Turf Removal Partnership Pays Off, Saving Enough Water for 700 Homes Annually

Extra water savings critical during multi-year drought

Riverside, Calif. – As the drought continues to plague the state, Riverside residents have curtailed their water use by removing turf, saving enough water to supply the indoor water needs of 700 families of four for one year. To honor the city’s savings, Western Municipal Water District presented Riverside Public Utilities with a check for more than $4 million in rebates for efficiency programs through a program it administers.

“Thanks to our collaboration with Western, our customers ripped out 2 million square feet of turf in the past year,” said Riverside Public Utilities General Manager Girish Balachandran. “We’re all in the drought together and every drop we save helps.”

The check presented to Riverside Public Utilities represents funding from both Metropolitan Water District’s Member Agency Administered Conservation Program and Western, which receives water from Metropolitan. As a member agency of Western, Riverside Public Utilities is eligible for efficiency program funding that directly benefits all city residents.

“We are committed to partnering with our member agencies, including Riverside Public Utilities, on efficiency measures and local water projects to ensure water reliability in our region,” said Western’s General Manager John Rossi. “As the drought continues, we all need to do our part to use water wisely.”

Not only did residential customers commit to remove grass that totaled $1.3 million in rebates, but also Riverside commercial customers stepped up and removed turf totaling $3.1 million in rebates. Stand-out commercial projects in Riverside included Bourns, Inc.; Riverside Auto Auction; PepsiCo and Kaiser Permanente as well as street median projects on Martin Luther King, Van Buren and Alessandro boulevards, Canyon Crest Drive and Magnolia Avenue.

“Our customers who have used the turf removal program proved that water-wise landscapes can be beautiful and colorful,” added Balachandran. “We’re hopeful that their colorful, efficient landscapes will inspire other residents to remove water guzzling grass in the quest for a more water-friendly outdoors.”
Water savings from turf removal was calculated from July 2014 to June 2015. Of the more than $4 million received by Riverside Public Utilities, approximately $3.5 million went directly to customers for turf removal projects; $850,000 went to city of Riverside turf removal projects. Customers of Riverside Public Utilities and Western are also eligible for programs, such as FreeSprinklerNozzles.com, which provides free, high-efficiency sprinkler nozzles to customers.

More than $8.4 million in funds were secured from Metropolitan by Western for use throughout its entire 527-square mile service area with a population of nearly 1 million. Metropolitan’s turf removal program funding is currently exhausted.

The city of Riverside is home to more than 300,000 residents. Based on location, residents receive water service from either Western or Riverside Public Utilities, providing water to 9,000 customers and 65,000 customers, respectively.

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