

MEMO

Date: April 1, 2009
To: Regional Planning Committee
From: Ceil Scandone, Senior Regional Planner
Subject: Bay-Friendly Landscaping & Gardening

Executive Summary

Bay Area cities, counties and regional agencies are developing and implementing climate action plans in order to address our most significant environmental challenges. Current drought conditions remind us that California's water supply is under increasing pressure. Water quality is in peril, with urban runoff polluting our creeks, streams, rivers and water bodies, and straining the capacity of our flood control systems. Landfill capacity and the energy used in transporting discarded resources to landfills are limited. The ***Bay-Friendly Landscaping & Gardening Program*** provides guidance and tools public agencies can use to address these critical issues.

Developed by Alameda County's StopWaste.Org, Bay-Friendly Landscaping & Gardening is a whole systems approach to the design, construction, and maintenance of landscapes that contributes to the health of the San Francisco Bay watershed. This methodology is an integral component of green building programs, extending green building principles to the area outside the building, as well as to greenbelts and parks.

The Bay-Friendly Landscaping & Gardening Coalition (Coalition) is an alliance of stakeholders representing public agencies, utilities, non-profits, landscape professionals and associations and businesses from around the San Francisco Bay Area. The Coalition promotes the Bay-Friendly standards and provides a complete package of educational and outreach tools. The Coalition has developed and is asking stakeholders to sign a ***7 Principles Charter*** to demonstrate their support of Bay-Friendly Landscaping & Gardening as a model approach to sustainable landscaping.

StopWaste.Org and the Coalition will make a presentation to the Regional Planning Committee and seek support for their initiatives. StopWaste.Org, and the Bay-Friendly Landscaping & Gardening Coalition are requesting that the Regional Planning Committee:

- endorse the Bay-Friendly Landscaping & Gardening 7 Principles Charter.
- encourage ABAG staff to identify opportunities to incorporate Bay-Friendly criteria in relevant programs, such as the Bay Area Green Business Program, the San Francisco Estuary Project, EcoWise Certified and FOCUS.
- encourage StopWaste.Org and the Coalition to continue development of a verification program for the design and construction of new landscapes in the Bay Area.
- direct staff to schedule a presentation to the Executive Board and seek its endorsement of these recommendations.

Bay-Friendly Landscaping and Gardening

Introduction

Like conventional building techniques, conventional landscaping practices can contribute to environmental degradation. Conventional landscaping often features large lawns, non-native plants, and extensive irrigation and depends on the heavy use of fertilizers and pesticides. It also tends to be maintenance-intensive requiring a great deal of watering, mowing, blowing, trimming, and removal of plant debris that can end up in landfills. By contrast, sustainable landscaping practices seek to conserve natural resources, reduce waste, minimize maintenance, chemical & water use, prevent pollution & stormwater runoff and build soil health.

While there are several comprehensive green building standards such as LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) by the U.S. Green Building Council and Green Point Rated Homes by Build It Green, Bay-Friendly Landscaping and Gardening is one of the first comprehensive sustainable landscape standards in the country. There are many standards for landscaping that address single issues such as stormwater pollution prevention or water efficiency but few that provide a holistic approach.

Bay-Friendly Landscaping and Gardening was initiated in 2001 by StopWaste.Org, the joint powers agency legally known as the Alameda County Waste Management Authority (Authority) and the Alameda County Source Reduction and Recycling Board (Board), for its members: Alameda County, the 14 cities within the county, and 2 sanitary districts. Public and private stakeholders developed the *7 Principles of Bay-Friendly Landscaping & Gardening* and created the *Bay-Friendly Landscaping Guidelines: Sustainable Practices for Landscape Professionals*. The Guidelines complement and coordinate with green building and waste management standards, water efficiency programs and stormwater pollution prevention protocols.

