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# Gold Mountain Community Services District

## POLICY HANDBOOK

**POLICY TITLE: Potable and Non-potable Outdoor Water Use**  
**POLICY NUMBER: 5101**

### **5101.1 Overview**

Water conservation is critical to sustaining the Gold Mountain Community Services District (“District”) potable water supply and fire-suppression infrastructure. Due to rising demand on the system, the District Board of Directors hereby adopts the Plumas County Water Efficient Landscape Standards (WEL), as set forth below.

The District may identify customers with elevated water use and evaluate whether landscape irrigation contributes to excessive demand. When applicable, the District may provide recommendations consistent with WEL standards to reduce overall water use.

### **5101.2 Purpose and Authority**

The District is responsible for managing and protecting the community’s potable water supply, wastewater facilities, and fire-suppression infrastructure. To support these responsibilities and promote long-term sustainability, the District adopts the water-efficient landscape standards established by Plumas County Title 9, Chapter 2, Article 42 – Water Efficient Landscape (WEL), adopted by Ordinance No. 2019-1124 on November 5, 2019, which is incorporated herein by reference.

### **5101.3 Applicability**

This policy applies to all residential and community properties within the District that are served by the District’s potable water system.

All new landscape installations, landscape rehabilitations, and landscape modifications that increase water demand shall comply with WEL requirements when applicable.

### **5101.4 Definitions for Applicability Determination**

#### **5101.4.1 Landscape Area**

Landscape Area shall include only those portions of a parcel that are actively designed, installed, modified, or planted as landscaped areas. Landscape Area includes Special Landscape Areas (SLA) as defined by WEL.

Landscape Area excludes buildings, driveways, parking areas, patios, walkways, decks, roofs, and other non-permeable hardscape surfaces.

Undisturbed native vegetation, forested areas, defensible-space fuel management

zones, and natural open space not intentionally landscaped shall not be included in the Landscape Area calculation. Vegetation management conducted solely for fire safety, fuel reduction, or defensible-space compliance shall not constitute Landscape Area unless new planting or irrigation is installed.

#### **5101.5 WEL Applicability Thresholds**

1. New landscape projects with an aggregate Landscape Area of 500 square feet or greater; and
2. Rehabilitated landscape projects with an aggregate landscape area equal to or greater than 2,500 square feet.

The District shall determine project classification. Projects not meeting thresholds are exempt.

#### **5101.6 Existing Landscapes and Exempt Activities**

Existing landscapes that are not being modified are not subject to WEL requirements and shall remain legally nonconforming unless and until renovation, expansion, or modification triggers compliance.

Routine maintenance, irrigation repairs that do not expand the system, and like-for-like plant replacement do not trigger WEL compliance.

#### **5101.7 Compliance Requirements**

All subject projects must demonstrate compliance, including:

- Water budget calculations (MAWA/ETWU)
- Hydrozone design
- Irrigation efficiency standards
- Water-efficient plant materials
- Soil and mulching requirements
- Metering and backflow protection
- Compliance with the California Plumbing Code for non-potable systems

#### **5101.8 Enforcement**

Failure to comply with this policy or with WEL requirements may result in enforcement actions, including:

- Notices of non-compliance.
- Requirements to correct deficiencies at the property owner's expense.
- Suspension or limitation of the water irrigation service.
- Administrative penalties or fees as authorized by District policy or State law.
- Denial of project approvals until full compliance is achieved.

### **5101.9 Effective Date**

This policy becomes effective upon adoption by the District Board of Directors and shall remain in effect until it is amended or rescinded by the Board.

### **5101.10 Additional Requirements**

All WEL requirements apply regardless of water source, including potable, non-potable, recycled water, graywater, and harvested rainwater. Use of non-potable water does not exempt compliance with MAWA/ETWU, Hydrozone design, irrigation efficiency, soil management, or documentation requirements.

### **5101.11 New Construction**

- Applicants shall indicate WEL applicability at the time of connection fee payment.
- Any landscaping plan exceeding 5,000 square feet, including any Special Landscape Area (SLA) irrigated with potable water, shall require installation of a separate GMCSO-approved irrigation meter. The irrigation meter shall be installed at the point where the irrigation system branches from the primary water service line.

Total landscaped area shall not exceed 10,000 square feet.

### **5101.12 Plant Material Standards**

- The use of very low- to low-water-use plant materials with an average WUCOLS Plant Factor (PF) of 0.2 is strongly encouraged throughout the landscape.
- The use of invasive plant species, as defined by the California Invasive Plant Council (Cal-IPC), is prohibited.
- Non-recreational turf is prohibited within the District.

### **5101.13 Mulching and Soil Standards**

Mulch depth shall be maintained as needed to achieve and preserve a minimum depth of three (3) inches.

For fire-safe landscaping purposes, the District strongly encourages adoption of California's 0–5 ft "Immediate Zone" ignition-resistant buffer, consisting of:

- No combustible vegetation (shrubs, groundcovers, or combustible mulch)
- No plantings touching any combustible structures.

