

Conejo Recreation & Park District

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April 21, 2022

Metropolitan Water District of Southern California
Calleguas Municipal Water District

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Tex Ward

SUBJECT: CONSIDER ESSENTIALITY OF PUBLIC PARKS WHEN CRAFTING PROPOSED WATER-USE RESTRICTIONS

The Conejo Recreation and Park District (CRPD) has been informed that the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and the Calleguas Municipal Water District is contemplating a uniform turf watering restriction of one day per week irrigation for a maximum of 8 minutes per station and that there is no exception for public parks or an accommodation provided for those who offer essential, functional turf highly utilized by the public.

Given the volume of public use and heat in the Conejo Valley, grass turf cannot survive on 8 minutes of watering/week.

We are writing to urge you to offer an exemption from such a severe watering limitation for turf in public parks and sports fields.

CRPD firmly believes public parks and recreation facilities are vital to the community's health and well being. CRPD and community sports groups such as baseball, soccer, softball, rugby, lacrosse and volleyball, day camps, youth sports classes, and many special events, rely on safe quality turf, as do the family-friendly community events, which occur regularly throughout our local park system. We live in a very active community with many people engaged in healthy lifestyles, exercise and sports.

We believe Governor Newsom's recent March 28, 2022 Executive Order N-7-22 which limits watering on "non-functional turf," is the better approach and that functional turf "used for human **recreation purposes such as school fields, sports fields, and parks**" should not have watering limitations. (emphasis added).

Over the past decade, CRPD has made a strong and continuous commitment to water conservation. The CRPD Board of Directors annually updates the Park District's Water Conservation Plan and remains committed to using water efficiently and to being a leader in the community with regards to water conservation and efficient water use. Measured by water units/developed park acre, **CRPD's water consumption remains nearly 30% below Fiscal Year 07/08** (Fiscal Years run July 1 – June 30).

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES

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CRPD remains committed to building upon its past water conservation efforts, and has made significant strides in its water conservation efforts, including:

- Reached the milestone of having 100% of approximately 10,000 irrigation heads controlled by iCentral Irrigation Control System which monitors local weather to automatically adjust watering schedule and volume for efficient plant use and perform rain shutdowns.
- Added an Irrigation Technician to field staff to conduct regular water audits and promote efficient water use.
- Added master flow valves at parks,
- Completed numerous waterwise Capital Projects totaling more than \$4,950,000, including, but not limited to:
 - Converted 70 acres (from a total of 250 acres) of irrigated grass turf to native/drought-tolerant species, mulch and non-turf ground cover (CRPD's website has a page dedicated to water conservation which includes maps of the completed grass turf conversion projects at parks throughout the Park District);
 - Converted from potable to reclaimed irrigation systems at North Ranch Neighborhood and Triunfo Community Park;
 - Upgraded irrigation system Thousand Oaks Community Park;
 - Installed waterwise landscape improvements at Banyan Neighborhood Park;
 - Replaced irrigation systems at McCrea Ranch;
 - Designed and developed 124-acre Sapwi Trails Community Park with no irrigated turf.
- Since Fiscal Year 2017-2018, CRPD has invested approximately \$300,000/year in drought response projects (native and drought-tolerant landscapes, drip irrigation) and plans to do so for the foreseeable future.

CRPD's ongoing efforts to conserve water over the past decade have saved water and money. As a result of careful water stewardship:

- In Fiscal Year 2020/2021, despite a very dry year, CRPD's water use was 12.1% below its water target of 503 units per acre.
- Since Fiscal Year 2007/2008, because of CRPD's efforts and improvements, **CRPD has decreased its water use by 29.6% and saved approximately 1,950 acre feet** (which represents 850,000 units or 635,794,000 gallons) **of water**.

CRPD responded swiftly and effectively to the recent 2012 – 2016 drought period and adopted the principles of the California Water Action Plan by "Making Water Conservation a California Way of Life. CRPD's sustained focused water conservation efforts since Fiscal Year 2013/2014 have resulted in significant savings in overall units of potable water consumption (in comparison to Fiscal Year 2013/2014):

- A minimum of 22.7% (in Fiscal Year 2014/2015)
- A maximum of 41.0% (in Fiscal Year 2018/2019)
- An average of 32.7% for the seven Fiscal Years since Fiscal Year 2013/2014
- Projected to save 33.2% for the current Fiscal Year 2021/2022 (full data available up to March 1, 2022)

CRPD is committed to resource conservation, water cost savings, and striving to become an environmentally considerate and sustainable operation. We welcome the input of the community and patrons of the parks for ways and methods we could improve. Residents can contact CRPD at parks@crpd.org or utilize the *Do Report Irrigation Problems* (D.R.I.P.) Water Watcher program (located at www.crpdp.org/water) and strongly encourages residents to report water leaks, broken sprinklers, over-watering due to malfunctioning controllers, or anything that results in water waste.

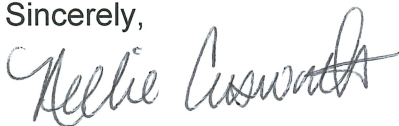
CRPD is continuously making efforts to balance aggressive water conservation efforts (more at www.crpdp.org/water) with community expectations for turf playability and quality and preservation of healthy landscaping.

Without an exemption, the proposed water restriction of one day per week irrigation for a maximum of 8 minutes per station, over a short few month period, will effectively devastate the turf in the entire CRPD park system.

CRPD believes other viable alternatives and options exist. As stated in Governor Newsom's March 28, 2022 Executive Order N-7-22, "to promote water conservation, the Department of Water Resources shall consult with leaders in the commercial, industrial, and institutional sectors to develop strategies for improving water conservation, including direct technical assistance, financial assistance, and other approaches." The Conejo Recreation and Park District is fully prepared and committed to meet with other water agencies, other governmental organizations, and leaders in the community to develop strategies to meet these water conservation goals.

We welcome an opportunity to be involved in solutions that work to save water and keep grass turf in public parks alive. Please let us know how we can be involved.

Sincerely,



Nellie Cusworth, Chair
Board of Directors

c: Board of Directors, Conejo Recreation and Park District
Jacqui Irwin, Assemblymember, District 44, State of California
Henry Stern, Senator, 27th District, State of California

Gavin Newsom, Governor, State of California
Steve Blois, President, Calleguas Municipal Water District
Bob Engler, Mayor, City of Thousand Oaks
Andrew Powers, City Manager, City of Thousand Oaks
Cliff Finley, City of Thousand Oaks
John Brooks, City of Thousand Oaks
Doug Varney, Cal Water