



One Water and Adaptation Committee

# Update on Stormwater Benefits of Turf Replacement

Item 6c

July 7, 2025

# Item 6c Turf Replacement Program Benefits and Successes

## Subject

Update on Stormwater Benefits of  
Turf Replacement

## Purpose

To provide an update on the history of the Turf Replacement Program and Metropolitan's stacked incentive and co-benefit efforts and to provide a context for discussion following up on the May 2025 presentation from ARLA.

# Presentation Overview

- Previous stacked incentive and co-benefit discussion summary
- History of turf replacement at Metropolitan
- Current program requirements and benefits
- Current stacked incentive and co-benefit efforts
- Next Steps



# Advancing Resilience Through Distributed Stormwater Capture & Conservation

## Previous OWA Committee Discussions

- Enhanced conservation is a scalable source of water supply
- Conservation co-benefits create co-funding opportunities
- Potential Pilot Program with Los Angeles County Department of Public Works
- Staff has met with ARLA and LACDPW to further explore recommendations

# Evolution of Turf Replacement

- 1990 – 2013
  - Member Agency Administered Program funding
  - Grant-funded programs
- 2014 - 2016
  - Turf Removal Program
    - \$350 million budget
    - Over 200 million square feet removed
    - Focus on water savings due to drought conditions
- 2018 – Present
  - Landscape Transformation Program changed to Turf Replacement Program in 2019



## Evolution of Turf Replacement

# Landscape Transformation Program

- Program relaunch in July 2018 with \$1 per sf rebate
- Incorporated watershed principles and increased emphasis on co-benefits
  - 5 plants per 100 square feet
  - Stormwater feature
  - Permeable hardscape
  - Efficient irrigation
  - Mulch for water retention

## Evolution of Turf Replacement

# Turf Replacement Program

- Board approved program change in February 2019
- Maintained focus on watershed principles and co-benefits
- Low activity and member agency and participant feedback led to changes
  - Increase rebate to \$2 per sf
  - 3 plants per 100 sf
  - Program name change
  - Increase in per application sf maximum
- Applications doubled immediately after change
- Tree rebate added in 2024

# Turf Replacement Program





## Program Co-Benefits

# Turf Replacement as a Multi-Benefit Program

- Achieves MWD water savings and demand management goals
- TRP projects also provide:
  - Increased habitat
  - Increased biodiversity
  - Stormwater capture and flow reduction
  - Urban cooling
- Tree rebate provides:
  - Energy conservation
  - Carbon sequestration
  - Air quality improvements
  - Improves soil and reduces erosion

## Stacked Incentives

## Evolution of Co-Funding

- MWD has utilized stacked incentives since the 1990's
- 2022 County of San Diego Stormwater Incentive Program
  - Co-funding added to TRP and device rebates through SDCWA
  - Supplemental programs and project assistance
  - TRP projects effectively reduce wet-weather and dry-weather runoff
  - Currently expanding to full scale \$1M program
  - Similar program launching with MWDOC and Orange County Public Works

# CoSD Waterscape Rebate Program

WRP includes three main elements that support the County's water quality objectives:



## Rain-Saving Best Management Practices (BMPs)

*Payments to fund projects that capture runoff from roofs and paving, then use the water for trees, plants, and gardens.*

Up to \$2,100 (residential) or  
\$6,000 (commercial) for  
Rain Barrels, Cisterns, Rain  
Gardens, and Gutters



## Landscape Optimization Service (LOS)

*Direct support to HOAs and other large landscapes to replace turf with sustainable landscaping.*

\$3-4/sqft to replace grass  
Design cost-share  
SW Feature incentive  
\$1/sqft for native plants



## Partner Programs with Water Supply Agencies


*Enhanced rebates to remove turf, harvest rainwater, and improve agricultural efficiency.*

\$30 on rain barrels  
\$100 on cisterns  
\$1/sqft of turf  
\$25/WBIC station



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO WATERSCAPE REBATE PROGRAM

## SoCalWaterSmart Stacked Incentives for Residential, Commercial, and Agricultural Customers

Program			TOTAL
Turf Replacement	\$2 - \$3/ sq. ft	\$1/ sq. ft.	\$3-\$4/sq. ft.
Weather-Based Irrigation Controllers (LL)	\$35/station	\$25/station	\$60/station
Rain Barrels	\$35/barrel	\$30/barrel	\$65/barrel
Cisterns	\$250-\$350/cistern	\$100/cistern	Up to \$450/cistern



# Pilot Program Impact



Over the 26-month pilot, WRP projects resulted in long-term impacts for regulators and the public.

## INPUTS:

*Projects and investments completed*



**434**

Verified Projects



**1,800**

Residents Actively Engaged



**\$1.3M** County

**\$1.7M** Partners

Incentives Paid

## OUTPUTS:

*Immediately measurable results*



**206,900**

Gallons of Storage Capacity Installed



**291,900**

Square Feet of Impervious Surface Treated



**900,700**

Square Feet of Turf Converted



**107,000**

Square Feet of Native Plants Planted

## OUTCOMES:

*Longer-term benefits valued by the public and regulators*



**5.7**

Wet Weather Flow Reductions (acre-foot per year)



**2.0**

Bacteria Load Reductions (MPN $\times 10^{12}$ /Y)



**123**

Water Savings (acre-foot per year)



**12**

Dry Weather Flow Reductions (acre-foot per year)

# San Diego LOS Program Accomplishments



**14**

Verified Projects



**386,000**

SqFt Turf Converted



**101,000**

SqFt Natives Planted



**53**

AFY Water Savings



**200k+**

Add'l Sqft Removed / In Progress by same HOAs – a 52% increase on original footprint

*"It's been such a benefit. It's been easy. The whole process has been a lot smoother than I thought it would be. I would recommend it to anybody."*

*"Motivating and managing turf projects at HOAs is a huge undertaking. Your program's value is immeasurable".*



# OC RainSmart Rebates Pilot Program



Large Landscape Upgrade Program

\$4/sqft for turf (stacked with partner rebates)  
Full-cost coverage to treat impervious area  
SW Incentive of \$0.10/gallons runoff reduced  
Design cost-share



Rainwater Collection Incentives

Up to \$1,500 per property for Rain Barrels, Cisterns, Rain Gardens, and Gutters



## Eligible Water Districts:

- South Coast WD
- Santa Margarita WD
- El Toro WD
- Trabuco Canyon WD
- MNWD
- City of San Clemente
- LBCWD

## Next Steps

- Receive direction from the Board to Continue discussions with LA County Department of Public Works on potential partnership
  - Enhanced rebate for pilot area with additional stormwater requirements
- Consider utilization of consultants under agreement to explore partnerships in all six counties
- Track results and lessons learned from SD and OC programs
- Report back to the Board in September with informational item on potential pilot and framework for co-benefit funding and partnership



