

Turf Removal Program Guidelines

Residential Applicants

The Turf Removal Program is designed to promote water efficient and sustainable landscapes. The Program aims to combine the elements of turf removal, climate appropriate plants, irrigation conversion, and water retention and/or infiltration to promote a watershed approach to landscaping.

The Turf Removal Program takes a multi-pronged approach to maximize water conservation and utilization. Removing turf grass is one of the most water-conscious adjustments an individual can make to reduce their water usage and associated costs. Converting irrigation systems to drip, hand-watering, or installing high efficiency sprinkler nozzles ensures that the water applied more closely matches what is needed. Finally, the addition of a sustainable design feature in the new landscape plan works to reduce or prevent wasteful runoff from irrigation and rainfall, which in turn, reduces water pollution in our local creeks and at our beaches, and nourishes your new landscape!

Program Requirements

- **If you have already removed your turf, your project is not eligible for this program. A Pre-Inspection is mandatory to be completed before any turf areas are removed. No exceptions can be made based on photographs by the customer.** Additionally, projects must not be started prior to the receipt and acknowledgement of this Program's Letter to Proceed.
- Project must have a **minimum of 250 square feet (sq ft)** of turf to be removed; or if the entire yard has less than 250 sq ft, all turf must be removed.
- A **maximum of 3,000 sq ft** of turf are eligible per home for funding per Fiscal Year (July 1 to June 30); projects larger than 3,000 sq ft are subject to pre-approval from the Moulton Niguel Water District (MNWD) Board of Directors in order to receive funding.
- Limit of 1 application per home per fiscal year.
- The front, side, and back yard areas are eligible for landscape transformation.
- Customer must provide a **simple landscape plan** showing intended transformation. At minimum, a landscape plan should show dimensions of area(s) to be transformed and location of significant features such as house, driveway, and sustainability element.
- Customer must provide **4 to 6 pictures of the turf project area** at the time of application. Photos of project area must reflect the current turf grass area at the time of applying. Google Earth/satellite images will not be accepted in place of landscape photos. Photos must be taken at appropriate angles, with visible points of reference, and at a sufficient distance to allow for review.
- **Artificial turf** is permitted to be installed under the MNWD program. Artificial turf must be **certified lead-free and manufactured in the USA of USA-made materials**. Artificial turf cannot be assembled in the USA of foreign-made materials. The Lead-Free Certificate from the manufacturer will be required at the post-inspection.
- Applicant must consent to an **on-site pre-inspection** to confirm project measurements and verify the presence of turf grass. Additionally, applicant must consent to an **on-site post-inspection** to confirm the removal and replacement of turf and to record the final measurements. Metropolitan Water District of

Southern California (Metropolitan) and/or Municipal Water District of Orange County (MWDOC) reserve the right to verify and perform a second post inspection, of any project at any time. This can be before, during, and/or after project completion. If the Pre and/or Post-Inspections cannot be scheduled and/or completed, your rebate will not be issued.

- All approved participants must complete their project **within 60 days** from the date of their Letter to Proceed. Projects not completed within 60 days may not receive a rebate. To request a possible project extension, you must contact the Turf Removal Rebate Program staff at Municipal Water District of Orange County (MWDOC) prior to the end of the 60-day project completion deadline.
- The rebate amount is based on **\$3 per square foot**. The maximum amount of rebate for the project is confirmed in the Letter to Proceed. **Project receipts must be submitted that meet or exceed the rebate amount to receive the full rebate.** Receipts for the following items will qualify for rebate funds:
 - Plants
 - Mulch - bark, wood chip, decomposed granite, river rock
 - Compost
 - Equipment Rental – sod cutter, back hoe, dumpster for haulage, etc.
 - Design Fees
 - Labor of hired contractors, however, contractor must be a licensed landscape contractor in the State of California (C-27 License)
- Other outdoor rebates may apply to a Landscape Transformation Project, please check the MNWD website for other qualifying products such as rain barrels, irrigation controllers, and sprinkler nozzles.
<https://www.mnwd.com/rebates/>
- Funding is limited. **Rebate funding is available on a first-come, first-served basis** to eligible participants only while funding lasts.
- **Areas which have already been converted are not eligible.**
- **Customers are responsible for complying with all applicable laws, codes, policies, covenants, conditions and restrictions.**
- **The converted area must remain in compliance with all Program conditions for a period of five (5) years.** This includes the Sustainability and quantity of plants components. **If this requirement is violated, you may be required to refund all or a portion of the rebate.** This requirement to maintain Program conditions is not binding on successor/subsequent owners.
- By participating in the Turf Removal Rebate Program, you authorize the release of your water consumption history from your water provider.

