



Update on the Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELO)

Introduction

One of the statutory responsibilities of the California Water Commission is to approve Department of Water Resources (DWR) rules and regulations not pertaining to the management and administration of the Department. The DWR's Water Use Efficiency Branch is developing a rulemaking package to establish an amended Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELO) for the January 2023 to December 2025 time period. The MWELO is a statewide water efficiency standards template for cities and counties to use in governing the permitting of new and retrofitted landscapes. The proposed update to MWELO is being done to simplify the regulation by improving clarity and workflow, and by resolving ambiguities for involved parties that are not experts in MWELO, making program implementation easier for cities and counties. This administrative update has broad support.

The Water Use Efficiency Branch is providing an introductory briefing on the MWELO prior to starting a rulemaking process, in anticipation of the updated MWELO coming back to the Commission for approval at a later date.

Background

DWR is authorized to update MWELO every three years following January 1, 2020, after holding one or more public hearings. The final MWELO regulatory text must be approved by the California Water Commission before it is effective.

DWR can, after holding public meetings, make a finding that that an update of MWELO would not be a useful or effective means to improve either the efficiency of landscape water use or the administration of the ordinance. DWR presented such a finding at the March 6, 2019 Commission meeting and the MWELO was not updated in the January 1, 2020 to December 31, 2022 cycle. DWR intends to begin the rulemaking process to amend the MWELO regulation this year for the January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2025 cycle.

This briefing will advance Goal Three of the Commission's Strategic Plan, which calls on the Commission to "carry out its statutory authorities associated with the Department of Water Resources to ensure that the DWR's decisions on key programs and activities are based on sound information and advance climate resiliency," stating that the Commission will "review, consider, and approve, as appropriate, all regulations by the Department, and provide public participation in the rulemaking process."

Agenda Item: 14

Meeting Date: August 16, 2023

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Meeting Overview

At the August meeting, Julie Saare-Edmonds, Senior Environmental Scientist, and Shem Stygar, Senior Water Resources Engineer, both with DWR's Water Use Efficiency Branch, will provide an overview about MWEL0, what it does, and what improvements are planned so the Commission is familiar with the topic.

This is an informational item.

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