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Meeting Date: May 20, 2015

Staff Contact: Katherine Yuhas, Water Conservation Officer

**TITLE: R-15-11 – Amending the Water Conservation Rebate Program**

**ACTION: Recommend Approval**

**SUMMARY:**

This resolution expands the current Treebate program to include the purchase of new xeric trees. The current Treebate program offers 25% off the cost of tree care (i.e. tree trimming, fertilization, irrigation or disease treatment) up to \$100 per year for residential customers and up to \$500 per year for non-residential customers.

The expansion would not increase the amount of the rebate available annually, but would allow customers to apply for the rebate when they purchase any tree listed in the Water Authority's Xeriscape Guide. This expansion is expected to increase participation in the program and this increase will be covered by current rebate program funds. Participation in the toilet rebate program is decreasing as fewer toilets are available to be converted and any additional costs will be covered by this decrease.

Planting trees does increase water use, but planting the right kind of trees has the potential to create a drought-tolerant tree canopy that will benefit our community for decades to come. In the long-term, trees can reduce water use by decreasing evaporative losses from soil and by providing shade that decreases the need for cooling buildings.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

None.



1           WHEREAS, drought-tolerant trees are covered by the Water Authority's  
2 xeriscape program but that program is only available to customers who are removing  
3 turf; and

4           WHEREAS, there is a need to enhance the rebates available to the Water  
5 Authority's customers; and

6           WHEREAS, the Treebate program which provides rebates for tree care (irrigation  
7 equipment, trimming, disease treatment and fertilization) has proven to be very  
8 successful with Water Authority customers; and

9           WHEREAS, during the FY14 Customer Conversation meetings, support for  
10 Urban Trees was the second highest of the nine future water resource priorities; and

11           WHEREAS, a frequent request from customers is that the purchase of new trees  
12 be included in the Treebate programs.

13 **BE IT RESOLVED BY THE WATER AUTHORITY:**

14           Section 1. Beginning June 1, 2015, the water conservation rebate programs will  
15 be amended as follows:

16           A.     The Treebate program will include the purchase of new trees listed in the  
17 Water Authority's xeriscape guidebook. The cap for the annual rebate for residential  
18 customers shall remain at \$100 and the cap for non-residential customers shall remain  
19 at \$500.

20           Section 2. R-06-12 requires that the Water Conservation Program submit a cost-  
21 effectiveness analysis detailing the amount for the rebate based on the estimate water  
22 savings and a fiscal analysis of the impact to the overall rebate program. The analysis  
23 is included as Appendix A.

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## APPENDIX A

The funding needed for these rebate program changes will come from the currently designated rebate program funds. The reduction in toilet rebate program participation will provide the savings to cover the cost of the increases in the Treebate program. The amount of the Treebate available to each individual customer will not increase, but overall participation in the program is expected to increase when new trees are covered under the rebate. As with all rebate programs, customers will be instructed to check that rebate funds are available before proceeding with any purchase.

R-06-12 requires that no rebate program will be developed that costs more than \$20 per unit of water (748 gallons) saved (\$1 spent must save at least 37 gallons of water).

The Treebate program is a long term investment in water usage reduction. Planting a new tree today increases short term water use, but in the long term having trees decreases water use by keeping the soil and air cooler thus reducing evaporative losses and by keeping buildings cooler and reducing the water needed for cooling. A rebate program now to encourage customers to purchase drought-tolerant trees will influence the quality of our community's tree canopy for decades to come.

# Treebate Expansion

## Current Program

- 25% off the cost of tree care: fertilization, irrigation, tree-trimming and disease treatment
- Up to \$100/year for residential customers
- Up to \$500/year for non-residential customers

## Expansion

- 25% off the cost of tree care **AND** the purchase of new xeric trees listed in the Xeriscape Guide
- Up to \$100/year for residential customers
- Up to \$500/year for non-residential customers

