

MAMMOTH COMMUNITY WATER DISTRICT

Landscape Standards Policy

Adopted: May 16, 2024

I. PURPOSE AND AUTHORITY

The purpose of this Landscape Standards Policy (Policy) is to provide guidelines for the installation or rehabilitation, and irrigation, of Landscape Areas for customers of the Mammoth Community Water District (MCWD or District). The goal of this policy is to promote the conservation and efficient use of water and to prevent the waste of this valuable resource. This Policy shall apply to all MCWD water customers, including but not limited to commercial, industrial, residential, and Out-of-District customers.

All customers are required to comply with the MCWD's WSCP. The District is required by the California Water Code to produce and implement an UWMP that includes a WSCP. The UWMP is updated every five years and the WSCP is updated as needed. Additional landscape-related conservation requirements are found in the CA MWELo and the Town of Mammoth Lakes's WELo, whichever is most effective in conserving water.

II. POLICY

This Policy shall be interpreted using the defined terms shown in Part III of this Policy beginning on page 6.

A Landscape Permit shall be required for all proposed new Landscape Areas served with potable water from the District:

- with an aggregate area equal to or greater than 500 square feet (sf), or
- when replacing existing Landscape Area equal to or greater than 2,500 sf.

A Landscape Permit ensures compliance with this policy, the MCWD Water Code, and the Town of Mammoth Lakes's WELo for installation or replacement of Landscape Areas and their irrigation.

All Landscape Areas shall be compliant with any Water Conservation Level established by the MCWD Board. The Water Conservation Level regulates water use on landscaping, including but not limited to the hours and amount of time irrigation of Landscape Areas may occur and devices used for their irrigation. The Water Conservation Level is subject to change in the MCWD Board of Directors' sole discretion depending on the available water supply.

A. Landscape Permit Application Process

Before installing any new Landscape Area that will result in a total area to be irrigated equal to or greater than 500 sf or when replacing existing Landscape Area equal to or greater than 2,500

sf, a customer shall submit to the District a Landscape Permit Application, Landscape Plans and pay applicable fees (see Table A below).

1. Single-Family Residential Properties: If the overall Landscape Area will total between 500 sf and 4,999 sf, a Landscape Permit Application and Landscape Plans for the proposed Landscape Area must be submitted and inspection of that area must be completed by District staff before irrigation may begin. There are no fees associated with this level of Landscape Permit.
2. Multi-Family Residential and Non-Residential Properties: If the overall Landscape Area will total between 500 sf and 999 sf, a Landscape Permit Application and Landscape Plans for the proposed Landscape Area must be submitted and inspection of the Landscape Area must be completed by District staff before irrigation may begin. There are no fees associated with this level of Landscape Permit.
3. All Multi-Family Residential and Non-Residential properties with a proposed Landscape Area equal to or greater than 1,000 sf in total shall submit a Landscape Permit Application, Landscape Plans, pay applicable fees, and install a separate irrigation meter. An inspection of the Landscape Area must be completed by District staff before irrigation may begin.
4. Any Single-Family Residential property with a proposed Landscape Area equal to or greater than 5,000 sf in total shall submit a Landscape Permit Application, Landscape Plans, pay applicable fees, and install a separate irrigation meter. An inspection of the landscape area must be completed by District staff before irrigation may begin.
5. Any customer of the District who proposes to install a new Landscape Area or proposes to replace 2,500 sf or more of any existing Landscape Area must submit a Landscape Permit Application and Landscape Plans. Plans approved by the Town of Mammoth Lakes shall include the items listed in II.B.1 of this policy. Installation of a new or replacement Landscape Area shall not begin until the submitted plans have been reviewed and approved by the District. The plans shall comply with the requirements of this policy and may require additional fees and the installation of a separate irrigation and metering system depending on the size of the proposed new or replacement Landscape Area. The plans shall become the exclusive property of the District.

B. Landscape Plans and Permits

1. Landscape Plans submitted to the District shall include at a minimum:
 - a) A site plan identifying the location and total square footage of the Landscape Area.
 - b) An irrigation plan identifying how the Landscape Area will be irrigated will be required as a condition of the District's issuing of a Landscape Permit and, if applicable, the design of the irrigation system, including sprinkler product type, and the location of shut off valves.
 - c) Soil amendments planned for the project.

- d) Planting selection: location and variety of plants.
- 2. The Landscape Permit Application shall be submitted to the District per the instructions in the application. Once the application is received, staff shall promptly review the application for completeness. Only complete applications will be processed. Staff will return an incomplete application to the customer with a summary of missing information.
- 3. District staff shall review complete applications and approve compliant plans prior to the issuance of any Landscape Permit. Plans that are not compliant will be returned to the customer for further work to make the plan compliant. Any change in plans must be checked and approved by the District before the issuance of any water permit and/or commencement of water service.
- 4. District staff will determine if a DIM is required at the time of the Landscape Application review and make a recommendation of the appropriate size DIM for the project. (See Table A below.)
- 5. A customer shall not irrigate any Landscape Area covered by this policy until a Landscape Permit has been issued by the District and the installation of the Landscape Area and the irrigation system have been inspected and finally approved by the District, as required by this policy.

