



**Board Planning Committee
November 14, 2019**

SUBJECT:

Approve and Authorize the Outdoor Water Use Efficiency Program

BACKGROUND:

Since 2014, Eastern Municipal Water District (EMWD) customers removed 9.4 million square feet of non-functional turf at residential and non-residential properties, and received a total of \$16,400,000 in rebates from EMWD, Metropolitan Water District (MWD), the California Department of Water Resources (DWR) and the United States Bureau of Reclamation (USBR).

On January 17, 2014, Governor Brown declared a drought emergency for California prompting water agencies throughout the state to accelerate conservation efforts. MWD and member agencies implemented a historic \$450 million conservation outreach campaign and increased turf removal rebates to \$2 per square foot. Over the next two years, EMWD customers removed almost 9 million square feet of turf. In mid-2016 MWD suspended its turf rebate program, and in April 2017 the Governor issued an executive order lifting the drought emergency. EMWD continued offering turf rebates funded through grant partnerships with DWR and USBR. MWD restarted their turf replacement program in 2018, offering a \$1 per square foot rebate and doubling the rebate to \$2 per square foot in 2019. However, turf replacement activity levels remain low throughout MWD's service area.

In order to increase program activity levels and respond to customer needs, staff proposes a new Outdoor Water Use Efficiency Program (Program) that restructures existing programs and adopted budgets to promote a holistic approach to landscape transformation. The Program will incorporate turf transformation, irrigation management, contractor training, marketing and outreach, an industry-leading standard of customer service, and flexible incentives for all EMWD customers.

Program elements include the following:

- A \$1 per square foot rebate added to MWD's \$2 per square foot rebate, to offer EMWD customers a \$3 per square foot turf replacement rebate;
- Landscape design assistance;
- On-bill financing option;
- Weather-based controller and drip irrigation rebates;
- Free homeowner and professional contractor training courses; and
- EMWD-focused marketing and public outreach campaign.

Customers will apply for the Program through a new EMWD microsite, and Conservation staff will work with them directly to streamline the process and ensure excellent customer service.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

None

STRATEGIC PLANNING GOAL/OBJECTIVE:

Water Use Efficiency: Promote efficient use of water resources through the implementation of industry-leading programs and practices combined with customer education and awareness.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT:

This item is not a project as defined in the California Environmental Quality Act Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3, Section 15378.

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve and authorize the following:

1. Authorize staff to supplement MWD's current \$2 per square foot turf replacement rebate with an additional \$1 per square foot using funds allocated in the District's adopted budget for fiscal years 2019-20 and 2020-21.
2. Authorize staff to develop the new Outdoor Water Use Efficiency Program that includes restructuring of existing programs, a comprehensive marketing campaign, and the addition of on-bill financing.

SUBMITTED BY:


Paul D. Jones II, P.E., General Manager

11/12/2019


Nick Kanetis, Deputy General Manager

11/8/2019

Attachment(s):

Presentation

11/20/19 Board Meeting

Staff Contact: Dan Carney