Design Requirements

- **The project must have at least one (1) of the following design components to capture rainfall through infiltration, retention, or on-site storage for reuse.** This is called the ‘Sustainability’ component of this Program. Project areas without one of these features will not be paid a rebate. There are 7 Sustainability components to choose from, and you must choose at least one. The selected component(s) should allow infiltration or capture of rainfall/runoff and not channel water to impervious surfaces. They must also meet all local and regional requirements. Descriptions follow at the bottom of this document, and videos and other resources are available online. The design components are:

- Rain Barrels or Cisterns
- Rain Gardens
- Project area grading or sloping
- Berms
- Swales
- Dry River Beds
- Rock Gardens
- Completed project area must be covered by at least **three (3) plants per 100 sq ft** planted in the ground.
 - (ex. 1,000 sq ft of project area must have 30 plants planted in the ground).
 - Trees in the project area do not need to be removed and can be counted as 1 of the plants within the project area.
- **All exposed soil must be covered with at least a three (3) inch layer of mulch.** Acceptable mulch includes but is not limited to: compost, bark, wood chip, decomposed granite, river rock. Mulch is not required in areas planted with creeping or rooting groundcovers. The use of organic materials is recommended.
- The irrigation system in the completed project area must be a **low flow system (drip or high efficiency, low precipitation rotating nozzles) or capped.** If part of a lawn is converted, the sprinkler system must be properly modified to provide adequate coverage to the remaining lawn without spraying the converted area.
- If the irrigation system is not replaced with a low-flow system, it must be properly capped off or removed and hand-watered.
- Completed project area **cannot contain any plants that are, or appear to be, turf** or turf-like.
- **Converted area must be permeable to air and water.**
- Project areas can include pavers that are adequately spaced, at a minimum of 2 inches between pavers, and are eligible for rebate incentives as long as there is a **minimum of 2 inches between pavers.**
- **Projects that install pavers and grout and/or mortar the spaces between the pavers are not considered permeable and that portion of the area will be removed from the rebate area.**
- **Project areas converted to swimming pools/Jacuzzis, ponds, fountains, or other water containing fixtures do not qualify.**

Resources

Register for one of our free Landscape or Irrigation Workshops to help you get started on your Transformation!

<https://www.mnwd.com/workshops/>

Need irrigation help right now? A video of our Irrigation Workshop is available online!

<https://www.mnwd.com/online-class-take-control-of-your-irrigation-system/>

Descriptions, videos, and images of sustainable landscape design features are available here:

<https://www.mwdoc.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Sustainable-features-defined-PDF.pdf>

<http://socalwatersmart.com/en/residential/rebates/available-rebates/turf-replacement-program/sustainable-approach/>

More resources for achieving a Sustainable Watershed Approach are available here:

<https://mwdoc.dropletportal.com/program/resources/>

<http://www.greengardensgroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/DTH-FINAL-102912sm.pdf>

Feature	Brief Description of Sustainable Element
Swales	Swales are shallow ditches that have gently sloping sides and slow and percolate water into your landscape. A swale relies on gravity to move water and is designed to direct the water where you want it to go, such as to flower or vegetable gardens. It limits runoff and traps silt and any pollutants.
Rain Garden	A shallow, planted depression that captures rainwater and creates a temporary pond. Rain gardens fill up with water during storms and keep water on site long enough for it to percolate into the ground, usually less than 24hrs. The chosen plants need to be able to tolerate wet and dry conditions.
Dry Creek Beds	A dry creek bed or dry river bed is designed to slow heavy flows from rainfall and prevent erosion problems. It is fed by gutter downspouts draining to an underground pipe. It usually contains some large stones to anchor the creek bed and add visual interest.
Rain Barrels or Cisterns	Rain barrels and cisterns are storage tanks that capture rainwater from rooftop gutter downspouts. Cisterns are essentially large-scale rain barrels. Collected rainwater, which is naturally soft, can be used throughout the rest of the year in your garden. Rain barrels and cisterns must be properly installed and connected to rain gutters and downspouts that run along the entire perimeter of the roof for adequate water collection. They must meet all local and regional requirements. Existing rain barrels and cisterns qualify provided they have been properly installed. Rebates are available for newly purchased units.
Grades	Surface grading an area so that water collects and flows to a lower elevation away from the house foundation. Grading can modify existing landforms like deep gullies, narrow ridges, or steep slopes and create more useful and attractive landforms.
Berms	Berms are mounds of earth with sloping sides that are located between areas of approximately the same elevation. Berms are constructed to direct or redirect drainage in order to keep water from flowing off the property.
Rock Gardens	A rock garden is a garden created with plants laid in between rocks, or decorated with rocks, and adapted for growth of smaller, dry climate plants. They are great for smaller areas where it is difficult to grow other plants or slopes that are hard to irrigate.

