



## **CASH FOR GRASS – EXISTING HOME CONVERSIONS REBATE PROGRAM**

This program is subject to change without notice and is subject to the availability of funding.

### **Program Goal:**

To encourage a permanent reduction in the amount of water used for landscaping – to save water long term.

### **Background:**

The City’s Cash for Grass Program helps property owners convert water-thirsty grass to a water efficient landscape. The City will rebate water customers based on the schedule below. Terms and conditions and frequently asked questions are also listed below.

#### Rebate Amount for Lawn Conversions

Rebate Amount	Minimum Rebate Amount	Maximum Rebate Amount
\$0.50 per ft <sup>2</sup> of grass removed	\$100 (at least 200 ft <sup>2</sup> of grass removed)	\$500 (1,000 ft <sup>2</sup> or more of grass removed)

### **How to Participate:**

- Read, complete, and submit the “Cash for Grass” application (applications can be found online at [www.morro-bay.ca.us /water conservation](http://www.morro-bay.ca.us/water-conservation) under “Water Conservation Rebate Programs”, or can be picked-up at Public Works office).
- Arrange onsite pre-grass removal verification by calling Damaris Hanson at 772-6265.
- Arrange a post-grass removal and project inspection verification by calling 772-6265.
- Please allow up to thirty (30) days for the rebate check to arrive after your post verification appointment.

**NOTE:** The City of Morro Bay does not warrant or assume any liability for the design, manufacture, installation or operation of any item obtained under this program.

### **Terms and Conditions:**

As indicated above, the rebate for removal is based on square footage of turf removed. Under this program, turf must be replaced with drought tolerant plants or mulch and sprinklers, if replaced, must be replaced with drip irrigation and mulch. Rebates are “first come, first served”. The number of rebates is limited based upon program budget. Only one rebate will be issued per household address. The City of Morro Bay reserves the right to terminate this program at any time, for any reason. Please read on for complete terms of the program.

1. Areas to be converted must receive their water from the City of Morro Bay.
2. The applicant’s utility account must be in good standing.
3. Areas to be converted must be maintained lawn with a dedicated irrigation system. Dead lawns will not be eligible for a rebate.
4. At least 200 square feet of lawn must be converted.



## CITY OF MORRO BAY

### PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

955 Shasta Avenue  
Morro Bay, CA 93442

5. The watering system to be installed, if any, must be an automatic low volume drip irrigation system equipped with a pressure regulator, filter, and emitters. The system must be free of leaks and malfunctions. Each drip emitter must be rated at less than two (2) gallons per hour (gph). If part of a lawn is converted, the sprinkler system must be properly modified to provide adequate coverage to the remaining lawn without spraying the converted area (narrow lawn areas often waste water and should be avoided).
6. The converted area must be completely covered by a 2-3" layer of mulch permeable to both air and water. Common mulching materials include rock, bark, wood chips, un-grouted flagstone or pavers and artificial turf manufactured to be permeable. Living groundcovers qualify as mulch provided the individual plants are installed at sufficient density to assure one hundred percent (100%) plant cover. If a weed barrier is used beneath the mulch, it must be manufactured to be permeable to both air and water. If artificial turf is to be used in any part of the conversion, the product installed must be permeable to water and air and must be non-flammable. Only polyethylene and nylon artificial turf products eligible for rebate – patio carpet and/or Astroturf are ineligible. Product installed must have a minimum five (5) year manufacturer warranty. Artificial turf must not encroach upon living plants/trees and must end at least three inches (3") from the base of any plant/tree.
7. The Cash for Grass Rebate Application must be submitted to the City of Morro Bay and the applicant must participate in a pre-conversion site review conducted by the City prior to the removal of any lawn. Conversions that are initiated without the City's approval are ineligible.
8. Conversions must be completed within six (6) months following receipt of the City's executed application. Once the City receives notice of conversion project completion, any wait time for the City's final inspection shall not be counted against this six-month period of time. The converted area must remain in compliance with all program terms and conditions for a period of five (5) years following receipt of the rebate. An applicant may be required to refund the entire rebate, or a portion thereof, if rebate program terms and conditions are violated. Notwithstanding the foregoing, this requirement is void upon transfer of ownership.
9. Rebate payments will be issued only to the property owner of record or to that property owner's legally appointed representative and, assuming program compliance, will be issued within thirty (30) to sixty (60) days following the City's final inspection.
10. Once the City is notified of a conversion project's completion, the City will conduct an inspection to verify program compliance. If the conversion fails inspection, the applicant will be permitted to bring the conversion project into compliance with the program terms and conditions for a period of sixty (60) days or the remainder of the six-month period, whichever is greater.
11. The City enforces only the terms and conditions of this application. The applicant is solely responsible for complying with any and all laws, regulations, policies, conditions, covenants and restrictions that may apply and for any and all liabilities arising out of a conversion project. Applicants are encouraged to consult any applicable covenants, conditions and restrictions ("CC&Rs") or neighborhood Homeowner's Association ("HOA") regulations that may apply to an anticipated conversion project prior to submitting an application with the City. Applicants must also comply with all state and local laws relating to landscape maintenance. The quality, maintenance and appearance of the conversion are the exclusive responsibility of the applicant.
12. Upon completion and continuing for the term of the application, converted areas must contain enough plants to create at least fifty percent (50%) living plant cover when the plants are fully grown.



