



MEMORANDUM

TOWN OF PORTOLA VALLEY

TO: Mayor and Members of the Town Council

FROM: Leslie Lambert, Planning Manager
Brandi de Garreaux, Sustainability & Resource Efficiency Coordinator

DATE: February 11, 2009

RE: Proposed Water Conservation Programs for the Town

Town staff has been exploring the following documents and contacts as they relate to a proposed water conservation program for the Town. Our research has included the recently adopted Town Sustainability Element, the San Mateo County Energy Strategy Plan, and the Department of Water Resources (DWR) Draft "Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance" and reviewed water conservation programs in other jurisdictions. In addition, we have met with representatives from CalWater to better understand some of the programs, potential partnerships with the Town and potential grants. We have attended San Mateo County Climate Action Workshops on water usage and conservation. We have met with consultants working on rainwater harvesting and discussed with San Mateo County Health Department and CalWater the use of cisterns and graywater systems on private properties.

We have gathered a significant amount of information and are sorting through it to see what is the best approach for establishing a program to reduce water usage and promote conservation for the Town and its residents. At this time, we want to share with you our proposed ideas and seek any additional input that you may have to offer on a Town-wide water conservation campaign.

Background:

We all know water usage is the next big challenge for the State of California. Let's be proactive and get ahead of the mandates coming our way. Bay Area Water Supply & Conservation Agency (BAWSCA) is currently working on a program for water conservation; they hope to have a scoping plan out for review in the spring of 2009. Their key strategy will be to make water conservation and reuse of water a standard practice. BAWSCA has indicated that we have been in the beginning of a drought for the last three years and have reduced water consumption by 10%. They note that if we do not have a good winter this year, a drought will be declared in March 2009. If this is the case, San Francisco Regional Water System will dictate the amount of water usage for San Mateo County.

By January 2010, the Town will be required to adopt the State's Model Water Efficiency Landscape Ordinance as required by AB 1881. DWR is nearing the adoption of the ordinance. The ordinance proposes to promote the use of recycled water and includes the following provisions:

- Water conservation and appropriate use of plants for particular sites and climate conditions.
- Landscape water budget component that establishes the maximum amount of water to be applied through the irrigation system.
- Encourages the capture and retention of stormwater onsite to improve water use efficiency.
- Use of automatic irrigation systems and schedules based on climatic conditions.
- Onsite soil assessment and soil management plans that involve grading and drainage to promote healthy plant growth and to prevent excessive erosion and runoff.

Staff will forward to the Town Council the Ordinance as adopted by the DWR or one that is "at least as effective" before the end of the year.

Program Options:

Now is the time to increase public awareness of the value of water and the importance of water conservation. It is our goal to put into place recycled water programs, water conservation programs, public outreach programs, rebate programs, and landscape/irrigation parameters. Through CalWater, BAWSCA, and DWR there are numerous opportunities for the Town to join in on programs being offered for both commercial and residential programs.

Following are some of the ideas that we have been discussing and hope to implement:

- Inform residents of BAWSCA, CalWater and PG&E rebate offers on replacement of older, inefficient toilets with high efficiency toilets, and purchases of high efficiency clothes washers.
- Provide residents with plumbing retrofit kits; we have placed an order for the kits with CalWater.
- Town wide mailing regarding tips for saving water and money (see attached rough drafts for contents).
- Obtain handout information prepared by CalWater on water conservation tips and programs. We have received some older versions of handouts and some coloring books for children; these are available at the front counter handout area. (CalWater is in the process of updating their flyers and will provide copies when available).

- Work with Building Official and San Mateo County on handout for Graywater Guidelines.
- Earth Day, April 18th, Erin McCauley, Acting District Manager from CalWater will be on hand and will provide residents with information about water conservation. We will have the plumbing retrofit kits available for distribution.
- Following are additional programs that we would like to consider in partnership with BAWSCA and CalWater:
 - Pilot program to reduce lawn area (Cash for Grass). CalWater is looking into a program for the Bear Gulch District (Portola Valley, Woodside, Atherton, Menlo Park and areas of unincorporated San Mateo County) where they would pay you to remove your grass and replace it with drought tolerant native landscaping.
 - Program to provide smart irrigation controllers to the community.
 - Offer landscape audits. We would begin with an audit of the Town Facilities, looking at our water usage. This program would provide an audit report and suggest ways to improve sites. We hope to expand the audit to residential uses in the future.
 - School Education Programs:
 - Water-wise School Education Kits Program. Through the Water-wise program, kits are distributed to 5th grade students which enable them to install water saving devices and perform a water audit in their home. The kit includes a curriculum for the teacher.
 - Disney's Environmental Challenge for grades 3-5.
 - Resource Action Program for grade 6.
- Green Speaker Series – Local Heroes on Local Issues: Panel on water – water conservation, drought tolerant/native landscaping, rainwater harvesting.

We are seeking Council input. Please feel free to offer suggestions and any comments that you may have, as staff moves this forward.