

AB 1572

Nonfunctional Turf Irrigation Ban – *City Code Update*

Water Conservation Subcommittee
May 18, 2026

Lisa Cuellar, Water Use Efficiency Coordinator

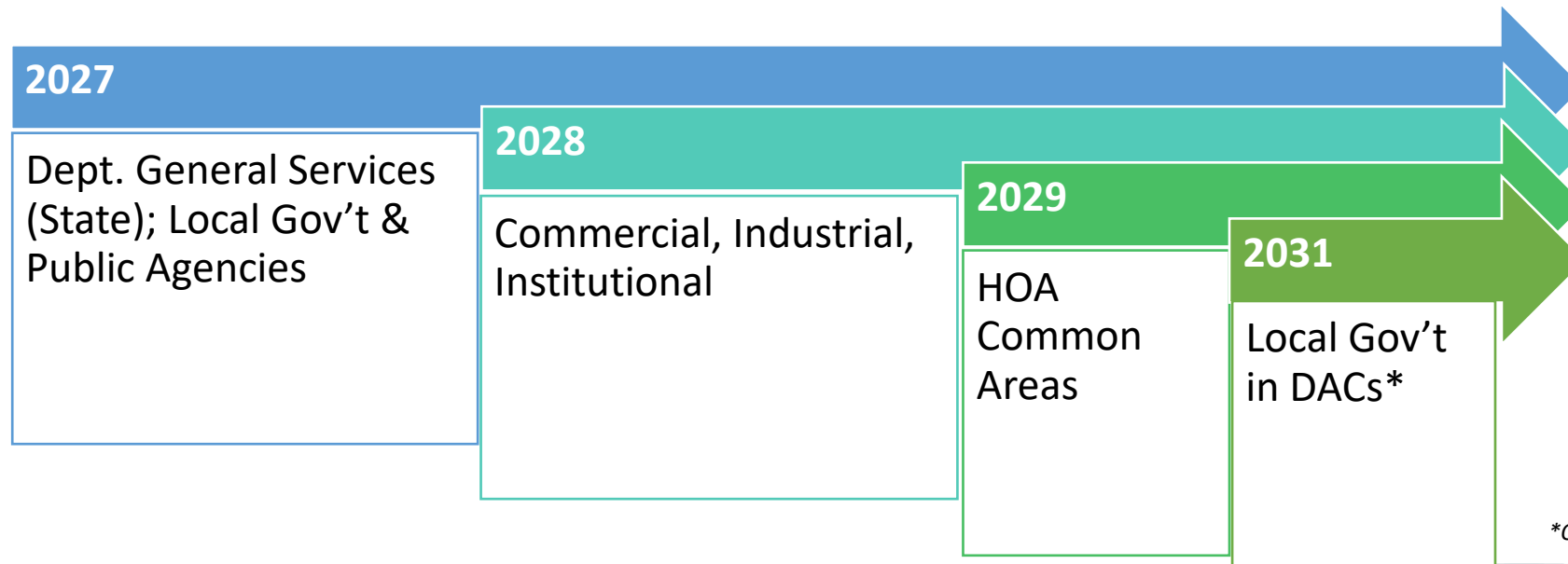


Overview

1. NFT Irrigation Ban (AB 1572) Overview
2. State Mandated Code Update
3. NFT Screening of City-owned Properties
4. Santa Rosa Water Community Outreach Approach

AB 1572 Requirements

- Prohibits **irrigating** nonfunctional turf (NFT) on commercial, industrial, institutional (CII) properties, and HOA common areas.
- **Phased implementation timeline.**



**Or when funding available*

What is Nonfunctional Turf?

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

“If the only time you walk on the turf is to mow it, it is considered nonfunctional.”



Nonfunctional Turf Indicators

Does the landscape have any of the following?

- Narrow strips (10 ft wide or less) along sidewalks, fences, or buildings
- Medians, frontage strips, or parking lot islands
- Decorative lawns at subdivision entries, signage areas, or gateways
- Steep slopes (25% grade or more)
- Inaccessible lawns (blocked by barriers, no pathways)
- Purely ornamental lawn (green for looks only, not used by residents)

If **“Yes”** then it’s likely Nonfunctional and subject to AB 1572.

Exemptions in Statute

“the use of potable water is not prohibited by this section to the extent necessary to ensure the health of trees and other perennial nonturf plantings, or to the extent necessary to address an immediate health and safety need.”

