for Water Efficiency audit
  - Add staff
  - Reconvene Program Advisory Committee to discuss a new turf program
Landscape Transformation Program

- Multi-pronged approach to maximize water utilization and conservation
- Plant density requirements
- Incorporates watershed components to capture runoff
- Water efficient irrigation
Program Activity

Reserved Sq. Ft.

Thousands

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Sq. Ft.
Success or Failure?

- Program goals
  - Water savings
  - Sustainability
- Expectation v. Reality
  - Drought v. Non-drought periods
  - Budget
  - Application numbers
- Marketing

Every day is a chance to save water. And money.
Transform your landscape. Get a rebate at bewaterwise.com
Member Agency and Participant Feedback

Per sq. ft. incentive
- Not enough to motivate customers to action

Maximum square footage
- Does not allow for full yard conversions
- Limits mid-size commercial conversions

Five plants per 100 sq. ft.
- Expensive and difficult to achieve

Requiring front yards first
- Confusion in areas without traditional front yards

Name of the program
- Can be confusing to customers
Turf Replacement Program

- Decrease plant density requirement
- Increase square footage and incentive amount
- Name change
- Kept stormwater capture requirement
- Increased promotion of CA natives and organic materials
Results

Number of Applications

Reserved Sq Ft

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How do I know when to change my program?

- Clearly define program goals and expectations
- Ease of implementation v. high participation
- Quality of projects v. quantity of projects
- Marketing and resources are helpful but not guarantees of success
- FEEDBACK!
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