## CITY OF MORRO BAY

### PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

955 Shasta Avenue  
Morro Bay, CA 93442

13. Applications are available at Morro Bay Public Works Department 955 Shasta Ave. or online at [www.morro-bay.ca.us](http://www.morro-bay.ca.us)

Applications will only be accepted in-person, by mail, or e-mail. Applications should be turned in or mailed to: CITY OF MORRO BAY, PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT, ATTN: DAMARIS HANSON, 955 SHASTA AVE., MORRO BAY, CA, 93442

Email: [DHANSON@MORRO-BAY.CA.US](mailto:DHANSON@MORRO-BAY.CA.US)

For further information, please contact the Public Works Department at 772-6261.

The number of rebates is limited. Only one rebate will be issued per parcel. For questions about this rebate program, please contact the Public Works Department at 772-6261.

### Frequently Asked Questions:

1. What plants can I use in my water-efficient landscape? The Cash for Grass Rebate Program does not require particular plants, only that when fully mature, the plants cover at least fifty percent (50%) of the converted area. An applicant can use any plants to meet this requirement, but the City highly encourages the use of drought tolerant and native species. An applicant should also consider keeping any existing trees since they provide shade to one's home and landscape. Several websites provide excellent landscaping options:

- a) [www.CaliforniaNativePlants.com](http://www.CaliforniaNativePlants.com)
- b) [www.slocounty.ca.gov/Assets/PL/environmental/Approved+Plants+\(Excel+Format\).xls](http://www.slocounty.ca.gov/Assets/PL/environmental/Approved+Plants+(Excel+Format).xls)
- c) <http://www.slowaterwiselandscaping.com>

2. Can I receive credit for replacing my lawn with artificial turf? The latest generation of synthetic turf is a grass-like surface covering that replicates lush natural grass in appearance and function. The City will accept artificial turf (as outlined and defined in the program's terms and conditions) as a substitute for irrigated lawn. Any artificial turf must be permeable (allowing both air and water to pass through freely) and must meet all other program terms and conditions including, but not limited to, compliance with installation standards. If artificial turf is to be used the product installed must be permeable to water and air and must be non-flammable. Only polyethylene and nylon artificial turf products eligible for rebate – patio carpet and/or Astroturf are ineligible. Product installed must have a minimum five (5) year manufacturer warranty. Artificial turf must not encroach upon living plants/trees and must end at least three inches (3") from the base of any plant/tree.

3. Can I receive credit for putting in a patio, a walkway or an extension to my driveway? Yes. If the applicant will be removing turf to install a patio, a walkway or a driveway extension, the City will allow credit if a permeable product is used. Permeable products include pervious pavement, gravel, or brick or flagstone with permeable, mortarless materials for gout lines (such as sand and gravel). All of these options reduce the amount of water runoff by allowing water to pass through the surface and be absorbed into the soil beneath. Keep in mind that the conversion area must still meet the fifty percent (50%) living plant coverage requirement.

4. I turned off the water on my grass and it has started to die. Can I still qualify for the program? No. Since the purpose of the program is to reduce existing water demand, an applicant must be currently maintaining a grass lawn. Once an applicant has sent in the application and has had a pre-conversation site review with a representative from the City, the applicant may stop watering the lawn. A City of Morro Bay representative must validate the turf areas before an applicant starts the conversion project.