Bay-Friendly subsequently developed other resources, such as model policies and programs, and training services. To date, 180 Bay-Friendly Qualified Landscape Maintenance Professionals have been trained in Alameda, Marin and Contra Costa counties. The Bay-Friendly Garden Tour has attracted 2,000 residents annually over the last 6 years, and a workshop series for home gardeners offered in fall and spring registers 50 people or more per class.

StopWaste.Org has provided Bay-Friendly technical assistance to over 50 public and public-benefit projects and has awarded nearly \$350,000 in Bay-Friendly landscaping grants for projects such as parks, street medians, city hall renovations, fire stations, libraries, senior centers and affordable housing projects in Alameda County. These projects have demonstrated that the Bay-Friendly principles and practices work in diverse situations and conditions.

StopWaste.Org staff regularly receive requests from agencies, utilities, landscape associations and businesses all over the region, the state and the country to share Bay-Friendly Landscaping & Gardening. Agencies in Marin and Contra Costa Counties have replicated the Maintenance Training & Qualification Program. The Sacramento area has adapted the Bay-Friendly approach to create the River-Friendly Landscape Guidelines. New York State has asked for information on the program. And the US EPA is adapting Bay-Friendly tools for a national audience.

Bay-Friendly Landscaping & Gardening Coalition

In 2006, diverse stakeholders established the Bay-Friendly Landscaping & Gardening Coalition (Coalition) to assist in the expansion of the Bay-Friendly programs and resources. A fiscally-sponsored project of StopWaste.Org, the Coalition offers general membership and sponsorship opportunities for public agencies; organizations; businesses in environmental protection and quality, waste and water management, air and water quality, and landscaping; and home gardeners. The Coalition promotes the adoption of Bay-Friendly Programs by Bay Area jurisdictions, and implementation of sustainable practices in landscapes and gardens. More information about the Coalition can be found on their website at: www.bayfriendlycoalition.com.

Bay-Friendly Guidelines & Tools

Bay-Friendly provides a comprehensive package of tools – for public agencies, home gardeners, and professionals – to support and encourage informed decisions about sustainable landscaping. This approach enables the Coalition to promote implementation across sectors.

In addition to the Guidelines, the Bay-Friendly toolkit / resources include:

- Landscape scorecards for the design and construction of new landscapes
- Trainings and qualification programs for landscape professionals
- Model landscape specifications
- Professional landscape guides on Sustainable Landscaping, Mulch, Grasscycling, and Using Recycled and Salvaged Materials in the Landscape.
- Regional Bay-Friendly Conference for landscape professionals
- Comprehensive home gardener guide and workshops for home gardeners
- Educational garden tours for home gardeners and more

Bay-Friendly programs and materials are applicable to communities throughout the region. They are consistent with a number of ABAG programs. StopWaste.Org staff participated in the development of the Green Business program landscaper checklist. ABAG's Eco-Wise Certified program for structural Integrated Pest Management complements StopWaste.Org's Bay-Friendly and Green Building programs. The Bay-Friendly tools and resources are available on the StopWaste.Org website at <http://www.stopwaste.org>.

Bay-Friendly Rated Landscapes

A new tool being developed by StopWaste.Org and the Coalition, due for release in 2010, is the Bay-Friendly Rated Landscape toolkit. Similar to the US Green Building Council's LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design), or Build It Green's Green Point Rated Homes, Bay-Friendly Rated Landscapes will be a third party system available to jurisdictions throughout the region. The program will train independent raters, and reward designers and contractors whose landscapes meet the Bay-Friendly standards with branded materials and signage that can be placed on the landscape as a visible seal of approval.

The development of a third party rating system is dependent upon interest and support from ABAG members and other public and private stakeholders in the greater Bay Area. With a Bay-Friendly Landscape Rater system in place, local governments can encourage or require that

public and private landscapes be built to a Bay-Friendly standard just as many have already required that buildings are built to a LEED or Green Point Rated Home green building standard.

StopWaste.Org has developed many of the tools needed to create the standard; however broader support is needed for it to become a regional tool. Local and regional governments working together on this effort are more likely to attract grant funding needed to complete development and implement the system in the Bay Area and beyond.

