

- **Board of Directors**
Communications, Outreach and Legislation Committee

October 14, 2003 Board Meeting

8-5

Subject

Appropriate \$500,000 and authorize amendment of agreement with Fraser Communications, increasing the maximum amount payable from \$249,000 to \$749,000, to extend Southern California Heritage Landscape public outreach campaign

Description

This action will appropriate \$500,000 and amend Agreement No. 55209 with Fraser Communications, increasing the maximum amount payable from \$249,000 to \$749,000 to extend the region-wide outdoor water use efficiency public outreach program (see [Attachment 1](#)). This outdoor conservation outreach program, authorized by the Board in November 2002 (Board Letter 9-5), combines public relations and advertising efforts to encourage reduced outdoor water use through more efficient irrigation and use of native and drought-tolerant (“California Friendly”) plants in landscapes. Outreach efforts began in July 2002, with a region-wide advertising campaign running from August to November 2003.

Already, combined with public relations efforts, the support has been much more positive than anticipated from garden retailers and nurseries for Metropolitan’s efforts to encourage use of native and California Friendly plants and reduced outdoor watering. One major retailer foresees creation of a native and California Friendly section as early as November 2003, one year ahead of Metropolitan’s staff’s projections. Two other retailers have indicated strong interest in doing so in 2004. The campaign will also support new programs currently under development by conservation staff. Advertising and retail marketing create a conducive, public environment for the incentive programs supported by the landscape related Bureau of Reclamation grant.

To take advantage of this momentum, staff proposes extending the existing campaign through the end of January to support use of these plants throughout the fall and winter planting season. The \$500,000 will be used for additional media buys negotiated and executed by Fraser Communications with the approval of Metropolitan’s staff.

Policy

By Board Letter 9-5, Nov. 2002, the Board authorized a \$2.374 million public outreach campaign to seek water use efficiency for summer 2003 and beyond.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

CEQA determination for Staff Recommendation:

The proposed action is not defined as a project under CEQA, because it involves continuing administrative activities such as general policy and procedure making (Section 15378(b)(2) of the State CEQA Guidelines). In addition, the proposed action is not subject to CEQA because it involves other government fiscal activities, which do not involve any commitment to any specific project that may result in a potentially significant physical impact on the environment (Section 15378(b)(4) of the State CEQA Guidelines).

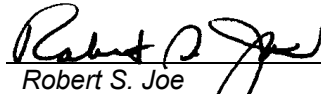
The CEQA determination is: Determine that the proposed action is not subject to CEQA pursuant to Sections 15378(b)(2) and 15378(b)(4) of the State CEQA Guidelines.

Staff Recommendation

Adopt the CEQA determination and


- a. Appropriate \$500,000; and
- b. Authorize amendment of Agreement No. 55209 with Fraser Communications, increasing the maximum amount payable from \$249,000 to \$749,000 to extend the region-wide public outreach campaign.

Fiscal Impact: \$500,000 amendment of the Fraser Communications contract will increase expenditures by \$500,000



Robert S. Joe
Manager, External Affairs

9/15/2003
Date



Ronald R. Gastelum
Chief Executive Officer

9/24/2003
Date

Attachment 1 – Southern California Heritage Landscape Program Extension

BLA #2534

Southern California Heritage Landscape Program Extension

In November 2002, the Board authorized a \$2.3 million strategic public outreach campaign to educate Southern Californians on the need to conserve water, particularly outdoors, without declaring a drought emergency. As significant conservation has been achieved with permanent indoor devices, such as low-flow toilets and showerheads, and through other incentive programs, the Board approved staff's recommendation to focus on reducing outdoor water use, which can range from 30 to 70 percent of total household consumption.

Staff developed and implemented a series of programs, each with the objective of securing a 7 to 12 percent reduction in normal water demand through increased conservation gains and promoting a long-term change in household water usage. These programs included:

- The bewaterwise.com advertising and public relations campaign supporting the Watering Index and Calculator.
- The 2003 City Makeover program, a grant funding program for transformation of highly visible public landscapes into gardens showcasing use of native and drought-tolerant plants and efficient irrigation techniques.
- Enhancement of educational programs for schoolchildren, residents and landscape maintenance professionals in the importance, care and maintenance of native plants and wise outdoor water usage.
- Promotion of the Commercial, Institutional and Industrial Conservation Campaign through funding of additional marketing pieces and direct mail efforts.
- Production and distribution of informational cards for the Hotel and Restaurant Water Awareness Campaign.
- Promotional support for centralized irrigation systems and evapotranspiration controllers through public relations outreach.

The \$1.5 million bewaterwise.com advertising and public relations campaign is the flagship program, slated to run from early August to mid-November 2003. The campaign encourages consumers to save water by employing smarter irrigation practices and, as a secondary message, encourages the use of native and "California Friendly" plants.

The region-wide ad campaign includes hundreds of 60-second radio spots, running on 20 major English and Spanish stations. Traffic report sponsorships in English, Spanish, Mandarin Chinese and Japanese will run on nearly 100 radio stations. Outdoor advertising—featuring colorful billboards and bus sides—also will be displayed through October. The campaign compels consumers to log on to a new web site "bewaterwise.com" to access tools to help them program and customize their outdoor sprinklers to be more efficient and to learn about Heritage Gardening. In the first week of the campaign, the web site "bewaterwise.com" received an average of 1,000 unique visitors a day.

The campaign is based upon research that found homeowners typically give their landscapes twice as much water as needed for plants to be healthy. In the first year of the campaign, staff planned on addressing this issue by educating homeowners on ways to learn how much water to use, primarily through use of the Watering Index and Calculator. Native and drought-tolerant plants would be highlighted as a simple way to reduce water use. But as native plants are not widely available, staff determined that the campaign's emphasis in the first year would remain on efficient watering, with promotion of native plants saved for the campaign's second year.

However, the success of the campaign so far has created interest among retailers in increasing their stock of native and California Friendly plants for fall/winter 2003 and spring 2004. Fall and winter are the peak planting seasons for native plants, and this offers Metropolitan an unexpected opportunity to accelerate the adoption of the

Heritage Garden theme by encouraging consumers to incorporate these plants into their gardens this year rather than next.

Staff seeks \$500,000 to extend the advertising and promotional campaign through January (the end of the planting season) and to retool the ads to give more emphasis to native plants. The extended campaign will include additional radio time, outdoor billboards, and print publication inserts with coupons for local nurseries in order to take advantage of this unique opportunity to extend our reach and impact.