



*The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California*

# NEWS RELEASE

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## POPULAR REBATE RETURNS IN JULY UNDER METROPOLITAN'S NEW LANDSCAPE TRANSFORMATION PROGRAM PROMOTING OUTDOOR WATER SAVINGS MWD board also approves biennial budget, 3 percent annual rate increase to fund capital program, conservation, California WaterFix

Residents and businesses across Southern California interested in swapping out their thirsty grass for more water-efficient, California Friendly® plants will have an added incentive to do so with a new turf removal program approved by the Metropolitan Water District Board of Directors.

The revamped landscape rebate was among several modifications to Metropolitan's water use efficiency incentives approved by the board Tuesday (April 10). Under the new Landscape Transformation Program, the district will offer a rebate of \$1 per square foot of turf removed accessed via [bewaterwise.com](http://bewaterwise.com), starting in July. [The program](#)—to be offered annually—will accept up to \$50 million in applications each year. Some Metropolitan's member agencies also may add additional incentives on top of the \$1 per square foot.

"Metropolitan made a huge mark on the landscape of Southern California with our turf removal rebate during the five-year drought. We hope to continue the region's transformation and build on that momentum through our new rebate," said board Chairman Randy Record.

During the drought, as part of the nation's largest conservation program, Metropolitan's popular [turf removal rebate](#) spurred the removal of 160 million square feet of grass across Southern California—expected to annually save 21,600 acre-feet of water, enough to serve about 64,000 households. Since the program ended in 2015, Metropolitan has been working with its member agencies to create and launch an even more effective program.

The Landscape Transformation Program includes [new rules](#) with a rebate maximum of 1,500 square feet of turf removed for residents and 10,000 square feet for businesses. Rules also require a landscape plan, a watershed approach, efficient irrigation, a certain number of water-saving plants and mulch coverage. Synthetic turf is prohibited.

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In addition, homeowners must remove turf from their front yard. If they do or have done their front lawns in the past, they are eligible to receive a rebate for removing turf from their side or backyard.

“Part of the success of the Landscape Transformation Program is the multiplier effect,” said Bill McDonnell, Metropolitan’s water use efficiency manager. “Neighbors see neighbors replace their grass with colorful California Friendly plants. They see the beauty, the birds, the butterflies it attracts, and they want to do the same. That’s why we want to focus on front yards.”

The long-term nature of the new program provides some reliability to residents and businesses who are planning to redo their yards in the coming years, he added. “We recognize that replacing your lawn is a big project. If you can’t do it this year, but plan to next, the rebate will be back next year,” McDonnell said.

Under the new program, Metropolitan also will offer classes to landscape professionals to become certified water-efficient landscapers. Metropolitan already offers a variety of landscaping classes to the public via its online water-saving portal, [bewaterwise.com](http://bewaterwise.com).

In a separate action Tuesday, Metropolitan’s board also approved a 3 percent rate increase in each of the next two years as part of the agency’s biennial budget for fiscal years 2018/19 and 2019/20.

Metropolitan General Manager Jeffrey Kightlinger said the new two-year spending plan will allow the agency to upgrade parts of the region’s water distribution system, increase its investment in conservation, and begin to fund its share of California WaterFix.

“This budget strikes an equitable balance between funding our strategic priorities and maintaining the agency’s smart financial policies and sensible rate increase,” Kightlinger said.

“Rate increases are never popular, but when you look at what we are doing in this budget—starting to fund California WaterFix to modernize our state’s water delivery system, local conservation programs, and extensive improvements to aging infrastructure—these modest increases are reasonable and smart investments in our future,” he added.

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*The Metropolitan Water District of Southern California is a state-established 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.*