
Irrigation Association - Water Management Committee

The IA has developed these Best Management Practices for turf and landscape irrigation (T&L BMPs) for use in a wide range of activities from policy making to the implementation of efficient irrigation practices. This document has identified the relevant stakeholders and their linkages, relationships and common values. The primary stakeholders include water purveyors, system owners, irrigation designers and consultants, contractors and maintenance personnel. Additional stakeholders include state, federal, public agencies and related landscape industries and associations. Each stakeholder group has specific needs and operates with different resources. This document provides the required hierarchies of information that are comprehensive, and specific while allowing for local interpretation.

The landscape and irrigation industry must demonstrate the ability to irrigate efficiently. The landscape industry is the most visible user of water in an urban setting. Landscape water use during the growing season defines the “peak load” that the water delivery infrastructure must accommodate. The failure to demonstrate efficient irrigation could set the stage for serious consequences to the landscape industry. A drought or perceived water shortage could provide all the impetus necessary for onerous mandates determining when and how much to irrigate as well as the type of plants a landscape can have. The ability to irrigate efficiently will help the landscape industry control its destiny.

The broad and comprehensive nature of the T&L BMPs is what differentiates it from previous “efficiency” initiatives. It provides tools to create active partnerships between the water purveyor, property owner and the green industry. It elevates the scope of efficient irrigation to encompass the development of appropriate water allowances for a site (and by extension a municipality or region), in the hope of improving decision making with respect to regional water demand. Specific benefits include:

- By enjoining the water purveyor and the Green Industry in water allowance planning and development of local strategies for implementation, both the Green Industry and the water purveyor are accountable for reduced water use in a way that is not detrimental to the landscapes.
- Reduced peak demand mitigates the need for infrastructure improvements, a cost benefit to the water purveyor.
- May reduce energy cost of pumping water at times of high energy demand and peak load water requirements.
- Reduces the need for onerous mandates regarding irrigation and as a consequence allows greater flexibility in the preservation of existing landscapes, with increased community support for the water purveyor as a result.

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The T&L BMPs is distributed as a two-document set:

- Turf and Landscape Irrigation Best Management Practices
- Landscape Irrigation Scheduling and Water Management

The Turf and Landscape Irrigation Best Management Practices document includes:

- Definition of a *Turf and Landscape Irrigation Best Management Practice*
- Five Best Management Practices that address the quality, design, installation, maintenance, and management of irrigation systems
- Definition of a *Practice Guideline*
- Five Practice Guidelines (PG) that address ways to implement respective Best Management Practices. Each PG is meant to be a guide to facilitate the development of local specifications
- Appendices that include a system design package and benefits of advanced irrigation control
- Glossary of terms used in the BMPs and Practice Guidelines

The second document, Landscape Irrigation Scheduling and Water Management, provides science-based ways to implement efficient irrigation while reducing water use and protecting water quality. The material includes:

- Landscape irrigation theory
- Scheduling theory and examples
- Landscape water management theory and examples
- Quality ratings for irrigation systems
- Landscape water allowance theory and examples
- Deficit irrigation theory and examples
- Expanded glossary of terms used in turf and landscape irrigation

The tools provided herein are meant to ensure the installation and management of efficient irrigation systems. This in turn enhances the value of landscapes while making responsible use of a precious and finite resource. The metrics defined raise the bar for turf and landscape irrigation systems, while pinpointing specific opportunities for greater efficiency. The T&L BMPs and related Practice Guidelines provide the basis for sensible, informed decision making regarding regional water use and response to drought.

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