



Public Works Department

2100 Thousand Oaks Boulevard • Thousand Oaks, CA 91362
Phone 805/449.2400 • Fax 805/449.2475 • www.toaks.org

December 11, 2017

Jay T. Spurgin
Public Works Director

Jeanine Townsend, Clerk to the Board
State Water Resources Control Board
P.O. Box 100
Sacramento, CA 95812-2000



RE: Comment Letter – Prohibiting Wasteful Water Use Practices

Dear Ms. Townsend:

The City of Thousand Oaks would like to offer the following comments on the proposed regulations making wasteful water practices permanent. The majority of the proposed regulations are already prohibited as part of the City's "Permanent Water Conservation" requirements adopted in 2009. Comments on specific areas:

Proposed Regulation

Article 2, Section 963(b)(1)(G) prohibits "The irrigation of turf on public street medians or publicly owned or maintained landscape areas between the street and sidewalk, except where the turf serves a community or neighborhood function"

City's Comment

This section would expand the prohibition of turf to the parkway. The City is cognizant of the need to eliminate unnecessary turf and to convert to landscaping that provides multiple benefits, including low water usage, permeable, and visually appealing, and supports native pollinators. We eliminated almost one million square feet of turf in the last few years, but the process is expensive and time consuming, and it will take multiple years to modify irrigation systems and replant these areas.

Because parkways tend to be narrow, trees grow their roots along the path of the parkway not covered by impervious materials. The open area in several of the City's parkways have grass. Removal of the grass would still require irrigation throughout the parkway to provide adequate water along the root zones to ensure the viability of the City's urban forest. In the long term, we anticipate the elimination of turf and conversion of the parkways to allow for the benefits noted above, and stormwater infiltration where appropriate. However, in the near term, the focus is on completing the medians where turf was removed. This section appears to allow for that flexibility, but the City wanted to clarify this concern and ensure that this flexibility is allowed.



Proposed Regulation

Article 2, Section 963(2)(d)(1) related to HOA's and community service organizations enforcing landscape actions during drought emergencies.

City's Comment

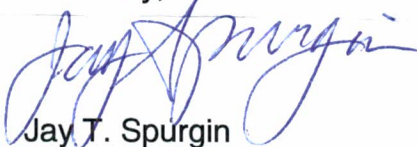
A section needs to be added outlining a specific timeline that an owner in an HOA has to be bring their property into compliance with HOA standards after a drought declaration has been lifted. As the section is currently written, it assumes that during the drought emergency, a homeowner replaced turf or high-water usage landscaping with new drought-tolerant plantings. However, many homeowners did not want to "waste" water during the drought by planting new plants that would require frequent irrigation to become established and let their lawns "Go Brown" as encouraged by the state.

Failure to explicitly define a grace period for compliance with an HOA's standards leaves the homeowners at risk of an overly aggressive HOA enforcement policy. To comply within these aggressive HOA timeframes, the quickest path for the homeowner may be re-sodding. In addition, reports of negative experiences may discourage HOA residents in the future from saving water by letting their landscapes die.

The City recognized and encouraged letting landscapes – especially turf – die by eliminating all code enforcement on landscaping, unless it was a health and safety issue. When the City lifted the local drought declaration on June 2, 2017, the City Council provided a six-month grace period for homeowners to come into compliance. This longer timeframe ensured that homeowners did not have to plant in the heat of summer, which would require significantly more water.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. If you have additional questions or would like to follow up on these comments, please contact Senior Sustainability Analyst John Brooks at (805) 449-2471 or jbrooks@toaks.org.

Sincerely,



Jay T. Spurgin
Public Works Director

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