



# CONEJO RECREATION & PARK DISTRICT

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## **District Mandatory Water Conservation Practices**

This is intended to provide information regarding water conservation practices and unique irrigation issues facing the Conejo Recreation and Park District.

### **The Conejo Recreation and Park District Has Extensive Experience with Landscape and Irrigation Management and Responsible Water Use**

Before the Governor's declaration of a state-wide water shortage emergency in February and the City of Thousand Oaks' declaration of Level 1 water supply shortage, the Conejo Recreation and Park District has been continuously looking for ways to maintain the turf and landscaping at our parks, while simultaneously conserving water.

Our Conejo Valley community enjoys over 1,126 acres of parkland, with 258 acres of grass turf, an estimated 70 miles of irrigation lines, and nearly 10,000 irrigation heads. We do our best to grow and maintain quality turf within a budget. Overwatering turf not only wastes money and water but is actually harmful and can lead to fungus, insects, puddles, and weak roots. Our extensive irrigation systems, covering over 40 separate parks, are tested and adjusted regularly. To keep it all flowing smoothly, our grounds maintenance staff – which includes a certified landscape irrigation auditor - checks each system at least twice a month for leaks and spray accuracy. This is one reason you may occasionally see sprinklers on during the day. We would like to be able to say it all works perfectly every day, but inherent in such a system are the occasional broken sprinkler heads, stuck valves, controller mishaps, and broken lines. We strive to repair all irrigation leaks upon discovery.

### **The District Has Approximately 8,000 of its 10,000 Irrigation Heads Controlled by an Internet Weather-Based "iCentral Control" System**

In order to apply the least amount of water necessary to keep our park landscaping healthy, District staff has been methodically replacing old irrigation controllers with "iCentral Controllers." These controllers monitor the weather in real-time via the Internet and adjust watering times and volumes accordingly. If it rains or the humidity is high enough, these controllers will simply shut the irrigation system off altogether. Approximately 80 percent of the irrigation heads within the Park District are now operated by these "iCentral Controllers."

## **Parks Have a Limited Watering Window**

One challenge of irrigating parks is that we typically do not irrigate until after 10:00 PM when the parks close and try to have the irrigation off by early morning so patrons using the park the next day enjoy a relatively dry park. This leaves a much shorter time "window" to water a large park than currently allowed in the water conservation ordinance. In order to meet this limited irrigation window, at some locations – especially sports fields - watering may be spread over five nights per week. Because of the size of the parks, the number of irrigation stations and the limited time window, it may not be physically possible to irrigate in only 3 days.

Another limitation on watering significant acreage in one location is that the water line connecting the park to the irrigation system may be too small to convey the volume of water necessary to irrigate the entire park in one evening. In such an instance, it may appear that a park is irrigated six nights per week; however, the water is being applied to different portions of the park.

## **New Landscaping, Turf Establishment and Field Refurbishment**

Park District programs, as well as community sports groups such as baseball, soccer, softball, football, lacrosse and volleyball, day camps, youth sport 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. This means our athletic fields are well used - - - to the point that our fields annually require 6-8 weeks of down time for "field refurbishment." During "field refurbishment," the fields are fenced and reseeded in an effort to restore the worn out turf. The reseeding requires daytime watering, especially during intensely hot weather, so that the newly germinated seedlings do not wither and die in the hot sun. Once the turf establishes a sufficient root structure, the daytime watering is curtailed and eventually eliminated.

## **Saving Water Beyond Landscaped Areas**

Other conservation practices the District has had in place for some time are low volume urinals and toilets fitted with infra red automatic valves. We have indefinitely suspended washing District vehicles except for maintaining sanitary conditions, and we have curtailed washing our tennis courts. When we do clean them, we use high pressure, low volume cleaning equipment.

## **Summary**

Like the City of Thousand Oaks, the Conejo Recreation and Park District is committed to water conservation and will continuously seek opportunities to save water. The District has taken steps to ensure compliance with the 3 day per week (Level 1) watering limitations at our neighborhood parks and community centers.

The District will continue to monitor water usage and expand our existing water conservation practices. Any further water use reductions will be accomplished by reducing our turf area as opposed to compromising essential turf health. In light of the Park District's continuous

efforts to save water and avoid water costs over the years, we are extremely concerned that cutting back further on irrigating sports field turf will compromise turf health and viability, and is likely to lead to dead and weedy parks.

As evidence of our commitment to water savings, the District will cut its overall water use by 15 percent through general conservation practices as well as eliminate irrigation from some existing irrigated areas altogether.<sup>1</sup> Some non-essential portions of a park (areas other than sports fields, high use public areas) may simply have the irrigation heads capped and the ground cover may be converted to wood chips, for example.

The District takes great pride in our parks and is committed to saving water and keeping our parks functional and beautiful for the enjoyment of the general community.

For additional information, please call the Parks and Planning Division at (805) 495-6471.

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<sup>1</sup> The 15 percent reduction will be based on overall District water use year-over-year; excepting therefrom newly installed irrigation for the new fields at Conejo Creek South & Northwood Park and the recently completed community pool at CLU since those facilities were not completed until recently.