



Water Smart Development

What is Water Smart Development?

Water Smart Development (WSD) integrates three distinct water management practices of conservation, reuse, and stormwater management to promote a holistic approach to water resource stewardship for land development. WSD strategically applies these practices when designing development projects to reduce impacts on water resources and the environment. WSD promotes long-term reliability and sustainability of limited water resources.



Example of commercial water audit. Picture provided by Sonoma County Water Agency.



Example of bioswale landscaping. Picture provided by RMC Water and Environment.



Example of rainwater harvesting. Picture provided by EPA's public Picasa Gallery.

Benefits of Water Smart Development

Proactive steps, such as the development of a comprehensive WSD Program, will help meet increasing regulatory requirements and promote local control for Sonoma County. WSD helps preserve and protect limited water resources. Mandates for municipalities and water purveyors to implement water conservation, water reuse, and stormwater management programs are increasing. Strategically integrating best management practices for new development will lead to management efficiencies and cost savings.

Who Should Be Involved?

- Land Use Entities
- Water Purveyors
- Developers
- Regulators
- Public

Why is the Sonoma County Water Agency Involved?

Two core business functions of the Sonoma County Water Agency are to provide a wholesale water supply and flood protection. Implementing an integrated Water Smart Development Program within Sonoma County can improve the reliability and quality of the County's water supply and reduce flood risks. Additionally, the Water Agency shares an obligation with the County and City of Santa Rosa, as co-permittees under the NPDES Stormwater Permit, to comply with permit requirements to implement Low Impact Development (LID) practices which are elements of Water Smart Development.



Proposed Program Set-up

The Water Agency envisions two levels of the Water Smart Development (WSD) Program: a countywide plan and a local plan for land use planning entities.

Countywide Plan: The Water Agency is developing a countywide WSD Guidebook that promotes planning and design considerations that increase water conservation, increase water reuse, and reduce stormwater impacts from land development. Within this guidebook, best management practices highlighting potential areas of synergy and mutual benefits between the three areas of concern are reviewed. This guidebook also addresses the LID requirement of the NPDES Stormwater Permit issued by the North Coast Regional Water Quality Control Board. The WSD Guidebook provides measures and strategies that support the Storm Water Low Impact Development Technical Design Manual developed by the County of Sonoma and City of Santa Rosa.

Localized Plan: New development is evaluated and approved by the land use planning entities (County/cities) which may have different needs and priorities regarding the extent to which the impacts of development can or should be minimized. Thus, each land use entity should develop its own localized WSD Plan. The localized plans should be flexible, allowing identification of quantified savings or offset goals and different approaches to achieve these goals. Localized plans should also ensure accountability that the goals are achieved.

Key Features of Localized Plans

- Implement WSD strategies and measures
- Identify target water savings or offset goals for new development
- Provide templates that include guidance for developers on how to prepare project specific calculations to estimate water savings
- Require developers to submit a WSD Plan as part of the design and permitting process and show how the localized goals would be met