Santa Rosa NFT Code Update

- By **January 1, 2027**, the City of Santa Rosa must update city code to address AB 1572 compliance and notify impacted customers.
- *Timeline for Approval*
 - ✓ *WC Subcommittee – Overview of Code Changes (May 18th)*
 - ✓ *BPU - Recommendation to Council (June 2nd)*
 - ✓ *City Council & Public Hearing - Adoption (July 28th)*

Santa Rosa NFT Code Update

- City of Santa Rosa ***Water Waste Regulation (Title 14 Potable and Recycled Water, Chapter 14-21)*** updated to include NFT irrigation prohibition.
- Advantages include:
 - ✓ *Uses an established legal and enforcement framework*
 - ✓ *Familiar to staff and customers*
- Same approach as Cities of Palo Alto and San Luis Obispo (with existing WW ordinances)

Water Waste Regulation – Redline Review

- Definitions (§ 14-21.020): 13 added (*verbatim of statute*)
- Prohibitions of irrigating nonfunctional turf (§ 14-21.050): NEW (*verbatim of statute*)
- Enforcement (§ 14-21.050): Reference to NEW prohibition above, enforcement mechanism not modified.

**Please reference handouts*

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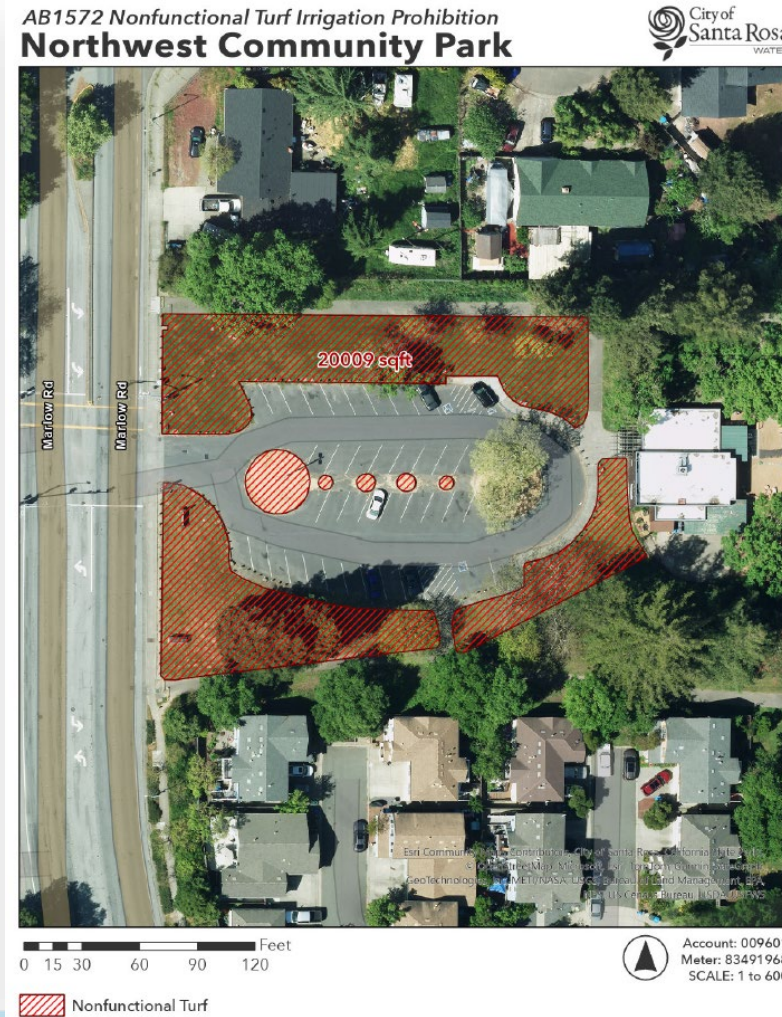
Santa Rosa Water Screen of City Owned Properties

City of Santa Rosa Owned Facilities Compliance

- The City of Santa Rosa has **174 city-owned irrigation accounts**:
 - **141** attributed to city owned parks or recreation parcels, and
 - **33** attributed to all other city owned parcels.
- In-depth GIS review and select site reconnaissance was performed by WUE staff at each of these accounts to identify areas of nonfunctional turf irrigated with potable water.
- A total of **8 sites** were identified to possess areas of nonfunctional turf potentially subject to the irrigation ban by Jan. 1, 2027.

City of Santa Rosa Owned Facilities Compliance

- Identified affected properties
- Outreach to Facility Managers
- Will now provide technical assistance to support initial compliance



City of Santa Rosa Compliance – Next Steps

WUE team will offer technical assistance to facilities and maintenance staff, including prequalification of Cash for Grass programs (where interested):

1. Verify active irrigation of suspected NFT.
2. Assess established trees and perennial plantings irrigated on the same valve as NFT and decide whether to exclude these areas.
3. Verify no active recreational use or community gatherings upon areas flagged by WUE staff.
4. Assist with preparation of plan to discontinue irrigation for all verified NFT areas.

