

## **NEW on your 2019 Property Tax Bill? Safe Clean Water!**

Measure W was approved by nearly 70% of the voters within Los Angeles County in 2018 and was created to fund projects that increase stormwater capture and reducing urban runoff pollution which may increase water supply; improve water quality; and provide community investment benefits. Measure W is now known as the “Safe Clean Water program” which is how it appears on your property tax bill. 2019 marks the first year that “Clean Safe Water” parcel tax is part of your property tax bill. Measure W was supported by EcoMalibu and many environmental groups in the area who worked diligently to ensure that projects using natural processes were preferred over heavily engineered projects that rely on mechanical processes and equipment. Environmental groups all made sure that independent Regional Oversight Committees, consisting of subject matter experts, prepare reports on whether the goals of the Measure are met, and submit recommendations to the Board.

The “Safe Clean Water” program is a 2.5-cent parcel tax on every square foot of impermeable surface of your property. Impermeable surfaces are surfaces covered by asphalt, concrete, brick, roof tiles and shingles that shed water and prevent water from being absorbed. The tax is intended to raise nearly \$300 million a year for projects to capture and clean storm water runoff, improve flood protection, and update our extremely old and dilapidated infrastructure. If these funds are spent wisely to make our stormwater and flood control systems effective and sustainable in the future this will be money well spent and will improve the quality of life for the millions of residents and visitors of L.A. County. However, if the County continues to rely too heavily on engineering and engineers to select projects and does not adopt projects that mainly use natural processes this tax will be a boondoggle and will be quickly ended.

The amount of impervious surfaces determine how much water and polluted runoff is generated on private property. How it works: A 2,000 square foot home with a concrete patio and driveway that creates an additional 1,000 square feet of impermeable area would cost the property owner approximately \$75 dollars per year or less than .21 cents per day (2,000 sq.ft house plus 1,000 sq. ft. driveway/patio = 3,000sq. ft multiplied by 2.5 cents equals \$75.00 per year).

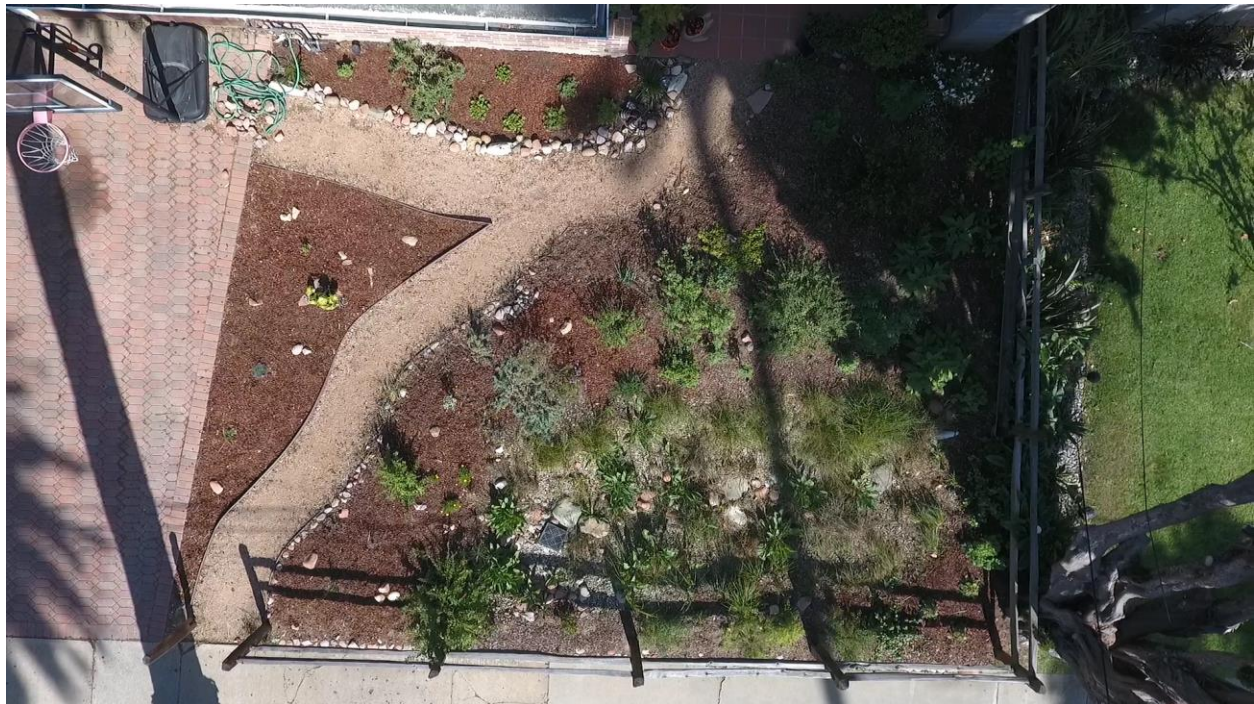
Impervious surface areas can be reduced by using materials that allow water to be absorbed and filtered such as green roofs, or permeable concrete and pavers that allow water to be absorbed instead of shed. Property owners can also create rain gardens that receive runoff from impervious areas and allow that water to be infiltrated and filtered by the soil and plants. Homeowners can reduce their tax burden by implementing rain gardens and stormwater infiltration projects on their property.