Table A: Application and Permit Requirements for Landscape Areas

| Landscape Area (Square Feet/sf) | Landscape Application & Permit* (TOML WELO Required) | Permit/ DIM Required* (with Connection & Inspection Fees) |
|---|--|--|
| Single Family Residential Properties | | |
| 500 – 4,999 sf | ✓ | |
| 5,000 sf ≤ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Multifamily Residential and Non-Residential Properties | | |
| 500- 999 sf | ✓ | |
| 1,000 sf ≤ | ✓ | ✓ |

**An inspection must be completed by District staff before a Landscape Permit is finalized.*

C. Installation and Inspection

- 1. When the installation of new or replacement Landscape Area is complete, the customer or their contractor shall provide notice to the District and schedule an inspection for compliance with the approved Landscape Permit.

- a) A District representative shall verify compliance with the requirements and conditions of the permit, including but not limited to verifying the Landscape Area, plant selection, and inspect irrigation system devices and backflow assemblies.
 - b) Backflow assemblies and DIM piping must be uncovered and exposed in order for staff to complete an inspection.
2. Any inspection by District representatives shall not relieve the customer of the responsibility for complying with all requirements stated in this Policy and the approved Landscape Permit and Plans. Any work found to not comply with the approved Landscape Permit and plan or this Policy shall be remedied at the expense of the customer before the District will provide a final approval.
- D. Irrigation Fees and Charges (Customers with DIMs)
- 1. Projects requiring a DIM shall pay a Connection Fee in accordance with the MCWD Master Fee Schedule.
 - 2. The commodity rate charge for all irrigation users on a DIM shall be based on the total monthly water use measured through the customer's meter, the square footage of Landscape Area, and the MAWA as determined by the District using the CA MWEL0.
 - 3. The rates shall be multiplied by each 1,000 gallons of metered usage and calculated and billed using the irrigation commodity rates stated in the MCWD Master Fee Schedule.
- E. Rules and Regulations (All Customers with Landscape Areas)
- 1. Any property with an irrigation system must have a backflow prevention assembly. (See MCWD Water Code, Division III, Section 3.34.)
 - 2. The watering of vegetation outside of any building, installation of new Landscape Areas, and rehabilitation of existing Landscape Areas is subject to compliance with the MCWD Water Shortage Contingency Plan and the declared Water Conservation Level in effect at the time.
 - 3. Use and installation of Decorative Water Features shall be subject to the MCWD Water Shortage Contingency Plan.
 - 4. Use of potable water for the irrigation of Non-Functional Turfgrass located on commercial, industrial, and institutional properties is prohibited by state law.
- F. Enforcement
- Any landscaping covered by this policy which is irrigated without compliance with this policy shall be considered an unauthorized use of water and is prohibited in accordance with the MCWD Water Code. Such unauthorized use shall be subject to all enforcement remedies

available to the District, including, but not limited to termination of all water service to the customer.

G. Variance

If, due to unique circumstances, a specific requirement of this policy would result in an undue hardship to a customer using District water or to a property upon which such water is used, then the customer may apply for a variance to the designated requirement. A customer request for a variance shall be made in compliance with Section 3.4.5, Variances, of the WSCP.

H. Landscape Best Practices

Landscape design, installation, maintenance, and management can and should be water efficient. MCWD encourages customers to practice xeriscape landscaping principles and, as part of reviewing permit applications and plans, will provide guidance to customers on the following best practices:

1. Plan and design – MCWD staff may provide guidance and mapping for irrigation and energy conservation strategies, both of which are dependent upon the regional climate and microclimate and water supply constraints.
2. Select and group plants appropriately – Staff may assist with plant selection to ensure the selection includes plants that are well-adapted to specific sites and to the specific regional climate and microclimate as well as soil types and topographic conditions. Grouping vegetation with similar watering needs into specific “hydrozones” reduces water use by allowing customers to water to each zone’s specific needs. For example, turf areas and shrub areas should always be separated into different hydrozones because of their differing water needs.
3. Go native or choose plants that need less water - Once established, native, regionally appropriate, and low water-using plants require little water beyond normal rainfall. If customers are designing a new landscape or enhancing existing landscape, be sure to consider the water needs of the plants chosen.
4. Be selective when adding turf areas - Turfgrass is the highest user of irrigation water in traditional landscaping. To improve the aesthetics of a landscape and better manage outdoor water use, select drought-tolerant turfgrass and plant turf only where it has a practical function, such as children’s play areas.
5. Improve the soil – Soil amendments increase capacity to absorb water and encourage deeper roots. Healthy soils are the basis for a water-smart landscape; they effectively cycle nutrients, minimize runoff, retain water, and absorb excess nutrients, sediments, and pollutants.