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Santa Rosa Water Customer Outreach

NFT Communications Plan

- Notification letters mailed to all affected accounts spring 2026 (Meets statutory requirement)
- WaterSmart branded fact sheets and guidance documents
- City webpage: www.srcity.org/NFT
- Commercial landscape transformation resources:
 - ✓ Groundcover alternatives,
 - ✓ Irrigation modifications and best practices
 - ✓ Low-cost approaches – sheetmulching demonstration video
- WaterSmart Rebates

LESS LAWN MORE VALUE

Lawn Identification Guide: What Qualifies for Watering—and What Doesn't

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

New rules create a chance to rethink outdoor spaces. Many lawns are costly to maintain and rarely used. With the right planning, they can be transformed into attractive, water-wise landscapes that can reduce costs, look great, and help protect local water supplies for the future—and contribute to a higher-quality, more appealing community environment.

Starting early gives you more flexibility, better access to rebates, and a smoother transition—plus a chance to save on installation costs before demand increases.



California poppy *Eschscholzia californica*, California native

This guide helps you tell the difference between lawn areas that can still be watered with drinking water—and those that can't under the new rules.

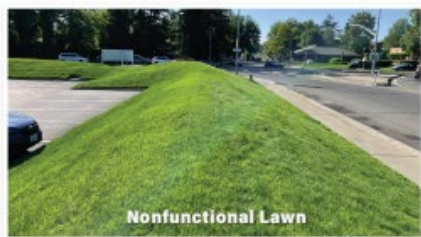
WHAT IS NONFUNCTIONAL LAWN?

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

If the only time people walk on the lawn is to mow it, it's likely nonfunctional.

Common Examples of Nonfunctional Lawn

- Narrow lawn strips in or around parking lots
- Decorative lawn along sidewalks, building edges, 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 IS ALLOWED?

Some lawn areas still qualify for irrigation because they are regularly used or serve a specific recreation or public gathering purpose. These include:

- Parks and public recreational spaces
- Cemeteries
- Sports fields (e.g., soccer fields, baseball diamonds)
- Any other areas where people regularly gather, play, or engage in recreational activities
- Lawn watered with recycled water

Lawn Areas That Might Not Meet the New Rules

To comply with the new law, some lawn areas may no longer be allowed to use drinking water for irrigation if they have these characteristics:

Too narrow to be used - less than 10 feet wide

Just for looks - not used for play, walking, or gathering

Blocked off or fenced - not easily accessed by people

Near signs or buildings - with no clear public use

On a steep slope - difficult to walk on or water efficiently

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE BY PROPERTY TYPE

Commercial and Office Sites

ALLOWED: Lawn with picnic benches or used as an outdoor break area

NOT ALLOWED: Lawn in planter strips or narrow borders with no foot traffic



Photo by Moulton Niguel Water District

Homeowner Associations and Apartments

ALLOWED: Lawn in courtyards, near play structures

NOT ALLOWED: Lawn along property edges, near entry signs, or between buildings with no access



Photo by Regional Water Authority

Schools and Educational Campuses

ALLOWED: Fields, Physical Education areas, or designated outdoor classrooms

NOT ALLOWED: Lawn at drop-off zones, near flagpoles, or around parking lots



Photo by La Tercera Elementary School

Hospitals and Campuses

ALLOWED: Accessible healing gardens or walkable open spaces

NOT ALLOWED: Lawn hidden behind, fences, walls, or not accessible for use



Photo by Regional Water Authority

Local Governments and Public Agencies

ALLOWED: Civic lawn used for events or gathering

NOT ALLOWED: Lawn in medians, at facility entrances, or on slopes where use isn't possible



Photo by Moulton Niguel Water District

Need Help Reviewing Your Site?

Many water providers offer support to evaluate lawn areas, plan improvements, and access rebates. Services may include site visits, irrigation reviews, guidance on replacing lawn with low-water landscaping, tips for protecting trees during conversion, and tools like plant lists, design templates, or irrigation guides appropriate for your local climate. In addition, professional landscape contractors can help review your site and make sure your project follows the rules while still looking great. Local water agencies or landscape programs may also provide useful resources—like tree protection guidelines, recommended plant lists, sample designs, and planning tools—to make the process easier.

TURF'S UP!