Non-combustible materials only, including:

- Rock/gravel
- Pavers
- Concrete
- Decomposed Granite
- Bare Mineral Soil

In the 5–30 ft zone, the District strongly encourages the use of composted wood-chip mulch (<0.5"), applied in discontinuous areas separated by non-combustible materials to reduce fire spread.

*Reference: Zahra et al. (2026), Defensible Space Landscaping: Mulches, UC ANR Fire Network.*

Pine needles shall not be used as mulch within the 0–5 ft zone at any time and shall always be kept clear in this zone.

#### **5101.14 Hand Watering Requirements (Alternative Compliance)**

Hand watering may be used to meet WEL requirements when supported by documentation demonstrating compliance with the Maximum Applied Water Allowance (MAWA).

- Hand watering shall be guided by soil-moisture sensors (wired or wireless) installed within each Hydrozone.
- Sensors shall be programmed with moisture-threshold parameters appropriate for the soil type and plant material in each Hydrozone.
- The monitoring system shall automatically notify the property owner by text or email when soil moisture reaches the lower limit of the programmed range, indicating that supplemental hand watering is required.
- Hand watering shall occur only after receiving a notification, ensuring plant health while preventing over-watering and water waste.

#### **5101.15 Water Features**

- All recirculating, open-air water features or ponds (including pondless systems) using potable water for evaporation top-off shall not exceed 50 square feet of exposed surface area.
- Water features exceeding 50 square feet must use non-potable water for evaporation replacement (e.g., rainwater or graywater).

Example: A 50 ft<sup>2</sup> feature may lose 8–10 gallons per day during seasonal conditions (800–1,000 gallons over 112 days).

#### **5101.16 Outdoor Fire Suppression Systems**

Rooftop or exterior fire-suppression systems shall use only approved non-potable water sources and must remain completely separated from potable systems.

#### **5101.17 Non-potable Rainwater Systems**

All rainwater systems must comply with California Plumbing Code Chapter 16 and District standards.

### **5101.18 Non-potable Graywater Systems**

All graywater systems must comply with California Plumbing Code Chapter 15 and District standards.

### **5101.19 Prohibition of Potable Connections**

Hard-plumbed potable water connections to non-potable systems are prohibited. Make-up water must be provided only through approved air-gap separation.

Any cross-connection hazard or unauthorized connection identified by the District shall be subject to immediate correction and enforcement action.

### **5101.20 Water Use Examples Using Required (MAWA / ETWU) calculations**

The table below uses the Current Portola Eto (Reference Evapotranspiration) Reading of 39.40, and does not include annual precipitation or Special Landscape Areas (SLA)

Definitions: Maximum Applied Water Allowance (MAWA) and Estimated Total Water Use (ETWU) Square Feet (SF), Gallons per year (GPY).

Below are sample calculations for the stated square feet (SF) landscapes:

- 500 SF at Plant Factor of 0.10 MAWA is 6,718 GPY, ETWU 1,508 GPY
- 500 SF at Plant Factor of 0.20 MAWA is 6,718 GPY, ETWU 3,016 GPY
- 500 SF at Plant Factor of 0.30 MAWA is 6,718 GPY, ETWU 4,524 GPY
  
- 1,000 SF at Plant Factor of 0.10 MAWA is 13,437 GPY, ETWU 3,016 GPY
- 1,000 SF at Plant Factor of 0.20 MAWA is 13,437 GPY, ETWU 6,032 GPY
- 1,000 SF at Plant Factor of 0.30 MAWA is 13,437 GPY, ETWU 9,048 GPY
  
- 5,000 SF at Plant Factor of 0.10 MAWA is 67,183 GPY, ETWU 15,080 GPY
- 5,000 SF at Plant Factor of 0.20 MAWA is 67,183 GPY, ETWU 30,161 GPY
- 5,000 SF at Plant Factor of 0.30 MAWA is 67,183 GPY, ETWU 45,241 GPY
  
- 10,000 SF at Plant Factor of 0.10 MAWA is 134,365 GPY, ETWU 30,161 GPY
- 10,000 SF at Plant Factor of 0.20 MAWA is 134,437 GPY, ETWU 60,321 GPY
- 10,000 SF at Plant Factor of 0.30 MAWA is 134,437 GPY, ETWU 90,481 GPY

### **5101.21 Irrigation Meter Installation**

Upon receipt of the Irrigation Election form, the District shall schedule installation of a 1-inch irrigation meter within the same billing cycle.

### **5101.22 District Responsibilities**

- Installation of an irrigation meter.
- Installation of a plumbing tee fitting downstream of the primary water meter.
- Provide a 1-inch irrigation connection.

**5101.23 Property Owner Responsibilities**

- Connect irrigation system at owner's expense.
- Pay all costs associated with second meter installation.