

Model Ordinance Development and Promotion

Situation



Under the guidance of the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection Division of Water Resources, a committee of Sustainable Jersey drafted a model outdoor water conservation ordinance. The model ordinance has been reviewed by multiple industry representatives and municipalities. The ordinance is currently being promoted statewide by Sustainable Jersey. For more information, go to <http://sustainablejersey.com>.

Action

The ordinance and an overview of the entire New Jersey Water Savers educational program is scheduled to be promoted through regional water conservation workshops, which are provided through Sustainable Jersey

The outdoor model ordinance promoted by Sustainable Jersey is intended to help municipalities curtail unnecessary water waste associated with seasonal outdoor water usage, which can lead to an unnecessary reduction in reservoir storage, ground water levels, and stream flows. In addition, overwatering actually inhibits the health and drought-tolerance of turf. This ordinance seeks to help extend available supplies through short-term drought periods and avoid recurrent drought warnings/water emergencies caused by late summer "drought."

The outdoor model ordinance recommends a two day per week watering schedule. Odd/even watering schedules are not recommended as water use often increases due to the perception by owners that it is necessary to water every other day. Municipalities should consider enforceability when determining how to establish the most appropriate watering schedule for their communities. An example of an effective structure would be to allow watering on the same days as garbage collection. In addition, this ordinance recommends morning and late afternoon/early evening irrigation periods to capitalize on low evapotranspiration (ET) rates and recommends a watering duration limit of 30 minutes per area to reduce over-watering. This recommendation varies for those that have rotary irrigation heads, Smart Irrigation Systems, or a qualified irrigation manager.

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Impact

Regardless of the type of schedule structure implemented, it should be understood that irrigation in New Jersey is intended to be supplemental to natural rainfall and that during periods of rain, lawns may not need additional watering.

The outdoor model ordinance recommends extending the reach of the state rain sensor law by requiring that all automatic irrigation systems are equipped with operational rain sensors, no matter what year they were installed. The current state law requires systems installed after September 8, 2000 to be equipped with an operational rain sensor. Municipalities should consider monitoring this requirement through a combination of routine monitoring and inspections, including Time of Sale and Certificate of Occupancy inspections.

New Jersey Water Savers Partnership

New Jersey Water Savers is a partnership between the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, and the United States Environmental Protection Agency. This partnership was created to provide leadership to promote water conservation throughout New Jersey. For more information on our partnership efforts, visit us at www.water.rutgers.edu.

