GENERAL GUIDANCE

LESS LAWN MORE SAVINGS

Fact Sheet: New Rules for Watering Lawns in California

California law (AB 1572) will prohibit the use of potable (drinking) water to irrigate nonfunctional turf—lawns that serve no recreational or community purpose—at most commercial, industrial, and institutional (CII) properties, including common areas managed by homeowner associations (HOAs).

California poppy *Eschscholzia californica, California native*

This fact sheet explains what's changing and how to prepare.

Functional Lawn

Nonfunctional Lawn

WHAT IS NONFUNCTIONAL LAWN?

Nonfunctional lawn refers to irrigated lawn that is ornamental and not regularly used for recreation or public gatherings.

Functional Lawn

- School fields
- Sports fields
- Picnic areas
- Designated play spaces
- Any other areas where people regularly gather, play, or engage in recreational activities

Nonfunctional Lawn

- Lawn in medians, roundabouts, or parking lots
- Decorative strips along sidewalks
- Unused patches near signage or building entries
- Lawn between buildings with no clear use
- Decorative lawn along sidewalks, building edges, or fences
- Sloped or oddly shaped areas that are hard to use or water efficiently

WHAT'S CHANGING

- Many properties will no longer be allowed to use potable water to irrigate lawn that isn't actively used for play, gatherings, or other functional purposes.
- These properties must stop watering lawns by their deadline.

The intent is not to remove all green spaces, but to stop wasting drinking water on unused lawn.

WHO NEEDS TO COMPLY?

- Commercial, industrial, and institutional properties (offices, retail centers, schools, hospitals, etc.)
- Common areas of HOAs
- Public agency landscapes (parks, civic campuses, medians)

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU DON'T COMPLY?

Failure to comply with AB 1572's nonfunctional lawn irrigation restrictions can result in civil penalties of up to $1,000 per day (California Water Code §1846). Enforcement specifics may vary by water agency; please contact your local provider for details.

COMPLIANCE TIMELINE

January 1, 2027
Public properties owned or managed by state and local governments, including public school districts

January 1, 2028
Commercial, industrial, and institutional properties

January 1, 2029
Common areas managed by homeowner associations, common interest development, and community service organizations

January 1, 2031
Public properties in Disadvantaged Communities, contingent upon available state financial assistance or when state funding for lawn replacement becomes available

Note: You are not required to replace lawn by these dates—only to stop irrigating with potable water.

Photo by Laurie Meyerpeter

Photo by Tece Markel

Photo by Christine Kohn

IDEAS FOR A BEAUTIFUL, WATER-WISE LANDSCAPE

Many properties are using this transition to create colorful spaces that use less water and serve more purpose. Ideas include:

- **Paths, benches, and shaded seating for walking, gathering, or relaxing**
- **Shade trees and flowering shrubs**
- **Rain gardens and bioswales**
- **Low-water native and water-wise plants**

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

STEP 1: **Identify and Document Nonfunctional Lawn:** Walk your property to assess where lawn is present. Note areas that are unused, narrow, or purely ornamental. Determine which areas are functional and which are not. Take photos, notes, or site maps to document your findings—this record can help track progress and support future self-certification requirements.

STEP 2: **Coordinate with Your Team:** Work with staff, landscape contractors, or maintenance crews to set goals and explore options. Include input from tenants, residents, or other site users when appropriate.

STEP 3: **Make a Plan:** Use rebate-eligible designs, plant lists, and tools from your water provider. Focus first on areas that are highly visible, difficult to maintain, or use the most water.

STEP 4: **Start Small and Build Over Time:** Break up the project into manageable phases to fit your budget, take advantage of rebates, and avoid disrupting day-to-day operations

Remember that you are not required to replace lawn by the compliance dates—only to stop irrigating lawn with potable water.

YOUR WATER PROVIDER IS HERE TO HELP

Need help getting started? Contact your local water provider or visit **NonFunctionalTurfCA.org** to find tools, rebates, and guidance for your property type.

Many water agencies offer:

- Lawn replacement and irrigation rebates
- Free site visits and landscape reviews
- Sample plant lists and design templates
- Tree protection tips and irrigation strategies
- Tools for identifying the highest water use areas

Don't wait for the deadline. Planning and phasing projects early gives you time to spread out costs, access rebates, and avoid rushed decisions.

CALIFORNIA WATER EFFICIENCY PARTNERSHIP

NonFunctionalTurfCA.org