The County of Los Angeles and its Cities (therefore its residents) are required by the “Clean Water Act” to clean polluted runoff generated from within their boundaries so that rivers, lakes, and the ocean are safe and healthy for people and wildlife. Further, the County and the Cities have a responsibility to keep their residents safe from flooding and pollution.

EcoMalibu and many environmental groups were strong supporters of Measure W. Now we have an obligation to make sure the County and the Cities do not squander this money and that the projects they undertake: **provide multiple benefits, and rely on natural processes to capture, treat, and infiltrate storm water runoff.** Environmental groups worked diligently to create strong oversight and that projects that use natural systems over mechanical processes should be preferred. **EcoMalibu and the other environmental organizations are closely monitoring the projects that the** County and Cities propose for funding under this “Safe Clean

Water” Parcel Tax. The concern, based on past performance, is the County and Cities are too dependent on engineers to select projects and the projects they put forward are too heavily reliant on mechanical processes, the projects have been ineffective, too expensive, require continual maintenance, and frequent replacement.

One of the elements about this tax that EcoMalibu really liked was to incentivize property owners to change their landscapes to reduce runoff and pollution by capturing and treating runoff on site. By modifying your landscape so that runoff is absorbed will also reduce or eliminate your tax burden. EcoMalibu has created a “How-to-Video” that provides detailed instructions on how to plan and build rain gardens that capture, filter, and absorb runoff. EcoMalibu is committed to helping property owners employ these types of natural solutions.



*Rain Garden Pacific Palisades California 2016*

Rain gardens built with native plants offer many benefits: They are beautiful and provide visual interest year round, they reduce irrigation use by 90%, they provide food and habitat for native birds, butterflies, and wildlife, they reduce flooding, they remove pollutants that hurt rivers, lakes and the ocean, they allow water to be absorbed into groundwater aquifers where it is stored for future use, and they minimize the size and cost of infrastructure needed to transport runoff. Rain gardens use nature not expensive mechanical processes to clean and store water. If the power goes out or if the motors and pumps break, or the building catches on fire, rain gardens continue to work while mechanical processes will not. Natural treatment systems require little to no maintenance and their life expectancy is for as long as they remain in the ground. It is these types of systems that work with nature and that do not rely upon cumbersome mechanical equipment that we should be employing. Restoring a natural stream that was concreted over provides better improvements of water quality, green space, wildlife habitat, better flood protection, improves property values, and improves the quality of life for residents and visitors.