Release of Claims and Indemnification

Neither the Municipal Water District of Orange County (MWDOC), the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD), your local retail water agency Moulton Niguel Water District (MNWD), or their contractors or agents makes any representation or warranty regarding the contracted services or products that you may select for your project under this Program. Removal of turf and installation of water efficient devices and plants does not guarantee reduced water use.

By participating in the Program and accepting the rebates provided, you thereby release MWDOC, MWD, MNWD, and their contractors and agents from any and all claims and causes of action that may arise out of your removal of turf from your property and/or the purchase, installation, and/or use of water efficient devices in connection with this Program. Any and all claims or causes of action you may have in connection with any defect or failure of

performance of any contracted service or installed product or device provided to you for your Project may only be pursued with the contractor you hired or the appropriate manufacturer/distributor.

MWDOC, MNWD, and/or their representative will take photos of landscapes being renovated through this Program and use those photos for reproduction or promotional purposes. Identifying location features, such as address numbers, will not be included in any promotional materials.

The MWDOC, MWD, and MNWD are responsible for operating and enforcing the terms and conditions of the Program. You, as the Program Participant, are responsible for ensuring that your Project complies with all applicable Federal, State and local laws, as well as applicable CC&Rs and/or HOA restrictions. Quality of work and appearance of the converted area are the responsibility of the Participant.

Further, you agree to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the MWDOC, MWD, and MNWD, and their directors, officers, employees, contractors, and agents from all liability and claims of any kind arising out of or related to your removal of turf and purchase, installation, and use of water efficient devices in connection with this Program.

Steps

1. Prepare required documents
2. Receive Homeowner Association Approval if you belong to an HOA that requires approval to modify your landscape.
3. Apply online in the MWDOC Droplet Portal
4. Wait to be contacted by MNWD's contractor, WaterWise for Pre-Inspection Appointment
5. Following Pre-Inspection, receive email notification of Letter To Proceed
6. Sign in to the Droplet Portal to acknowledge receipt of Letter To Proceed
7. NOW you may remove your turf grass and begin your transformation!
8. Complete your project within 60 days
9. Sign in to the Droplet Portal and upload photos of completed project area and all applicable/required receipts/invoices
10. Wait to be contacted by MNWD's contractor, WaterWise for Post-Inspection Appointment
11. Enjoy your new Watershed Wise Landscape!
12. 6-8 weeks following Post-Inspection your rebate check from MWDOC should arrive

Process

When you are ready to apply for the program gather your:

- Design plan
- 4-6 photographs of your landscape
- A copy of your most recent water bill

Then proceed to the Droplet Portal at the Municipal Water District of Orange County (MWDOC) and choose the "Residential Customers Start Here" button at the bottom:

https://mwdoc.dropletportal.com/program/get_started/

Please keep in mind that the Droplet portal is utilized by many water districts that are under the purview of MWDOC. The application is not specific to MNWD customers. The terms and conditions above should reflect all requirements of the program, aside from the differences noted below, but in the case of a discrepancy, MWDOC has final say.

Primary differences between the MWDOC Terms and Conditions and MNWD Terms and Conditions are:

- MNWD is currently offering \$3.00 per sq ft of turf removed (MWDOC caps at \$2.00/sq ft)
- MNWD will offer rebate funds for up to 3,000 sq ft without board approval (MWDOC caps at 5,000 sq ft)
- MNWD will offer rebate funds for installing artificial turf (MWDOC is no longer rebating artificial turf)