Bay-Friendly Landscaping and Gardening 7 Principles Charter

In 2008, at the Bay-Friendly Landscaping and Gardening Conference, the Coalition introduced the *Bay-Friendly Landscaping and Gardening 7 Principles Charter* (Charter) (*attachment 1*), and initiated a signature campaign to increase awareness and broaden Bay-Friendly's reach. To date, 23 entities, including the Authority and Board, 4 cities, several water districts, and the San Francisco Estuary Project, have signed the Charter (*attachment 2*). StopWaste.Org and the Bay-Friendly Coalition are requesting ABAG's endorsement and assistance in encouraging all Bay Area cities and counties to sign the Charter.

Briefly, the "7 Principles" are:

1. Landscape Locally
2. Landscape for Less to the Landfill
3. Nurture the Soil
4. Conserve Water
5. Conserve Energy
6. Protect Water & Air Quality
7. Create Wildlife Habitat

The Charter is an important initial step toward achieving sustainable landscaping goals. In Alameda County, 9 jurisdictions have taken a further step by adopting an ordinance requiring use of the Bay-Friendly Rated Landscapes in civic landscape projects. All 17 Member Agencies of StopWaste.Org are expected to have ordinances by mid 2009 (*attachment 3*).

Endorsement of the Charter by the Regional Planning Committee will assist StopWaste.Org and the Coalition as they conduct outreach to ABAG members. It can also provide direction to relevant ABAG programs with diverse environmental goals such as water and resource conservation, reduction of waste and pollution and the creation of healthy urban environments.

Benefits of a Regional Approach

StopWaste.Org and the Bay-Friendly Landscaping & Gardening Coalition provide critical leadership for creating a regional approach to sustainable landscaping and gardening in the Bay Area. The benefits of a regional approach include:

- Provides a consistent definition and recognizable brand of sustainable landscaping that is less confusing, easily recognized, and avoids conflicting "best" practices for consumers, professionals, and local governments.

- Leverages staff time to avoid reinventing programs and materials and encourage economy of scale.
- Leverages data & information by sharing our knowledge and increasing access to information to the public and to the landscape/horticulture industry.
- Strengthens the ability to influence markets and research toward sustainable landscape practices, products and services.
- Leverages financial resources by forming partnerships to solicit funding/conduct regional projects, media campaigns, rebate programs and more.

StopWaste.Org and the Coalition are eager to share these resources with the ABAG member jurisdictions and gain their support.

StopWaste.Org/Bay-Friendly Coalition Presentation – April 1, 2009

At the meeting on April 1, 2009, Gary Wolff, the Executive Director of StopWaste.Org, Teresa Eade, Senior Program Manager of StopWaste.Org, and Michelle LeBeau of the Coalition will make a presentation. The presentation will cover the following points:

- How a comprehensive, sustainable landscaping program can help local agencies reduce greenhouse gas emissions; conserve energy and water; reduce stormwater runoff, air pollution and waste; increase recycling; and create healthier communities.
- What Bay-Friendly Landscaping and Gardening offers: tools for public agencies, landscape professionals, and home gardeners to implement sustainable landscaping practices.
- Support needed from Regional Agencies, Boards of Supervisors and City Councils to accelerate expansion of sustainable landscaping regionally through a common standard.

ACTION REQUESTED:

THAT the Regional Planning Committee

- endorse the Bay-Friendly Landscaping & Gardening 7 Principles Charter.
- encourage ABAG staff to identify opportunities to incorporate Bay-Friendly criteria in relevant programs, such as the Bay Area Green Business Program, the San Francisco Estuary Project , EcoWise Certified and FOCUS.
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Attachments:

1. Declaration of Support of the 7 Principles of Bay-Friendly Landscaping
2. Signers of the Declaration of Support.
3. Cities in Alameda County that have adopted and are developing policies that require Bay-Friendly Rated Landscapes for new civic landscape projects.