Tree Care and Lawn Conversion in a New Regulatory Landscape

Wednesday, February 11, 2026
08.00 AM - 12.30 PM

 Finley Center
2060 W College Ave, Santa Rosa

California law, AB1572, bans irrigating nonfunctional turf with potable water for HOA, commercial, industrial, institutional, and public properties.

Join industry experts, property managers, and contractors to:

- ✓ Understand compliance timelines
- ✓ Discover available resources
- ✓ Define nonfunctional turf
- ✓ Maintain tree health
- ✓ Earn CEU's



Scan to learn more
and register!



www.rrwatershed.org/event/turfs-up



Outreach & Education



Understanding Your Irrigation System

Garden irrigation can seem intimidating, but with the right resources, it doesn't have to be.



Watering Recommendations

Free weekly watering recommendations for your garden.



Garden Design and Plant Selection

Let us help you design your new WaterSmart garden.



Maintaining a WaterSmart Garden

Just like any garden, low-water-use landscapes also require a little care and attention.

www.NonFunctionalTurfCA.org

External Resources

LESS LAWN MORE APPEAL

HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATIONS

The New State Law On Irrigating Nonfunctional Lawn

Starting on **January 1, 2029**, California law (AB 1572) will prohibit the use of potable (drinking) water to irrigate nonfunctional lawns in Homeowner Association (HOA) common areas that are purely decorative. HOAs are not required to transform these areas into water-wise landscapes by that date, but lawns can no longer be irrigated using potable water.

Failure to comply with the law can result in civil penalties of up to \$1,000 per day (California Water Code §1846).

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

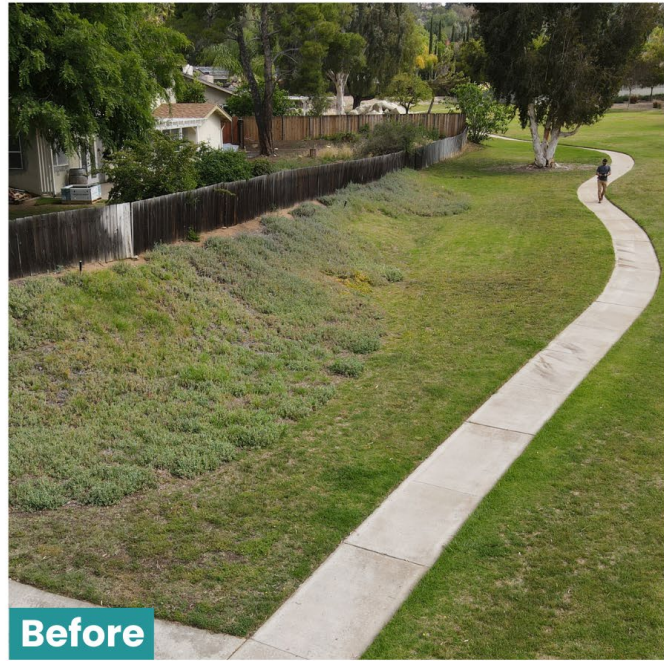


California Flannel Bush *Fremontodendron spp.*, California native

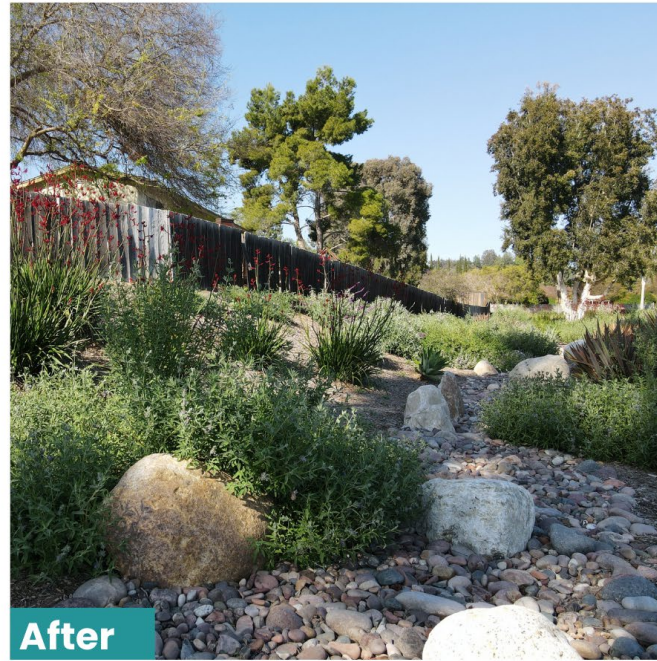
Steps for Getting Started

Thank you

Questions?



Before



After