

LESS LAWN MORE APPEAL

Fact Sheet: New Rules for Watering Lawns in California

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

The new law provides an opportunity to create attractive new spaces that showcase the beauty of water-wise and native plants, increase curb appeal, and provide a vision for others to follow.



California Flannel Bush *Fremontodendron* spp., California native

This fact sheet explains what is changing and how to prepare.



Functional Lawn



Nonfunctional Lawn

WHAT IS NONFUNCTIONAL LAWN?

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

Examples include:

- Narrow lawn strips in or around parking lots
- Decorative lawn along sidewalks, buildings, or fences
- Lawn between buildings with no seating, access, or activity
- Lawn in medians, roundabouts, or entry signage zones
- Sloped or oddly shaped areas that are hard to use or water efficiently

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; please get in touch with your local water provider for details.

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

BY JANUARY 1, 2029:

HOAs must stop watering nonfunctional lawn by January 1, 2029. You are not required to complete landscape conversions by this date, but it is strongly encouraged that you prepare to protect any trees in the areas of nonfunctional lawn. Contact your local water provider for help and advice.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

HOAs with more than 5,000 square feet of irrigated area will be responsible for self-certifying their compliance with the law to the State Water Resources Control Board every three years starting on June 30, 2031.



CREATE A VISION OF A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

Many HOAs are using the new law as an opportunity to create colorful, sustainable, water-wise landscapes that enhance the aesthetics of their common areas, as well as helping to keep HOA fees lower in the coming years as water rates increase.

Ideas include:

- Theme-based landscaping, such as “Butterfly Gardens” or “California Native Plant Gardens”
- Rain gardens, bioswales, and dry stream beds
- Shade trees and flowering shrubs
- Paths, benches, and BBQ areas
- High-efficiency irrigation systems that utilize weather-based sprinkler timers, drip systems, and pressure regulators

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



Photo by Christine Kohn



Photo by Laurie Meyerpeter



Photo by Countrywood HOA