



The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California

NEWS RELEASE

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PUBLIC'S RESPONSE TO METROPOLITAN'S WATER-SAVING REBATES BREAKS RECORDS **Turf removal rebates lead the way in call for conservation**

Demand for water-saving rebates and turf removal incentives offered by the Metropolitan Water District skyrocketed during the first seven months of 2014 as Southern California consumers and businesses rallied behind the district's conservation call in response to the state's historic drought.

During that time, commercial rebates nearly tripled and residential incentives doubled compared to the similar period last year. Meanwhile, visitors to bewaterwise.com[®], Metropolitan's online drought information and conservation rebate portal, quintupled between January and July.

"The tremendous public response clearly demonstrates that Southern California residents and businesses are fully engaged and enthusiastically answering the statewide mandate to lower demands in this difficult drought," said Metropolitan board Chairman Randy Record.

The dramatic growth in the public's appetite for the district's turf removal rebate highlighted the water-saving momentum, particularly since Metropolitan's Board of Directors in May doubled from \$1 to \$2 per square foot the incentive for consumers and businesses to replace turf with California Friendly[®] plants and drought-tolerant landscaping.

Requests for turf removal rebates since January nearly doubled the total number of requests received over the previous five years. In July alone, requests for residential turf removal rebates increased to 2.5 million square feet—equivalent to removing 1,665 typical Southland front yards—from 99,000 square-feet in January.

The upsurge in Southland business requests was even more pronounced, increasing from 22,000 square feet in January to 4.7 million square feet of turf—equivalent to 82 football fields—in July.

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“The increased demand for rebates is setting district records,” said Metropolitan General Manager Jeffrey Kightlinger. “Our ongoing advertising and outreach campaign is fueling the demand for the water-saving incentives. We’re really pleased with the response we’re seeing from both residents and businesses.”

The outreach campaign also helped drive more visitors to Metropolitan’s bewaterwise.com website. The website logged more than 50,000 visitors the first week Metropolitan’s television ads aired, increasing from less than 10,000 in January.

Demands for Metropolitan’s imported supplies have dropped 15 percent compared to the last dry cycle of similar severity in 2006-07, despite record-setting Southland temperatures this year and more than a half million more people living in the region. Detailing the record hot and dry conditions experienced this year throughout the state and particularly in Southern California, Kightlinger reported Southland temperatures are 5.7 degrees above average in 2014.

“Southern California’s recent gains in water-use efficiency continue a long pattern throughout the region that has seen per capita water use drop about 25 percent since 1990,” Kightlinger said.

“These numbers validate the continuing efforts by Metropolitan and local water agencies to make conservation and efficient water use a permanent part of life in Southern California, drought or no drought,” he said. “This year, we especially need the public to continue its remarkable water-saving efforts to help maintain our stored reserves in case the drought carries over into 2015.”

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The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is a cooperative of 26 cities and water agencies serving nearly 19 million people in six counties. The district imports water from the Colorado River and Northern California to supplement local supplies, and helps its members to develop increased water conservation, recycling, storage and other resource-management programs.