6. Use mulches – Incorporate mulch around shrubs and garden plants to help reduce evaporation, inhibit weed growth, moderate soil temperature, and prevent erosion. Adding organic matter and aerating soil can improve its ability to hold water.
7. Maintain the landscape – Keep plants healthy through weeding, pruning, fertilizing, and controlling pests. Replace mulch around shrubs and garden plants at least once per year.
8. Irrigate efficiently – Know your plants’ water needs and avoid watering during the heat of the day. If you have an irrigation system, make regular adjustments to ensure proper watering. Be sure to use WaterSense rated components for your system.

III. DEFINITIONS

Landscape Area means the existing or proposed aggregate area of turfgrass, trees, shrubs, garden beds, or other plants that are intentionally installed by a property owner, previous owner, tenant, or homeowners association and Decorative Water Features in a landscape design. Landscape Area does not include footprints of buildings or structures, sidewalks, driveways, parking lots, decks, patios, gravel or stone walks, other pervious or non-pervious hardscapes.

DIM means a Dedicated Irrigation Meter, which must be installed for:

- a) Single-Family Residential Landscaping – when a property’s aggregate irrigated landscape area is equal to or greater than 5,000 sf.
- b) Multifamily and Non-Residential Landscaping – when a property’s aggregate irrigated landscape area is equal to or greater than 1,000 sf.

When a DIM is required, the customer shall pay all associated Permit and Connection Fees as stated in the MCWD Master Fee Schedule.

MAWA means Maximum Applied Water Allocation and is only applicable to customers with a DIM. MAWA is the upper limit of water needed annually for an established landscaped area as specified in the CA MWEL. It is calculated using the local region’s state-defined Evapotranspiration Adjustment Factor, and the size of the landscaped area. The Estimated Total Water Use of a parcel or lot shall not exceed the MAWA established for it. Special Landscape Areas, including recreation areas, areas permanently and solely dedicated to edible plants such as orchards and vegetable gardens, and areas irrigated with recycled water will be assigned a slightly higher MAWA to ensure sufficient irrigation.

Non-Functional Turfgrass means decorative grass within property owned or maintained by a homeowners association, or at commercial, industrial, or institutional sites, not used for recreation or community activities, and including turf located within street rights-of-way and parking lots. Turf enclosed by fencing or other barriers to permanently preclude human access for recreation or assembly is Non-Functional Turfgrass.

Decorative Water Features means water features such as ponds or running water structures designed to receive potable, raw, or recycled water from MCWD and used for ornamental purposes. Ponds that are used to hold irrigation water, mainly golf course ponds, are allowed under conditions specified in MCWD's Water Code.

UWMP means Urban Water Management Plan and is a plan required for all urban water suppliers, which includes the District, by the California Department of Water Resources under California Water Code sections 10608 and 10610-10656. The Plan is required to be updated every five years and supports the long-term resource planning to ensure that adequate water supplies are available to meet existing and future water needs. Each UWMP must include an adopted Water Shortage Contingency Plan ("WSCP"). MCWD's WSCP is found at Chapter 8 of the UWMP.

WSCP means Water Shortage Contingency Plan (See definition for UWMP)

WELO means a Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance and is an ordinance adopted by local agencies to increase water efficiency and improve environmental conditions in the built environment, based on the 2015 California Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance ("CA MWELO"). California Department of Water Resources requires local agencies to report implementation annually, per CCR Title 23, Chapter 2.7. The Town of Mammoth Lakes is the local agency that enforces the WELO.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. UC Agriculture and Natural Resources, Master Gardeners of Inyo and Mono County and the California Garden Web, a portal to organize and extend the University's vast collection of research-based information about gardening to the public. <https://ucanr.edu/sites/newinyomonmg/>
2. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) WaterSense program can help customers take some of the guesswork out of keeping a healthy yard while using less water. <https://www.epa.gov/watersense>
3. The Town of Mammoth Lakes' WELO is found at Chapter 17.40 of the Town Code. Compliance is required when installing and rehabilitating landscape thresholds are met by a project. The Code is enforced by the Town. See: https://library.municode.com/ca/mammoth_lakes_/codes/code_of_ordinances?noDeId=TIT17ZO_ARTIIISIPLGEDEST_CH17.40WAEFLARE
4. The Mammoth Community Water District's Water Code (Chapter 12) includes the General Powers and Duties, Fees and Charges, and Enforcement. <https://mcwd.dst.ca.us/files/47d83ca5d/MCWD+Water+Code+02-2024.pdf>

5. The Mammoth Community Water District's UWMP and WSCP establish the procedures, regulations, and enforcement of Water Conservation Levels. All landscaping is required to comply with the Water Conservation Level established by the Board.

<https://mcwd.dst.ca.us/files/77084a9fe/2023+MCWD+Water+Shortage+Contingency+Plan+FINAL.pdf>

IV. POLICY REVIEW

This policy shall be reviewed at least every two years.