## CITY OF MORRO BAY

### PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

955 Shasta Avenue  
Morro Bay, CA 93442

5. Can I receive credit for replacing my high water use grass with a low water use grass? No. This program provides incentive to convert grass to alternative types of landscaping, including trees, shrubs and groundcovers. These use less water than even the lowest water use grass. However, the City does encourage homeowners to use low water use grass in those areas where grass is needed or desired outside of this program.

6. If I have children and/or dogs, how do I incorporate water efficient landscaping into my yard? An applicant does not have to eliminate all of its lawn area to participate. Some conversion projects simply involve reducing the amount of lawn area or creating a buffer area around the edge of an existing lawn.

7. What if my Homeowner's Association or CC&Rs require me to keep grass in my yard? To avoid problems, an applicant must be sure to follow all applicable Homeowner's Association conditions, covenants and rules (CC&Rs) that may apply to any anticipated landscaping project.

8. What is mulch and why is it required? The most common types of mulch are decorative rock, bark or wood. Mulch helps maintain the moisture level. Wood and bark mulches help retain the temperature of the soil. Without mulch, wind and heat pull the moisture out of the soil and more water is then needed to keep plants healthy. Also, the temperature of the soil constantly fluctuates causing stress to plants. Additional benefits include the reduction of weed growth, erosion and certain insect diseases. A minimum of 2-3" layer of mulch is required.

9. Do I get credit for removing my high water use plants? No. The City's Cash for Grass Program focuses solely on the removal of turf grass. However, most shrub beds may be watered more effectively by converting the irrigation system to a drip irrigation system.

10. I have many plants surrounding the grass that I'm removing. Will these plants count toward the 50 percent (50%) coverage requirement? No. The City only counts those plants that are either currently planted in the grass area or those that are added to the area where the grass is to be removed and converted.

11. Why does the City require plants? This program encourages the use of water efficient landscaping, and the City wants that landscaping to be attractive in order to encourage others to do the same. Trees, shrubs and groundcovers provide shade, absorb carbon dioxide, supply oxygen, reduce soil erosion, give wildlife a home, decrease energy use, reduce stormwater runoff and save water.

12. Do plants have to cover fifty percent (50%) of the conversion area when you come and inspect my landscape? An applicant can choose plants at any size. Planting smaller plants (1 gallon) are less expensive and have a tendency to adapt better to their environment. The City uses the full mature value of the plant type to determine plant coverage.

13. I don't like the desert look - what are my options? Once established, water efficient landscaping can be much more than rocks and cactus. There are hundreds of plants that need little, if any, irrigation. With proper design and plant selection, an applicant can accomplish almost any look or feel and still save water. See Question No. 1 above for websites that provide information on drought tolerant and native plants indigenous to our area.

14. Do I have to use a weed barrier? No. Weed barriers are generally recommended in areas that have a particular weed problem (i.e. areas where Bermuda grass is being removed or under permeable surfaces such as patios and walkways where plants will not be grown). If a weed barrier is used, the City requires that it be permeable allowing both water and air to penetrate.



## CITY OF MORRO BAY

### PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

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Morro Bay, CA 93442

15. Why do I need a filter and pressure regulator? The emitters on a drip irrigation system have very small openings for the water to pass through. A filter prevents sediment from clogging emitters, ensuring that plants will get the correct amount of water. A pressure regulator keeps the irrigation system at the manufacturer's recommended pressure (usually between 20 and 40 pounds per square inch). Not installing a pressure regulator may cause fittings and lines to fail, creating wasteful breaks and leaks in your system.

16. What is considered to be an efficient irrigation system? The installation of an efficient irrigation system begins with good design. A low volume drip system is a proper choice for trees, plants and shrubs applying water directly to the roots. For turf areas, systems must apply water uniformly over the desired area with a minimum of overspray into adjacent areas. There are sprinkler heads on the market today that offer low precipitation rates (such as rotating spray heads) that save water and allow the soil to absorb the applied water minimizing any runoff. The City recommends installing a smart irrigation timer that (after proper programming) automatically adjusts itself to provide the right amount of water to your landscape.

