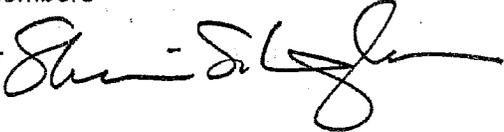




CITY OF SAN DIEGO
COUNCIL PRESIDENT PRO TEM SHERRI S. LIGHTNER
DISTRICT ONE

MEMORANDUM

DATE: February 22, 2013
TO: Natural Resources and Culture Committee members
FROM: Council President Pro Tem Sherri S. Lightner 
SUBJECT: Promoting Graywater Usage

Graywater systems, widely used in cities like San Francisco, Santa Barbara and Phoenix, allow untreated wastewater from a home's washing machines, bathtubs, showers and sinks to be recycled on-site for outdoor irrigation. In a pilot project, the City of Los Angeles found that graywater reuse has the potential to reduce a household's water use by as much as 50 percent. Graywater advocates in San Diego estimate that if just one residential graywater system was installed every day for a year that it would reduce our water consumption by as much as 5 million gallons annually.

Unfortunately, the City of San Diego currently has unclear and contradictory rules regarding graywater, which, in turn, has inhibited the use of these graywater systems.

To help encourage graywater recycling in the City of San Diego, I proposed revisions to the city's graywater policies at the Oct. 10, 2012 Natural Resources and Culture Committee and asked that the city's Water Policy Implementation Task Force review and provide direction on my recommendations. Those recommendations included streamlining the permitting process, tasking the Public Utilities Department with developing an outreach and education campaign and exploring the possibility of providing residents and developers with incentives for installing graywater systems.

The Task Force thoroughly vetted my recommendations and approved the following:

1. Continue with "no permit" policy for Closed Clothes Washer Systems
2. Expand the "no permit" requirement to systems used for landscape irrigation that discharge less than 250 gallons a day and primarily consist of systems taking discharge water from washing machines and wash basins and does not include a potable water connection, the use of a pump, or affect other plumbing, electrical, mechanical or

building components. Emphasize the use of Best Management Practices to prevent runoff.

3. Streamline the permitting process for "simple" and "complex systems" that take discharge water from other elements in a residence such as bathtubs and showers that would require more extensive in-house plumbing, electrical or mechanical modifications or use of a pump.
4. Public Utilities Department, in consultation with Development Services Department, should develop and include information on simple graywater systems in their public outreach materials and social media outreach, and emphasize the use of Best Management Practices to prevent runoff.
5. Oversight of "complex systems" should continue to be in the purview of the Development Services Department in order to ensure that plumbing and building code requirements are met.

I believe the Task Force's proposals are a good start in encouraging graywater usage and request that the Natural Resources and Culture Committee direct these proposals to the full City Council for adoption.

It is time for the City of San Diego to step up and finally embrace graywater usage as so many other municipalities have. Simplifying the process and investing in improving education and outreach will pay huge dividends as San Diego works to create its own local and sustainable water supply.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or my staff.

cc: Honorable Councilmembers

SL/jd